



# news & views

from Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY

**N**RECA has designated the second Tuesday in April as Lineman Appreciation Day. These brave men and women work all hours of the day and night to keep your power on.

They often work outages during the worst possible weather. In the snow, the rain, the wind, the cold, they toil tirelessly in less-than-ideal conditions to get our members back on as quickly as possible.

On a daily basis, they perform dangerous and critical work. From underground locates to pole replacements, everything they do is done to benefit our members with con-

tinued reliability and safety.

To honor our linemen, LEC will have blank cards in the front office through the month of April. Please stop by and fill one out to show our linemen how much you appreciate the work they do.

At the end of the month, these cards will be displayed in the crew room to remind our linemen of the essential role they play in our lives.

But don't forget about our linemen the other 11 months of the year. Any time you see them out in our communities, remember to thank a lineman for all they do to keep your lights on.



*Your Lincoln Electric linemen at work.*



## NRECA RESOLUTION

The full text of the resolution, which the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Board adopted unanimously, follows:

"Whereas our linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on; Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure; Whereas linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after

storms and accidents; and Whereas there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen; Therefore be it resolved that NRECA recognize the Second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day and make available to electric cooperatives, materials and support to recognize the contributions of these valuable men and women to America's Electric Cooperatives."

# Capital Credit Checks Issued to Members

As you know, cooperatives are unique. We have business plan and set of principles that are different than for-profit businesses.

One of the most obvious ways we show our differences is through the refund of margins to our members in the form of capital credits.

Since LEC is a cooperative, and therefore non-profit, capital credits are any revenue we have in excess of our costs each year. We allocate these margins back to you, our members, based on your share of our overall revenue.

Each year, your Board of Trustees, made up of fellow members elected by the membership, reviews the financials of your cooperative. They determine if our financial condition warrants returning any portion of these capital credits to the members. I am happy to report that for the 42nd consecutive year, LEC will be

making a capital credit retirement.

At the February Board Meeting, the Board of Trustees authorized the retirement of approximately 5 percent of our outstanding capital credits. This amounts to more than \$454,000 that was retired in March.

Those LEC members who had an active electric membership during 1997 and/or 1998 were eligible to pick up their capital credit checks at the Annual Meeting on March 19. If you were eligible for a capital credit refund, but unable to attend the Annual Meeting, your check will be mailed to you early this month.

Since LEC was founded, we have returned more than \$11.1 million to members in the form of capital credits. When compared with other electric cooperatives, we are in the top 2 percent nationwide for capital credits retired.

Please take a look at the chart on page

6 to see the historical data for LEC's capital credit refunds. I also urge to watch for the list of members with unclaimed capital credits that will be published in

your *May Rural Montana*. These are past members that have capital credits that were refunded to them, but were never claimed.

We do our best to return capital credits to those members who earned them. However, like a true non-profit invested in the benefit of our communities, any capital credits that remain unclaimed for five years are used for education purposes. In the past these capital credits have funded our Luck of the Draw scholarship program and donations to schools served by LEC.

So as you can see, capital credits are just one of the benefits of being a member in an electric cooperative.

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:  
Monday, April 18, 2016**

### Board of Trustees

- **Mike Workman** - President, Dist. 5, Koocanusa 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, Koocanusa 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 March 16, 2016. A quorum of trustees was present and the board took the following action:

- Approved the proposed 2016 Capital Credit retirement schedule.
- Approved three new job descriptions.
- Authorized the posting of Board Meeting Minutes on Lincoln Electric's website.
- Approved a \$100 donation to the Tobacco Valley Animal Shelter.
- Approved a \$250 donation to Friends of the NRA for the Eddie the Eagle program.
- Approved various Trustees to attend trainings and conferences.

	Year to Date 01/31/2016	Year to Date 01/31/2015
Year to Date kWh Sales	13,413,437	14,076,219
Year to Date Revenue	\$ 1,077,116	\$ 1,105,569
Year to Date Cost of Power	\$ 553,483	\$ 533,057
Year to Date Operating Exp	\$ 386,593	\$ 334,041
Year to Date Margins	\$ 133,251	\$ 239,078
Number of Members	4,412	4,309
Number of Meters	5,719	5,609
Miles of Line	949	945
Total Utility Plant	\$ 32,550,767	\$ 31,254,898
Member Equity	\$ 9,249,941	\$ 8,950,366
Jan. Average Residential Use (kWh)	1,961	2,128
Jan. Average Residential Billing	\$160.68	\$169.11

# You Have Options With Programmable Thermostats

By Tom Tate

Let's start with a little bit of history. Did you realize that the programmable thermostat is over 100 years old? Honeywell introduced the first programmable thermostat in 1906, naming it the Jewell. It was a simple, clock-powered product that allowed you to establish times for the temperature to go up and down. Anyone who is a fan of the Steampunk style (think Victorian technology and style in modern items and clothes) would be proud to have this device on their walls. While crude by today's standards, it was truly a pioneering product.

The basic programmable thermostat offers four programming periods: wake, leave, return and sleep. You set the time of day and target temperature for each period according to the days of the week. The lowest priced models will offer you a 5-2 day option. Here you set the four periods for the workweek (Monday through Friday) and the weekend (Saturday and Sunday). The next model up will be a 5-1-1 day option. This allows different schedules for Saturday and Sunday. And finally, you can buy a model that allows you to program each day of the week individually. It should be noted that programming each day of the week can quickly become tedious.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established recommendations for proper programming, and over the years, we have seen thermostats that come preprogrammed with their suggestions. Remember the "tedious" comment? Purchasing a pre-programmed model solves that problem nicely. You can override this programming, but it makes for an easy set up.

So what does the EPA suggest? A heating maximum of 68 degrees Fahrenheit and a cooling minimum of 78 degrees Fahrenheit for those times when you are home. They estimate you can save 1 percent on your energy bill for every degree of temperature change when away. On average, expect to save about 10 percent on your annual heating bill.

The size of the temperature change to use when away or asleep is another area of discussion. One camp recommends keeping the range narrow on the theory that the home loses too much of its conditioning and the energy saved is lost as the systems work to get back to the proper temperature. Another says systems run more efficiently when set at a rather modest temperature (cooler for heating and warmer for cooling) and left

alone.

And the last is the EPA's opinion that a 10 to 15 degree change over an eight-hour period provides the best savings, a change from previous recommendations. A caveat offered by the EPA is that you should not use a programmable thermostat for heat pumps. While fine in cooling mode, they make the heat pump inefficient in heating mode. Specifically designed thermostats are available for heat pumps to overcome this issue. If you have a heat pump, we recommend one of these.

No discussion of programmable thermostats is complete without getting into their "smart" relatives. This fairly new phenomenon really got traction with the introduction of the Nest. A smart thermostat can be programmed, but their true appeal lies in the ability to "set and forget" them, allowing their software to

build a program around the way you live. Their second major appeal is the ability to interact with them via the Web or your smart phone. While expensive, more choices are hitting the market, so if this is an intriguing idea, keep an eye out as prices are starting to drop.

Experimentation will help you determine the best solution for your home as each is different due to insulation, weather sealing, system efficiencies and how you operate you it. That being said, a programmable thermostat will definitely save you money. Pick one of Jewell's descendants today, and start saving.

*Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*



## Don't TOY with your SAFETY

When you are playing outdoors, keep a safe distance from power lines, substations and other equipment your electric co-op uses to send electricity to your home.



Flying remote controlled toys are a great way to have fun, but accidentally making contact with a power line or other electrical equipment can be dangerous and in some cases, even deadly.

- Never fly kites, or remote controlled toys near power lines.
- Stay away from power lines, meters, transformers and electrical boxes.
- Never climb trees near power lines.
- If you get something stuck in a power line, call your electric co-op.
- Never touch or go near a downed power line.



Year	Capital Credit Retirements
1975	\$4,427
1976	\$10,785
1977	\$6,381
1978	\$13,691
1979	\$27,276
1980	\$42,958
1981	\$31,903
1982	\$64,757
1983	\$80,107
1984	\$101,353
1985	\$154,582

Year	Capital Credit Retirements
1986	\$183,552
1987	\$133,746
1988	\$323,929
1989	\$688,850
1990	\$155,703
1991	\$283,972
1992	\$618,686
1993	\$159,118
1994	\$252,017
1995	\$374,432
1996	\$293,189

Year	Capital Credit Retirements
1997	\$325,651
1998	\$336,670
1999	\$329,778
2000	\$332,867
2001	\$324,761
2002	\$326,021
2003	\$342,046
2004	\$330,967
2005	\$354,314
2006	\$303,888
2007	\$296,597

Year	Capital Credit Retirements
2008	\$307,955
2009	\$317,322
2010	\$356,790
2011	\$364,785
2012	\$397,931
2013	\$411,498
2014	\$443,809
2015	\$437,149
2016	\$454,721
<b>Total Capital Credit Retirements</b>	
<b>\$11,100,213</b>	

## Three quick tips toward energy efficiency

By Paul Wesslund

If you want to celebrate Earth Day on April 22, start by making your home more energy efficient. Below are three efficiency tips from energy expert Brian Sloboda of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

**1. Look around your home for no-cost ways to be efficient.** Close the curtains in the summer and open them in the winter. Turn off your computers overnight. Also turn off video game consoles when they're not being used. Better yet, keep them off and send the kids outside to play baseball.

**2. Look for small steps you can take and DIY.** Caulk around drafty windows. Check the attic for the correct amount of insulation. Switch to LED light bulbs. Plant a deciduous tree on the sunny side of your house; in a few years the leaves will cool your home against the sun in summer, then fall off to warm it in the winter.

Old cable TV boxes use a lot of energy. If yours is not ENERGY STAR-rated, call your cable provider and ask for a new one. If you have a major appliance – like a refrigerator, washing machine or dryer – that's more than 10 years old, don't repair it. The energy efficiency of a newer model will likely pay for itself with energy savings in a few years. Before buying any appliance, look for the ENERGY STAR label, and learn to read it and compare products.

**3. Call Lincoln Electric about energy-saving programs**—They may be able to offer advice, appliance rebates or a home energy checkup. You might be surprised to find out what's really driving up your energy costs.

*Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*

### 3 STEPS to ENERGY EFFICIENCY



Identify ways to save energy when using appliances and electronics in your home. Buy ENERGY STAR-rated appliances when possible and turn off electronics, such as computers and gaming consoles when not in use.

2



DIY projects can help you save energy. Caulk around drafty windows, use LED bulbs and check insulation levels in your home.

3



Check with your electric co-op about energy saving programs.