

Sheridan Electric Cooperative

LiveWire

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

WHAT'S INSIDE?

- The power of Facebook
- Farver Farms in Scobey
- Statistical report

Construction work needs identified

BY RICK KNICK

**Rick Knick**

During the budget process in the fall of every year, the staff and board complete some research and decide how much money to set aside for plant improvements for the coming year. We use the power outage history and a document called the construction work plan to guide us in deciding which areas need the most attention.

The power outage history was a key factor in deciding to replace underground cable in six areas this summer. These accounts included one salt water disposal site, one oil well and four irrigation pivots. When we have a fault on an underground cable, it's typically at the worst time of the year. If it is an irrigation pivot, it happens in late July when the crop is nearing harvest. If it is an oil well, it happens in the winter when the digging is the most difficult.

The first generation of underground cable is identified by the bare concentric neutral wire wrapped around the cable. The new cable is completely encased with a thick plastic shield. We installed a lot of the first-generation cable in the late 1970s and 1980s. We soon found out that it lasted about 20 years in this soil before it degraded enough to cause power outages. Most of this first-generation cable has now been replaced and the new cable seems to be a better product.

We label circuits out of the substation with unit numbers and then the branches

are labeled with letters. We have identified four areas to rebuild with overhead construction, including Unit 44, 44F tap, 1A tap and 9G tap.

Unit 44, which heads east out of the Culbertson substation and runs along the highway between Culbertson and Bainville, is being rebuilt with heavier wire to accommodate the extra oil loads that have accumulated over the years. The 44F tap is also included in this construction plan and runs south of the highway. The need for this rebuild is three-tiered. First, it is old. Second, it is overloaded. Third, it is an important tie line between the Red Bank substation near Bainville and the Culbertson substation. We need these tie lines because they allow us to feed loads from another substation in the case of a substation failure or a storm that takes out an area between the closest substation and the load.

Unit 1A is the area between Plentywood and Outlook. This is an old line that has also seen growth over the years, so it also needs a larger conductor. It serves the area along the highway where several businesses and homes have been built.

The last area to rebuild is the 9G tap. This area is west of McCabe or northwest of Culbertson. This line is old and portions of it are the old solid copper wire. The copper wire gets brittle with age, causing it to break in the wind and making it difficult to splice. ■



The power of Facebook

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

The connections we have in place with our membership were put to the test in July, as several storms ravaged the service territory and threatened the system. Throughout the storms, the employees acted as a “well-oiled machine.” The most inspiring part were the Facebook comments that flooded our computers from the membership.

The storm was severe, and the employee focus was even more intense. But what was even more inspirational was the support from the membership, from words of encouragement to the food that was delivered.

We didn't receive just a few comments, but we received a few hundred comments from people all over the system and beyond. Some comments were from neighboring

co-ops who wanted to lend a hand.

The power of this tool is unmeasurable, and yet was untried until just four years ago. When I started, I was under the illusion that most of the membership found no use for this social media tool. But when a new board member was elected, he brought the idea. It was this new board member who had us take another look at this tool. Thus, the platform was created, administrators put into place, and the rest is history.

When you have an outage or other electrical problem, please call the office. Let us log it into our system and dispatch our people when it is safe to do so, but don't blame them when the power is not on right away.

At a Co-op Day in Plentywood, one of our longtime members praised the use of Facebook

when dealing with power outages and storms. She praised the hard-working employees of the cooperative, and then clearly stated, “No one should ever chastise MY linemen when they go home to sleep. These are my employees and to stay safe, they need sleep. These are great folks who do a hard job, and I appreciate everything they do for us.”

Storms are serious here. They create dangers for the membership, and the employees of the cooperative. Yet, there are some who do not understand these perils and only focus on the fact that they do not have power.

I dealt with five instances when the employees in the office took abuse from these folks, from name calling to outright screaming. The staff took the information, explaining that crews cannot go out in this storm, or they have to go home and get some sleep before starting the process all over again.

This is where I come in. It is my job to address all of these issues. It is my job to find out what the issue really is and address it. In one instance, a member actually thought we treated one portion of the system differently than another portion. This is not the case at all. All members are treated the same and at all times. It all hinges on the severity and number of people without power in a localized section. These two factors are the basis for dispatching crews.

I would like to state that the percentage of people I address total less than 0.5 percent of the total membership, which is a small number compared to the total and in contrast to the comments from the majority for the job the line crews do during these tough times. ■

Farver Farms creates new business in Scobey

BY SCOTT WESTLUND



In early June, I contacted Shauna Farver to talk to her about the business she and her husband created in Scobey. During the past few years, I have asked Shauna to put together products for the annual meeting. Each time, she has produced soup mixes with ingredients that they raise on their land.

Renovating a former restaurant,

she has invested in machinery to help dispense the material she needs to put together these amazing products, which are now reaching into other parts of the state and Canada. Shauna talked about her excitement to get into other demographics by showing what she has created.

The need to package differently for grocery outlets was one of the hurdles she is about to solve as well as shipping to different locations. All of the topics we talked about are hurdles that any small business has to overcome to be successful.

Sheridan Electric's interests in these types of business startups are focused on a healthy local economy. We are proud of a member who has built a business from the ground up, and we are there to help if needed.

I talked with Shauna about assisting in advertising and shipping, but also what can we do to enhance her business to employ even more people.

One of the cooperative principles is concern and commitment to



community. This is exactly what this means and what we are here to do. We want to be there when needed, maybe find parts, maybe assist in the small things that help them be more successful.

We are proud of Shauna and her family to make this jump into what really makes America great, which is small business. ■

Please make the time for your annual meeting

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

The annual meeting will be held Oct. 13. The significance of this meeting every year is an opportunity to see your board of directors in action. Unfortunately, we have lost two board members in the past two years due to illnesses.

We introduced one new director at the last annual meeting, and another this year. It is important for you, the member, to know these folks as they assume the roles of their predecessors, understand their business acumen, and feel

comfortable knowing that your cooperative is in good hands.

These are important folks, they have an important job, they are your directors for Sheridan Electric Cooperative.

See you there! ■

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 Beverly Pederson for winning this month's light bulb giveaway.



Sheridan Electric Cooperative STATISTICAL REPORT

	July 2017	July 2018
Total miles of line	2,831	2,836
Consumers billed	3,091	3,089
Kilowatt-hours purchased	11,389,716	9,504,962
Kilowatt-hours sold	10,659,486	8,984,465
Average KWH per residential consumer	1,406	1,040
Average bill per residential consumer	\$150.89	\$125
Cost of purchased power	\$617,617	\$502,953
Margins year to date	\$2,876,170	\$2,256,887

LINE DEPARTMENT STATS

	July 2017	July 2018
Weather	25	55
Age or deterioration	5	4
Animals and public	7	4
Power supplier	1	4
Equipment	1	0

SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

	July 2017	July 2018	Year to date
Pole installations	15	6	26
New construction	5,626 ft.	150 ft.	42,685 ft.
Miles driven	23,451	28,919	151,055
New accounts	4	2	21
Accounts retired	8	0	3

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.
 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