

LIVEWIRE

Sheridan Electric Cooperative - Medicine Lake, Mont.
406-789-2231

The status of your cooperative

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

Every so often, I am asked about the status of the cooperative in regard to debt. With the construction of the new transmission line on the eastern part of the service territory, new plant and upgraded rolling stock, Sheridan Electric Cooperative does experience debt. This debt is repaid primarily through rates passed on to the membership, although the new transmission line is paid for through a transmission lease program and the oil industry through a KVA charge.

Short- and long-term loans, through various lenders, keep your cooperative in good working order. Construction work plans are funded through these means, giving us the resource to upgrade old plant into more reliable system components.

I also have the question posed to me about a rate increase that hit the membership in early January. Please keep in mind that this rate increase is primarily due to a rate increase from our power supplier. In the past, we have been able to absorb any increases passed on to us, but we cannot in this case.

The base rate charge has also been affected this year. The base rate is designed to cover fixed costs and hasn't been adjusted regularly.

So to minimize the impact of even higher power rates, the board of directors elected to bump the base rate for the meter, poles and wires to your home.

In regard to debt, and the rate increase, the two really have nothing in common at all. Our debt is really the same as it has been in the past. True, we have increased debt for the transmission line buildout, but as described prior, this is paid for by other means.

We also have lines of credit in place to protect us from unexpected events like storms. I was asked about this the other day. The question was, "When we have a storm, why does it cost us so much to put the system back up if we have poles and wire in the yard, and if you don't have enough material, why not have it on hand"?

Well, that was easy to answer. We have enough money in our line of credit (\$5,000,000) to take on the worst of storms. Sometimes we need to have poles and wire delivered quickly, which means that we need to have this money available to get things here quickly. Our inventory does not support unexpected

events like a bad storm, and in fact, our inventory is considerably lower than normal to reduce costs to the membership (it costs money to sit on inventory).

Some debt and credit lines are the best courses of action to operate your cooperative. Some debt is good as long as you have a solid plan to pay it back. Lines of credit are a necessity for the unexpected, such as storms and natural catastrophes. Your board of directors, staff and employees analyze each level of the operation to maximize the dollars spent for a reliable system for you, the membership.

Rate increases are not a pleasant thing to accept, but when faced with outside influences such as from the power supplier, we make the adjustments when necessary. ■



It pays to be a part of Sheridan Electric Cooperative's family

BY SCOTT WESTLUND



Throughout the history of cooperatives across the nation, customer service and commitment to community have been at the core of the beliefs that drive them daily.

Not only do cooperatives continue these basic functions, your cooperative does some special things to help our membership meet the demands of their daily lives.

Scholarships are an important part of the donations toward our legacies. Sheridan Electric donates up to six, \$1,000 scholarships every

year, and facilitates the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) and Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarships. All of the listed parties believe in our legacy and futures by continuing to donate toward these noble causes.

The "Building Our Legacy" program is a program addressing the need for lineworkers and electricians within the United States and our area. Sheridan Electric solicits the interest of individuals who may want to stay in the area to become lineworkers and electricians. Although there are no boundaries to where they work after college, we offer this full scholarship to do our part in building people in this specialized field. So far, we have graduated two individuals, one for each field, and are now in the process of looking for more candidates.

Assistance and identification of energy consumption is another part of the business that we provide, as well as a staff of electricians who can help you with your

wiring needs.

Direct, concise communication is a motto we live by because not addressing a problem is worse than the problem. We also believe that all issues have a solution no matter how big or how small, and with the right staff, employees can solve anything they put their minds to.

We strive to make a difference every day we are at the office or in the field. This is your cooperative, with your name on every truck, computer or building. Your name in conjunction with resources from all over the state makes this particular cooperative unique in communication, process improvement and problem solving. The employees and staffing are the best I have ever worked with in this type of setting striving for member involvement and satisfaction.

We firmly believe that it is the member service that separates us from other utilities.

It is an honor to be of service to you. ■

CoBank Sharing Success Program

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

Every year, our primary lender, CoBank, conducts a program called "CoBank's Sharing Success Program." The ground rules are simple: Donate toward a nonprofit 501(c)3 institution and CoBank will match those funds donated up to \$5,000.

Four years ago, I approached CoBank with a request to include schools into that mix since Sheridan Electric's donations were so heavy in that area.

CoBank accepted, and voiced the

understanding that all rural schools face financial challenges and would like to help.

Since we encompass 11 schools within the service territory, it was easy to target a project for this program.

This year, we went to work on a matching donation from CoBank for \$4,000 to match the work that Sheridan Electric had done for the school in Froid, Mont.

This work encompassed the work donated on the school sign, work

donated on school housing, and work done on the school interior electrical system.

In November, we received a check from CoBank for the Froid school in the amount of \$4,000.

We want to thank the generosity of CoBank for assisting in the shared concern for schools in a rural setting. It makes a difference.

Thanks to CoBank and your board of directors. ■



Take the brrrr out of starting a cold vehicle

Will your vehicle start Monday morning when it's 30 degrees below zero? When your vehicle doesn't start due to frigid temperatures, it can be frustrating. That's why most North Dakotans use an engine block heater on their vehicles. Engine block heaters keep your vehicle's motor warm, allowing an easy start on those cold mornings. But there are some considerations when using an engine block heater. Sheridan Electric Cooperative offers these tips:

- Don't overload a circuit by plugging your engine block heater into just any outlet. A simple formula will help you decide how many watts one circuit can handle. Divide the wattage of the engine block heater by 120 volts to find out how many amps will be used. If you plug a 640-watt engine block heater into a 120-volt outlet, you are using 5.33 amps. Circuit breakers are rated in amps, so make sure the circuit has enough amps to carry the additional load. It might be best to use an exterior outlet that is protected by one circuit breaker and has ample capacity.
- If the engine block heater has a three-prong plug, don't alter it. Always leave the plug intact and attach extension cords correctly.
- If you use an extension cord outdoors, make sure it is a heavy-duty extension cord rated for outdoor use.
- Warming your engine all night and sometimes all day can use a significant amount of electricity. For better energy efficiency, purchase a timer for your block heater. A timer allows you to automatically turn the engine heater to on-and-off intervals according to your specifications. ■

TOLL-FREE NUMBER

**1-888-472-1533 OR LOG ONTO
WWW.SHERIDANELECTRIC.COOP**

- Check your utility account balance(s)
- Make a payment on your utility account(s)
- Enter your meter reading(s)
- Update your phone number(s) or
- Update your pin number used for check payments.

The system is automated and all of your personal information will be entered by YOU. Just follow the prompts and at anytime, you may hang up.

This system is available 24/7 to you at no additional cost!

Sheridan Electric Cooperative must move to the automated system to be compliant with the Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standard. These worldwide requirements are designed to help companies that process payments prevent

credit card fraud through increased data controls. Moving to this system ensures our continued ability to accept debit and credit card payments.

Lighting to be given away

In the spirit of efficiency, Sheridan Electric Cooperative is giving away compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) each month. Each month's winner will receive 24 new CFL bulbs. A CFL produces the same amount of light for less than half the cost. The bulbs also produce about 75 percent less heat, so they are safer to operate. They can also last up to 10 times longer than the standard incandescent bulb. You could save \$80 a year by switching to CFLs throughout your home!

So this month, take a moment to complete and mail the coupon. Maybe you'll be this month's lucky winner and save on your energy costs. Good luck! ■

Name: _____

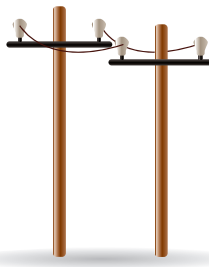
Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Account number: _____

*Congratulations to 3B-Farms' **May Budke** for winning this month's light giveaway.*

Sheridan Electric Cooperative statistical report



	October 2014	October 2015
Total miles of line	2,756	2,849
Consumers billed	3,897	3,052
Kilowatt-hours purchased	10,521,005	9,479,086
Kilowatt-hours sold	9,576,427	9,199,403
Average KWH per residential consumer	959	854
Average bill per residential consumer	\$90.48	\$83.29
Cost of purchased power	\$547,725	\$430,133
Margins year to date	\$1,795,042	\$3,319,539

LINE DEPARTMENT STATS

	October 2014	October 2015
Weather	0	10
Age or deterioration	1	0
Animals and public	2	3
Power supplier	0	0
Equipment	9	7

SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

	October 2014	October 2015	Year to date
Pole installations	2	17	121
New construction	3,390 ft.	6,803 ft.	106,542 ft.
Miles driven	26,950	24,642	240,934
New accounts	8	10	72
Accounts retired	0	0	0

SHERIDAN ELECTRIC CO-OP

Medicine Lake, Mont. 59247
406-789-2231

TRUSTEES

Wayne Deubner, President..... Brockton, Mont.
Rod Smith V. President..... Dagmar, Mont.
Rob Rust, Sec. Alkabo, N.D.
Kerrey Heppner, Treas. Plentywood, Mont
Alan Danelson, Trustee Scobey, Mont.
Andrew Dethman, Trustee Brockton, Mont.
Rick A. Hansen Trustee Froid, Mont.
Warren Overgaard Trustee Westby, Mont.
Harlan Skillingberg Plentywood, Mont.

EMPLOYEES

Rick Knick Manager
Riley Tommerup Office Mgr./Accountant
Scott Westlund Marketing/Member Service Manager
Pam Lund Billing Supervisor
Doris Wivholm Bookkeeper/Billing Specialist
Jamie Ator Accountant
Lisa Salvevold Office Assistant
Casey Brunsvold Cashier/Receptionist
Torie Waller Work Order Clerk
Max Beach Line Superintendent
Kory Opp Staking Engineer
Don Haven Utilityman
Tim Ereth Operator/Utilityman
Josh Johnson Electrical General Foreman
Tom Hinds Electrical Foreman
Jeff Carbonneau Journeyman Electrician
Travis Benton Apprentice Electrician
Tristen Ereth Apprentice Electrician
Will Mozingo Line Foreman
Joseph Prieto Journeyman Lineman
Ronnie Gillett Journeyman Lineman
Dan Roeder Journeyman Lineman
Shawn Sansaver Journeyman Lineman
Josh Marottek Apprentice Lineman
Bill Baillie Apprentice Lineman
Josh Ming Apprentice Lineman
Jim Bakken Material Specialist
Vicky Haddix Custodian

OUTAGES • CALL 24 HOURS A DAY
406-789-2231

OFFICE HOURS: 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative