



news & views

from Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Right of Way Maintenance

How does Lincoln Electric help to maintain our system reliability and reduce outages? We perform routine maintenance on our facilities. These range from replacing poles, underground cable, overloaded transformers, and maintaining an acceptable right of way corridor.

Having a clear and open right of way is essential to helping reduce outages caused by trees. By limiting tree growth within and on the edges of the right of way corridor, we are able to prevent some outages and save our members time and money.

At Lincoln Electric we have an eight year right of way program for our system. Every mile of our overhead line power line corridor is completely maintained every eight years.

What does this mean for you, our members? Most important is the impact on service reliability for our mem-

bership as a whole. Beyond that, there is also an impact on individual members who have overhead power lines on, or adjacent to, their property.

Before our right of way contractor begins clearing for the year, all affected landowners are contacted in several ways. The first is this article. Secondly is a certified, return receipt letter detailing the work to be done. Finally, the contractor will attempt to call the landowner prior to working on the property.

However, in order to make that third step work, we need our members to ensure they have a good contact number on file with Lincoln Electric. To update your information, call our office at 406-889-3301, stop by 312 Osloski Road in Eureka, or log-in to your SmartHub account at www.lincolnelectric.coop.

2016 will find our contractor on the southern portion of our system. It will include all overhead power lines south of



A tree in the overhead line.

our Stillwater Substation in Olney.

So it will affect those landowners along Highway 93 South of Olney, Farm to Market, Good Creek, Star Meadows, Lupfer, Beaver Lake, Tamarack, and all other associated areas south of Olney.

As your letter will explain, in order to maintain a sufficient right of way, the con-

tractor will remove all trees and brush within the overhead power line corridor. Crews will also look outside the right of way for any potential dangers, like trees with branches encroaching the right of way. These will typically be trimmed, but if this cannot be done safely, the tree will be felled.

The contractor will also *Continued on page 5*



Left: A pole in the distance broken by a tree. Right: Broken wire and crossarm damage caused by a tree.

Member Education is a Top Priority for Cooperatives

The controversy that surrounds energy in the news media seems to be never ending. Both sides of the political spectrum make various claims to support their particular perspective.

Every day reports come across my desk using "facts" that show the validity of one position or another on renewable energy or the next big idea for energy production. The trouble is that upon closer examination, most do not stand up to the reliability or production standards needed to meet the usage patterns and demands of consumers.

We currently enjoy the highest standard of living in the history of mankind. There is a direct correlation between that standard of living and the cost of energy. How do we keep the cost of energy as low as possible to maintain our current way of life and incorporate all the new regulations and demands that we are now

experiencing?

At the very least these questions are difficult for even someone schooled in energy to decipher. When most of the claims one reads about paints too good of a picture surrounding the product or idea, how does a person with no background in electricity distribution understand what is actually true?

Electric Cooperatives are by nature built to serve their members and have no stake in one product or energy source over another. We are always worrying about cost, availability and reliability. We filter everything through that lens as our membership speaks loud and clear if those three items are not met.

As a non-profit utility that is owned by its membership, electric cooperatives are in the best position to glean through the mountains of data to determine the best solution. Because we are democratically controlled we get a very good sampling of what our members as a group wants to see done. With that direction and with the accumulated knowledge of its employee's, cooperatives can and will find a way through this morass we find ourselves in.

It is with this partnership that Lincoln Electric Cooperative

has always operated to the benefit of its membership. We want to be your information provider when it comes to energy issues. As mentioned above we are impartial to any particular technology or product and only want what is best for our members. We are committed to our membership to provide you with energy that is available and reliable and at reasonable rates.

As part of our mission to inform our membership, we are still seeking members interested in joining a Member Education Committee. This group will meet once every one to two months to learn about their cooperative. We will cover various topics including electric generation, legislative issues affecting LEC, rate design, energy efficiency, alternative generation, and net metering, along with others. Please call the office if you would like to learn more.

Thanks for your membership,
Ray



**Manager's Notes
by Ray Ellis**

News & Views

Published monthly by Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Lincoln Electric's Board of Trustees hold regular meetings monthly at the Eureka office. These are typically scheduled on the third Monday of each month at 7 pm. All members are encouraged to attend. If you have any items of interest, please contact the general manager prior to the meeting.

Next Meeting Date:

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

Board of Trustees

- **Mike Workman** - President, Dist. 5, Koochanusa Shores-Pinkham
- **Tina Taurman** - Vice President, Dist. 2, Trego-Stryker
- **Courtney Pluid** - Secretary, Dist. 3, Fortine-Glen Lake
- **Mike Clark** - Dist. 1, Flathead
- **Joel Graves** - Dist. 5, Koochanusa Shores-Pinkham
- **Tom Klyver** - Dist. 1, Flathead
- **Wesly Loughman** - Dist. 4, Eureka-Tobacco Plains
- **Marianne Roose** - Dist. 3 - Fortine-Glen Lake
- **Terry Utter** - Dist. 4 - Eureka-Tobacco Plains
- **Ethel White** - Dist. 4 - Eureka-Tobacco Plains

General Manager Ray Ellis

**In case of power outage:
Always call 406-889-3301**

312 Osloski Road
PO Box 628
Eureka, MT 59917
www.lincolnelectric.coop
info@lincolnelectric.coop

BUSINESS AND BOARDROOM BRIEFS

The regular meeting of the board of trustees was conducted on December 21, 2015. A quorum of trustees was present and the board took the following action:

- Approved the addition of two new positions, Receptionist and Lineman, and a restructure of current employees.
- Approved a restructure of existing employees.
- Approved Resolution 2015-04 Purchase Property.

	Year to Date 11/30/2015	Year to Date 11/30/2014
Year to Date Kwh Sales	93,381,814	100,039,296
Year to Date Revenue	\$ 8,638,848	\$ 8,610,936
Year to Date Cost of Power	\$ 3,973,875	\$ 4,258,914
Year to Date Operating Exp	\$ 4,071,170	\$ 4,102,338
Year to Date Margins	\$ 655,891	\$ 259,165
Number of Members	4,401	4,305
Number of Meters	5,715	5,610
Miles of Line	949	942
Total Utility Plant	\$ 32,305,863	\$ 30,666,803
Member Equity	\$ 8,685,602	\$ 8,391,036
Nov. Average Residential Use (kWh)	1,635	1,742
Nov. Average Residential Billing	\$139.41	\$143.97

Right of Way

Continued from page 3

cut down any dead and dying trees that present a fire hazard or outage threat that are outside the right of way, but can reach the line.

The debris is the responsibility of the contractor. Brush and limbs within 50 feet of vehicle access to a property will be chipped. If it is farther than 50 feet from vehicle access, the brush and limbs will be scattered or piled. However, if you prefer a different treatment of debris, please contact LEC's Operations Superintendent after you have received your notification letter.

Regular right of way maintenance is a typical operations expense for all electric companies with overhead power lines. However, please keep in mind that our members also have a responsibility to keep the right of way corridor on their property free of potential hazards.

Easements for these overhead lines show that the landowners agree to not unduly interfere with the corridor. This includes planting trees within the right of way corridor.

Every time Lincoln Electric crews have to do right of way maintenance above and beyond the normal rotation

for landowner-planted trees, it adds an additional expense for our system. This type of maintenance expense is passed along to the entire membership within our monthly system maintenance and energy charges.

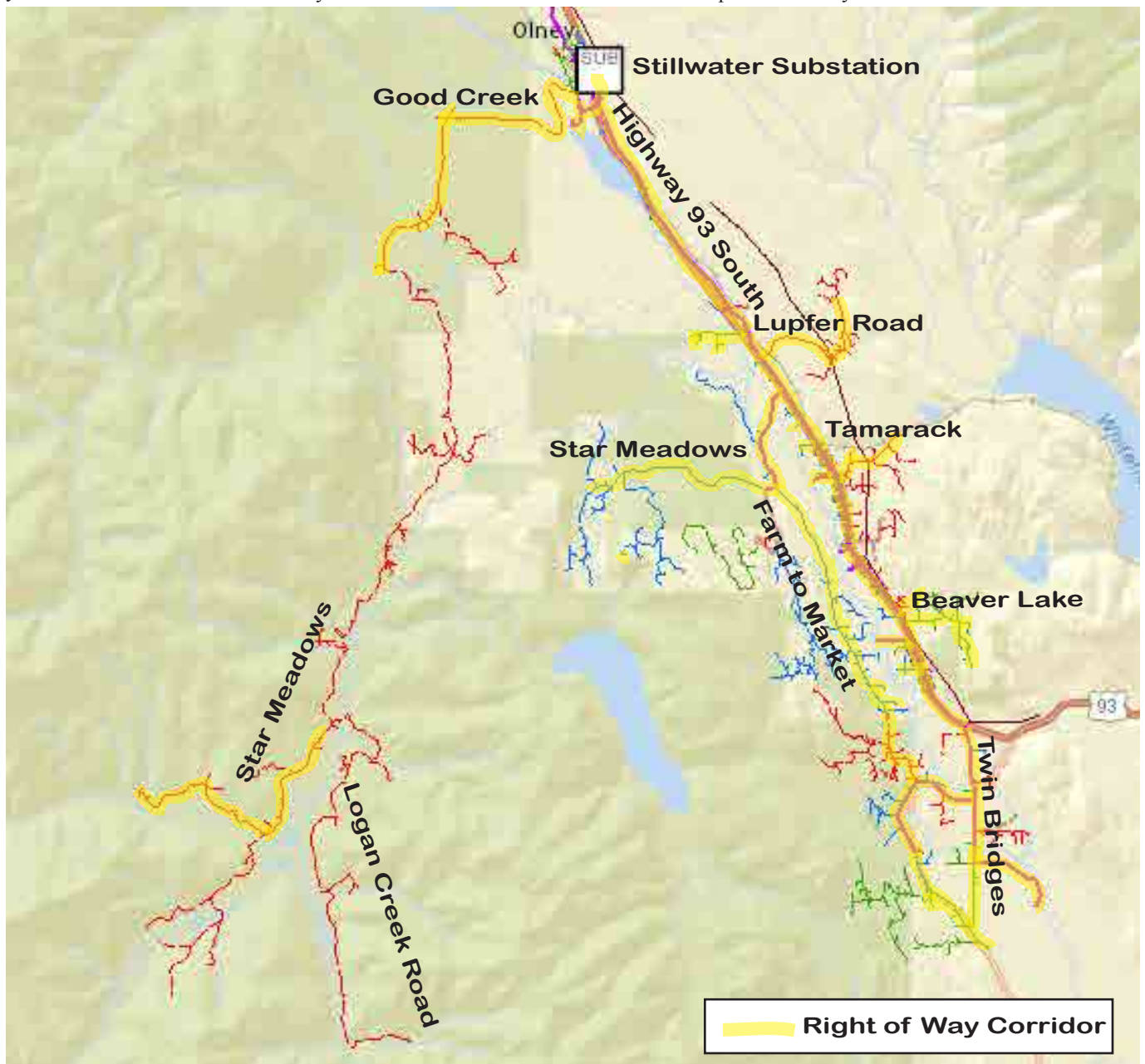
As a result, Lincoln Electric will charge the specific landowner in the event of excessive trips to trim those trees a landowner has requested remain in the right of way on their property.

An alternative would be for the landowner to hire a certified line clearance tree trimmer to maintain those trees on a regular basis. This would be an expense borne by

the landowner.

As a cooperative, we cannot justify spreading amongst our membership a cost that is for the benefit of only one landowner and/or member. Billing the individual landowner helps keep our maintenance costs as low as possible, while still providing excellent service to our members.

Our vigorous right of way maintenance program has been, and will continue to be, essential to the reliability and safety of our overhead power line system. We appreciate our members' continued support and cooperation with this program.



PURSING HIGHER EDUCATION?

LINCOLN ELECTRIC MAY BE ABLE TO HELP!!

This year we will again be offering **Luck of the Draw Scholarships** to qualifying students.

Student or their parent/guardian must be a member of Lincoln Electric.

Winners will be drawn at our Annual Meeting on March 19, 2016, in the LCHS Auditorium.

Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.

The applicable member **MUST** register and be present to win at the Annual Meeting.

Full eligibility requirements and application packets available at www.lincolnelectric.coop.

Applications are also available at our office at 312 Osloski Road in Eureka.

Application deadline is 4:30 pm on Wednesday, March 9, 2016.



DANGER! Outlet Overload

Every year, U.S. fire departments respond to an estimated **25,900 home electrical fires**. These fires cause an estimated **280 deaths, 1,125 injuries** and **\$1.1 billion in property loss**.

Thirty-nine percent of home electrical fires involve outlets and receptacles, and other electrical wiring.

To ensure safety, you should only use about 80 percent of the available current for each electrical outlet in your home.

Are you overloading outlets?

Use this formula to find out:

WATTAGE/VOLTS=AMPS

Example:

Let's say you are using 2,000 watts of power (for one outlet). Divide the watts by the volts in your home (typically 120), and you come up with 16.6 amps of current being used. With a 20 amp electrical outlet, you are using about 80 percent of the available current.

Source: U.S. Fire Administration, Home & Garden