COMPETITIVE FOCUS

The broader impact of lineman’s rodeos

Annual Meeting & TechAdvantage Preview

p.30
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‘FULL PARTNERS IN THE 20TH CENTURY’
AN INNOVATIVE NORTHERN LIGHTS/BPA PROJECT BROUGHT POWER TO MONTANA’S YAAK RIVER VALLEY

BY FRANK K. GALLANT

At precisely 3:00 in the afternoon on Oct. 10, 1963, lightbulbs blinked on in Montana’s Yaak River Valley. Belatedly, central-station power—distributed by Northern Lights Inc., a co-op based across the state line in Sandpoint, Idaho—had arrived in this remote, heavily forested area 20 miles south of the Canadian border.

The lights came on when a switch was thrown at a new Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) substation near the small town of Troy, Montana.

“You are now in the position to leapfrog decades to become full partners in the 20th century,” the regional power supplier’s Russell Holt told the dozen or so locals gathered for the dedication ceremony.

Northern Lights had built 21 miles of line to serve some 30 families, a U.S. Forest Service station, a one-room school, and a sawmill. Twenty-seven more miles of line were built the next year, reaching another 47 Yaak River Valley homes.

For the 17 year-round workers, continued on page 128
COMMENTARY
POLITICS AND POLICY AFFECTING NRECA MEMBERS

PHIL CARSON, PRESIDENT

In a few weeks, we’ll gather in Nashville for the NRECA Annual Meeting and TechAdvantage Conference.

The meeting will mark the halfway point in my term as NRECA president, and I look forward to updating you on the health of our association and sharing some goals for the remainder of my term.

Last year, as I was preparing to receive the gavel from Mel Coleman, I thought about leadership and stewardship and how they relate to the future of rural America and the electric cooperative movement. I recalled that the most successful and popular American presidents—regardless of party—led the country from a place of principled optimism.

From FDR’s New Deal to Ronald Reagan’s Morning in America, our strongest leaders see the challenges we face while showing unwavering confidence in our ability to achieve great things.

Along those same lines is another concept that a co-op friend from Missouri introduced me to: cathedral thinking.

This management philosophy, which takes its name from the ornate houses of worship that often took hundreds of years to complete, encourages leaders to see beyond their own lifetimes to consider the positive impact their actions will have on future generations.

Both of these concepts helped fuel the early success of rural electrification. Our founding members understood the challenge before them, but they didn’t let the immense scope deter them.

Today, our cooperatives and communities face new challenges that could benefit from a dose of principled optimism and cathedral thinking.

Advances in technology and changing consumer expectations are prompting co-ops to reexamine everything from rates to staffing to governance so they can meet the needs of our next generation of members.

Some things—like the consumer-focused philosophy of the cooperative business model—are as relevant today as they were in the early days of rural electrification. But other time-honored practices might be ready for a refresh or even retirement.

In those situations, it’s our job to follow the example of the co-op leaders before us and adapt to accommodate the needs of the people and places we serve.

Later this month in Nashville, we’ll learn from our peers, exchange ideas, and discuss emerging trends. If you’ll be there, I encourage you to think about our industry’s challenges and opportunities through the lens of a cathedral builder.

How would they respond to the issues of our day? How does our work honor and build upon the efforts of previous generations? And how will the choices we make strengthen our cooperatives and communities for those who follow?

Some answers might reveal uncomfortable truths about areas where we can improve. And I suspect many others will be reassuring or inspiring.

In either case, I have full confidence in our ability to make the tough decisions required to meet and overcome the challenges that lie ahead. RE
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METAL THEFTS DROP BUT STILL PLAGUE CO-OPS

Insurance claims for metal theft continue to fall, but the problem is far from over for electric cooperatives and others, a new report shows.

The National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) said 28,040 metal theft claims were processed from 2014 through 2016. That’s down 22 percent from 2013 through 2015.

Throughout all four years, copper accounted for 98 percent of the metals reported stolen and, for the most part, copper prices fell over that time—meaning thieves got less for their efforts.

“When the number of metal theft claims and copper prices are compared, a statistically significant positive correlation was found to exist,” the NICB report says.

According to Bloomberg, COMEX copper prices went from $3.69 per pound on Jan. 4, 2013, to $2.50 per pound on Dec. 30, 2016. However, prices rose during 2017, closing at $3.19 on Nov. 24.

NICB says laws targeting metal theft have helped, including measures requiring sellers to show identification and receive payments by check.

“Some states and local governments have increased the penalties associated with metal theft or are charging thieves with additional crimes if the theft caused damage to infrastructure or created a hazard to the public,” the report notes.

NICB found Ohio had the most metal theft claims of any state—3,060 between 2014 and 2016—though the total is down from the 4,042 recorded between 2013 and 2015.

“We’re glad to see the overall numbers coming down, and we have noticed some decline in Ohio, but we remain on top of this tarnished list of states for metal theft,” says Dwight Miller, director of safety and loss control at Ohio’s Electric Cooperatives (statewide/G&T). “Thieves in Ohio continue to jeopardize the safety of Ohio’s cooperative employees, the public, and especially themselves for a few bucks in scrap metal.”

Following Ohio, the other states in the top five for metal theft claims were New Jersey (2,661), Pennsylvania (2,435), New York (2,005), and Illinois (1,448).

—By Michael W. Kahn
PUTTING WATER AND THE SUN TO USE FOR ELECTRICITY

Tourists visit Hawaii for the sun and sea. Now, solar and reservoir water could be central to the way the state’s only electric co-op produces electricity well into the next century.

“We want to pump water from the Mana Reservoir to the Puu Opae Reservoir using solar power and release the water to generate electricity for our members,” says David Bissell, CEO of Kaua’i Island Utility Cooperative.

The project is part of an overall plan to revitalize agriculture and restore habitat on the western side of Kaua’i Island. Restoration and maintenance of the reservoirs and associated infrastructure are key to this effort.

The Lihue-based co-op will spend up to $350,000 on preliminary survey, engineering, and permitting work for the pumped-storage project. It could eventually produce about 25 MW of hydroelectric power, enough to meet about 15 percent of the island’s electricity needs.

Plans include a 5-mile pipeline to move the water between the two reservoirs and an 8-kW solar array to power pumps that will move the water uphill during the day. Release of the water through turbines at a power house would help meet co-op demand when its other generation facilities are not producing adequate power.

“We see the Puu Opae pumped-storage project as an investment in the co-op’s future that could still be providing energy 100 years from now,” Bissell says. “It will help ensure energy and water resources for our members and get us closer to our goal of meeting 70 percent of our energy demand with renewable resources by 2030.”

The overall project could cost up to $90 million, and construction could begin in 2020, co-op officials say.

—By Derrill Holly

PUBLIC PERCEPTION IS NUCLEAR’S ENEMY NO. 1

With growing popular concern about global warming, this should be nuclear’s moment. As a low-carbon generation resource, it should be winning hearts and minds like wind and solar.

But as University of Pennsylvania scholar Reto Giere observes, “The most pressing problem right now is public perception of the risk of nuclear power. People are afraid of it, even though, she adds, “engineers and scientists have good solutions to the challenge of waste management.”

Giere, chair of the Earth and Environmental Science Department at Penn, and Katherine L. Smith, a visiting scholar from Australia, are the authors of a report, Why Some Nations Choose Nuclear Power, which drills down into nuclear’s role in power generation worldwide.

One of their conclusions is that the closer a person lives to a nuclear power plant, the less afraid they are. They cite a series of surveys conducted between 2005 and 2015 in the U.S. showing that “86 to 90 percent of the people living within 16 km [10 miles] of a nuclear power plant … view nuclear power favorably.”

The mid-2015 surveys further show that 83 percent of those ”nuclear power neighbors” are in favor of nuclear power, 15 points higher than the general population.

The U.S. saw a budding nuclear resurgence recently until cheap natural gas became the darling of power generators.
CO-OP HAPPENINGS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

DG WITH A TWIST

The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) in upstate New York and National Grid, an investor-owned utility, are collaborating on planning a microgrid that could be a new business model for distributed generation (DG).

Not only will the 120-acre center for medical care and research generate its own power during outages and times of peak demand, but it will also be a micro-market for electricity. Hospitals, labs, and doctors’ offices will sell excess power from solar, storage, co-generation, and other on-site energy assets within the campus in downtown Buffalo.

Between 5 and 10 MW will be traded at any given time, according to *Bloomberg News*. The same micro-market concept could be used by homeowners to sell rooftop solar to their neighbors, it says.

“This will force changes on the utilities, in their planning and their operations,” John Rhodes, chairman of the New York Public Service Commission, told *Bloomberg*. “This is critical to developing consumer-driven innovation.”

Like the New York Independent System Operator and its day-ahead power price, the BNMC micro-market will use big data on weather, past use, current output, and other factors to set a price for an hour’s worth of electricity.

“It’s all about helping utilities get more distributed energy on the grid,” says Keyvan Cohanim, an officer of Opus One Solutions, the company that developed the smart grid technology that will allow the micro-market to function like a pint-size independent system operator. “This market will provide a natural incentive to create a decentralized, more resilient grid.”

Last March, BNMC won a $1 million state grant to continue planning the microgrid. It was one of 11 finalists in the NY Prize Community Microgrid Competition, part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s ambitious Reforming the Energy Vision, or REV, strategy.

IOWA CO-OPS CHIME IN FOR THE ARTS

This fall, the Forest City High School Marching Band will perform in a gleaming new facility that befits its 36 consecutive No. 1 ratings in state competitions.

That’s when Forest City, Iowa, will open a $10.3-million fine arts facility on the grounds of Waldorf University, a private liberal arts institution. Heartland Power Cooperative in Thompson and Winnebago Cooperative Telecom Association in Lake Mills are playing supporting roles in its construction, with pass-through federal loans of $1 million each.

The zero-interest loans come from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Economic Development and Grant Program, or REDLG.

Since 1998, Heartland Power Cooperative has been involved in providing $7.3 million in financing through REDLG and other economic development programs to more than 50 businesses in its northern Iowa service area. Nearly 800 jobs were created or retained.

“Heartland Power Cooperative is pleased to be an active partner in economic development in our rural communities,” CEO Jon Leear says. “Concern for community is one of our cooperative principles. Helping to provide access to businesses and services while also creating and retaining jobs is essential for our rural communities to remain viable.”

Forest City’s first performing arts center will be a 30,000-square-foot facility with a 600-seat theater, complete with an orchestra pit and a stage, a 200-seat banquet hall with an adjoining catering kitchen, and green space.

—By Victoria Rocha
Plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) work well for a lot of businesses, so why not law enforcement? Ford thinks it’s a perfect fit.

The automaker unveiled the Special Service Plug-In Hybrid Sedan, its first PHEV police vehicle. But don’t expect to see it in one of those chases the news channels like to show. The automaker said it’s designed for “police and fire chiefs, detectives, and other government personnel whose jobs don’t require a pursuit-rated vehicle.”

On a fully charged battery, the car has a 21-mile range with a top speed of 85 mph when operating in electric-only mode. Stephen Tyler, Ford police brand marketing manager, said it’s the company’s first police vehicle “that can potentially get through an entire shift using no gasoline whatsoever.”

“Anyone can plug this into any wall outlet to run gas- and emissions-free on battery-only operation,” Tyler says.

The automaker believes most agencies won’t need anything more than a regular 120-volt wall outlet to recharge. The car can also switch to gasoline mode, giving it a range of some 500 miles.

—By Michael W. Kahn
MILLIONS IN RELIEF FOR CO-OP BATTLING IOU

A Michigan electric co-op welcomed a decision by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that will shave millions off its share of the bill to sustain another utility’s coal-based plant. But the battle isn’t over.

Cloverland Electric Cooperative initially faced costs of $22 million to support Presque Isle Power Plant, which is owned by Wisconsin Electric Power Company, a Milwaukee-based investor-owned utility (IOU).

Wisconsin Electric was ready to close the 359-MW-capacity plant in the Upper Peninsula after a 2008 Michigan law allowed the two ore mines that accounted for 80 percent of its load to seek alternative energy suppliers.

But in 2014, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator directed that Wisconsin Electric keep the plant running for grid reliability. The mines subsequently returned as plant customers, yet the utility continued to levy millions of dollars in operating costs on Cloverland.

A federal administrative law judge petitioned by the co-op reduced Cloverland’s share to about $12 million, and that will be cut further under an October 2017 FERC order that Wisconsin Electric refund more of the money it collected between 2014 and 2015 to run the power plant.

“Cloverland Electric is pleased with this order issued by FERC,” says Dan Dasho, president and CEO of the co-op based in Dafter, Michigan. “We have been fighting this long and hard for our members, who should not be paying the millions of dollars demanded by Wisconsin Electric to keep Presque Isle in commercial operation. [O]ur concern is that it will still have a significant impact on Cloverland to the tune of $6 million to $7 million in terms of cost of that our members will have to pay.”

—By Cathy Cash
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A RECIPE FOR TRANSPARENCY
THE BASIC INGREDIENTS FOR CO-OP OPENNESS
BY ADAM SCHWARTZ

It’s Super Bowl month, and this got me thinking about that most-classic of “big game” meals: chili. I think what I love most about chili is how everyone has their own recipe, with creative tweaks, special ingredients, and flourishes that make the dish unique to them. Thinking about this column on co-op transparency, it occurred to me that the way co-ops approach this important principle is sort of like a chili recipe. There are innumerable ways to accomplish it, and co-ops are always coming up with unique and interesting techniques and ingredients. But in the end, the result is something we’re all fans of: a trusted co-op and an informed, engaged membership.

My formula for co-op transparency continues to evolve, but after years of trial and error, the following is a basic recipe I’ve settled on.

Ingredients

Equal parts:
- Honesty
- Openness
- Access to information
- Accountability

Plus—just a pinch of risk

Honesty

This is a simple one. To build and maintain trust among our members, they have to believe that we’re committed to providing full, unvarnished, and appropriate information about how their cooperative is run. Be sure you train your staff and your board to know what information they can discuss with members and to never say anything about the co-op that is not true.

Openness

Think about the ways you can facilitate your members having visibility into the governance of your cooperative. One way to do this is to invite members to a board meeting. If you haven’t done this before, start slow. Maybe open up the first 20 minutes of each meeting to a Q&A session. Even better, consider an open-forum discussion.

Access to information

Your members shouldn’t have to go to heroic lengths to find certain information about the co-op. Make documents they have a right to see easily accessible. Start with your bylaws, board agendas, and board-approved minutes. Are you posting these on your website? If not, you should consider it. Other documents include your Form 990, which every member has the right to review. They can get it through government websites, so why not get it directly from you?

Accountability

One of the ways we ensure accountability is by making it easy for members to vote for directors. Is your co-op holding regular board elections? When was the last time you updated your election process? Do you allow for members to vote by mail and electronically? These are all ways to show your members you value their input.

Risk

In deciding how transparent to be, we must assess whether the information we’re making available could be misused to hurt the co-op. In addition, we need to recognize that, for legal, privacy, and other reasons, some information must remain confidential and not made available. These are very real concerns and should be taken seriously. There are risks to too much transparency. But we shouldn’t allow fear of what could happen to limit our desire to engage members. In my experience, it’s usually preferable to err on the side of transparency.

Transparency is itself an important ingredient in the larger cooperative program. I might argue it’s even the main course, an ultimate goal of all our component principles. Transparency is more than a happy consequence of good management and good governance; it’s the lifeblood of an engaged and satisfied membership.

Bon apetit.

(If you have your own transparency recipe, please feel free to send it my way.)

Adam Schwartz (@AdamCooperative) is the founder of The Cooperative Way, a consulting firm that helps co-ops succeed. He is an author, consultant, educator, speaker, and member-owner of the CDS Consulting Co-op. You can e-mail him at aschwartz@thecooperativeway.coop.
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More than a thousand linemen from around the world were competing for top honors at the International Lineman’s Rodeo & Expo in Bonner Springs, Kansas, in mid-October. But only a select few had curious strips of tape on their work pants.

“We wear tape on our legs, but you see the tape is taped backwards,” says lineman David Carlton, a 17-year veteran of Jackson Electric Membership Corporation (EMC), pointing to the bottom of a pair of heavy-duty jeans. “When we put the hook on there, it sticks to it, whereas with a lot of other guys, they just put the hook on and it can be a little loose. There’s lots of little tricks we incorporate to make ourselves faster.”

Lineman’s rodeos have increased in popularity in recent years; you can find one a half-day’s drive from just about any point in the United States. In that evolution, they’ve become more than an opportunity to show off skills in front of a crowd or hang with a few buddies from other companies. They represent a new round of continuing education for linemen to draw on when they return home.

“The payoff is just amazing,” says James Vasquez, technical training manager at Pedernales Electric Cooperative (PEC) in Johnson City, Texas. Vasquez should know; he started his career as a Class C lineman, and his mother, Rosa, was the first woman inducted into the International Lineman’s Museum Hall of Fame.

“They have to master their skills, their trade, they have to study, and it’s just an all-around win-win for everybody,” he says. “They have to learn the safety aspect. There’s no downside. The idea is to make the new generation better than the older generation. And the way to do that is to continue to test their skills.”

The Center for Energy Workforce Development, which is backed by NRECA, trade associations, and utilities, estimates as much as 40 percent of the lineman population could retire by 2024. To Bobby Christmas, senior executive manager at Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative (GVEC) in Gonzales, Texas, rodeos are a “fantastic” way of filling that skill gap.

“The apprentices that are participating in the rodeo tend to learn more, faster, than those that are not participating,” Christmas says. “It forces them to learn from the lineman’s book, but also to ask questions about how things work from the linemen that have been in the rodeo. Then they start talking to other utilities, the apprentices there, and learn new things from them.”

Christmas is about as close as you’ll find to being “Mr. Rodeo” in the Lone Star State. He has attended the annual international rodeo on the outskirts of Kansas City, Missouri, 19 times. He chairs the board of directors of the Texas Lineman’s Rodeo Association and helped found the event in 1995. It has grown from a dozen journeyman teams and a dozen apprentices to 40 to 50 teams and 130 apprentices from electric co-ops, municipal systems, and investor-owned utilities.

So what really brings a smile to his face is when GVEC linemen take their rodeo experiences into the workplace.

“I see our teams out in the field when I go out and do inspections,” Christmas says. “They’ll come down out of the bucket and one of them will say, ‘Well, you lost four points because you dropped a tool.’ Or when they’re climbing, if they cut out, they’ll say, ‘You cost yourself points.’ It’s almost like they are using their day-to-day activities as though they were competing in a rodeo. It’s pretty impressive to watch it, and it really gets them to focus on the safety side.”
Count Mark Stallons, CEO of Owen Electric Cooperative in Owenton, Kentucky, as one who believes that the rodeo investment more than pays for itself.

As a show of support from management and the co-op board, Owen Electric budgets about $20,000 a year for lineman’s rodeos. Stallons cheers on his teams as often as possible—in 2017, he flew to Kansas City straight from the NRECA Regions 2 & 3 meeting in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

“Basically, it helps build a team, it helps build morale, it helps build safety skills,” says Stallons, whose father and uncle were electric utility linemen. “I think it also says for the co-op, we aspire for our linemen to be the best they can be.”

Owen Electric fielded a pair of three-person journeyman teams in the 2017 international competition, held less than a month after the annual Kentucky Lineman’s Rodeo. The rule is not hard and fast, but Stallons says his co-op generally takes teams that do well at the state event to Kansas. At either event, there’s little room for error. At the statewide rodeo, an Owen Electric team was one foot from dismounting the pole when a wrench fell, hit the ground, cost the crew a deduction penalty, and became the difference in winning a medal and sitting in the audience.

“We want linemen who work safely. We want linemen who are skilled. And we want linemen who take pride. This rodeo does all three of those things: pride, skill, and
competition among the co-ops, as well as we get to benchmark ourselves against the best,” Stallons says. “And quite honestly, we have a good time coming out here.”

Jimmy Wilmoth, a journeyman lineman with Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (CVEC) in Lovingston, drove 16 hours with his crewmates to Kansas. Asked about any hijinks that occurred on the long haul, he jokes, “I can tell you … but you probably don’t want to know.”

Then he turns serious. “It prepares us for work at home. It lets us see stuff you wouldn’t see in a normal day. It helps your hand work. It makes your guys a little more tightly knit. You get out of it what you put in it.”

Wilmoth was one of eight CVEC workers at the international rodeo, dubbed the “Super Bowl of Linemen.” Four team members helped out with coaching and event judging during the one-day competition. The competitors—apprentice Steven Matney and a journeyman team of Brandon Hudson, D.J. Noble, and Brute Gardner—tackled an array of challenges. From the sidelines, other linemen from co-ops, investor-owned utilities, and municipal systems studied their every move like quarterbacks gauging defenses.

“We watch, and we take notes. We do spend a lot of time beforehand prepping and trying to find the best methods,” says Carlton of Jackson EMC. “Maybe the materials are different, but we can look it up on the internet, look at a piece of equipment and how to use it. Research is key. You’ve got a job to do; you lay it out and do it the best way possible.”

‘HERE TO WIN’

One trek around the grounds of the international rodeo, and it’s clear that electric cooperatives take this business seriously. Co-op utility trucks dot the parking lot, and several co-ops have special trailers the size of tour buses to haul equipment and necessities. Because the rodeo is an all-volunteer effort, it asks participating utilities to bring along a potential judge or two for each entrant. That’s how some co-op entourages number 40 to 50 people, including family members.

“We’re here to win,” says Tim Burns, a line foreman with Jackson EMC, a coach and part of the co-op’s support team in 2017. “If we’re just here to show the flag, then I’m staying home.”

Burns has been at Jackson EMC for 36 years and was a member of the first team that the co-op sent to the international rodeo in 1997. His crew took first place, and the Jefferson, Georgia-based co-op has been a fixture since, slowing its participation only during the Great Recession. In 2017, its journeyman team of Wayne Connell, Jeff Sutton, and Jeremy Adams placed eighth out of 238 teams from all utilities and third among 38 co-op teams.

Based on his two decades of rodeo experience, Burns says there’s a common trait among linemen who compete in the rodeo. They tend to wind up being the real go-getters at Jackson EMC.

“We feel like it’s the best training these guys can get,” he says. “When we have our storms, poles that are out in

Linemen from around the world participate in the International Lineman’s Rodeo & Expo, including a competition to change a crossarm safely and efficiently.
the wet areas, these guys are the first ones at it. ‘Hey, I’ll go out there and get it.’ These ‘rodeo-ers’— they’re on it.”

Part of that desire to win requires extra hours of training in the months leading up to state, regional, or international rodeos. Many co-ops have a couple of utility poles mounted in their yards for just such a purpose, while some have even more elaborate setups. Eric Bitzko, technical services supervisor at Pedernales, says that kind of practice makes perfect.

“Every guy out here has put in more time to practice than some guys will put in all year on overtime,” says Bitzko, part of PEC’s support team at the international rodeo. “The last thing you want to do is come out here and embarrass yourself and the company that you’re representing. So a lot of these guys, they practice on nights or weekends, whether it’s studying or climbing.”

“There’s always new things to learn,” adds Greg John of Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative, whose team won the 2017 journeyman division in Texas and fared well in Kansas. “You’ve got to be a little crazy to climb a pole, and you’ve got to want to win.”

The payoff?
A 4-foot-high trophy.

The 2017 Cobb Electric Membership Corporation team of Scotty Lyons, Jeremy Norment, and Josh Poston finished first in the journeyman division in Texas and fared well in Kansas. “You’ve got to be a little crazy to climb a pole, and you’ve got to want to win.”

SAFETY FIRST

Clint Card says there’s a common misconception about lineman’s rodeos: that everyone is out to beat the clock.

Not so, says Card, manager of Chase City district operations at Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative in Chase City, Virginia. The true name of the game is safety. As a judge at regional and international rodeos, he’s looking for faults before he worries about the stopwatch. Case in point: He worked the apprentice pole climb in Bonner Springs, crooking his neck up and down to watch 313 competitors. The second-fastest time of the day was registered by an investor-owned utility contestant at a sizzling 22 seconds. But he scored a two-point deduction for a slight bobble and placed 160th instead of second.

“Time can be an issue as a tiebreaker,” Card says. “But the rodeo is about safety first, doing it right, and watching other people do it right.”

That’s particularly important because many of the simulated events would be extremely dangerous on
FOR LINEMEN, ABOUT LINEMEN, BY LINEMEN

THE MAKING OF THE ‘SUPER BOWL OF RODEOS’

BY STEVEN JOHNSON

As Dale Warman remembers it, the idea for an electric utility lineman’s rodeo came from … a rodeo.

Warman was a supervisor at Kansas City Power & Light (KCP&L) in 1984 when he and some utility buddies were speaking at the technical school at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

“Somebody was talking about the rodeo, how the ranchers used to have a rodeo. They felt that was a good way for the ranchers and the hands to improve the skills they do every day. And when they had to compete with each other, they would have to increase those skills,” he says.

From that offhand comment, the International Lineman’s Rodeo & Expo was born. It started with a dozen journeyman teams from four companies on a field in Manhattan. Thirty-four years later, it has outgrown seven venues and now attracts more than 1,000 competitors from around the world—the Super Bowl of the trade.

“The whole idea behind this from day one with our model was this is for linemen, about linemen, and by linemen. Nothing else,” says Warman, who is retired from active duty and serves as co-chairman of the rodeo board of directors.

“Success lies in the fact that there are no hidden agendas. It was always and has been always for the linemen and their families.”

After two years in Manhattan, the rodeo, then a Kansas-Missouri endeavor, relocated to the training grounds of KCP&L. But it was still financed in the same small-scale manner as a youth soccer league. “A lot of my children and other people’s children would cook hot dogs and hamburgers to buy trophies,” Warman laughs.

Apprentice linemen came on board in 1987, and the field swelled to 235 hopefuls by 1990. In response, the name of the tournament evolved from the Midwest Rodeo to the National Rodeo to the International Rodeo, when entrants from Canada and Great Britain first appeared in 1993.

With that expansion, corporate sponsors became interested and obviated the need for Warman’s kids to labor over a smoky grill, though he points out that volunteers are essential to pulling off the October spectacle.

“There’s no paid salary. The board, all of us, are on our own dime. We travel on our own dime, and we come here on our own dime.”

After bouncing back and forth between vacant land and stockyards, the rodeo has found a permanent home on property owned by the National Agricultural Hall of Fame in Bonner Springs, Kansas, about 20 miles west of Kansas City, Missouri.

That dedicated land means workers no longer have to put up and pull down poles every year, as they do with other rodeos. In addition to the competition, the rodeo includes a vendor expo and a two-day safety conference that serves a continuing education function for linemen.

“You watch your peers and how they do things. You see tools that you’ve not seen before,” Warman says.

There are no strict guidelines on entries, though most competitors have scored well in regional rodeos in the months before the big event. The competition includes overall winners—the best of the best as scored by volunteer judges—as well as champions in divisions for investor-owned utilities, electric cooperatives, and municipal systems, among several categories. The 2018 event kicks off with the expo and safety conference Oct. 10–12, with the competition on Oct. 13.

From those early days, nothing has warmed Warman’s heart more than watching linemen lend their tools to colleagues who lack the needed equipment for a given event.

“You’re competing against me, but take mine.’ That’s just the way it is,” he says. “It’s like a family; I mean a true family. Once a Marine, always a Marine. Once a lineman, always a lineman. I can go anywhere in the country and tell somebody I’m a lineman, and I’ve got a friend.”
energized lines. While events differ from rodeo to rodeo, the 2017 menu in Kansas included repairing a phase conductor around a damaged wire as well as heaving a gathered rope 30 feet in the air, threading it through lines of wire 18 inches apart, then mounting a utility pole to change out pin-top insulators.

“A lot of guys can climb real fast, but you have to learn to be able to work,” says Rick Aulgur, area operations supervisor at Branson, Missouri-based White River Valley Electric Co-op, which fielded one team at the international rodeo. “Get the technique first, then speed will follow naturally.”

**STRONG GROWTH**

What does the future hold? Probably more rodeos, more competition, and more team building. In 2017, the Georgia Lineman’s Rodeo attracted 86 apprentices who compete individually and 33 journeyman teams. The Virginia-based Gaff-n-Go Lineman’s Rodeo grows each year; it was up to 150 linemen in 2017. Rodeos in the Tennessee Valley, Kentucky, Nebraska, Montana, California, New England, Utah, and the Pacific Northwest, among others, all report strong growth.

But as the job of a lineman changes, organizers say rodeos will have to adjust. In Texas, for example, Christmas foresees apprentices taking their written tests online, perhaps before the rodeo. Events will have to be restructured as well. Today’s linemen must be computer-savvy and routinely work with laptops and a smart grid. So future competitions might involve troubleshooting electronic devices, he says.

“Every day, you can learn new practices and learn new ways to do things, and you can learn things from being here with other people,” says James Berry, a lineman at Petit Jean Electric Cooperative in Clinton, Arkansas, who attended his first international rodeo in 2017. “We’re just showing off our trade. A lot of people don’t know what it takes to do what we do. You’ve got to respect it.”
The only thing you have to unfold is potential.

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As electric cooperatives confront challenges like changing technologies, evolving consumer expectations, and workforce turnover, programming for the 76th NRECA Annual Meeting and Expo will follow a theme of “Leading the Energy Future.”

Organizers are expecting high registration numbers for the event, to be held at the Music City Center in popular Nashville, Tennessee, February 22 to 28.

“Electric cooperative leaders across the country are facing wide-ranging issues in the areas of culture, operations, technology, member engagement, and governance,” says Tracey B. Steiner, NRECA’s senior vice president for education and training. “These challenges provide opportunities for growth as we incorporate new technologies in the provision of services to our members, use different communication channels to reach them, manage multiple generations in the workplace, and much more.”

As in recent years, opportunities abound for seasoned and emerging cooperative leaders to learn how to address these challenges at the meeting’s shorter general sessions, breakouts, and other activities. Participants will also have plenty of chances to network.

“We know networking is important to attendees, so we continue to allot more time on the agenda and space in the convention center for these meaningful conversations to take place,” says Kristen Wheeler, NRECA Annual Meetings program manager.
Entertainment Night is back, after taking last year off for the NRECA 75th anniversary celebration in San Diego. Nashville icon and award-winning country music singer Trace Adkins will take the stage on Tuesday, February 27. Tickets are selling fast, meeting organizers say.

CBS News correspondent Lesley Stahl will be the closing speaker on Wednesday, February 28. The longtime 60 Minutes reporter will speak for about a half-hour then take part in a conversation with the meeting’s moderator for another 30 minutes.

Another speaker of note is former top Navy SEAL sniper Howard E. Wasdin, who was the subject of the 2001 movie Black Hawk Down. A twice-decorated veteran for service during the Battle of Mogadishu, Somalia, he will speak at the second general session February 27.

At press time, organizers were planning two additional events: The Lab will be a hands-on showcase for co-op leaders to experience trending technologies on February 26 and 27, and NRECA will unveil the new Cooperative.com website that week.

NRECA CEO Jim Matheson will kick off the opening general session on Monday, February 26. He will be preceded by the Youth Leadership Council’s parade of states and followed by the day’s keynote speaker, New York Times best-selling author Jeremy Gutsche, CEO of TrendHunter.com. Gutsche will talk about cultivating a culture of action, change, creativity, and reinvention.

Introductions of the current Youth Leadership Council will lead off the second general session February 27, and participants will hear from YLC spokesperson and native Tennessean Aaron Lay, a member of Fort Loudon Electric Cooperative in Vonore. Remarks from NRECA President Phil Carson come next, and afterward the association will conduct its business meeting.

At the February 28 closing session, the association will honor the recipients of its annual awards.

Now in its third year, NRECA’s Next Generation Leaders Experience will provide special programming for co-op employees who have demonstrated leadership potential or management capabilities and show a strong interest in the co-op business model. During workshops and meetings, “we hope participants will learn about their personal leadership style and begin to build their own personal co-op network,” says Michelle Rostom, NRECA’s director of workforce development. “It’s a unique opportunity for emerging leaders to experience the co-op business model in action.”

Tickets are on sale for the NRECA International lunch February 27 and the annual breakfast and business meeting of ACRE® the next day. The business meeting will include the 2017 Annual Report and elections of ACRE’s executive committee.

As in past years, other national cooperative organizations will hold their annual meetings in Nashville throughout the week: National Information Solutions Cooperative and National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative on February 25; National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation on February 26; and Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange on February 27.

This year, annual meeting participants will have two chances to demonstrate their commitment to community. Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives and Middle Tennessee EMC in Murfreesboro will sponsor the all-day service project on Saturday, February 24. At press time, a location was to be determined.

And don’t worry if you can’t volunteer on the 24th. NRECA will host another community service project at the Music City Center during the week.

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2018 COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

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And don’t worry if you can’t volunteer on the 24th. NRECA will host another community service project at the Music City Center during the week.

BUSINESS MEETING:
Tuesday, Feb. 27 following the second general session (approximately 10:30 a.m.)
2018 NRECA ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  Pre-Meeting Education

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  Pre-Meeting Education

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  Pre-Meeting Education
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  Community Service Project

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25
7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  NRECA Registration
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  Pre-Meeting Education
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  Community Service Project
8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  Health and Retirement Screenings
9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  NRECA Registration
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  CFC Registration
9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  NRRTC Registration
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  SEDC Member Enrichment Meeting
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  NISC Annual Meeting
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.  Breakout Sessions
2:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.  Breakout Sessions
3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  CFC Annual Meeting
4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.  TechAdvantage Expo Opening Reception

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26
7:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  CFC Registration
7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.  NRECA Registration
7:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.  Breakfast
7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  Concern for Community
8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.  General Session 1
8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  Health and Retirement Screenings
10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.  Breakout Sessions
11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  Lunch
11:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  TechAdvantage Expo
2:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.  Breakout Sessions
3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.  Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange Annual Meeting
7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  Concern for Community
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  TechAdvantage Conference
8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  General Session 2
8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  Health and Retirement Screenings
11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  Lunch
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  International Lunch
11:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  TechAdvantage Expo
1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.  Breakout Sessions
2:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.  Breakout Sessions
3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.  Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange Annual Meeting
7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.  Entertainment Night

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27
7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.  NRECA Registration
7:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.  Breakfast
7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  Concern for Community
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  TechAdvantage Conference
8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  General Session 2
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3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.  Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange Annual Meeting
7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.  Entertainment Night

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.  Annual ACRE® Meeting & Breakfast
7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  NRECA Registration
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  TechAdvantage Conference
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  General Session 3
11:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  TechAdvantage Expo
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TechAdvantage Expo
Nashville, Tenn. • February 26-28, 2018
Electric cooperatives face challenges in better serving their members, and the equipment, technology, and partners they turn to for solutions will be on display at the TechAdvantage® 2018 Conference & Expo.

“Electric co-ops have critical roles to play in building and maintaining an increasingly more complex electric grid and meeting member-consumer expectations,” says Jim Spiers, NRECA’s vice president of business and technology strategies. “Distributed generation, renewables, storage, consumer controls, and enhanced efficiency tools are changing the ways cooperatives serve our members.”

Held in conjunction with NRECA’s 76th Annual Meeting, the premier trade show and technology conference for electric co-ops moves into Nashville’s Music City Convention Center February 25 through 28. More than 300 exhibitors will be on hand to display their products and services.

Pre-conference training sessions on February 25 include seminars on Rural Utilities Service engineering, cybersecurity incident-response planning, and photovoltaic (PV) system maintenance.

“We’ve partnered with the IEEE Rural Electric Power Conference this year, so some of their leading presenters will be among our featured speakers,” says Mary Ackleson, TechAdvantage program manager.

Many of the presentations will focus on emerging benefits provided by smart grid components, including PV tracking systems and distribution fault anticipation technology, Ackleson says.

“Engineers, technical experts, and academic researchers who work closely with utilities will be discussing systems and processes that co-ops are using to enhance value for their members today.”

Nearly 60 breakouts and 20 Technovation sessions are scheduled February 26 through 28. Many of the sessions February 27 will deal with operations topics.

Ackleson notes that Nashville is less than a day’s drive from many co-ops in the Mid-South region, and she encourages staff of those co-ops to find a way to attend.
STUDENT-CENTERED ACTIVITIES

NRECA is hosting student-centered activities at TechAdvantage funded by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Grid Engineering for Accelerated Renewable Energy Deployment initiative (GEARED). The program builds on an education and training framework designed to prepare future utility professionals to handle an influx of renewables into the electric generation mix.

“The goal is to provide students who are still trying to make decisions about career choices the opportunity to meet cooperative employees and vendors,” says Patti Metro, NRECA’s manager of transmission and reliability standards and an adviser for NRECA’s Next Generation Workforce initiative. “We want students to know that this is an interesting, fun, and innovative industry and that cooperatives are focused on providing opportunities for the next generation of employees.”

Among the hundreds of products displayed across the exhibit hall will be bucket trucks, the latest in electric utility safety gear, drones and other specialized operations equipment, vehicle charging stations, and wind generation and solar components.

“Electric co-ops spend more than $4 billion upgrading and maintaining their systems each year,” says Eric Commodore, NRECA’s director of meeting and event planning. “We’ve added a hands-on technology demonstration space to TechAdvantage this year so visitors will be able to get a good look at some of the technology they can use to serve their members better.” RE
SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25
7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Pre Conference Workshops
(8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted)
• 2018 RUS Engineering Seminar
• MultiSpeak Integrator Training
• Build and Test Your Cybersecurity Incident Response Plan
• Cybersecurity Penetration Testing
• PV System Maintenance and Troubleshooting
• Creating a Technology Plan: The Process and the Product
• UAS Ground School
• Deploying Distribution Automation at Electric Co-ops (8:00 a.m. – Noon)
• What's New in Communications Infrastructure for Utilities? (1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Opening General Session—Jim Carrol, Futurist, Trends, and Innovation Expert

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Breakout Session 1
• A Preview of the New Interconnection Standard
• Analysis of Impact of Mass Implementation of DER on a Distribution System
• Specifying and Purchasing Cybersecure Operations Technology Networks
• C&I Engagement Opportunities in a DER World
• Securing the Network: Understanding CIA, Segmentation and Zero Trust
• Introduction to Powershell
• Unique Techniques to Improve your GIS Data Quality
• Procurement and Supply Chain Speed Networking

11:00 a.m. – Noon Breakout Session 2
• Evaluating Economic Considerations for Deploying a Broadband Network at Your Electric Cooperative
• UAS: Utility Applications & Case Studies
• Underground Cable Testing and Life Expectancy Diagnostics
• Advanced Distribution Modeling and Simulation Research
• Train Your Cyber Defenders to Think Like Hackers: Lessons Learned from Red Team vs. Blue Team a.k.a. “Purple Teaming”

2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Breakout Session 3
• Lessons Learned from Regional Solar Procurement
• Energy Storage for Co-ops
• Hurricane Irma Response—Lessons Learned
• GPS Tracking of Borrowed Resources and Contractors During Emergencies
• Activating your Cyber Insurance
• IT’s Jeopardy!!
• Best Practices for Procurement of Medium- and Heavy Duty Vehicles
• FEMA’s Public Assistance and Procurement—Do’s and Don’t’s

3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. Breakout Session 4
• Storm Restoration: Technology and Process Lessons Learned
• Exploring the Uses and Value of Microgrids
• Building a State-of-the-Art EMS
• Digital Certificates and Signatures
• Call Center Live Chat Services
• Advances in Voltage Optimization, Fault Detection, and Response
• The Axis of Physical and Cyber Security

4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

TechAdvantage Expo Grand Opening Reception

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27
8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Breakout Session 5
• New Rate Manual for DER
• Evaluating Batteries: Deployment, Integration and Market Drivers
• Distribution Automation Tools, Technology, and Use Cases
• Connect America Fund and Mobility Fund Auctions
• Value of a Cybersecurity Self-Assessment
• Consumer-Centric Program Design
• The NCCIC: Addressing Cyber Risks to Industrial Control Systems (ICS)
• Managing Your Certificate of Insurance to Minimize Risk Exposure

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9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Breakout Session 6
• Progress Update on Regulatory Reform Initiatives
• Unmanned Aerial Systems—Latest Technologies and Advances
• E&O Processes to Ensure Data Accuracy in GIS and Throughout
• Delivering Broadband—Why Collaboration is Critical to Bringing First-Class Internet Services to Rural Communities
• Cyber Mutual Assistance
• Multi-Stage Energy Storage for Renewables Integration
• Modeling Verification & Validation
• Wood Pole Purchasing and Maintenance

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. Breakout Session 7
• Benefits of De-risking Technology Integration
• Fiber for Cooperatives: the Economic Case for Member Empowerment & Operational Gains
• Design Tools for System Engineering
• Emergency Response Planning and Tabletop Testing
• Hacking Your Building Access Control Systems
• Substation Device/Network Connectivity and Security: Equipment & Services
• NRECA’s National Discounts Program – New Program Administrator & New Program Opportunities

11:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. TechAdvantage Expo Open (Lunch available for purchase)
Technovation Session classrooms in the Expo

1:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. Techno 1
• Managing Safety in Your Facility
• Outsourced Outage Texting & Member Notifications
• UAV, a New Eye in the Sky
• Getting the Most Out of Fleet Auctions

2:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Techno 2
• A Battery of Choices, But What Does it Mean?
• Addressing NERC-CIP Compliance Challenge for Utilities through IT Service Management
• Safety for the Single-Person Crew
• Automated Pole Inspections

3:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. Techno 3
• Data-Driven Loss Analytics and Operational Efficiency
• Achieving Better Outage Management through Multi-layer GIS Views
• The Power of Broadband Bundles
• Mitigating High-Risk Trees with an Aerial Topping Saw

5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
TechAdvantage & Associate Member Reception at The George Jones

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
Breakfast with Phil Gwoke

9:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.
IEEE REPC SPOTLIGHT
• IEEE REPC #1: A Modern Intelligent Grid Means New Motivations, Models, and Methods
• IEEE REPC #3: Application of DFA Technology for Improved Reliability and Operations
• IEEE REPC #2: Does a PV Tracking System Make Sense for Co-ops?

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Breakout Session 8
• IT Peer to Peer - Part 1
• Procurement and Supply Chain Roundtables—Part 1

11:00 a.m. – Noon Breakout Session 9
• IT Peer to Peer - Part 2
• Procurement and Supply Chain Roundtables—Part 2

11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Expo Open (Lunch provided)

1:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. Techno 4
• Fixed Wireless Broadband Solutions for Utilities and Rural Electrical Co-ops
• Integration Systems to Access Asset Details from GIS Systems
• Leveraging Utility FTTH for Smart Grid and Community Economic Development
• Increase Reliability through Wildlife Mitigation Planning

1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Techno 5
• DER Impact on Distribution Operations that Require Next Generation Outage Management
• Integrating IT Data Into SCADA Using SNMP
• How Valley Communications Leveraged Electric Infrastructure to Deliver Fiber-Like Wireless Broadband to Customers
• Eliminating Paper in the Office and in the Field

2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Closing General Session—Don Yaeger, The Speaker of Champions
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901 Main Campus Dr.
Raleigh, NC 27606
919-856-2421
tim.gladd@us.abb.com
abb.com
Enabling a smarter, stronger, and greener grid, ABB is a leader in power and automation technologies, providing customers with the most comprehensive transmission and distribution offerings for all industries and helping to address the challenges of balancing a rising demand for power.

NRECA Platinum Associate Member

ACES 745
Andy Whitesitt, Vice President of Business Development & Customer Service
4140 West 99th St.
Carmel, IN 46032
317-344-7089
andyw@acspower.com
acspower.com
ACES is owned by 21 electric cooperatives. The company assists its members and customers by managing their energy risk. ACES’ members and customers operate in all of the major electricity markets in the U.S. and have a collective portfolio of over 50,000 MW of both load and resources.

NRECA Affiliate Member

Aclara 917
Anne-Laure Leroyer, Director of Marketing and Communications
77 Westport Dr., Ste. 500
Maryland Heights, MO 63146
571-701-0083
events@aclara.com
aclara.com
Aclara is a world-class supplier of smart infrastructure solutions and services to more than 800 water, gas, and electric utilities globally. Aclara offerings include smart meters and field devices, advanced metering infrastructure, and software and services to utilities.

NRECA Platinum Associate Member

ACRT 1011
Michelle Walker, Business Development Coordinator
1333 Home Ave.
Akron, OH 44310
330-945-7500
mwalker@acrtinc.com
acrtinc.com
ACRT is the leading independent utility vegetation management consulting firm that proactively prevents and rapidly resolves cooperatives’ challenges. We assess and monitor systems for liabilities, consult with decision-makers on planning and budgeting, represent cooperatives, and train personnel to be safety-focused leaders.

NRECA Platinum Associate Member

Event Sponsor

Aerial Solutions 551
Lynn Grayson, Marketing Manager
7074 Ramsey Ford Rd.
Tabor City, NC 28463
540-761-9900
lgrayson@aerialsolutionsinc.com
aerialsolutionsinc.com
Aerial Solutions helps utilities provide safe, reliable service by side trimming trees along rights-of-way using a saw suspended under a helicopter. Using this saw allows us to easily overcome constraints, such as rough terrain, wetlands, and inaccessible locations that challenge ground crews.

NRECA Silver Associate Member

Albarrie GeoComposites Limited 554
Carla Smidler, Sales & Marketing Manager
85 Morrow Rd.
Barrie, Ontario L4N 3V7
Canada
705-737-0551
info@sorbwebplus.com
albarrie.com/secondary-containment
Albarrie manufactures, engineers, supplies, and installs Sorbweb Plus secondary oil containment using patented oil reactive self-sealing smart fabric technology. Sorbweb Plus is a maintenance-free oil containment system that offers...
cost savings on both installation and operation.

Alianza, Inc. 1344
Kevin Mitchell, Vice President, Marketing
333 South 520 West
Lindon, UT 84042
801-802-6400
kmitchell@alianza.com
alianza.com
Alianza makes cloud communications radically better for service providers. Our Cloud Voice Platform is a web-scale, turnkey virtualized software solution that enables broadband providers to rapidly launch and profit from VoIP and unified communications (UC) services. Alianza is a Fiber-To-The-Home Top 100 and Utilities Technology Council Impact Award winner.
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Allied Telesis, Inc. 1515
Nathan Nash, VP, Channel Sales
3041 Orchard Pkwy.
San Jose, CA 95134
408-519-5700
nathan_nash@alliedtelesis.com
alliedtelesis.com
For nearly 30 years, Allied Telesis has been delivering reliable, intelligent connectivity for everything from enterprise organizations to complex critical infrastructure projects around the globe, resulting in increased value and lower operating costs.
NRECA Silver Associate Member

Altec Industries 900
Jeannie Harrison, Project Manager
210 Inverness Center Dr.
Birmingham, AL 35242
205-991-7733
jeannie.harrison@altec.com
altec.com
Visit Altec at Booth 900 to see some of our latest products in our complete line of aerial devices, digger derricks, and specialty products. Speak one-on-one with Altec representatives to learn more about our complete line of products and services for the electric utility and contractor market.
NRECA Gold Associate Member

American Tower 353
Justin Han, Marketing Specialist
10 Presidential Way
Woburn, MA 01801
781-926-7082
justin.han@americantower.com
americantower.com
American Tower is a leading provider of wireless and broadcast communications infrastructure, with over 144,000 communications sites globally. Our solutions also include in-building and outdoor distributed antenna systems, managed rooftops, and services that speed network development.
NRECA Silver Associate Member

American Transmission Co. 544
Steve Dykstra, Vice President, Business Development & Integration
P.O. Box 47
Waukesha, WI 53187
608-877-3630
sdykstra@atcllc.com
atcllc.com
As the nation’s first multistate, transmission-only utility, ATC’s sole focus is transmission. We serve utilities that procure primary network transmission service. Public power is represented on our board, and 22 of our 26 owners are public utilities. This model can benefit utilities nationwide.
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Andax Industries LLC 1749
Jim Bunn, Sales Manager
613 W Palmer St.
St. Marys, KS 66536
800-999-1358
sales@andax.com
andax.com
Andax Industries LLC manufactures top-quality leak and spill control products and secondary containment systems. Our products include pole- and pad-mount transformer containment, flange and isolator bushing containment, spill kits, and more. We are a distributor for Streamlight and Pelican products.
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AriesPro 1655
Ace M. Kumar, President
19901 Southwest Freeway
Ste. 164
Sugar Land, TX 77479
949-294-7357
info@ariespro.com
ariespro.com
AriesPro is systems integrator and data analytics services firm delivering enterprise analytics solutions to cooperatives nationwide. Our core solutions, with no licensing or installation fees, focus on engineering, operations, outage management, advanced metering infrastructure and smart grid, and member services demand response and energy efficiency functions for co-op.
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Arteche USA 417
Catherine Holguin, Regional Sales Director
18403 Pines Blvd., Ste. 313
Pembroke Pines, FL 33029
954-329-6009
cholguin@artecUSA.com
artech.com
ARTECHE has 70 years of experience in the electricity sector. ARTECHE offers a wide range of instrument transformers that covers all customers’ needs. ARTECHE High Accuracy Extended Range current transformers accurately measure variables currents produced from today’s generation systems.

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Asplundh Tree Expert LLC 1023
Greg Asplundh, President
708 Blair Mill Rd.
Willow Grove, PA 19090
800-243-8737
dkemmerer@asplundh.com
asplundh.com
Celebrating its 90th year of proudly serving the utility industry, Asplundh continues to specialize in efficient, safe, and cost-effective vegetation management. A family-owned and managed corporation, Asplundh employs over 34,000 service professionals throughout the United States. As a full-service vegetation management contractor, Asplundh performs tree pruning or removals, right-of-way clearing and maintenance with specialized equipment, and integrated vegetation management with herbicides. Whenever a storm-related emergency occurs, Asplundh crews can be quickly mobilized to remove downed trees from power lines and roadways. The clear choice for vegetation management is Asplundh.
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B

Baron USA LLC 1554
Greg Steeves, Chief Technical Officer
350 Baron Cir.
Cookeville, TN 38501
931-528-8476
sales@baronusa.com
baronusa.com
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\(^1\) Based on comparison of the 50-gallon Hybrid Electric model against the estimated annual operating cost of a standard electric water heater of like capacity manufactured prior to 2015 under NAECA II which is likely being replaced. Savings over 10 years and will be slightly lower for 65- and 80-gallon models. \(^2\) Built in leak detection alerts of a water leak so you can take action to prevent home damage. \(^3\) Limited tank warranty is extended for residential single-family dwelling applications from ten (10) years to lifetime with product registration (limited parts warranty is extended for residential single-family dwelling applications from one (1) year to six (6) years with registration). Warranty registration must be completed within 90 days of installation. Some states may not require warranty registration. Limited lifetime tank warranty applies to the original purchaser for as long as the purchaser owns the home. See warranty certificate for complete information. Warranty information can be located in the “Use and Care Instructions” found under the Specs/Docs tab of the product page on Rheem.com.
At Bayer, we provide innovative, science-based solutions to minimize risks and help utilities protect public safety and maintain uninterrupted service. Our diverse portfolio of solutions, including Esplanade 200 SC, Method 240 SL, and Viewpoint, offers a solution for all their vegetation challenges.

We are wood experts who deliver excellence in products, aesthetics, value, and services—all customized for your needs and available even in unplanned events.

Bayer Vegetation
Management ........... 318
Douglas Wood, Area Sales Manager
138 Heritage Dr.
West Monroe, LA 71291-1420
318-331-4715
douglas.wood@bayer.com
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bayervm.com

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Management ........... 318
Douglas Wood, Area Sales Manager
138 Heritage Dr.
West Monroe, LA 71291-1420
318-331-4715
douglas.wood@bayer.com
bayervm.com

We are wood experts who deliver excellence in products, aesthetics, value, and services—all customized for your needs and available even in unplanned events.
Your business is providing safe, reliable power to your members. Our business is making sure you keep that commitment. We pride ourselves on our history of thinking ahead to plan for what will be needed. As we’ve continued to grow, we’ve built a plan for a better way to serve you. We’re excited to show you what comes next with ACRT.

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Calix .......................... 450
Carl Meyerhoefer, Solutions Director
1035 N McDowell Blvd.
Petaluma, CA 94954
828-244-1359
meyerhoefer@calix.com

Calix is the global leader in platform innovations for access networks. Its Intelligent Access systems portfolio combines AXOS, the revolutionary platform for access, with Calix Cloud, innovative cloud services for data analytics, and experience assurance.  

**NRECA Gold Associate Member**

CallNet Call Center Services Inc. .......... 752
Charles Webb, President
P.O. Box 1345
Bloomingon, IN 47402
812-355-8200
info@callnetservices.com
callnetutilities.com

CallNet Call Center Services is a live-agent call center specializing in electric cooperative and municipal utility outage, dispatch, and customer service. MultiSpeak®-compatible transfer of data between CallNet and the co-op outage management system, customer information system, and metering systems is available. Please call us to talk about our after-hours phone coverage.  

**NRECA Silver Associate Member**

CDW Nonprofit .......... 850
Paul Amriester, National BDM
200 N Milwaukee Ave.
Vernon Hills, IL 60061
480-867-7499
paulam@cdw.com
cdw.com/nonprofit

**NRECA Platinum Associate Member**

Central Service Association (CSA) .......... 1625
Roger Smith, Chief Business Development Officer
P.O. Box 3480
Tupelo, MS 38803
622-842-5962
rsmith@csa1.com

Cs1a.com

Celebrating 80 years of service! CSA has been offering services to cooperatives since 1938, and we continue to expand our offerings and our reach. Today CSA provides customer information, financial, work order, meter data management, and geographic information systems; employee benefit plans; and more.

**NRECA Service Member**

Chain Electric Company .......... 214
Melissa Lyman, Contract Coordinator
1308 West Pine St.
Hattiesburg, MS 34903
601-545-3800
mlyman@bchain.com
chainelectric.com

**NRECA Silver Associate Member**

Channell ............... 1702
Tom Janke, CSR Manager & Trade Show Manager
2604 Ynez Rd.
Temecula, CA 92589
800-423-1863
tjanke@channell.com
channell.com

Channell's FIBER-X and SHIELD-X are committed to making the world of fiber optics a better place through design, innovation, and service. Channell's 90 years of experience and proven features for the telecommunication, broadband, and utility industries have contributed to Channell's reputation and success.

**NRECA Silver Associate Member**

Charles Industries Ltd. .......... 239
Dennis Sheridan, Utilities & Transportation National Sales Manager
1450 American Ln., 20th Floor
Schaumburg, IL 60173
847-806-6300
mktserv@charlesindustries.com
charlesindustries.com

Charles manufacturers innovative enclosed solutions for protecting electronics at remote locations. Products include a comprehensive line of outdoor and indoor cabinets and shrouds, building terminals, pedestals, housings, and below-grade enclosures for fiber and copper networks, made in the USA.

**NRECA Silver Associate Member**

CMS Utility Services Inc. .......... 1444
Glenn Wilson, President
6959 Beech Grove Rd.
Lebanon Junction, KY 40150
502-643-8785
GWilson@cmsus.com
CMSus.com

CMS Utility Services Inc. is the nation’s leading expert in pole yard design and construction. CMS designs pole yards that are safe, efficient, and affordable using the proprietary CMS Portable Pole Rack System. We offer this service free of charge to utility companies interested in our system.

**NRECA Silver Associate Member**

ComNet ............... 1510
Frank Haight, VP of Marketing
3 Corporate Dr.
Danbury, CT 06810
203-796-5300
fhaight@comnet.net
comnet.net

ComNet is a fiber-optic communication and Ethernet product manufacturer. ComNet focuses on providing networking solutions to the energy, power, and transmission markets. The product line consists of fiber-optic transmission as well as a broad line of fiber-optic, copper, and wireless Ethernet products.

**NRECA Silver Associate Member**

Cooperative Building Solutions .......... 846
Gary Hobson, Chairman
77 Westport Plaza, Ste. 250
St. Louis, MO 63146
314-744-2277
garyjohbson@coopbuildingsolutions.com
coopbuildingsolutions.com
Cooperative Building Solutions (CBS) was established to provide a complete turnkey approach to the planning, design, and construction of rural electric cooperative facilities. Backed by over 100 years of unique industry experience, Gary Hobson leads CBS and his team of industry professionals.

**NRECA Silver Associate Member**

Cooperative Response Center Inc. (CRC) .... 927
Dan Otteson, Senior
Regional Business Manager
2000 8th St. NW
Austin, MN 55912
507-437-2400

Cintas Corporation ....... 1445
John Lewis, Marketing Manager
6800 Cintas Blvd.
Mason, OH 45040
513-754-3842
lewisj@cintas.com

Cintas is the largest provider of managed flame-resistant clothing (FRC) programs. Over half a million wearers get ready for the workday with FRC from Cintas—making Cintas the most trusted source to equip companies with FRC apparel in North America.

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Cleveest ............. 1329
Brad Johnson, Regional Business Manager
13700 International Place
Richmond, BC V6V2X8
Canada
612-695-6112
Brad.Johnson@cleveest.com
cleveest.com

Cleveest helps cooperatives deliver reliable services through innovative mobile workforce management and smart grid operations software solutions. We specialize in optimizing field operations and automating field activities and processes to improve safety, reliability, and response time.

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info@crc.coop
crc.coop
CRC is a nationwide 24/7 contact center and alarm-monitoring center providing services to electric utilities, including energy dispatching, customer care, and monitoring of security and medical alarms, including video-verified substation monitoring.

**NRECA Platinum and Service Associate Member**

**Copperweld Bimetallics LLC**  238
Dustin Smith, VP Sales
254 Cotton Mill Rd.
Fayetteville, TN 37334
931-433-7177
dsmith@copperweld.com
copperweldenergy.com
Copperweld replaces theft-prone copper cables for grounding. Proper grounding saves electric grids from severe damage during lightning or fault conditions. Copperweld’s metallurgical bond provides owners, developers, and contractors with a cost-efficient solution to copper theft.

**NRECA Silver Associate Member**

**Daffron & Associates Inc.**  1029
John Bleiker, Senior Marketing Executive
1 Solution Pl.
Bowling Green, MO 63334
888-323-3766
marketing@daffron.com
daffron.com
Daffron provides tightly integrated utility software solutions, including customer information system/billing, customer self-service web and mobile, financial management, workflow management, prepaid metering, meter data management, and field solutions. Daffron also provides application and data hosting and information technology services.

**NRECA Platinum Associate Member**

**DataSource**

**Mobility**  1654
Ashley Ingram, Tradeshow and Marketing Coordinator
1990 Madison St., Ste. 105
Clarksville, TN 37043
931-286-4242
angram@datasourcemobility.com

dataVoice International Inc.  1227
Denna Sandoval, VP Sales and Marketing
2220 Bush Dr.
McKinney, TX 75070
972-390-8808
denna@datavoiceint.com
datavoiceint.com
We provide feature-rich mobile solutions that help utilities improve customer service and operational efficiency. Our offerings include outage and work force management products that equip utilities with the tools needed to address service interruptions and improve system reliability.

**NRECA Silver Associate Member**

**Davey Resource Group**  1345
Tommy Maloney, Sr. Project Developer
2035 Grassland Pkwy.
Alpharetta, GA 30004
770-377-1594
tommy.maloney@davey.com
davey.com/drg
Solutions are our specialty. Davey achieves proven results by integrating cutting-edge technology with highly qualified, experienced people. For inventories and inspections, as well as reliability, to improve management of your distribution system, the Davey Resource Group is your complete resource.

**NRECA Gold Associate Member**

**dBspectra.com**  236
Steve Lahodny, Global Account Manager
1590 East Hwy. 121 Business, Bldg. A, Ste. 100
Lewisville, TX 75056
501-235-7143
steve.lahodny@dbspectra.com
dBspectra.com is a U.S. manufacturer of mission-critical antennas, transmitter combiners, receive multiplexers, tower top amplifiers, power monitors, duplexers filters, and other antenna system solutions. Strategic supplier to all major OEM LMR/LTE/Tetra radio manufacturers supporting projects in the U.S.

**DJI / Gesco Technology Solutions**  1601
Rusty Ortkiese, Unmanned Aircraft Systems Sales Engineer
1135 Rumble Rd.
Forsyth, GA 31029
478-315-0812
uas@gesco.com
gescoas.com
DJI is the worldwide leader in unmanned aircraft system (UAS)/drone technology, and we have partnered with Gesco Technology Solutions to bring UAS products to the utility industry. Together, we provide field-ready packaged solutions for drones with all the necessary accessories in a custom, rugged, hard-shell case.

**Dur-A-Lift Inc.**  1301
Rod Bergstrom, Eastern Sales Manager
2002 Kingbird Ave.
George, IA 51237
712-475-2804
sales@dur-a-lift.com
dur-a-lift.com
WE SPEAK BUCKET TRUCK.
Dur-A-Lift Inc. is a leading manufacturer of telescoping articulating personnel and material handling aerial lifts for what is better known as a bucket truck. The experience, quality, and dependability shows in every product that leaves the factory floor.

**NRECA Gold Associate Member**

**Diversified.**  1745
Mark Steele, Director - Energy & Utilities
2975 Northwoods Pkwy.
Norcross, GA 30071
310-728-0616
msteele@diversifiedus.com
diversifiedus.com
Diversified provides enterprise-wide network and media technology solutions for both large and small utilities. While Diversified is known globally for control room design and integration (over 500 control rooms), we also offer technology products and services for your organization: Facility design security operations centers, emergency operations centers, data centers, mobile command vehicles, IP telephony & wireless solutions, structured cabling, digital signage and content development, virtual reality, augmented reality, consulting on emerging technologies and technology road mapping, etc. As one of the largest technology providers in the world: If You Can Imagine It, We Can Engineer It.

**DVI**  644
Joy Hazelgrove, Admin Assistant
701 E Cary St.
Richmond, VA 23219
804-771-4319
jhazelgrove@dvgridsolutions.com
dvgridsolutions.com
**NRECA Gold Associate Member**
Okonite is the undisputed leader in the cable industry. Established in 1878, Okonite's Okoguard EPR insulation has been in service for 50 years, becoming the backbone of many electric systems and helping electric and industrial utilities achieve unsurpassed reliability objectives.

Okonite manufactures Okoguard EPR cables in three geographically separated facilities, each of which have undergone extensive expansions and modernizations. Today, Okonite manufactures more EPR cable than all our competitors combined.

Our new control cable plant in Cumberland RI was built to accommodate increased demand in power, control and instrumentation cable needs, including substation control cable.

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Eagle Solar Group .......................... 217
Chris Kellar, Managing Director
9200 E Pima Center Pkwy., Ste. 180
Scottsdale, AZ 85258
404-226-7354
ckellar@eaglesolargroup.com
Eaglesolargroup.com
Eagle Solar Group develops utility-scale solar energy projects to provide clean, reliable, and affordable renewable energy to utilities of all types.

Eaton ........................................... 1129
Ben Wallace, GM
3033 Campus Dr., Ste. 350 N
Minneapolis, MN 55441
763-543-7770
bendwallace@eaton.com
eaton.com/smartgrid
Eaton’s Energy Automation Solutions division (EASD) provides a range of power delivery and reliability, automation and control, advanced metering, and demand response solutions designed to increase efficiency and smart operations. EASD serves customers in the utility, commercial and industrial, mining, and renewable energy markets.

NRECA Platinum Associate Member

Electricity Utility Distributor Association (EUDA) .................. 1400
Matthew Brandrup, Chairman
2250 Pinehurst Dr.
Middleton, WI 53562
800-356-9370
mbrandrup@resco1.com
eudaonline.com
All members of the EUDA group are customer-owned distributors. EUDA members are here to ensure your utility gets the supplies it needs at a fair price while still providing the best customer service possible.

Electricom ...................... 451
Billy Vincent, VP Power Division
1660 W Hospital Rd.
Paoli, IN 47454
812-723-2626
bvreeden@electricominc.com
electricominc.com
ElectriCom provides all facets of telecommunications and power construction services, including design-build and OSP arrangements. Telecom includes fiber and copper cable placement, splicing, and removal. We also provide right-of-way clearance and construct manhole and conduit systems.

NRECA Silver Associate Member Event Sponsor

Electro Industries/
GaugeTech .................. 1700
Maria Luckas, Marketing Manager
1800 Shames Dr.
Westbury, NY 11590
516-334-0870
mrktg@electroind.com
electroind.com

Electrosolve Technology Solutions and Services .................. 1511
Steve Dalon, Director of Sales and Marketing
300 Youree Blvd., Bldg. 1
Shreveport, LA 71105
318-221-2055
dsalon@electsolve.com
electsolve.com
ElectSolve’s uCentra meter data management system is a data management and integration platform for managing utility data. uCentra captures data from advanced metering infrastructure, customer information systems, SCADA, outage management systems, geographic information systems, and other utility systems. uCentra provides a complete analytic view of the utilities data with management, analysis, and reporting.

NRECA Silver Associate Member

Emerald Transformer ........ 1724
Chris Bruner, National Sales Manager
4509 US Highway 83 N
Defuniak Springs, FL 32435
317-509-6220
cbbruner@emeraldtransformer.com
emeraldftransformer.com
With eight plant locations in the U.S., Emerald Transformer provides customers (regardless of size or location) a premier single-source solution for oil-filled electrical equipment, including repair, remanufacturing, field services, recycling, disposal, oil processing, lab services, and parts sales.

EnerVision Inc. .......... 1518
Joshua Warmack, VP
Emerging Energy Solutions
4170 Ashford Dunwoody Rd., Ste. 550
Atlanta, GA 30319
678-510-2923
joshua.warmack@enervision-inc.com
enervision-inc.com
EnerVision is an innovative, independent management and technical consulting firm, offering the electric utility industry a full range of business-related services. Services include power supply; distributed energy resource and demand side management planning; strategic planning; and rates strategies and designs.

NRECA Silver Associate Member

Environmental Consultants
LLC (ECI) .......................... 215
David Palen, Director,
Business Development
(Cooperative, Municipal, & Contractor Markets)
520 Business Park Cir.
Stoughton, WI 53551
608-877-1170
dpalen@eci-consulting.com
eci-consulting.com
Environmental Consultants LLC (ECI) is a vegetation and asset management consulting firm. ECI has provided services and personnel for right-of-way and asset assessments, program development consulting, I.S. and UAS technology solutions, contract foresters and environmental specialists, and legal support.

NRECA Silver Associate Member

EPRECSA USA LLC .......................... 1559
Gilbert Duran, Sales Representative
5065 Westheimer Rd., Ste.
1130
Houston, TX 77006
832-372-6993
g.duran@eprecsausa.com
eprecsausa.com
Manufacturer and distributor of smart grid medium-voltage circuit reclosers for use in overhead distribution lines and substation applications (brand: NOJA POWER) and line post insulators. We also manufacture line posts and dead end insulators for transmission and distribution lines.

Equipment Technology
LLC .......................... 501
Chris Rycroft, VP Sales/ Customer Service
341 NW 122nd St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73114
912-656-5370
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417-267-7000
brad.grainger@rsplastics.com
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217-259-5826
spencer.halbrook@sssr.com
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radenz@bepc.com
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8601 Six Forks Rd., Ste. 700
Raleigh, NC 27615
252-732-5888
matthew.besch@xyleminc.
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Dominika Sink, Corporate Sales Coordinator
50101 Governors Dr., Ste. 280
Chapel Hill, NC 27517
919-960-6015
dsink@stratasolar.com
stratasolar.com
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Jacquie Hudson, Marketing Manager
3555 Gilmore Way, Ste. 200
Burnaby, British Columbia
V5G 0B3 Canada
919-900-8970
jhudson@tantalus.com
tantalus.com
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Mark Nelson, Executive Chairman
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textpower.com
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tireboss.com

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Phil Dudley, Regional Business Manager
300 S 8th St.
Waco, TX 76701
254-799-0261
phil.dudley@texasmeter.com
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Anthony Principi, Director of Operations
650 N Sam Houston Pkwy, E, Ste. 205
Houston, TX 77070
443-838-7174
aprincipi@trees-llc.com
trees-llc.com

**Trimble Energy** ........ 413
Traci Musch, Sales Administration Manager
310 The Bridge St.
Huntsville, AL 35806
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traci_musch@trimble.com
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3947 Main St., Ste. 4
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606-677-3402
b.heuer@tru-check.com
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9045 N River Rd., Ste. 300
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608-335-8945
eddubuc@usicllc.com
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Trever McLaughlin, Client Services/Marketing Associate
109 Independence Way
Coatesville, PA 19320
610-857-2655
trever@uticom.net
uticom.net

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Cheryl Hennessy, Marketing Manager
4730 Madison Rd.
Cincinnati, OH 45227
513-533-6200
communications@ilSCO.com
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Bobbi Harris, VP, Market Strategy & Development
1129 20th St. NW, Ste. 350
Washington, DC 20036
202-833-6828
bobbi.harris@utc.org
utc.org

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Aaron Wood, Marketing Manager
101 33rd St. Dr. SE
Hickory, NC 28602
828-323-8914
sales@utilitysolutionsinc.com
utilitysolutionsinc.com

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Jared Brandon, CEO
3256 W 11th Ave.
Vancouver, BC Canada
604-727-1666
jared@utilityops.com

**V&S Schuler Utilities Group** ........ 1641
George Cook II, Operations Manager
2240 Allen Ave. SE
Canton, OH 44707
330-452-200
gecook@vsschuler.com
vsschuler.com

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**Valmont Utility** ........ 852
Chris Evans, Marketing Director
28800 Ida St.
Valley, NE 68064
205-968-7200
cevans@valmont.com
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2211 N Minnesota St.
Mitchell, SD 57301
414-801-1424
kevin.kloehn@vantagept.com
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26 Old Elm St.
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Shayne Forsyth, Director of Marketing Communications
1575 Sawdust Rd, Ste. 600
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cbasel@weg.net
weg.net

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James Carter, Executive Vice President
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Steve Sisler, VP of Sales
Development
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515-267-8099
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Jack Schwartz, Sales Engineer
13650 Dulles Technology Dr., Ste. 275
Herndon, VA 20171
240-527-8893
j schwartz@zerionsoftware.com
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William Walsh, Strategic Distribution Manager
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2017 PHOTO OF THE YEAR

Dave Ritchey’s “Storm” earned the most Likes in the December photo contest to take home 2017 RE Magazine Photo of the Year honors. Congratulations, Dave!

The contest themes for 2018 are:

- **February:** Engaging Younger Members
- **March:** Drones
- **April:** April Fool (Co-op Humor)
- **May:** Tailgate Talks

Visit REMagazine.coop to see all the photos, read the contest rules, Like your favorite shots, or enter some images of your own.
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MULTISPEAK IS ENABLING THE ELECTRIC UTILITY OF THE FUTURE

BY DERRILL HOLLY

MultiSpeak” is evolving.

The widely used interoperability standard began in 2000 as a fairly limited specification developed by NRECA, electric cooperatives, and vendors to allow automated metering platforms to “talk” to billing systems.

Over nearly two decades of development, expansion, and refinement, the standard has been integrated into dozens of enterprise software systems, making it a cornerstone for distribution optimization and the industry standard for interoperability.

It’s now used by more than 800 utilities—cooperative, investor-owned, and municipals—in 21 countries.

“As the electric industry becomes more complex, the value of having an interoperability standard has never been more crucial,” says Alvin Razon, senior director of distribution optimization for NRECA’s Business and Technology Strategies unit. “We are constantly working on updates and improvements to meet the needs of our evolving industry.”

Its latest iteration, MultiSpeak 5.0, is an ambitious foray into the critical fields of cybersecurity, distributed generation (DG) integration, microgrids, and demand response. New online resources help utilities tie critical business and operations tools into what Razon calls an “ecosystem of connectivity solutions.” And a new, innovative online testing harness and digital certification are being built as part of the MultiSpeak cybersecurity tool.

Troy, Missouri-based Cuivre River Electric Cooperative has been using MultiSpeak products since 2005.

“When it comes to integrating use of different software packages, this is one of the best things we’ve had available,” says Rick Didion, the co-op’s manager of engineering and operations. “It touches every piece of software that we own.”

“MultiSpeak has reduced the need for us to convert data to reach the desired results,” adds Anna Pudiwit, supervisor of engineering and operations customer service representatives for Cuivre River Electric. “We’re now able to import and analyze data more easily, which, in turn, saves us time responding to our members’ requests.”

Didion says their MultiSpeak-enabled platforms help get up-to-the-minute information to members who use the co-op’s energy management mobile app.

“Sharing data among different platforms, we can provide more timely information to members who use our mobile applications,” he says. “That means they have more control over how they use energy and manage their service accounts.”
Didion sees the potential of Multi-Speak to develop a paperless system for field crews. Outage tickets, crew management directives, timekeeping, and resolution reports would be dispatched and compiled via mobile devices in the co-op’s service vehicles.

“We’ve already done a lot to reduce the paper flow,” Pudiwitir says. “The engineering and operations teams see the value of getting the information to the right place at the right time.”

PREPAY

For WIN Energy Rural Electric Membership Corp., in Vincennes, Indiana, MultiSpeak applications that facilitate advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) communications between co-ops and their meters were key to launching a prepaid metering program.

Processes that once required expensive service calls are now automated, reducing the need for deposits from members on tight budgets, says Gregory Wolven, the co-op’s director of engineering.

“It’s a management tool that’s making participating members extremely happy,” he says. “They can put $50 on their meter and replenish the funds by phone or mobile device.”

Wolven, who chairs NRECA’s MultiSpeak User Advisory Group, was one of the original cooperative leaders involved in developing MultiSpeak. He first got involved to address challenges co-ops faced in coordinating computerized staking and customer information system management.

“Every time one of our vendors would change their system, our custom integration would break,” Wolven recalls. “I’d have to pay both vendors to come up with workable solutions.”

He says the expansion of vendors adopting MultiSpeak protocols is giving utilities flexibility in deploying new equipment or adapting existing components to accommodate new services, like time-of-use rates and cost of service for distributed energy coordination. Wolven notes that WIN Energy will soon be able to compare retail rates and wholesale power costs as well as plan potential incentives for conservation.

“We’re looking at real-time load flows,” he says.

STORM RECOVERY

In the aftermath of Hurricane Irma in September, Excelsior Electric Membership Corp. in Metter, Georgia, worked with the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative...
(NRTC), using MultiSpeak interoperability protocols, to quickly develop applications to assist 150 crews with repairs across its service territory.

“Information showing up on control center screens was color-coded and symbolized so dispatchers instantly knew a crew’s capabilities,” says Doug Lambert, NRTC director of technical solutions. “A separate crew assigned to damage assessment had its members designated in green, and one dispatcher was assigned to keep track of them.”

That led to more efficient use of crews, better communication, and faster overall restoration, as circuits on the co-op’s system were reenergized.

“They had over 18,000 meters out, and within 72 hours they had 100 percent restoration,” Lambert says.

DATA TRANSLATION

Another MultiSpeak feature that’s affecting day-to-day operations is the ability to compile and analyze highly technical data and present it in a nontechnical manner for member services, field operations, and administrative services staff.

“MultiSpeak has given us the capability to connect systems for various purposes without having to custom-write a lot of bridges to address different needs,” says Chris Hamon, CEO of Branson, Missouri-based White River Valley Electric Cooperative. “We need equipment that people in our offices can use without asking a lot of questions. That means fewer calls to the information technology department, fewer calls to the vendors and manufacturers, and fewer calls to co-op communications.”

MultiSpeak could be a key component in consolidating various data streams on single screens in co-op operations or dispatch, particularly as more utilities adopt it, he adds. “More participation, size diversity, and capabilities will mean more flexibility. That means more value for the users and the industry.”

“America’s electric cooperatives came together with our great software and hardware partners to develop this interoperability tool, MultiSpeak,” says Jim Spiers, NRECA’s senior vice president for Business and Technology Strategies. “It helped control the exorbitant cost of building out one-by-one IT systems and saved the prohibitive expense of adding staff to do the work each new step required.”
MultiSpeak is now central to handling the “big data” essential to management, operations, and planning to meet the demands of consumers committed to controlling their energy use, Spiers says. “MultiSpeak will help consumer-centric electric co-ops and other utilities meet the challenges offered by a changing power grid.”

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LAKE REGION SWITCHING TO LED SECURITY LIGHTS

Lake Region Electric Cooperative has seen the light: the LED model chosen to replace its 70-W high-pressure sodium and 175-W mercury vapor security lights.

The decision came after head-to-head tests of products from seven vendors. While the competition led to the selection of AreaMax lights from Evluma (NRECA Associate Member; evluma.com), Lake Region Electric proceeded slowly, installing just over 1,200 lights in four years, largely through replacement of failed high-pressure sodium models. It assessed the program at every step.

The effort is turning a corner, says Logan Pleasant, the Hulbert, Oklahoma, co-op’s director of engineering and operations. “In our next phase, we’re going to change out a light anytime we’re near one,” he says. “If we are on a pole to change a transformer, we’re going to change out the light.”

Contact: Lake Region Electric Cooperative, Logan Pleasant, 918-772-2526; Evluma, Cathleen Shattuck, 425-336-5824.

ADDED MEMBER BENEFIT: PEACE OF MIND

Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative has added another benefit for its consumer-members: peace of mind.

The Mattoon, Illinois, co-op is partnering with a provider of emergency repair service plans covering residential electric lines, other service lines, and appliances typically not covered by homeowner insurance or the co-op.

“The cooperative now can give the members an option to help them avoid potential costs from faulty wiring in and around their home,” says Samuel Adair, Coles-Moultrie’s marketing and member services manager.

The partnership with plan provider HomeServe USA (homeserveusa.com) lets the co-op offer members an insurance program without the management expenses, he adds. “All our member service representatives need relay to the members is a phone number.”

Any benefits the co-op realizes from the partnership will be applied to other programs, such as energy efficiency, Adair says.


OUTAGES FALL, RATINGS RISE FOR MID-OHIO

Mid-Ohio Energy Cooperative has sharply increased the operational efficiency of its distribution network in recent years, reflected in an outage-time reduction of almost two-thirds over its 1,300 miles of line.

Mid-Ohio’s System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI) dropped from 128 minutes in 2009 to just 46 minutes in 2016, a 64 percent decrease.

The co-op’s performance earned it an 87 rating on the latest American Customer Satisfaction Index, the utility’s
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highest-ever score, and consistent recognition as one of five Ohio utilities with the lowest annual outage times, says Mark Terrill, director of operations.

Mid-Ohio uses Survalent (NRECA Associate Member; survalent.com) SCADA to remotely monitor and operate devices across its network, allowing field crews to pinpoint and fix problems faster than before. It relies on the company’s outage management system to automatically process outage reports from members and determine the location and extent of each outage, speeding service restoration.

Contact: Mid-Ohio Energy Cooperative, Mark Terrill, 419-673-7289; Survalent, Marianne Kapina, 905-826-5000.

AMI CHANGE-OUT FOR RAVALLI

When Corvallis, Montana-based Ravalli Electric Cooperative’s aging advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) experienced difficulties communicating with the utility’s meters in remote areas of its service territory, replacement became essential.

Following an analysis of AMI solutions from various vendors and discussions with several co-ops about their AMI deployments, a review team led by Joe Smith, Ravalli’s manager of engineering, initiated complete replacement of Ravalli’s AMI with a solution from Sensus (NRECA Associate Member; sensus.com).

Smith anticipates that the point-to-multipoint functionality of the Sensus FlexNet system will provide greater flexibility and coverage across the co-op’s mountainous territory. And Sensus’s Stratus meter remote connect/disconnect feature will enable better customer service for seasonal users.

Ravalli expects full AMI replacement to be complete by the end of 2019.

Contact: Ravalli Electric Cooperative, Joe Smith, 406-961-3001; Sensus, Linda Palmer, 919-845-4021.
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AERIAL DEVICE UPGRADE

Terex Corporation recently announced the new Optima TC, TCX, HR, and HRX Series featuring product enhancements in the heart of the Hi-Ranger aerial device product line. Improvements include greater payload capacity, better boom speeds, and enhanced side reach and ground access, as well as features that improve maintenance access and reliability on the Optima Hi-Ranger aerials. The addition of the optional Load Alert system further enhances safe work practices by monitoring the truck’s jib and basket capacity.

Contact: Terex Corporation, Watertown, South Dakota, 605-882-5525; becki.dale@terex.com; terex.com.

RAPID OVERHEAD DEPLOYMENT TRAILER

Sauber Manufacturing’s new Model 1572 Rapid Overhead Deployment Trailer is a hydraulically extendable utility pole system designed to hold up power lines while they are energized. This trailer-mounted pole is engineered to temporarily replace poles on most distribution systems. The fiberglass unit can be mounted with standard cross arms and insulators and has space for two circuits on the three-phase pole.

Contact: Sauber Manufacturing, Virgil, Illinois, 630-365-6600; mikeblaser@saubermfg.com; saubermfg.com.
Smart Grid Wireless Router

Nokia is introducing the 7705 SAR-Hm, an LTE/3G wireless router that provides connectivity for grid devices located deep in a highly scalable distribution network. The router can help with wireless communication, distribution automation, advanced metering, and integration of renewable energy sources. The SAR-Hm uses standards-based LTE/3G and IP/MPLS technologies and security features in both hardware and software implementations, including Network Group Encryption.

Contact: Nokia, Helsinki, Finland, 613-720-9716; sarah.miller@nokia.com; nokia.com.

Lithium-Powered Soldering Solution

Milwaukee Tool is introducing the M12 Soldering Iron, the first lithium-powered soldering solution. The portable soldering iron heats quickly, reaching operational temperature in 18 seconds, and monitors the temperature of the tip to power through demanding applications and prevent overheating or damaging wires. A heat indicator notifies the user when the tool is ready to use and safe to store. It features a three-stop pivoting head that locks the tool in multiple orientations, and an LED work light provides visibility to solder in confined spaces.

Contact: Milwaukee Tool, Brookfield, Wisconsin, 262-790-6655; heather.markovich@milwaukeetool.com; milwaukeetool.com.

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Brooks Utility Products’ new Banana Jack Test Switch was designed to improve safety and security on test switches for electric meter testing. The new switch design was made in response to customer reports of numerous near-misses and safety incidents when alligator clips became dislodged from test switches. Banana Jacks offer a more secure electrical connection. The Banana Jack kits enable the field retrofit of ANSI C12.9 compliant front-connected test switches, allowing for the use of banana plugs when connecting to the test switch.

Contact: Brooks Utility Products, Novi, Michigan, 888-687-3008; sales@brooksupg.com; brooksutility.com.
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TEST TOOLS WITH THERMAL IMAGING

Excessive heat often indicates an electrical fault. FLIR recently introduced three new test and measurement tools with thermal imaging with the company’s Infrared Guided Measurement technology. The three thermal imaging products include two digital multimeters, the FLIR DM166 and FLIR DM285, and a clamp meter, the FLIR CM275. The 18-function, 160-by-120 thermal resolution DM285 is FLIR’s most advanced digital multimeter. The CM275 600-amp AC/DC clamp meter also offers 160-by-120 thermal resolution. And the DM166 is the most affordable digital multimeter/thermal imager combination, featuring 80-by-60 thermal resolution.

Contact: FLIR Systems, Boston, Massachusetts, 603-324-7600; flir@penton-media.com; flir.com/test.

LIGHTWEIGHT COMPRESSION TOOL

BURNDY has introduced its PATRIOT IN-LINE series to meet the growing market need for a smaller, lighter, and more ergonomic tools. The PATMD-LW series crimer weighs just 6.7 pounds and is only 18.70 inches in height. The jaws stay retained in the tool when the release pin is activated, and it features an enhanced safety trigger lock to avoid accidental actuation. It also includes an integrated LED light to assist in dimly lit areas.

Contact: BURNDY, Manchester, New Hampshire, 800-346-4175; atoppazzini@burndy.com; burndy.com.
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ASV LLC’s new RT-120 Forestry Post-Track compact track loader is designed for mulching, brush cutting, and highway and utility work. The large-frame unit has increased power and less ground disturbance and works well in mud, ice, and snow. It includes metal guarding around key areas like lights, the AC condenser, and the rear screen, and its level-2 cab has heavy-gauge falling object protection and reinforced windows for impact resistance. A full rear brush guard is also available as a factory-installed option.

Contact: ASV Holdings Inc., Grand Rapids, Minnesota, 218-327-5389; andrew.rooke@asvi.com; asvllc.com.

MOBILE INSPECTION

ARCOS says its new Mobile Inspection solution assesses infrastructure like substations or gas lines in hours instead of days. With a utility’s geographic information system and the mobile location services on any smartphone, tablet, or laptop, inspectors can report and transmit inspection data to managers. When inspectors note a repair, they create a new job with the application, tag the location, and send it to a work management system. Repairs can also be prioritized based on customers affected.

Contact: ARCOS LLC, Columbus, Ohio, 614-396-5500; sales@arcos-inc.com; arcos-inc.com.
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Huskie Tools’ new line of Series 7 PRO-LINE hydraulic cutting and compression tools features a powerful 18-V, 5.0-Ah battery platform that is compatible across all tool lines. Series 7 improved ergonomic tools have built-in Bluetooth connectivity, providing ready access to recorded tool performance data. Internal circuitry monitors critical tool performance, provides audio/visual completed cycle verification, and records cycle count, pressure output, time, date, and GPS location data. The tools also feature a built-in LED light for working in low-light conditions.

Contact: Huskie Tools, a subsidiary of Spartaco, Glendale Heights, Illinois, 630-485-2249; scarlson@huskietools.com; huskietools.com. RE
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The National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA) has presented its prestigious President’s Award to Mary McLaury, who retired last year as COO of Touchstone Energy Cooperatives. The award was presented during the association’s recent national conference by NREDA President Jim Vermeer, vice president of business development at Corn Belt Power Cooperative (G&T), Humboldt, Iowa. A former NREDA president herself, McLaury served on the association’s board for several years.

After 35 years at NRECA, Executive Vice President for Member & Association Affairs Martin Lowery will throttle back to part-time contract work this spring, he told the association’s board recently. He’ll work on special projects and continue to represent NRECA on the boards of the International Cooperative Alliance and the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, CEO Jim Matheson said. “NRECA is truly a great organization, primarily because co-ops are...
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truly great organizations,” said Lowery, a 2014 inductee to the U.S. Cooperative Hall of Fame. “Anyone who understands our construct and purpose is captivated. I look forward to staying involved.”

REGION 1

JOPLIN’S ADVANCE

Jake Joplin has moved up to CEO/general manager at Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative, Newport, North Carolina. “If the name sounds familiar,” the co-op said in announcing Joplin’s appointment, “that’s because he is the son of ... Joe Joplin,” general manager at Rutherford Electric Membership Corporation, Forest City, North Carolina. Jake Joplin, a 17-year employee at Carteret-Craven Electric, has moved through the ranks from staff engineer to vice president of engineering & operations to COO. He takes over from Craig Conrad, the co-op’s CEO/general manager since 2000. “Service for Conrad has been more than managing the nuts and bolts of a co-op,” the announcement release said. “He has truly been committed to the community.”

Barry Bernstein, board president at Washington Electric Cooperative, East Montpelier, Vermont, has been seated as his state’s new representative on the NRECA board.

Staffers at Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative, Manassas, Virginia, have welcomed four newcomers into their ranks. They are Bryan Dittmer and Michael Giltner, field services technicians; Dustin Dobson, meter technician; and Darius Merrill, line technician.

Fifteen years after he retired from Central Virginia Electric Cooperative, Lovingston, Virginia, Grover Palmer has had a new solar installation named in his honor—and it came about by accident. The retired working foreman and his wife, Wanda, own a farm that the solar developer chose as the site for its 41-acre, 10-MW Palmer Solar Center, which is expected to go on-line this month under a 25-year purchased-power agreement with the co-op. “It’s such a coincidence that they found him,” said Melissa Gay, the co-op’s communications & administrative services manager. “We didn’t tell [the company] to ask Mr. Palmer.” It’s a fitting commemoration to Palmer, who worked at the co-op for 39 years before retiring in 2002, but he was pretty low-key about the tribute when ground was broken for the project. “I guess it’s all right,” Palmer said.

One board member at Central Electric Cooperative, Parker, Pennsylvania, has reached the highest level of certification under NRECA’s director training program, while another has taken a second step toward that achievement. Jody Weaver earned Director Gold status recently, and Ken Etzel earned the Board Leadership Certificate.
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REGION 2
SECO’S THE BEST

The Ocala (Florida) Star Banner has rated SECO Energy, Sumterville, Florida, as the best utility in Marion County in its annual Readers’ Choice Awards for Best of the Best. More than 55,000 of the co-op’s nearly 200,000 meters are located in the county, which SECO Energy has served since its founding in 1938. “Thank you, Marion County members, for voting SECO the best utility in the county,” CEO Jim Duncan said. “SECO Energy is proud to have a role in Marion County’s growth and is an active community sponsor in the areas we serve. Almost 100 of our employees and their families reside in Marion County.” Also at SECO Energy, two trustees earned recognition for commitment to their co-op. Richard Dennison earned the Board Leadership Certificate through NRECA’s director training and certification program less than a year after completing the first-level Credentialed Cooperative Director courses. “I promised SECO members to work hard on their behalf,” Dennison said. “My recent educational achievement, this Board Leadership Certificate, is the next step in keeping my promise to members and the communities SECO serves.” Meanwhile, Earl Muffett, a 27-year member of the SECO board, was recognized recently for 16 years of service as the co-op’s representative on the board of Seminole Electric Cooperative (G&T), Tampa, Florida. Lisa Johnson, the G&T’s CEO/general manager, presented Muffett with a commemorative plaque and a letter of recognition. “It is so important for Seminole and all cooperatives to have willing, engaged individuals like you to serve the critical role of board trustee,” she said.

Through three straight years of routine maintenance, construction of a substation, and power restoration after two hurricanes, Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative, Live Oak, Florida, has maintained a perfect safety record, going more than half a million staff hours without a lost-time injury. Staff got the credit when the co-op recently observed the milestone. “Going three years without a serious injury is quite an achievement considering the nature of our work and the types of tasks our employees perform every day,” said Mark Mosley.
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training & safety loss control director. “Our employees know they are responsible for their own safety, as well as the safety of their co-workers and the public,” Executive Vice President & CEO Michael McWaters found strong personal as well as business reasons for the co-op’s pride in the accomplishment. “The well-being of our employees is a top priority, and we want to make sure they all go home safe to their families every day,” he said. “Safety is also important from a business point of view because injuries reduce productivity and increase insurance rates and workers’ compensation costs.”

Malcolm Page has retired from the board at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Madison, Florida, after 24 years of dedicated service. During his eight terms as a trustee, Page also represented his co-op on the board of the Florida Electric Cooperatives Association (statewide), Tallahassee, and as a trustee at Seminole Electric Cooperative (G&T), Tampa, Florida, where he served as board president from 2012 to 2015. “He kept up to date on the constantly changing electric industry” by attending NRECA and statewide training programs, Tri-County Electric said in reporting his retirement. Page had reached Director Gold level through NRECA’s director training and certification program by the time of his retirement.

More than 36 years at the helm of Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, Pickens, South Carolina drew to a close with Charles Dalton’s recent retirement as president/CEO. The co-op built 10 new substations and rebuilt three others under his leadership, as membership swelled from less than 30,000 to about 66,000 in the course of Dalton’s career there. Another legacy, Jim Lovinggood, has been named to succeed Dalton at president/CEO. Formerly the co-op’s vice president of engineering, Lovinggood was Dalton’s second hire after he took the CEO job in 1982.

David Felkel, president/CEO at Edisto Electric Cooperative, Bamberg, South Carolina, has been elected to a three-year term on the board of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (service), Dulles, Virginia.

REGION 3
BUSY LIFESAVERS

Crews from Southern Pine Electric Power Association, Taylorsville, Mississippi, recently saved two lives within a month in separate heroic episodes. In one, a five-member crew returned to a member’s home to replace lines they’d lowered earlier so the member could trim some...
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trees, only to find the member had severely injured his arm with a chainsaw. “Everybody jumped in,” said Mark Meadows, who was on the site with Rodney Buckelew, Brett Dew, Trey Serio, and Parker Vincent. “Nobody hesitated.” The team grabbed a first-aid kit, called emergency responders, and then worked to stop the bleeding. Days later, Colby Ezell and Tyler White were heading back to the office at the end of the day when they saw a man prone on his stomach in the front yard of his home. “He was laying out in the sun, just sweating all over,” Ezell told NRECA News. He and White radioed headquarters to summon an ambulance, and Jimmy Arender, a co-op line foreman, raced to the scene to help as well. Other vehicles had passed by, the stricken man told the linemen, but only the high cab of the bucket truck allowed the co-op crew to catch sight of the victim. Co-op crews are known for helping out after coming across traffic accidents, according to Jason Siegfried, CEO at Southern Pine Electric, but such back-to-back episodes are rare. “God puts his angels where they need to be,” he said.

Josh Mowell has joined the staff at Holston Electric Cooperative, Rogersville, Tennessee, as utility forester. A former regional safety supervisor for the state, Mowell brings 17 years of experience with Asplundh Tree Expert Co. to his new post.

Eight employees with a combined total of 185 years of service to Pickwick Electric Cooperative, Selmer, Tennessee, were honored recently. The veteran staffers are Beverly Lambert, 40 years; Donny Gibbs, 30 years; John Bowers, Janet Browder, and Debbie Tennyson, 25 years; Katie McClain, 20 years; and Dustin Brown and Amanda Taylor, 10 years.

Employees, directors, and members at Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, Clarksville, Tennessee, were sorry to learn of the recent passing of John Archie Stinson, who worked for the co-op for 43 years before retiring in 1994 as its Dover district engineer. Stinson was 84.

Also at the co-op, Merrell Britt was recently named human resources representative, Ryan Clayton was chosen as a journeyman lineman for the Gallatin district, and Tonya Pulley is a new human resources assistant.

His co-workers at Mountain Electric Cooperative, Mountain City, Tennessee, congratulated Cory Singleton as he celebrated his 10-year service anniversary recently.

Kim Phelps has joined Warren Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation, Bowling Green, Kentucky, as senior director of communications & public
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relations. She comes to the co-op from the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, where she served for four years as vice president of communications & public policy, and she previously spent 13 years working for the state’s General Assembly.

**REGION 4**

**BONTRAGER PASSES**

Employees, directors, and members at LaGrange County Rural Electric Membership Corporation (REMC), LaGrange, Indiana, mourned the recent passing of Mark Bontrager, a member of the co-op’s board for the past 49 years. “He served as vice president of the board for 15 of those years,” the co-op reported in its member newsletter. “He always said LaGrange County REMC is a great organization, the best in the state of Indiana and one of the best in the nation.” The co-op recognized his service and dedication in 2001 when it named a substation in his honor. “The LaGrange County REMC directors and employees are sincerely grateful to Mark for his many years of service, commitment, and dedication to the cooperative,” CEO Mark Leu said.

Staffers at Miami-Cass County Rural Electric Membership Corporation, Peru, Indiana, have welcomed Derek Haynes as its new lineman. Haynes brought six years of line experience with Peru Utilities to the co-op post, as well as a family history of co-op service: His grandfather served on the board at Fulton County Rural Electric Membership Corporation, Rochester, Indiana, for 20 years, including 15 as its president.

Daniel McNaul will move this month from the boardroom to the general manager’s office at Firelands Electric Cooperative, New London, Ohio. A board member since 1991 and its president since 1999, McNaul will take over from April Bordas following her retirement. “Dan’s tenure on the Firelands board, coupled with his unparalleled business acumen, operational insight, and member service credentials, make him exceptionally qualified to assume effective responsibility of our co-op,” Bordas said.

Nearly half a century of service to members of North Western Electric Cooperative, Bryan, Ohio, came to a close with Duane Peugeot’s retirement as a lineman. Throughout his 47-year career as a lineman, the co-op reported, Peugeot “served as a mentor to all who worked with him. Congratulations to Duane on an outstanding career, and best wishes for his retirement.”

Two new linemen are on the job at Mid-Ohio Energy Cooperative, Kenton, Ohio. Jason Chavana signed on with the crews working out of the co-op’s Marion district, and Solomon “Solly” Weihrauch joined the Kenton crews.

Kenneth Brown has retired after 36 years as a trustee at Carroll Electric Cooperative, Carrollton, Ohio. He
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wrapped up that long service at the co-op’s recent 80th annual meeting, when board President Harold Sutton presented him with a commemorative plaque. “He will be sorely missed by the board, and especially me,” Sutton said. “Kenny causes us all to think harder and dig deeper. He has been a great servant to the co-op.” Members elected William “Todd” Brown to take his place, while William Casper and Diane Tarka were re-elected.

Union Rural Electric Cooperative, Marysville, Ohio, has named Mike Aquillo as chief experience officer, responsible for the overall member experience with the co-op. Aquillo joined the co-op in 2001 and has been vice president of member services for 12 years. “Mike’s leadership experience and background in continuous improvement systems are a perfect fit for this expanded role,” said Anthony Smith, president & CEO. “We expect to increase performance standards and strengthen the member value proposition across our organization.”

Joel Johns has moved up to meter technician at Midwest Electric, St. Marys, Ohio. He’s been the co-op’s operations clerk since 2015 and previously served as an engineering technician for the city of St. Marys.

REGION 5
CIPCO’S NEW CEO

Bill Cherrier has taken the reins as executive vice president & CEO at Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO, G&T), Cedar Rapids. He comes to the G&T with a wide range of utility management experience, most recently as chief planning & finance officer at Colorado Springs Utilities, where he led the municipal system’s acquisition of a 480-MW gas-fired power plant. “The board selected Bill Cherrier as CEO for his diverse background in the utility industry and his ability to lead our cooperative through a rapidly evolving energy landscape,” said Paul Heineman, president.

Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative, Woodbine, Iowa, recently lost a seasoned board member when Russ Kurth perished in a tragic grain-bin accident. Kurth, 63, had served on the co-op’s board for six years, the last four as its treasurer. “Our cooperative has lost a dedicated director, friend, and community steward,” said Joe Farley, executive vice president & general manager. “We share our deepest condolences with his family.”

Becky Bradburn is now the full-time general manager at Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative, Hampton, Iowa. For the past two years, Franklin Rural Electric had been sharing her with Prairie Energy Cooperative,
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Clarion, Iowa, but the Franklin board recently named her to be its full-time CEO.

Three polished professionals were honored at the recent annual meeting of the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (statewide), Madison. Shannon Clark, CEO/general manager at Richland Electric Cooperative, Richland Center, received the Ally of Cooperative Electrification, or ACE, Award, the association’s highest honor. A long-time champion of expanded telecommunications and data services, Clark credited an earlier ACE Award winner for his co-op’s approach to business. The co-op’s late board president, Gilman Moe, created “a culture of people putting service above self,” Clark said, a commitment that “makes us what we are.” Mary Kay Brevig, communications & public relations manager at Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, Fall Creek, won the statewide’s prestigious N.F. Leifer Memorial Journalism Award. It was her fourth trip to the podium to receive the award. And Nathan Steines, director of operations at Barron Electric Cooperative, Barron, received the Herman C. Potthast Award for his heroic actions after coming upon a vehicle that overturned after a highway accident.

James Anderson has settled in as the new general manager at Jump River Electric Cooperative, Ladysmith, Wisconsin. He came to the co-op from Tanner Electric Cooperative, North Bend, Washington, where he was operations & engineering manager.

Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, Fall Creek, Wisconsin, has promoted Monica Obrycki to the new position of chief administrative officer. A five-year employee of the co-op, Obrycki has taken an active role in the community, where she serves on the board of the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation and chairs the area Chamber of Commerce’s business & workforce development committee. She is a recent graduate of the chamber’s Leadership Eau Claire program.
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Mike Murray, property & right-of-way manager at Basin Electric Power Cooperative (G&T), Bismarck, North Dakota, has been recognized by his professional peers with the highest honor bestowed by the International Right of Way Association. His selection for the Frank C. Balfour Professional of the Year Award marked the first time the association’s nominations & elections committee voted unanimously on the award’s recipient, with no other finalists. Murray has spent his entire 17-year career as a right-of-way professional at Basin Electric. “Being nominated and selected for this award by my peers was one thing,” he said. “But to read the letter of recommendation submitted by my Basin team was totally heart-warming.” Also at the G&T, Tracie Bettenhausen, senior staff writer/editor, has been elected to the board of the International Association of Business Communicators Pacific Plains Region. And Jason Byram, generation/load quantitative analyst, was recently chosen as one of just 18 participants in Leadership Bismarck-Mandan, a leadership training program coordinated by the local Chamber of Commerce.

A legendary co-op lawyer from Minnesota has landed a prestigious listing as a Lifetime Achiever in Marquis Who’s Who, a leading global publisher of biographical profiles. Harold “Hap” LeVander Jr., the son of a former Minnesota governor, served co-ops in the state and lent his expertise to others nationwide for nearly half a century before retiring in 2015. A former regional representative on the NRECA Lawyers Committee, LeVander received the association’s Regional Award for Outstanding Service in 2006. His Who’s Who honor was seconded by the Minnesota co-op leaders who know him best. “The nicest guy to ever live in the Governor’s Residence deserves these accolades and more,” said Steven Wattnem, CEO/general manager at Cooperative Light & Power Association, Two Harbors. “Thank you for all you did for Cooperative Light & Power and for all the cooperatives in the state of Minnesota over the 46 years you served.” Added Mark Glaess, retired president/CEO at the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (statewide), Maple Grove: “So many have toiled in the electric cooperative vineyards, but none as well and as long as Hap. Without this fine and honorable gentleman, Minnesota co-ops would not have been the utility of choice in the North Star State.”

Four directors at Lake Country Power, Grand Rapids, Minnesota, received certificates signifying their training through NRECA’s director education and certification program. Bob Bruckbauer recently received his Board Leadership Certificate, while Mike Forsman and Jim Huhta both completed the requirements.
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for Credentialed Cooperative Director, the first level in NRECA’s three-step training program. Craig Carlson earned certification at both levels.

Great River Energy (G&T), Maple Grove, Minnesota, has been honored as a Yellow Ribbon Company by the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs. “The kind of environment you have created at Great River Energy ensures veterans and military families feel appreciated in the workplace,” said Brig. Gen. Sandy Best, chief of staff of the state’s Air National Guard. That appreciation goes both ways, said Larry Schmid, the G&T’s vice president & CFO who’s also an Air Force veteran and retired Air National Guard member. “Veterans know about leadership, how to work under stress, teamwork, sacrifice, integrity, and about working for the greater good of all,” Schmid said. “In addition to thinking about what Great River Energy can do for veterans, we also considered what veterans can do for Great River Energy and our membership.”

Joel Janorschke has taken the reins as general manager at Traverse Electric Cooperative, Wheaton, Minnesota. Janorschke, who succeeds Clayton Halvorson in the post, comes to the co-op from Meeker Cooperative Light & Power Association, Litchfield, Minnesota, where he was manager of operations.

REGION 7
ALUMNI HONORS

Pro 15, a policy and legislative advocacy group for 15 northeastern Colorado counties, has named Troy Whitmore, public affairs officer at United Power, Brighton, Colorado, as one of its Alumni of the Plains. The award recognizes the professional accomplishments of graduates of high schools in Pro 15 member counties, and Whitmore clearly deserved the honor after working at the co-op for 31 years. Adams County Commissioner Mary Hodge, a United Power member, was also named an Alumni of the Plains. Also at United Power, Keith Alquist has been appointed to the board of directors following the resignation of Bob Grant. Alquist retired in 2012 as vice president & CFO at American Pride Cooperative and is a long-time member of the National Society of Accountants for Cooperatives. “The selection of Keith to fill this board seat is a win for the cooperative members,” said James Vigesaa, board president. “Keith brings a rich background in cooperative business and an intimate knowledge of the United Power community to this position.”

His new co-workers at Empire Electric Association, Cortez, Colorado, have welcomed Preston Vialpando into their ranks as the co-op’s new equipment operator. Vialpando comes to the co-op from Asplundh Tree...
Experts. Also at Empire Electric, Matt Ruggles was promoted to working foreman.

La Plata Electric Association, Durango, Colo., has promoted Archie Ribera to working foreman on its hot crew. Ribera joined the co-op in 2007 as an equipment operator and has been a journeyman lineman since 2012. La Plata Electric also recently announced three new hires and two job changes. The new employees are Shea Rivers, accounting clerk; Jodi Patchek, customer service representative; and Matt Kibel, electronic technician. Moving into new positions are Chris Edmondson, who shifted from meter reader collector to meter technician, and Joel Mann, who advanced to lead meter reader collector.

B.D. “Bud” Paddock has retired from the board at Mountain View Electric Association, Limon, Colorado, after nearly half a century of service. “It went by so fast, but it is time to pass the torch,” he said. When Paddock joined the board to fill a vacancy in 1971, the co-op had fewer than 7,000 meters, about 3,000 miles of line, and five substations. He leaves it with more than 53,000 meters, 6,000 miles of line, and 23 substations. Paddock was the board vice president from 1988 through 2014 and served for 27 years as the co-op’s representative on the board of the Colorado Rural Electric Association (statewide), Denver.

Leslie Kaufman has joined the staff at Kansas Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Topeka, as the association’s new director of government relations & legal counsel. Kaufman comes to the post with a head start; she previously served as president/CEO of the Kansas Cooperative Council, a trade association that represents all types of co-ops in the state. “The electric cooperatives have worked with Leslie throughout her career at the Kansas Cooperative Council,” said statewide CEO Bruce Graham. “Our members have been impressed with Leslie’s public policy and legal work, as well as her development of education and training programs.” Kaufman succeeds Kim Christiansen, who moved north to take over as general manager & executive vice president at the Nebraska Rural Electric Association (statewide), Lincoln.

The new CEO at Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative, Girard, Kansas, is Mark Scheibe, who took the post following the recent retirement of Dale Coomes. “We are excited to have Mark join the Heartland family,” said board President Ernie Troth. “He will be a great addition to our team and leader for our future.” Scheibe comes to the co-op from Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative, Anamosa, Iowa, where he was director of engineering. Coomes, who had served as CEO for nearly 30 years, predicted that “our members and employees will be served well by the leadership Mark brings to our organization.”

Midwest Energy, Hays, Kansas, has named Bob Muirhead vice president of customer service. Formerly the co-op’s director of economic & community development, Muirhead took over as vice president to succeed Pat Parke, who was named general manager. Also at Midwest Energy, staffers said farewell recently to two retiring veterans. Gloria Aust’s retirement as information technology support specialist wrapped up a 37-year career, while Ken Stormont retired as a gas meter technician after a 40-year career. And Timothy Robinson joined the co-op staff as a communications & relay technician.
The two-year-old lineman training program coordinated by Arkansas Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Little Rock, recently graduated its first class of 18 newly certified apprentices. Making up the inaugural class were Josh Harris with the statewide; Cliff Fancher, Monty Hoskins, Keith King, Nathan Maloy, Micheal McDaniel, Jordon Parton, Matthew Snyder, and Joey Wiltgen, Carroll Electric Cooperative Corporation, Berryville; Callan Romine, Craighead Electric Cooperative Corporation, Jonesboro; Jake Autry, Matt Anderson, Hunter Fallen, Zack Lewis, Bo Mitchell, and Chance Schueren, First Electric Cooperative Corporation, Jacksonville; and Trevor Adams and Hunter Frymire, Woodruff Electric Cooperative Corporation, Forrest City. The program includes a requirement of eight weeks of training at the statewide’s campus in Little Rock. “We developed and implemented this program to provide Arkansas electric cooperative linemen with a high standard of training, which, in turn, provides our members with the benchmark in apprentice lineman training, creating a safe, reliable, responsible workforce while still maintaining an affordable cost,” said Kevin Riddle, the statewide’s supervisor of job training & safety. Since the program launched in the fall of 2015, four additional classes have started their training.

PC Electric (formerly Pointe Coupee Electric Membership Corporation), New Roads, Louisiana, recently saluted eight employees who celebrated service anniversaries totaling 135 years of dedication to the co-op and its members. They are Marvin Dixon, 40 years; Chad David and Shane Johnson, 20 years; James Werchan II, 15 years; and Chad Brown, Derek Jarreau, Emily Jarreau, and Jerry Moore, 10 years. “We take pride in our employees and what they bring to the co-op,” said Myron Lambert, general manager.

Scott Deshotel has been promoted to vice president of operations at Beauregard Electric Cooperative, DeRidder, Louisiana. A 16-year employee and former field superintendent of construction, Deshotel moved up to succeed Mark Royer, who retired recently after 39 years at the co-op.

The communications team at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Hooker, Oklahoma, claimed four top awards in recent competitions sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of

Region 3 members of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC, service), Dulles, Virginia, have elected Timothy Rodriguez to a three-year term on the CFC board. Rodriguez is CEO at Kay Electric Cooperative, Blackwell, Oklahoma.

REGION 9
MAUNDER RECOGNIZED

The Northwest Public Power Association (service), Vancouver, Washington, has presented its prestigious Jim Brands Award to Jim Maunder, manager of member services at Ravalli County Electric Cooperative, Corvallis, Montana. A 12-year employee of the co-op, Maunder started his utility career in 1992 at Missoula Electric Cooperative, Missoula, Montana, as an energy specialist and member services representative. He was presented the award in recognition of his long record of commitment and leadership in member service and energy efficiency.

Doug Schmier, board president at Fall River Electric Cooperative, Ashton, Idaho, has earned Director Gold status in NRECA’s board member training and certification program. “This is the highest level of certification NRECA offers to cooperative board members,” the co-op reported. “This achievement highlights Fall River Electric’s commitment to education and remaining informed in an industry which is experiencing significant fundamental changes.”

Vangie McConnell took first-place honors among local-pages editors when the Montana Electric Cooperatives’ Association (statewide), Great Falls, handed out awards at its recent annual meeting. McConnell edits Fergus Features for members.
of Fergus Electric Cooperative, Lewistown. Also at the co-op, six staffers were honored for rounding service milestones: **Guy Johnson**, 30 years, and **Don Criswell**, **Kerby Durbin**, **Bret Ophus**, **Dale Rikala**, and **Tom Simons**, 25 years.

New officers have taken their places at the head of the board table at the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association (statewide), Wilsonville. **Dave Schneider**, general manager at Midstate Electric Cooperative, La Pine, was elected president to succeed **Chris Seubert**, a director at Lane Electric Cooperative, Eugene, who stepped down after the traditional two years of service but remains on the statewide’s executive committee. Other officers are **Bob Durham**, a director at Wasco Electric Cooperative, The Dalles, vice president; **Bob MacPherson**, a director at Umatilla Electric Cooperative, Hermiston, secretary/treasurer; and **Alicia Bonesteel**, a director at Douglas Electric Cooperative, Roseburg, both at-large members of the executive committee.

A photo of the setting sun glinting off icicles on a power pole, as a weary lineman stands at its base, earned **Eric Weekly** a first-place photography award from the Northwest Public Power Association (service), Vancouver, Washington. Weekly, a lineman at Salem Electric, Salem, Oregon, snapped the shot after spending the day helping restore power following an ice storm at Emerald People’s Utility District in Eugene, Ore. “It’s nice to assist other utilities in need,” Weekly said. “We were treated very well, and I’m glad we were able to help.” Also at the co-op, **Randy Adkins**, best known as “the tall guy in charge of digging” for Salem Electric, recently celebrated 40 years of service. He started as a groundman and has been an equipment operator since 1994. He says he’s asked about his height almost every day, to which he answers, “5-foot, 22 inches.” “I’ve seen a lot of changes over the last 40 years,” he said. “While times are changing, I’ll continue to be the tall guy in charge of digging, at least for a while longer.”

**REGION 10**

**BARRERA’S BACK**

Thirty years after she left, **Denise Barrera** is back on the staff at Sierra Electric Cooperative, Elephant Butte, New Mexico, this time as general manager. Barrera started her co-op career as the co-op’s office manager in 1979 and moved on to Columbus Electric Cooperative, Deming, New Mexico, in 1987.
She worked her way through a variety of positions there, from manager of customer support, finance manager, information technology manager, and mapping manager, before taking the assistant general manager post. "Much like her early life in Sierra County," the co-op said in announcing her appointment, "Barrera’s career has come to a full circle, bringing her back to where she started: Sierra Electric Cooperative."

More than three decades of service to Roosevelt County Electric Cooperative, Portales, New Mexico, will draw to a close this month when Mike Riley retires as a meter technician. Riley joined the co-op as a janitor in 1984 and advanced to meter reader within a year. He was promoted to meter technician 10 years later and was also named the co-op’s lead accident investigator. Riley earned the Long Rope Safety Award from the New Mexico Rural Electric Cooperative Association (statewide), Santa Fe, in 2015. He was grateful to the co-op’s line crews, according to a co-op announcement of his retirement, “for being so dedicated to safety he never had to investigate an electrical contact that resulted in great bodily harm.”

The board of directors at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Azle, Texas, has presented the co-op’s Life Saving Award to four linemen who moved fast to save a driver’s life after witnessing an accident last spring. Bill Liedtke, Michael Whitt, Logan Fritchen, and Mitchell Culpepper saw the accident occur on an interstate overpass above them and raced to the scene. Whitt removed the windshield of a vehicle pinned against a guardrail and all four worked to free the driver before rendering first aid and managing traffic until emergency responders arrived.

The SWAT Team at Trico Electric Cooperative, Marana, Arizona, has earned a workplace innovation award for its effort to improve the use of technology at the co-op. Justin Banales, Hal Elzweig, and Alle Rodriguez make up the team, whose initials in this case stand for Support Working to Advance Technology. The trio came up with ways to boost the use of iVUE to make some jobs faster and easier, and they showed field crews how to use less paper by completing routine work on iPads. Their projects recently won first place in the technology/process improvement category of the Celebrating Innovation in the Workplace competition sponsored by the Society for Human Resource Management of Greater Tucson. A Trico Electric team of a different sort, meanwhile, made a respectable debut in its first appearance at the International Lineman’s Rodeo, and they’re ready
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to go again. Darin Cicchini, Andrew Keepers, and Nate Stalcup placed 24th among co-op competitors in the recent rodeo, and they’re looking forward to the next one. “Hopefully we will get the opportunity to go back next year, and we’ll be better prepared,” Stalcup said. Cicchini called it “a great experience. I’d never been a part of something so big. I thought we did okay for our first time. We’ll know what to expect next time.” Chris Neely, a Trico electric crew leader and the team’s coach as well as a judge at the rodeo, wasn’t surprised by his team’s enthusiasm. “The international rodeo is on a different level than the state rodeo,” he said. Also at Trico Electric, employees, board members, and consumers mourned the recent passing of Russell Jones, who served as the co-op’s legal counsel for nearly half a century before retiring in 2015. “Mr. Jones was a legend in the local legal community,” the co-op said in an obituary notice. “Throughout his career, he worked on landmark court cases that set precedent for all electric utilities doing business in Arizona and elsewhere.” Jones, 93, was honored as a director emeritus of the co-op in recognition of his long service.

Russell Jones

Information for this article came from “The Lights Go On in Yaak River Valley,” from the January 1963 issue of RE Magazine.
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