MEC
McLean Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Evolving energy demands shape cooperative

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Sometimes, going to Plan B can work out as well, if not better, than Plan A.

When McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) incorporated in 1945, Plan A was to first bring electricity to farms around Turtle Lake and west of Garrison.

But the fledgling cooperative found itself onto Plan B, as it sought to energize and electrify rural McLean County.

Work was well underway. Its newly elected member-owner board of directors secured funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Electrification Administration (REA), hired a design engineering firm proficient in the electric construction industry, found temporary office space and even hired early staff to augment construction contractors building initial mile upon mile of power lines.

But Plan A changed. Congress authorized the Pick-Sloan Flood Control Act of 1944, with the first dirt turned for Garrison Dam construction in 1947. The legislation was the nation's major effort to tame the mighty Missouri River to protect much of its heartland from flooding, among other authorized project objectives.

Construction meant people needed places to live and, much like California and Alaska's Gold Rush eras, little short-lived towns sprouted up like a farmer's field after rain.

In 1947, MEC's first energized power lines brought electricity to the dam's construction boom towns of Dakota City and Big Bend. Lights, however, weren't turned on yet at a third boom town, Silver City, "because their places have not been inspected," a March 31, 1947, report to the board of directors explained.

Those farm and ranch families who literally bought into the concept of an electric cooperative having the ability to modernize their lives weren't neglected, though. Over the course of the next few years, MEC delivered on that promise to provide electricity's benefits to the county's rural folks.

But by serving boom towns, the young cooperative had additional revenue. A June 20, 1946, board meeting record reported: "The board is very anxious to serve this territory, as it would mean a very good revenue for our REA cooperative."

That revenue, unexpected at its beginnings, helped ensure the young cooperative's economic stability. It helped pay its REA loans in a timely manner and helped MEC adhere to its mission of making electric energy available to its members at the lowest cost, consistent with sound economy and good management.

Everything from electric livestock waterers to welders and much more simplified life for farmers and ranchers in McLean County once electricity became available.

Fast-forward to 1961: MEC found itself with yet another major construction task and revenue generator. The U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Air Force were building missile silos in North Dakota – and it included McLean County.

This time, rather than having to obtain additional funding through REA loans like it did to service Garrison Dam's boom towns, MEC signed a contract with the U.S. Air Force on Dec. 29, 1961. It provided a financial boost for the cooperative, including a $291,750 upfront prepayment for missile site power construction to begin in 1962.

Much like the Garrison Dam boom towns, the missile sites helped make MEC a financially stable cooperative

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through additional revenue generation.

For years, the electric cooperative industry promoted the benefits and use of electrical energy. Selling and using electricity meant revenue for the young cooperative. During the 1966 MEC annual meeting, its manager, the late Joe Walters, informed members, "It is our increased consumption of electricity that has enabled us to lower the average cost for your use."

In the 1970s, that changed as electric demand increased, stretching supply capacity even with the establishment of Basin Electric Power Cooperative, the multistate regional generation and transmission cooperative providing wholesale electricity to much of North Dakota, including MEC.

But much like the waters of Lake Sakakawea ebb and flow, electric demand ebbs and flows. The early scene of promoting electricity would return as the number of power plants rose into the sky to meet increasing electric energy demand.

By 1988, MEC annual meeting attendees learned Basin Electric had a surplus. It was OK once again to enjoy using those increasing electrical benefits.

Fast-forward to 2025: Eighty years after MEC incorporated, today's cooperative serves more than 4,000 accounts. Diverse accounts.

Yes, those missile sites continue generating revenue through electric energy sales. While Garrison Dam "boom towns" did what typical boom towns tend to do – become distant memories at best – MEC serves large energy loads, such as the Harvestone Low Carbon Partners Blue Flint ethanol plant near Underwood.

It serves large agricultural energy demands, such as irrigation systems and grain handling, drying and storage facilities.

It serves small businesses and powers folks earning a living from their rural residential office.

It powers a portion of the state's oil and gas industry, and a major part of the state's recreational industry along Lake Sakakawea, Lake Audubon, Missouri River, small lakes and other outdoor recreational opportunities.

And once again, the electric power industry ebbs and flows as the nation moves deeper into the 21st century.

"It's not just that people use more electricity and we're increasingly dependent on electricity," explained MEC Manager/CEO Mark Doyle. "The increased demand for cooperatives now are large-scale energy demands, plus it's an uptick in all electricity usage."

While the current buzzwords for "large-scale energy demands" can readily lead people to envision massive things like massive data centers gobbling large acreages and electrical energy for AI needs or large corporate operations like Amazon, it's more than that, Doyle added.

"Everything has become supersized," he continued.

The rural residential lifestyle continues calling people,

*Roseglen area farmer **Julius Mattson** served McLean Electric Cooperative member-owners on its board of directors from 1945 to 1967 and was the board's first president. He was also instrumental in helping establish the cooperative.*

which means additional rural development often accompanied by large shops and homes with lots of electrical usage. It's manufacturing and large agricultural needs ranging from shops to equipment and everything else necessary to feed the world in one of the nation's leading agricultural states.

The N.D. Department of Commerce is making it well known that the state is "open for business," Doyle suggested. "We have a good business climate – manufacturing, data processing, pumping stations for water, carbon and the petroleum industry." The state is in the midst of an industrial boom potential beyond oil and gas, he suggested.

And that means additional demands on capacity, Doyle explained.

The challenge, he continued, is for the electric industry as a whole – generation, transmission, and electric distribution providers – to have the capital needed to meet those demands.

MEC and Basin Electric have made a commitment to members as they work to meet those demands.

"As a cooperative responsible to all members, it's imperative to follow the guideline of its mission – safe, reliable and cost-effective electricity – balancing the pros of additional revenue for our cooperative versus the cons of upfront expenses to be able to meet demands," Doyle said.

An analogy, Doyle suggested, is when cities place special assessments in new urban housing developments for water and sewer that only benefit the developer and those living in the area. They're paid for by the entity creating the demand for the additional infrastructure – the developer and property owner, he added.

MEC has a similar policy. For example, developers pay the cost of bringing electricity to rural residential developments, with property owners paying for the service to the home, buildings or even a camper parked on the lot.

So, too, is the goal for future large load demands. MEC is committed to meeting the increased demand for electrical service.

But it shouldn't be at the expense of existing member-owners, Doyle concluded.

After all, it's worked for 80 years.

The goal is to have it work well into the future. ■

A to-do list

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

As the calendar races toward fall and winter, McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) offers some reminders for member-owners venturing to warmer weather in the coming weeks:

While it might be tempting for member-owners with electric heat to just shut it off, there could still be problems with drained water lines and pipes freezing in the event of an extended power outage. MEC General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle suggests setting thermostats to about 50 to 55 degrees in the winter when gone for extended periods of time. That way, the house retains heat longer should a major outage occur.

In addition, "that's why it's important to sign up for notifications regarding planned maintenance or service outages," Doyle added, or if major storm events cause extended downtime in electric service.

Doyle also recommends member-owners with smart thermostats to make certain their app is set to receive notifications.

Another preventative measure is to consider a home monitoring system in addition to a home security system. Look for systems featuring home temperature monitoring and additional features, Doyle suggested.

It's also beneficial if member-owners notify MEC when they're gone for an extended time and when they return, should something on their account differ substantially from their normal usage.

Contact MEC at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922 with questions and to notify the cooperative of your extended time away enjoying winter in sunny climates. ■

Kato the Kitty teaches electrical safety

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Kato teaches children about the importance of being safe around electricity.

The best part?

Children can have fun in the process of learning.

"Kato's Electrical Safety Coloring & Activity Book" is a 16-page coloring book, but it's more than that. It features activities, such as "Word Search" for nine words associated with electricity, "Picture Match," putting electrical safety tips with drawings, "Fill-in-the Blank" (and, no, it's not a test but a fun game), "Unscramble," making words out of letters to form a safety message, and a "Safety Maze."

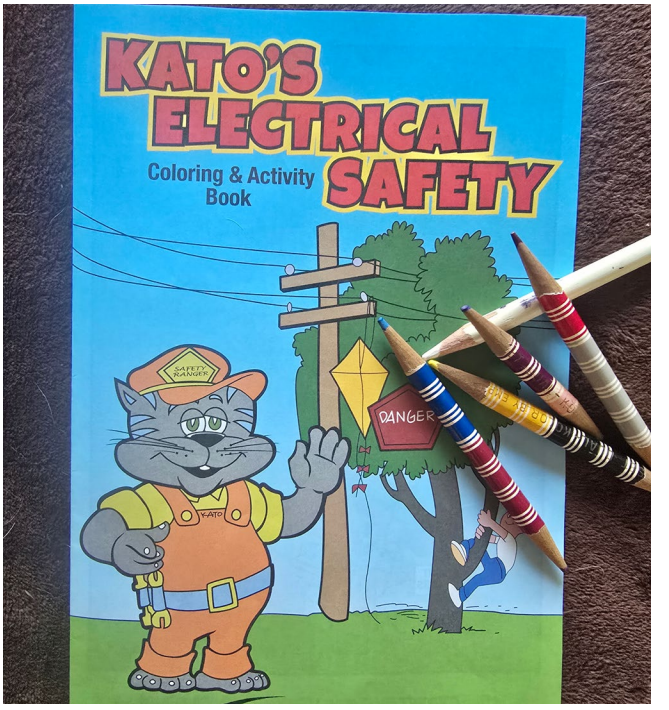
There are also six pages for budding artists to color, each with a safety message.

Kato explains electricity is a good friend, allowing families to enjoy television, electronic devices and lights.

But it can be also be dangerous: Putting objects in electrical outlets, not paying attention to one's surroundings, flying kites near electric power lines, touching downed power lines or being around electrical equipment outside in the rain are examples of unsafe activities.

Published by the Culver Company, the booklet is part of its mission to assist electric, natural gas and water utilities in providing safety and environmental sustainability education to their cooperative member-owners and consumers.

And the coloring and activity book is free from McLean Electric Cooperative and is great for families, day care providers or educators. Simply stop at McLean Electric's Garrison office during business hours to pick up a copy, but call if in need of multiple copies to ensure availability, 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922. ■



Whether using colored pencils or crayons, "Kato's Electrical Safety Coloring & Activity Book" is a great way to teach children about electrical safety.

Be safe, stay safe year-round

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

There is a reason insurance companies, government agencies and safety organizations have recommendations when dealing with farm equipment and power lines.

"The most common (farm electrical safety issue) is power line contacts or pole contacts with machinery," stressed McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) Operations Manager Keith Thelen.

In the fall, many farm incidents related to power lines occur during harvest. During spring's work is another common time for farm-related accidents around power lines.

Oftentimes, those situations happen when producers or workers are operating new or different equipment and are unfamiliar with its operation and folding height.

Or, they hit a pole because the equipment is wider than what they are used to operating, Thelen added.

In addition to the potential for injury or worse, the person damaging MEC's infrastructure is billed for repair costs if a power line damaged by farm equipment meets the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC). The codes are updated every five years.

It's not cheap.

"Replacing a damaged pole can cost from $2,500 to $4,000, depending on the circumstances," Thelen described.

He offers some advice when working around power lines and electrical safety tips, as farmers and ranchers continue harvest and prepare for winter.

"Take your time and look up for power lines. So often, people get in a hurry and forget about their surroundings, and that's when power lines get hit. Even in the winter, with more underground cable going in, people must be aware of pad transformers and cabinets in yards while moving snow," Thelen advised. ■

A McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) power pole was damaged when farm machinery came too close. As harvest continues, MEC Operations Manager Keith Thelen reminds producers to be cognizant of machinery height when entering and working in fields. Safety is equally as important around grain bins, shops and farmyards year-round.

Stay safe on the farm and ranch

Several resources are dedicated to increasing awareness in the farm and ranch industry as it relates to electrical safety, whether on the farm, out in the pasture or in the field.

Here are some farm and ranch electrical safety tips, courtesy of American Family Insurance, the Energy Education Council's Safe Electricity program and the University of Minnesota's Upper Midwest Agriculture Safety and Health Center:

- Identify all overhead power lines on the farm and fields and map safe travel routes to move equipment and machinery, avoiding lines when possible.
- Always stay in the tractor or other machinery if equipment contacts overhead power lines, and don't let any part of your body touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. If it's necessary to escape, jump as far away as possible and never touch the machinery or tractor.
- Always stay away from any downed power lines and report their location by calling 911 or McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922.
- Never try to raise or adjust a downed or sagging power line. Contact MEC for line repairs.
- Stay away from any guy wires attached to power poles.
- Use extreme caution when working around overhead power lines and know equipment height if going under or working around overhead lines. Try to stay at least 10 feet away from overhead power poles and lines and never place any farm equipment, hay bales or irrigation pipes beneath overhead lines.
- Lower high equipment, such as augers and truck beds, to their lowest possible height prior to moving from a location and be aware of the increased height and size of newer equipment, including antennas.
- Equipment should be no more than 14 feet in height to ensure safe clearance, especially on windy days.
- Never raise anything, including ladders or other equipment, into a power line and always fold and unfold machinery well into a field and away from field edges, where power lines could be located.
- Always contact 811 to locate buried utility lines prior to any digging.
- Properly ground farm and ranch electrical systems, ensuring all equipment has working ground wires. The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration defines electrical grounding as "intentionally creating a low-resistance path that connects to the earth." Proper grounding prevents voltage buildup that could cause electrical accidents.
- Make certain all outlets in potentially wet conditions have ground-fault circuit interruptor protection and always use grounded, three-hole outlets with covers.
- Make certain all wiring meets electrical codes and use certified and qualified electricians.
- Properly maintain electrical equipment and wiring to ensure it's in good working condition.
- Watch for power lines around grain bins and always load and unload on the side opposite a power line if near grain bins and power lines.
- Vent grain bins for the required period of time if it's necessary to enter. Be sure to shut off and lock out electricity before entering. Always have someone else present and use safety harnesses and lines for protection.
- Never use metal poles when it's necessary to break bridged grain inside or outside of bins.
- Install lockout switches to provide the ability to shut off all electricity from one location, which helps prevent equipment from accidentally starting. Clearly identify main electrical shutoffs and ensure they're accessible.
- Identify high-risk areas and make certain everyone is aware of direct and indirect electrical contact hazards.
- Make sure everyone is aware of power line locations and know how to properly exit equipment if it contacts power lines.
- Make sure everyone knows the actual height of equipment, especially if it has antennas, and the height of equipment when raised. ■

THINKING AHEAD TOWARD FALL:

Electric heat rate program Oct. 1-April 30

It's never too early to plan ahead for winter.

When it comes to wintertime energy costs, McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) member-owners participating in the co-op's residential electric heat rate program know they can save money.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC), the multi-state regional generation and transmission cooperative providing electricity to electric cooperatives in North Dakota and parts of eight other states, offers an optional discounted residential electric heat rate to its member cooperatives purchasing electricity directly from BEPC.

MEC participates in the program, passing a discounted rate onto its member-owners using residential electric heat who opt to install a separate meter (a sub-meter) for their electric heat kilowatt-hour (kWh) usage.

The discount is currently 5.81 cents per kWh, compared to 11.48 cents per kWh residential electric charge, described McLean Electric General Manager/ CEO Mark Doyle.

The heat rate is effective from Oct. 1 through April 30 each winter. ■

Heat rate program details

How to participate in McLean Electric Cooperative's (MEC) heat rate program:

- 240-volt electrical heating circuit systems on a sub-meter (separate meter to measure electric heat usage) qualify, such as baseboard and cove heat, wall units, boilers, electric furnaces and unit heaters.
- Member-owners must purchase the meter socket, picking it up at MEC's Garrison office with either the member-owner or electrician doing the installation. It will be billed separately from their monthly statement.
- Meter sockets must be installed outside, so the meter can be accessible by MEC line crews, if needed, for servicing.
- Contact MEC when socket installation is complete, so proper installation can be verified and the meter installed by MEC meter technicians.
- Sub-metered heat usage qualifies for the discounted heat rate 0f 5.81 cents per kWh, although there is a $3 monthly sub-meter base charge.
- Because the discount applies from Oct. 1 through April 30, other heat usage during the year is billed the standard residential kWh rate.

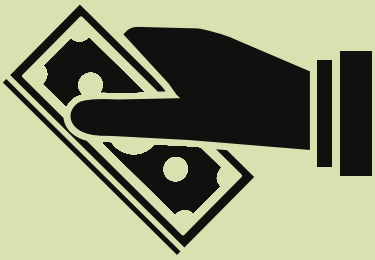
Contact MEC for more information or questions at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922 or visitmcleanelectric.com. ■

WHAT ARE CAPITAL CREDITS?

Did you know electric cooperatives return money to their members in the form of capital credits? While you may like receiving those capital credit checks from your local cooperative, you may not be sure exactly why you receive them. It's simple, really.

Capital credits reflect each member's ownership in the cooperative. Electric cooperatives do not earn profits. Instead, any margins or remaining revenue after all expenses have been paid are returned to the cooperative's members in proportion to their electrical usage.

How are capital credits returned to you, the member?



STEP 1: ALLOCATION

Your electric cooperative tracks how much electricity you purchase throughout a year. An allocation determines your share of the cooperative's margin in a particular year. Each member's portion is referred to as a "capital credit allocation."

STEP 2: RETIREMENT

Once capital credits are allocated, they are retained by the co-op for a certain time. Capital credits are the most significant source of equity for the cooperative. Equity is used to help meet the expenses of the co-op, such as paying for new equipment to serve members and repaying debt. Capital credits help keep rates at an affordable level by reducing the amount of funds that must be borrowed to grow and maintain a cooperative's existing electric system.

STEP 3: PAYMENT

Upon completion of the rotation period, the board of directors will review the cooperative's financial health and can declare a retirement (your cash payment), then a portion of your capital credits are returned to you.

IT'S A CO-OP PRINCIPLE!

The allocation of capital credits is exemplified in one of the seven principles that guide all cooperatives. The principle states:

Members' economic participation – Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership. ■

McLean County community calendar:

Events and activities to see and do

McLean Electric Cooperative summer hours: 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to noon Friday.

McLean County area food pantry September distribution and donation thrift store dates, times and locations:

- **Garrison: Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry:** Noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. Sept. 25.
- **Makoti, Parshall, Plaza, Roseglen, Ryder, White Shield and others in need:** Community Food Pantry: 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Sept. 27, 181 Ellsworth St., Makoti. Community Thrift Store: 3-6 p.m. Tuesday, 4-7 p.m. Thursday and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, except holidays, 181 Ellsworth St., Makoti.
- **Max: Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry:** Noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. Sept. 15, Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **Turtle Lake: The Lord's Pantry:** 2-4 p.m. Sept. 11 and 10 a.m.-noon Sept. 27, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.
- **Turtle Lake: Free Community Clothing Share & Exchange Store:** Noon-6 p.m. every Thursday, 221 Main St.
- **Underwood: Community Cupboard of Underwood food distribution:** 10 a.m.-noon Sept. 6 and 10 a.m.-noon Sept. 18, 208 Lincoln Ave. Like us on Facebook (Community Cupboard of Underwood) for distribution dates and thrift store updates.
- **Underwood: Community Cupboard of Underwood Thrift Store:** 1-5 p.m. every Tuesday.
- **Washburn: McLean Family Resource Center:** McLean County residents can contact the center, 701-462-8643, for an appointment to pick up baskets along with more information or assistance through the center's services, 205 Seventh St.
- **Washburn: McLean Family Resource Center Clothing Outlet:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 205 Seventh St.
- **Wilton: Wilton Food Pantry mini distributions:** every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone. Full food distribution, 4-6 p.m. Sept. 18, Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.
- **Wilton: The (free) Clothes Closet**: 3-5 p.m. Sept. 18, First Presbyterian Church, 401 Dakota Ave.

Area food pantries often experience high needs for the following items: baked beans, pork and beans, canned fruit, tuna, chicken, vegetables, cereal, oatmeal, granola and breakfast bars, juice, macaroni and cheese, hamburger and tuna helper, pancake mix, syrup, pasta, spaghetti, Alfredo and pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, rice side dishes, soups and chili, and household items, such as body wash and soap, dish soap, laundry detergent, shampoo and conditioner, toilet paper, toothpaste and toothbrushes. Contact local food pantries for drop-off locations, information or a list of additional needs in your community.

September events:

- **Sept. 20: Oktober Family Fest**, 4-8 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **Sept. 30: Operation Round Up application deadline**. Go to McLean Electric Cooperative's website, mcleanelectric.com, click "Grants and Scholarship" on the homepage for information or contact Communications Manager Sonja Moe at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922.

Nonprofit organizations and communities throughout McLean County can contact Patricia Stockdill at stockdill.patricia@gmail.com or 701-337-5462 to submit community events. ■