



## Wet, heavy snow... What it means to LPEA



Photo: Ray Pierotti

Heavy, wet snow is not a friend to LPEA's electrical system. On Jan. 13, LPEA experienced one of the most challenging days in recent history for keeping the lights on, as the heavy snow pulled down trees, broke pole cross arms, and caused wires to bounce and fuses to blow.

"When a big snow storm comes in while the temperature is around 32 degrees, we know that any kind of accumulation could impact our system," says Justin Talbot, manager of operations. "If it's warmer, the snow melts. If it's colder, the snow is light and fluffy. Wet snow around 32 degrees sticks to everything."

LPEA's electricity distribution system is programmed such that when any foreign object – such as a tree branch, another wire, etc. – comes in contact with the energized wires, the system operates automatically, going through a set amount of operations (blinks), allowing the object to clear, then locks open (or stops the flow of electricity) until the problem can be determined.

During storms, wind can blow wires together or cause tree branches to briefly touch a line. Also, as was seen in January, wet snow will pile up on the wires, and then unload or abruptly fall off, causing the wires to bounce and interact with each other or nearby objects. Any of these occurrences will prompt the system to automatically cut power to avoid potential fires or further

damage to the system, as well as give the interfering object a chance to clear the line.

"Most often our customers will experience only a few 'blinks' as the system resets itself," says Talbot, noting that wires interacting with each other can cause fuses to blow. "A worst case scenario is that the wet snow brings wires down and damages equipment, or causes a tree to fall through a line."

If members experience a few blinks, it's not necessary to call LPEA immediately, according to Talbot. If, however, after about 15 minutes the power has not been automatically restored, members are encouraged to call the main LPEA line, 970.247.5786 to report the outage.

Members can also help LPEA's line crews zero in on a fault location by taking notice of their surroundings to see if they can spot any physical damage, whether it be overhead or underground.

"Then let us know," says Darrick Robinson, superintendent in charge of LPEA's Dispatch team. "If a line is down in the snow, do not go near it. The power at your house could be out, but the line may still be energized, and electricity conducts quite well through the snow."

"Safety is our first priority, and our crews work as quickly as they can to restore power, especially in the middle of winter," says Talbot.

# Some “need-to-know” tips of LED lighting

BY RAY PIEROTTI | PROJECT SPECIALIST | RPIEROTTI@LPEA.COOP

As the project specialist who manages LPEA's lighting rebates, I'm regularly fielding questions our members have about upgrading their lighting to energy efficient LED (light-emitting diode) lamps.

A light-emitting diode, or LED, is a type of solid-state lighting that uses a semiconductor to convert electricity into light. Today's LED bulbs are much more energy efficient than incandescent lights and cut energy use by more than 80 percent.

As your incandescents burn out, it's a good time to switch to LED bulbs. But remember, the bulbs are still considerably more expensive. The impressive lifespan of 20 years or more helps justify the purchase, plus LPEA offers rebates to encourage members to upgrade. Still, it pays to do some homework.

**Tip #1:** You can't realize energy efficiency if a lamp isn't on. Change out the lamps that you use the most to maximize the energy savings and justify the additional cost of the bulb. As a guideline, switch to LEDs with bulbs that are on three hours or more a day. Typically, 20 percent of your lamps produce 80 percent of a lighting load.

**Tip #2:** It's not about watts anymore! Get a sense of brightness in lumens. The higher the lumen light output, the more light emitted. Compare wattage in the bulb to be replaced with the LED lumens to get the equivalent light output. Older people require more light [at age 65 we need twice as much light to see as well as we did at age 20], and are much more sensitive to glare. See the adjacent chart for a watts-to-lumens comparison.

## How Much Light Do I Need?

Incandescent Bulbs WATTS	Minimum Light Output LUMENS
40	450
60	800
75	>1,100
100	1,600
150	2,600



**Tip #3:** LEDs can display different hues – a color range from warm reds to a spectrum of cool whites. To replace the light of a typical incandescent bulb in your home, look for “Warm White” or “Soft White” on the packaging. Bulbs labeled as “White Light” or “Daylight” produce a whiter light often used for outdoors, shops and task lighting.

**Tip #4:** Most LEDs can be dimmed, however LEDs consume such a low wattage, many existing dimmers made for high wattage incandescents may not function well. Read the packaging and ask a knowledgeable salesperson before you purchase LED bulbs and dimmers. Use the LED manufacturer recommended low wattage dimmers or find LED bulbs compatible with traditional dimmers.

**Tip #5:** Thermal Management: Don't enclose that LED! LEDs DO produce a small amount of heat, so if placed in an enclosed housing, the heat will have no place to go except back to the bulb, thus reducing the life of the lamp. Look for LEDs designed for enclosed spaces or those built into the fixture.

Still have questions? Join us for our upcoming Lunch & Lights workshops – 11 a.m.–1 p.m., Feb. 12 at our Durango offices, 45 Stewart St., and Feb. 17 at the Sisson Library in Pagosa Springs. Visit [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop) for details, or give me a call, 970.382.7770.

## CO-OP MEMBERS

### Ask...

**Q:** When there's an outage, why don't we get a refund on our electric bill?

**A:** LPEA bills our members for the electricity they use, after they use it. During an outage, electricity is not making its way to your meter, so it's not being consumed at your home, so we will not bill you for energy usage during an outage. We cannot refund that which is not purchased.

Please do also understand that your bill includes a “Base Charge,” which is consistent from month to month. These dollars help finance LPEA's infrastructure, an on-going expense to maintain the system even during an outage when our crews are out affecting repairs.

# Celebrating years of service

Each year LPEA takes an opportunity to reward milestones in employment at the cooperative during the Employee Annual Meeting.

"Our LPEA employees are skilled professionals," says CEO Michael Dreyspring. "The service awards are one way to recognize their years of dedication to our members."

## 40 Years

Gayle Norman, Manager of Staking Services

## 35 Years

Phil Dietrich, Working Foreman  
Steve Orr, Chief Storekeeper

## 30 Years

Les Hahn, Dispatcher

## 25 Years

Brent Tanner, Journeyman Lineman

## 20 Years

Mike Alley, Area Supervisor  
Jeannie Bennett, Public Relations Coordinator  
Jackie Doyle, Engineering Clerk  
Brandi Fassett, Work Order Specialist  
Dan Harms, Systems Engineer  
Curt Marlatt, Line Superintendent  
Justin Talbot, Manager of Operations  
Sharon Walter, Senior Clerk

## 15 Years

Sandie Marlatt, Billing Clerk  
Charlene Sandoval, Engineering Clerk

## 10 Years

Misty Fredrickson, GIS Technician  
Eric Hoover, Equipment Operator  
Jackie Nelson, Billing Clerk  
Jake Wills, Staff Engineer

## 5 Years

Nancy Andrews, Energy Management Specialist  
Drew Timmerman, Network Administrator



Les Hahn



Gayle Norman



Mike Alley and Phil Dietrich



Charlene Sandoval and Justin Talbot



Sharon Walter



Brandi Fassett

To learn more about employment opportunities at LPEA, or to sign up for job email alerts, visit [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop).

# Director elections up-coming

Four seats on the LPEA board of directors will be up for election in 2015. Those who may be interested in running are advised to begin their education about the cooperative and understand obligations and fiduciary duties of the directors.

"We encourage those interested to familiarize themselves with the organization through our web site, [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop), and to attend regular board meetings," says Mike Dreyspring, CEO. "The board meets the third Wednesday of each month beginning at 9 a.m."

Election packets for those interested in running for a seat will be available March 17, 2015, on-line at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop) and at LPEA offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs. To be placed on the ballot, candidates must return completed petitions to either LPEA office by 1 p.m. on April 1, 2015.

Pursuant to LPEA bylaws, one-third of the directors' seats are up for election annually, one in each of LPEA's four districts. Incumbent directors are Bob Formwalt (District 1 - Archuleta County), Jerry McCaw (District 2 - south and west La Plata County), Britt Bassett (District 3 - Durango proper) and Heather Erb (District 4 - north and east La Plata County).

Director candidates must be cooperative member-owners and be permanent residents of the district for which they are seeking office. Ballots will be mailed to LPEA's full membership in April, and the results announced during the LPEA Annual Meeting, set for Saturday, May 16 at Pagosa Springs High School.

## LIVE WIRES

### Board of Directors Meeting

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2015, 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop). All members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

### Scholarship deadline

Deadline for the variety of college scholarships available through LPEA is Monday, Mar. 2, 2015. Visit [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop) for information and to download applications, or call 970.382.3505.

### Colorado Energy Master

CSU Extension is offering up to 30 hours of energy education covering the current energy system, energy policy, renewable energy, transportation alternatives, climate change and more in its Colorado Energy Master Program. Registration is open through Feb. 10, 2015. Coursework runs Feb. 17-Mar. 28. Visit [www.ext.colostate.edu/energymaster](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/energymaster) for information and registration.

### Offices closed

In observance of President's Day, LPEA offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed Monday, Feb. 16.



# From the CEO LPEA/Tri-State and the PUC

BY MIKE DREYSPRING | CEO | MDREYSPRING@LPEA.COOP

## **LPEA's settlement with Tri-State and what it means for our members: It's settled!?**

Well, almost. LPEA and Tri-State Generation and Transmission have reached a preliminary settlement on the rate dispute in process for the past couple of years. For now, the hearing for the discriminatory rate complaint filed with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) against our power supplier (Tri-State) by LPEA, Empire Electric Association, and White River Electric Association has been suspended.

The co-ops' complaint asserted that the new wholesale power rate implemented by Tri-State in 2013 was discriminatory and preferential and resulted in unfair increased charges to high load factor members, as well as those practicing demand side

management. Taking this formal step was a last resort LPEA sought to try to help protect our members.

Based on the preliminary settlement agreement, Tri-State will develop new rates. LPEA is a party to this process and in the end we expect the rates to be acceptable and fair. Additionally, the settlement allows for a temporary 2015 rate that LPEA also believes is fair.

So, what does all this formal language mean for you, our members?

It's important to point out that though all LPEA members were impacted by Tri-State's discriminatory rate, two segments were highly impacted: LPEA's Time-of-Use (TOU) participants and our industrial members. After introduction of the discriminatory rate, LPEA lost approximately 60 percent of our TOU members, going from nearly 5,000 members to around 2,000 participating in this very beneficial program. Very simply, these members decided it no longer made sense to remain on the TOU rate.

The disputed aspect of the rate change in 2013 resulted in LPEA being charged essentially an "energy only" rate - a rate that charges only for what electricity is used, regardless of how it is used. The wholesale rate we were previously charged enabled LPEA to develop the TOU program. TOU

participants essentially paid less for electricity used during an off-peak period, which allowed them to save on their energy bill. The 2015 temporary rate is a demand and energy rate, but we won't know until 2016 whether or not the permanent rate will allow for a successful TOU program. LPEA feels it is best to wait and see what the permanent rate is before making changes to our residential rates.

Overall, the temporary rate settlement with Tri-State will reduce LPEA's wholesale costs around 1.5 percent, which is of benefit to the cooperative as a whole, but it is directly tied to how our large, industrial members use energy. The industrial customers will notice a change in their electric bills this year. For the time being, however, there are no rate changes for the rest of our members, including TOU, until a final settlement is reached with Tri-State.

In the meantime, LPEA is not sitting idly by. The road ahead remains long, and to prepare for the Tri-State 2016 permanent rate (whatever it might be), LPEA is commissioning a new cost-of-service study to determine what it actually costs us to get electricity to you, factoring in the cost of purchasing the power from Tri-State. Our goal always is to design rates that are fair, flexible and affordable to all our members.

### **Mailing Address:**

PO Box 2750 Durango, CO 81302-2750

### **Street Address:**

45 Stewart St. Durango, CO 81303  
603 S. 8th St. Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

970.247.5786 | [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop)

### **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]  
Heather Erb, Vice President - [District 4]  
Mark Garcia, Treasurer - [District 1]  
Jeff Berman, Secretary - [District 3]  
Britt Bassett [District 3]  
Tom Compton [District 2]  
Bob Formwalt [District 1]  
Bob Lynch [District 1]  
Jerry McCaw [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](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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

