



news & views

from Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.



Eureka Lumber Mill and Downtown Eureka, 1906.

Electrifying Eureka

STORY BY **JACOB DELONG** | LINCOLN ELECTRIC COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

DRIVING into Eureka from the south has changed a lot over the last 100 years.

Of course, time changes everything. Most rural Montana towns have seen new buildings, fresh paint and growing trees over the decades. But Eureka changed in a much deeper way. The very foundation of the community was different than it is today.

Eureka was built on timber.

It was founded by loggers, powered by sawmills and sustained by logging families. While there were certainly farmers, ranchers, bankers and merchants, the timber industry formed the backbone of the Tobacco Valley economy for generations.

Even within living memory, the entrance to town looked much different than it does today.

At the top of the hill, where High-

way 93 meets Central Avenue, stood a small gas station that sold fuel, seed and feed. Longtime residents may also remember when the Town Pump operated out of a modest trailer-like building near where the current fuel pumps stand today.

But if we traveled even further back, to the early 1900s, the landscape would

See EUREKA, page 7

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW	YEAR TO DATE APRIL 2026	YEAR TO DATE APRIL 2025
kWh SALES	53,531,896	57,309,767
REVENUE	\$6,066,400	\$5,558,749
COST OF POWER	\$2,578,207	\$2,721,081
OPERATING EXPENSE	\$2,259,834	\$1,740,306
MARGINS	\$605,080	\$525,046
NUMBER OF MEMBERS	5,396	5,225
NUMBER OF METERS	6,884	6,614
MILES OF LINE	1,044	1,016
TOTAL UTILITY PLANT	\$43,343,911	\$39,938,010
MEMBER EQUITY	\$17,032,784	\$14,976,838
APRIL AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL USE (KWH)	1,289	1,268
APRIL AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL BILLING	\$169.74	\$149.23

* Discount applies to propane deliveries and bottle fills (RPS office only). Partial deliveries excluded. Discounted deliveries must occur on your regular route date within the promotion period. Delinquent accounts not eligible. Payment due within 15 days of delivery.

BUSINESS AND BOARDROOM BRIEFS

The regular meeting of the board of trustees was conducted on May 18. A quorum of trustees was present, and the board took the following actions:

- Approved Myra Appel as the primary voting delegate and Rick Peterson as the alternate voting delegate for CFC/NCSC.
- Approved policies 103, 104, 105, 208, 210, 502 as presented.
- Approved a donation of \$1,000 for LC Unite for Youth.
- Approved donation of up to \$2,000 in LEC engineering costs for a bio-mass plant.
- Approved any board member interested in attending the MECA Summer Meeting and Pre-Conference training.



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VISIT OUR WEBSITE at www.lincolnelectric.coop for information on member services, billing, outages and safety, job postings, energy efficiency, community and general cooperative updates.

LINCOLN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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OFFICE

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OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday
 7:00 AM - 5:30 PM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rick Peterson
 President

Joel Graves
 Vice President

Sandi Mason
 Secretary-Treasurer

Myra Appel
Larry Benson
Rodney Kane
David Purdy
Tina Taurman

Matt Quinn
 General Manager

Lincoln Electric's Board of Trustees holds regular monthly meetings at the boardroom in the cooperative office. These are typically scheduled on the third Monday of each month at 4 p.m. 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, JULY 20, 2026



Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

SEND YOUR IDEAS TO:

memberservices@lincolnelectric.coop

EUREKA

Continued from page 5

be almost unrecognizable.

Around 1905, the area where Highway 93 now enters Eureka was home to a splash dam built along Sinclair Creek and the Tobacco River. Over the years, the Tobacco River has been rerouted several times, dramatically changing the shape of the valley floor.

The splash dam served multiple purposes. It stored logs for the Eureka Lumber Company mill, which once stood near the current locations of the Historical Village and the Interbel building. It also generated electricity through a small hydroelectric plant that powered the mill as well as several businesses and homes throughout Eureka.

For a small Montana town in the early 1900s, electricity was still a remarkable luxury.

After several devastating fires, the mill eventually shut down, and in 1924 the power went out with it. Eureka was left without electricity until Homer McCullough purchased the power plant and restored service to the community using the same dependable source: hydroelectric power.

Then came one of the most important moments in rural American history.

In 1935, as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the Rural Electrification Act created federal loan programs to help bring electricity to isolated rural communities across the country.

That description fit Eureka and the Tobacco Valley perfectly.

Local residents organized and applied for funding, but ironically, the area was initially denied because the population was considered too sparse. After World War II ended, the community tried again. According to local history books, the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) described it as "the hardest project in the U.S."

Despite the challenges, the project



Splash Dam hydro power, 1905.

moved forward.

In 1949, the Tobacco Valley was officially energized, and Lincoln Electric Cooperative was born.

The co-op first operated out of the old Farmers and Merchants Bank building in downtown Eureka. Later, Lincoln Electric purchased the assets of the Tobacco River Power Company, which had previously supplied electricity to parts of town on a much smaller scale.

By the mid-1950s, the co-op office had moved into the old power company's generator building, which sat along the riverbank on the opposite side of a bridge connecting that area to the rest of town.

At that time, a branch of the Tobacco River still flowed through what is now the Highway 93 corridor. The bridge connected the former mill site, now home to the Historical Village and Interbel, with Main Street and the Lincoln Electric office.

In 1982, Lincoln Electric Cooperative moved into its current headquarters on

Osloski Road.

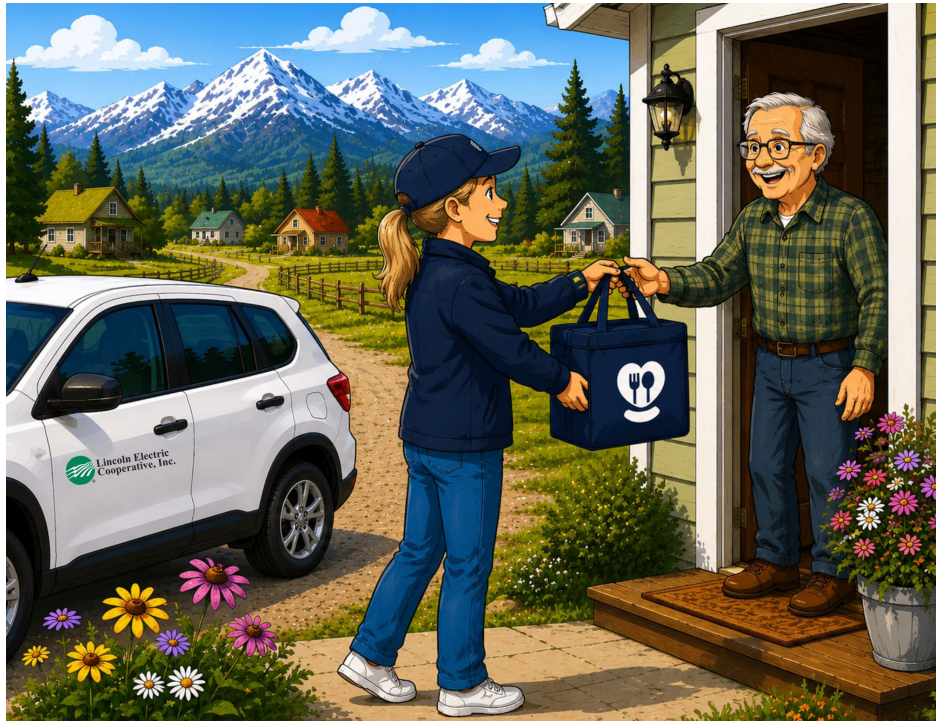
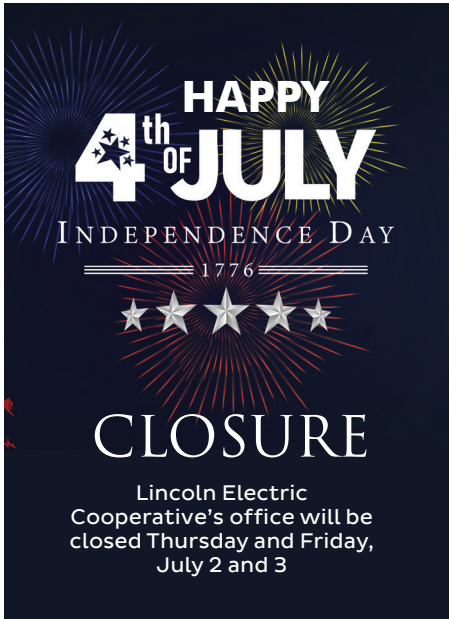
The co-op that once served only 28 members in 1950 now provides electricity to more than 5,380 members stretching from the Canadian border to the outskirts of Whitefish.

Today, many of the old mills, the splash dam, bridges and waterways are gone. The logging camps have faded into history, and the landscape entering Eureka looks far different than it did a century ago.

But the electricity that first helped build modern life in the Tobacco Valley continues to power the homes, ranches, schools and businesses that keep this community alive today.

And like the generations before them, the people of communities still rely on neighbors working together to keep the lights on. RM

Facts, dates and pictures for this article were taken from the Historical Village archives, Lincoln Electric Co-op Archives, and the Eureka Riverwalk info boards.



AI illustration



Lincoln Electric Cooperative gives back to our neighbors through Meals on Wheels

AT Lincoln Electric Cooperative, serving our communities goes beyond delivering reliable electricity. We are proud to support our neighbors through volunteer service with the Meals on Wheels program in Eureka.

Each week, LEC employees donate their time to help deliver meals to local residents who may have difficulty preparing meals or traveling to receive them. These deliveries provide not only nutritious food, but also friendly visits and valuable connections that help brighten someone's day.

As a member-owned cooperative, giving back is a core part of who we are. By partnering with Meals on Wheels, we are helping ensure that members of our community receive the care, support and compassion they deserve.

"Being part of Meals on Wheels is a great reminder of what community is all about," said Jennifer Armstrong, LEC employee volunteer. "We're not just delivering meals, we're checking in on our neighbors, sharing a smile and helping people stay connected. It's a small investment of time that can make a big difference in someone's day."

We are grateful for the opportunity to work alongside the dedicated Meals on Wheels volunteers and staff, who make this important program possible. Together, we are strengthening our communities one meal, one visit and one act of kindness at a time.

At Lincoln Electric Cooperative, we believe that neighbors helping neighbors is what makes our communities special, and we are honored to do our part. RM