

Sheridan Electric Cooperative

LiveWire

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

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20 years of electricians

BY RICK KNICK

2019 marks the 20th year of Sheridan Electric Cooperative having one or more electricians on staff. I was the member services director then and a master electrician myself when we hired our first full-time electrician, John Nickisch, with the primary responsibility of wiring for the membership.

With board members getting requests from members asking for help with farm wiring, the board decided to act. A number of issues were covered during the discussion to hire electricians, but two main issues kept popping up.

The first was member safety. Co-op members needing wiring completed on the farm were struggling to find electricians. They were forced to attempt to do the work themselves or recruit the help of a neighbor who had a little less fear of the hot wire.

Sheridan Electric's field staff has many hours of safety training regarding the uses of electricity. When they drive into a farm yard, it is second nature to identify any hazards. Many are long-term employees who have been in the yard before, so they recognize when something has changed. In most cases, they see wiring jobs that are done correctly, but safety hazards exist in some cases.

The second topic was the general lack of electricians in

rural Montana. We aren't the only co-op experiencing this problem and it seems to be concentrated in the eastern half of Montana.

The board's solution was to develop a program that focused on training electricians in hopes some would become business owners themselves. We have had a good number of employees enrolled in the apprenticeship program and eventually obtain their journeyman or master electrician license. Some are now business owners in other co-op service areas, so the idea is working.

The primary responsibility of the electricians is to do wiring jobs for the membership. The problem arises when there are no jobs needing attention. In this case, we use the electricians in the operations department helping the lineworkers or the engineers. They are also on call with the lineworkers and become lineworkers during any storm outages.

Traditionally, the electrician business is seasonal. By late winter, our electricians do meter testing, pole testing and line retirements when time allows. We've had as many as five electricians on staff and currently have three, with one apprentice. If you need help with a wiring project, please give us a call.

We are here to serve. ■

Sheridan Electric continues to assist when needed

In a recent request from the Westby School District, we were asked if we could help in the removal of an old boiler from the basement of the gym. This project contained asbestos that is a contaminant that would have to be contained. Westby quoted the project at \$15,000 and funding came up short on this important safety project for the school.

Approaching the Sheridan Electric Cooperative board, it was quickly approved to assist the school with a \$2,000 donation. The following day, I contacted Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which quickly approved matching funds, bringing the total to \$4,000.

Again, we strive to assist when needed in our service area region. ■

Net metering explained

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

I have spent time in several conversations about members generating their own power to supply their homes. Let's face it, it is all over the news. Solar panels and wind turbines are the most popular forms we see now.

From the saturation of this topic, I believe that most of the discussions were stimulated by a vendor either visiting or sending reading material for people to install these systems within their homes.

In one instance, one of our members was told that a \$20,000 system could be paid for in 10 years by what Sheridan Electric Cooperative would pay for the excess power.

While we support these types of power generators for the membership, we are also proposing that you use caution to buy a system without doing your homework. If considering a system, give us a call and we can help you with the numbers.

The myth

The myth behind member-owned generating systems is that the cooperative will pay the rate that we charge for power usage. This is not the case.

We pay a residential generator of electricity "avoided costs," which also matches what we pay for power from our wholesale generator.

Our rates, to the member, are a combination of wholesale power costs, poles, wires, equipment and administration. These items are not part of any power buybacks from the cooperative.

So, don't be fooled when someone is trying to sell you a system and quotes a buyback price that is not real.

Sheridan Electric gets its power from two sources, Hydro from WAPA and Basin Electric. Our wholesale power costs/month depends on this mix. It usually runs about .05 kwh. The rates that we charge for power consumption is 9 cents a KWH. Again, this rate includes all the items listed above. So, we would buy back excess power for the range stated above or some other negotiated price.

Now, member-owned generating facilities have the continued use of poles and wires either to subsidize the lack of all power needs or to use to sell back to the cooperative. In this instance, it is the rest of the membership who are being penalized for this system to be

in service, because they are paying for the poles, wires and the rest of the costs listed.

The maximum generating capacity we will allow is 10 kilowatts. With any larger system, we will have to get further permission from our power supplier to buy back this power from you. Currently, we are under an "all power contract" through Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, which, in turn, is supplied by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

On the cooperative side, besides the rates for the buyback of power, there are safety concerns that always must be addressed. The most important one is the ability to shut down a system if a lineworker is working on something that is connected. Transfer switches, hard breakers or physical disconnections need to be available for our people to work safely. In all cases, the cooperative will need to inspect the generation unit to ensure that all these safety features are in place.

Recently, I have been involved in discussions about systems larger than the 10-kilowatt generators within our service territory. In discussions with other co-ops, we have learned that they are facing systems up to 25 kilowatts.

Sheridan Electric Cooperative supports the wishes of the membership, including trying new ideas to generate power, but there are rules to follow. But beware of the salesman showing a quick payback of a system without getting all the facts first. ■

Newest member of Sheridan Electric family

It is our pleasure to introduce Locklyn Roness to the Sheridan Electric family. Pictured are Tasha Roness and her son, Everett. Locklyn was born on April 3.

Welcome, Locklyn.





Hunter Krogedal delivers strong performance

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

Hunter Krogedal was one of the speakers who attended the last Sheridan Electric Cooperative board meeting in late March. Hunter is a member of the Business Professionals of America (BPA) with the Froid School District.

Hunter talked about his recent accomplishments and his earned position at taking second place in interview skills out of 40 rivals. This accomplishment will send Hunter to the national competition in Houston, Texas.

His talk was direct, confident and informative as the board members saw firsthand what the donations last

year had produced. Hunter talked not only about his accomplishments, but those of other competitors who achieved high honors within the Culbertson and Bainville school districts. Jacob Martin, Mariah Cathey, Gabe Granada, Jacob Crowder, Eli Williams, Lucas Oelkers, Abigail Ator and Ashtyn Ator, of Culbertson, also won high honors and will be traveling to Texas. Kaden Hansen, Paytyn Wilson, Lextyn Portra, Bonny Krogedal, Allie Romo, and Violet Azure of the Bainville chapter of the BPA, also earned high honors and will be traveling to Houston.

Sheridan Electric has identified BPA and FFA as potential pools of young talent to groom for the future. These folks are the next board members, managers, IT specialists and superintendents. No matter what group they are affiliated with, Sheridan Electric is on a drive to find them and invest in their futures.

These young folks are our future, and the future of the cooperative.

Well done, Hunter. You represented yourself very well as you did for all of BPA in this region. ■

Scams continue

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

In early April, I was visiting a member who was excited about a contest he had won. The contest stated he had won \$55 million. As the correspondence continued, the perpetrator of the contest needed \$500 to get things moving along. They mailed it. Then came the request for another amount, then another, then another.

Some \$35,000 into the program, these fine folks are starting to wonder if it is a scam or not. I recommended

that it is a scam, and to send all the information to the state's attorney.

Sound familiar? It is happening all over the nation. Good people are being taken for money. This instance is within our service territory. It is common, and it is also against the law.

If it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is.

Please do not get sucked into these programs, no matter what they are. ■

Lighting to be given away



In the spirit of efficiency, Sheridan Electric Cooperative is giving away light-emitting diodes (LEDs) each month. Each month's winner will receive 12 new LED bulbs.

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 Hanks Wheat Ranch, Lynn Severson, for winning this month's light bulb giveaway.



Sheridan Electric Cooperative STATISTICAL REPORT

	April 2017	April 2018
Total miles of line	2,831	2,836
Consumers billed	3,082	3,087
Kilowatt-hours purchased	9,831,494	11,182,113
Kilowatt-hours sold	8,963,433	10,686,062
Average KWH per residential consumer	930	1,258
Average bill per residential consumer	\$95.83	\$113
Cost of purchased power	\$405,881	\$538,238
Margins year to date	\$1,781,386	\$1,509,805

LINE DEPARTMENT STATS

	April 2017	April 2018
Weather	4	4
Age or deterioration	3	3
Animals and public	4	0
Power supplier	0	0
Equipment	0	0

SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

	April 2017	April 2018	Year to date
Pole installations	2	5	11
New construction	21,962 ft.	15,559 ft.	23,755 ft.
Miles driven	18,773	18,368	73,473
New accounts	2	4	6
Accounts retired	0	2	2

SHERIDAN ELECTRIC CO-OP

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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.
Harlan Skillingberg, Trustee Plentywood, Mont.

EMPLOYEES

Rick Knick Manager
Riley Tommerup Office Mgr./Accountant
Scott Westlund Marketing/Member Service Manager
Jamie Ator Accountant
Lisa Salveold Office Assistant
Tasha Ronnes Customer Service Representative
Torie Waller Work Order Clerk
Kory Opp Line Superintendent
Bryan Lenz Line Foreman
Nick Oelkers Staking Tech
Tim Ereth Operator/Utilityman
Josh Johnson Electrical General Foreman
Tom Hinds Electrical Foreman
Steve Augustine Line Sub Foreman
Tristan Ereth Apprentice Electrician
Dan Roeder Journeyman Lineman
Shawn Sansaver Journeyman Lineman
Josh Marottek Journeyman 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 4:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 