



In a continual effort to improve service to co-op members, LPEA's Dispatch Center has a whole, new "look," but more importantly now incorporates enhanced technological capabilities.

"Part of our mission is reliable service, and our goal is to always improve," says Line Superintendent Darrick Robinson, who oversaw the renovations. "Our new Dispatch Center will enable us to respond more quickly to any issues on our system."

LPEA's Dispatch Center is staffed 24/7 with trained professionals well-versed in the electrical system that stretches across 3,370 square miles and includes more than 3,600 miles of distribution and transmission line and 31 substations. Outages can occur at any point on the system, and whether the outage is caused by lightning, downed tree, animal intrusion, snow or equipment failure, the goal of LPEA's Operations team is, in very simple terms, find the outage, solve the problem and get power restored as quickly as is safely possible.

LPEA has long been a forward-looking cooperative and years back implemented a computerized Outage Management System (OMS) that helped predict location and number of meters out of power. The OMS is now augmented by LPEA's Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), which can pinpoint the location of an outage often down to the meter(s) involved.

The new Dispatch Center features a high tech, electronic "Live Wall" that takes the OMS and AMI to a next level in visually identifying outage location on

literally a giant wall.

As storm cells are a predominant cause of outages, the Live Wall is also capable of tracking current weather conditions, including lightning. Lightning strikes to or around the electrical equipment can cause significant damage, or sometimes causes just a surge of power that signals to the computerized system to open up the circuits even though no actual damage has occurred.

"With a lightning map overlapped on our system map, we can actually see where the strikes occurred, and can forecast if they might have caused the outage," says Operations Manager Justin Talbot. "If we see that a storm cell with lightning has rolled through, we can test the circuits immediately, and, if all tests well, promptly re-energize the lines. If we note that there was no lightning in the area, we know to look deeper into the outage and maybe get a crew rolling to the location, because something else has happened."

Remodel of the Dispatch Center also enabled LPEA to provide a better, more productive working environment for the five-person Dispatch Team.

"The old Dispatch Center had been built and added to over decades, making it inefficient and crowded," says Robinson, noting that the floor had included some safety hazards and equipment had encroached on the windows, making the room dark. "By taking the room down to the studs we were able to rebuild it to more effectively handle our needs for today, as well as prepare for tomorrow, to better serve our members."

Wholesale power rates to increase in 2017

LPEA's primary power provider, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, has notified the cooperative that wholesale power rates will increase in 2017, but it is not yet known whether this will trigger a rate increase for LPEA's member-customers.

"The good news is, since Tri-State is a cooperative just like LPEA, we along with a lot of the other distribution cooperatives were able to work together to share our individual stories about what a rate increase means to us and you," says Ron Meier, manager of engineering and member services, noting that during Tri-State's budget and rate setting process, started earlier this year, rate increases were projected to be higher than the final 4.33 percent increase. "Rate structure is very complex for both Tri-State and its member cooperatives, but Tri-State found a way to lower their need for a larger rate increase for 2017."

LPEA is in the midst of its annual budgeting process, the results of which will determine whether or not the cooperative can absorb Tri-State's rate increase, or need to pass some or all of it on to consumers. In anticipation of Tri-State's decision, LPEA staff and board have spent the better part of 2016 extensively exploring various rate design concepts to determine the best solutions and ensure reliable service to members, but keep bills as low as possible.

As a result of the work, the LPEA Board of Directors adopted a strategic rate policy, plotting a course for the future. The document contains 10 elements that can be reviewed by members at www.lpea.coop - Board Resolution 2016-16.

"Ultimately LPEA is looking to Time-of-Use (TOU) rate structures for our entire residential membership," says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy policy. "We have enhanced our TOU program and most members save 5 percent before even trying. Members who make a concerted effort can save up to 40 percent."

By researching actual member electricity usage information, LPEA staff can calculate what members would have paid had they been on the TOU rate for the past year. Curious members are encouraged to give the co-op a call [970.247.5786] to learn more.

"We still have a lot of work to do with our members to explain why TOU is our future, so stay tuned," says Harms, adding LPEA has set a goal that the TOU rate could be the default rate for all members by 2020.

"As noted, we don't know at this point whether rates will change in 2017. If our members are interested in the process, we encourage them to keep an eye on our Board Meeting agenda," says Meier. "Adoption of next year's rates is expected to happen during November's Board Meeting."

LPEA's November Board agenda will be posted at www.lpea.coop on Friday, Nov. 4, 2016.

Hunters: Sight-in Days scheduled

In an effort to both assist hunters and protect valuable electrical equipment, LPEA will resume its underwriting support of "Sight-in Days" at the Durango Gun Club Outdoor Range in advance of the three big game seasons, Thursdays and Fridays, Oct. 13-14, 20-21, and Nov. 3-4, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

During Sight-in Days, the Durango Gun Club on La Posta Road is open to the general public/hunters for rifle scope sighting, and hunters are encouraged to take advantage of the controlled environment to prepare their firearms for the season. LPEA has contributed funds to cover costs incurred by the club for the Sight-in Days. In past years, some 500-600 hunters have taken advantage of the complimentary service.

Durango Gun Club staff, plus volunteer club members, will be on hand during Sight-in Days to answer questions, provide assistance and do minor firearms repair. Donations to the club are welcomed, but no payment is required.

For further information, contact Joseph Perino, Durango Gun Club secretary/treasurer, 970.749.3453.

Ireland joins the co-op



Jacque Ireland has joined the LPEA Finance & Accounting team as a Billing Clerk.

Working in coordination with LPEA's finance personnel and customer service representatives, Ireland assists members with billing concerns as well as troubleshooting meter reading and billing issues.

Originally from Santa Fe, Ireland discovered Durango as a student at Fort Lewis College, where she earned her bachelor's in finance. She has since served in banking and home financing for 15 years, the last eight with Nia Consulting in Durango as a forensic mortgage analyst, auditing mortgages.

"I'm very excited to enter a new industry and be working for the members of La Plata Electric Association and serving the community," says Ireland, who resides with her husband in Durango.

LPEA offers a variety of apprenticeships and employment opportunities. To explore employment, or for additional information, visit www.lpea.coop.

Two new on Operations team

The LPEA Operations team welcomes Matt Gallaway and Dalton Hotter. Gallaway serves on the line crews as a Journeyman Lineman, with Hotter taking on the position of Storekeeper.

Gallaway entered the electric utility business immediately out of high school in his hometown of Stilwell, Okla., joining Ozarks Electric Cooperative in the Apprentice Lineman program. He “topped out” earning his Journeyman in 2000 and served Ozarks for 13 years.

He worked as a Lineman for Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative in Arizona for four years, before moving to Oregon with his bride and stepping into the investor-owned utility world with Pacific Power. There, in both Oregon and Wyoming, he garnered experience in Substation Maintenance and as a District Lineman.

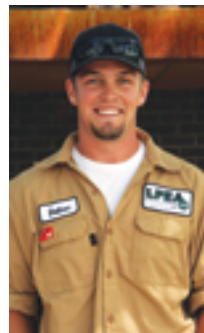
“I wanted to get back to a rural electric co-op because it is more family-oriented,” says Gallaway, pleased when the LPEA lineman position became available. He and his wife (and their horses and dogs) have settled in Ignacio.

Hailing from a multi-generational Durango family, Dalton Hotter was born and raised in Durango. Launching his career initially in construction, he sought to tackle a new discipline. As Storekeeper for LPEA, Hotter works with the warehouse and purchasing, as well as the line crews, to ensure needed equipment and tools are stocked and available.

“I would like to become a lineman down the road,” says Hotter, who resides in Durango with his new bride. “That’s what I like about this position – starting on the ground level. It gives me the opportunity to learn about all the different components that go into the making and maintenance of an electrical system.”



Gallaway



Hotter

LPEA youth shine at State Fair

More than a half million dollars was raised for Colorado’s agricultural youth at the 2016 Colorado State Fair, thanks to Colorado’s Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, of which LPEA is a part.

The state’s electric cooperatives came together to sponsor the fair’s 53rd Junior Livestock Sale. According to preliminary totals, the 2016 sale accumulated approximately \$524,700 from generous buyers.

From LPEA’s service territory, Keely Harper of Bayfield was honored with 1st Place Market Beef, which sold for \$4,250.

Brock Fassett of Durango is pictured here with his 3rd Place Non-Blackface Market Lamb, which sold for \$2,000. Brock is the cousin of LPEA employee Brandi Fassett.

“Over the past 37 years, the Colorado State Fair Junior Livestock Sale has raised \$9,794,289 for the youth involved in Colorado’s 4-H and FFA programs. This sale is a reflection of their dedication to the animals and the agricultural community,” says State Fair General Manager Sarah Cummings. “I’d also like to thank the generous philanthropists who come out to support these amazing kids. The sale would not be possible without them.”



LIVE WIRES

Board meeting Oct. 19, 9 a.m.

The next LPEA Board meeting is Wednesday, Oct. 19, 9 a.m., at LPEA headquarters in Durango. A Committee of the Whole meeting will also be held Oct. 17 in Pagosa Springs. 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 Board meeting.

Lunch & Lights Workshop

Learn the latest in energy efficient lighting at the next Lunch & Lights Workshop, set for Tuesday, Oct. 25, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at LPEA’s Durango Headquarters. RSVP to Ray Pierotti, 970.382.7770.

Time for “Fall Back”

Daylight Saving Time ends Sunday, Nov. 6. Enjoy an extra hour of sleep! Be sure to set your clocks back, and Time-of-Use customers, make sure your ETS and water heater timers are reflecting the accurate time. Questions? Call 970.382.3506.

Round Up Grants

The following organizations received grants from the Round Up Foundation in August: Celebrating Healthy Communities [\$1,070] and Durango Railroad Historical Society [\$2,000].



From the CEO More than ever, the American “Co-operation”

BY MIKE DREYSPRING | CEO | MDREYSPRING@LPEA.COOP

This is just one example of how co-ops have been around for quite a long time – and are still around, thriving and serving Americans. Today, more than ever, we benefit from cooperative business organizations. You’re probably more impacted by cooperatives than you realize.

The National Cooperative Business Association is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Its membership is made up of food growers and grocery stores, housing corporations, blood donation and processing, and banks, just to name a few.²

So, I can hear your thoughts. (Not really, but go with me on this one.) Why should we care?

Cooperatives exist to provide products or services to people. We’re not big, cold, concrete jungles. More than that, co-ops exist to impact and improve the quality of life – not exist to make a profit for a group of stockholders. Cooperatives are grassroots organizations. They are formed by people, to serve people, and are governed by those they serve. Cooperatives give people they serve “choice.”

I love working for a cooperative. It has taught me the importance of doing my part, whatever I can, to serve and help others. For cooperative employees – your LPEA employees – that’s a way of life. I

am so fortunate to work with some amazing people at LPEA who are passionate about serving you. I am inspired by their dedication and commitment almost every day.

But that’s not all you get from your cooperative. You have a say in the governance of the organization. As a member, you own it, and thus receive the margins generated by the co-op’s revenue over expenses, [we call those Capital Credit retirements].

All of the employees of LPEA, including me, are your neighbors. We’re member-owners, too. And that’s another awesome feature of cooperatives, we’re local.

Ben Franklin was credited, by some, with discoveries about electricity. Isaacson points out in his biography of Franklin that Franklin’s biggest contributions to science were his musings about electricity. Quantum mechanics took it from there. Franklin, as it turned out, was driven to learn. Yes, that’s another cooperative characteristic. We’re looking to the future for you.

Don’t feel you’re getting enough from your cooperative? If you feel as if it could be better, get involved. “Cooperate” with us. Improvement on behalf of our members is always a priority at LPEA.

¹ heroes.coop/archive/Benjamin-franklin

² Ncba.coop/our-members/members

October is National Cooperative Month – and LPEA is your rural electric cooperative. It’s truly special to me that there’s a month dedicated to celebrating cooperatives. Call me sentimental, but I think it’s pretty cool.

Unfortunately, I also find that many people don’t understand cooperatives, and the history or benefits of being “a member.”

I am currently reading Walter Isaacson’s biography of Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was an organizer, and, according to Isaacson, incessantly looked to create organizations that benefited multitudes of people.

In 1751, Franklin and his Union Fire Company met with other Philadelphia fire-fighting companies to discuss the formation of a fire insurance company. The Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss By Fire was ultimately created and, more than any other reason, landed Franklin in the Cooperative Hall of Fame.¹

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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.

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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.

