

LOVE a Lineman!

Photo: Pat Fahrion



Apprentice Lineman Ty Mortensen and Journeyman Lineman Bill Holtsford brave the elements to repair damages to the system.

It's nearing midnight and, for some unknown reason, the power goes out. Most LPEA members are probably in bed, but somewhere across our service territory, a lineman is getting OUT of bed.

No matter the time of day... lightning storms, minus degree temperatures, feet of snow... LPEA's linemen are committed to sourcing an outage problem and restoring power as safely and quickly as possible.

"April 11 is National Lineman Appreciation Day," says Indiana Reed, marketing communications specialist. "When you consider what they do, risk and sacrifice for all of us to keep the lights on, we want to encourage our members to 'thank a lineman' this month."

Simply put, the job of a lineman is to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure - but the work is dangerous. Linemen are required to climb utility poles and work high atop bucket trucks, and also engage "live" electrical lines. Linemen have been compared to the military's Special Forces - highly skilled and trained and on the front lines when issues occur on LPEA's system.

"We definitely are an independent, unique breed," assures Justin Talbot, who earned his Journeyman Lineman but now oversees the crews as LPEA's Manager of Operations. "There is an unwritten code that we instinctively embrace. We get out there to serve our members, and we follow strict safety precautions. AND we support our brothers."

Safety is the number one priority at LPEA. Yes, restoring power is important, but as part of LPEA culture, restoring power "quickly" is never done at the risk of injury or human life.

"I am so in awe of our linemen, and I am concerned for them every day," says CEO Mike Dreyspring, stressing that electricity is a powerful force, and one that can kill. "Part of our mission is 'reliability' - and to help ensure that, we have an extensive maintenance program. But sometimes our guys are put out there in challenging situations."

LPEA's linemen are trained to work "line hot," or energized. They're also trained to decide when the line must be dead, or de-energized, to repair the system.

"You can trust them to get it right," says Dreyspring. "If it takes an hour or two longer to get your power back on, I'm behind that if it means our crews are going home safe and whole to their families that night."

Indeed, if one happens to catch an LPEA crew's arrival on a job, you will observe a solemn reverence at the outset, an appraisal of the situation, with a specific game plan developed before they risk life and limb to get the lights back on.

"Our linemen are some of the most generous and giving guys I've ever met," says Reed. "This April, please let them know that YOU recognize all that they do for all of us."

Students to visit Washington DC

Area high school students Jenna Engelken and Maizey Funk of Durango, Miranda Talbot of Bayfield, and Adeline Thompson of Pagosa Springs have been selected to represent LPEA as part of the National Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington D.C. scheduled for June 9-16, 2016.

"This trip is a tremendous opportunity for our area juniors," says Mike Dreyspring, CEO. "Our communities, as well as the country and the world are facing many challenges in the energy arena, and the industry is changing, so it's important that our next generation gain an understanding about energy policy development at the federal level. We are pleased to be able to further that education."

LPEA's student representatives will join juniors from the cooperative's sister electric co-ops across Colorado. The schedule includes an intimate look at the nation's Capitol and the government from the inside, including discussion of current concerns with Congressional representatives. Tours of Washington D.C.'s monuments and museums, plus social activities, are also part of the agenda.

The opportunity to participate in the D.C. Youth Tour was open to all current high school juniors, including home-schooled students, who receive their electric power from LPEA. Students completed an application and penned a 500-word essay covering an aspect of the electric industry.

Applications for the 2017 Washington D.C. Youth Tour will be available in November 2016 at LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs, through area high school counselors, or on the web, www.lpea.coop.



Jenna Engelken



Maizey Funk



Miranda Talbot



Adeline Thompson

Review/apply for LPEA jobs on-line

Technology continues to help improve how LPEA does business, and now those seeking positions at the co-op can not only explore opportunities, but also apply on-line.

On LPEA's webpage, www.lpea.coop, click on Your Co-op – Career Opportunities. The page will show positions currently available. Click on the posted link for a complete job description and/or to apply for this position.

"We've implemented a great program, Epicor HCM, that facilitates on-line job applications," says Nadine Ontiveros. "Applicants will be able to set up a secure username and password and submit applications for LPEA positions as they become available."

LPEA has been known over the years for its steady workforce, with openings rarely available at the cooperative.

"That resulted in a well-seasoned workforce and now we're experiencing many retirements," says Ontiveros. "The good news is, great jobs are opening up at LPEA."

LPEA also offers "employment alerts" through an "opt-in" on-line service. On the website, click on "Join our Email List" and opt-in to Job Opportunities.



Call before you Dig

Safe digging begins by calling 8-1-1.

From planting shrubs to building a fence, many outdoor projects require digging. Avoid striking underground utilities by calling the "Call Before You Dig" 8-1-1 number first. Within two days, LPEA will send a professional line locator to mark the underground electric lines. The service is free to members.

April is National Safe Digging Month. The simple step of calling 8-1-1 could prevent serious injury, or even save a life.

A line locate request can also be made on line at www.colorado811.org or through the link on LPEA's home page, www.lpea.coop.

Ballots for Director Elections to be mailed to members in April

In accordance with LPEA's bylaws, one seat in each of LPEA's four districts comes up for election annually. As of press time, 2016 candidates are:

- District 1 (Archuleta County) – Mike Alley, Mark Garcia (incumbent) and Calum McNeil
- District 2 (South and west La Plata County) – Dan Huntington and Lori Schell
- District 3 (City of Durango) – Doug Lyon
- District 4 (North and east La Plata County) – John Beebe, Ron Bishop, Robin Duffy-Wirth and Jack Turner (incumbent)

Ballots will be mailed to those members with contested elections (more than one challenger) and must be returned by mail by Friday, May 6 (remember mail goes to Albuquerque before returning to Durango), or dropped off at local locations, which are printed on the ballot information and include LPEA's offices in Archuleta and Pagosa Springs. Ballots may also be physically brought to the LPEA Annual Meeting and submitted PRIOR to 10:30 a.m., for votes to be counted.

Election results will be announced at the LPEA Annual Meeting, set for Sky Ute Casino Resort in Ignacio, Saturday, May 7, 2016. Registration begins at 9 a.m. with the business meeting to commence at 10:30 a.m. A complementary lunch follows.

For information on LPEA Director Elections, visit www.lpea.coop.

Stevens, Beeman - two new faces in Finance and Accounting

Two new faces have joined the LPEA Finance and Accounting team: Billing Clerk Ana Stevens and part-time Accounting Clerk Angela Beeman.

Working in coordination with LPEA's finance executives and customer service representatives, Stevens assists customers with billing concerns as well as troubleshooting meter reading and billing issues.

Stevens is a native of Panama and earned a degree in public relations and communications from Loyola University – New Orleans. Returning to Panama, she applied her marketing skills in the banking industry with Chase and Citibank, and continued in the industry handling credit card management, insurance and customer service over the years. Most recently she has served as a personal banker with Wells Fargo in Durango.

As an accounting clerk, Beeman is currently training in Accounts Payable, with responsibilities to include receivables for Marathon water heaters and ETS space heaters, and work on LPEA's sales tax returns.

A native of La Plata County, she grew up in the Ignacio area and pursued her career with the City of Farmington, serving with the municipal electric utility for five years, working with members on new construction. She currently assists her husband on his water well development business in La Plata County, and is pleased to supplement her experience with the part-time position at LPEA.



Stevens



Beeman

LIVE WIRES

Learn about SmartHub

April 5, 7:45 a.m., at Carver Brewing Co. during the Durango Chamber of Commerce's "Tuesday Talk," Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy management will discuss the features of LPEA's on-line program "SmartHub," including how to monitor your electric usage. Reservations required: www.durangobusiness.org or 970.247.0312.

Board meeting Apr. 20, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, April 20, 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at www.lpea.coop. All members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

Home & Ranch Show

Stop by the La Plata County Fairgrounds on April 23-24 for the Annual Home & Ranch Show. LPEA will be in the house and available to talk to members about Time-of-Use, Round Up Foundation and other services offered by the cooperative.



From the CEO...

LPEA elections – Why vote?

BY MIKE DREYSPRING | CEO | MDREYSPRING@LPEAL.COOP

Ballots for LPEA's Board of Directors elections are mailed this month. The Board of Directors sets the vision and policies that govern how LPEA is managed as a business.

So, why vote? You might wonder – does one vote really matter? Yes it does.

Ask business owners why they voted. They may say that reliable and affordable electric power is essential to their business. Likely, the electric bill is a large portion of their monthly expenses. Perhaps not the largest, but probably more significant than any other check a business might write, other than payroll. Beyond cost, however, for most businesses, reliable electric service is important, as all commerce stops without electricity.

Ask our irrigators why they voted. Our farmers and ranchers vote in LPEA elections because

electricity is also vital to their operations – a great deal of electricity is consumed to power water pumps.

How about the residential member who votes? Why do they vote? Let's detour here and see why a residential member *doesn't* vote. They perhaps don't realize they are a member-owner of an electric cooperative and that their vote counts. Or they may not know the candidates. Or, perhaps they trust the local co-op CEO so completely they don't feel the CEO needs a boss. [I've never heard that before, and probably never will, but I am speculating here as to why people do or don't vote.]

I surmise that most residential members vote because energy means something. It's not just about reliable, affordable power here in Southwest Colorado. It's also about our energy sources and the impact on our environment, right along with the water we drink and the air we breathe. Electric energy is more than just turning on our lights or the technology it powers – it's part of everything you do.

So, if you vote regularly in your co-op's annual election, thank you. I truly appreciate that my bosses are paying attention to the business

they own.

If, on the other hand, you haven't voted in an LPEA election, here are my 10 reasons TO vote:

10. It's simple.
9. It takes less than a minute to vote.
8. Your voice and direction count.
7. You can express yourself without involving social media.
6. When you see your elected director from your district, you can tell them you voted.
5. You can tell your local co-op CEO that you have your eye on him because you voted. [That really spooks CEOs].
4. Unless you tell someone, it's private.
3. If the vote results in a tie, you get the credit or the blame, depending on who wins the coin toss.
2. You have a say in the governance of your cooperative.

And the #1 reason to vote – you make your co-op better.

Watch for your ballots mid-April. Please vote. It does make a difference.

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Mission Statement:
La Plata Electric Association provides its members safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost while being environmentally responsible.

Board of Directors:
Michael Rendon, President [District 3]
Tom Compton, Vice President [District 2]
Karen Barger, Treasurer [District 4]
Jeff Berman, Secretary [District 3]
Britt Bassett [District 3]
Bob Formwalt [District 1]
Mark Garcia [District 1]
Bob Lynch [District 1]
Kohler McInnis [District 2]
Davin Montoya [District 2]
Jack Turner [District 4]
Joe Wheeling [District 4]

Chief Executive Officer:
Michael A. Dreyspring

Statement of Non-discrimination

LPEA is an equal opportunity provider and employer M/F/ Disability/Veteran. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

