

Looking back at 2021

by **Chris Hillesland, chief operating officer**



It's been another good year at Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC). The lack of moisture in 2021 allowed our crews to complete more work than we expected. The Romo and Sanderson substations, along with the 115-kilovolt transmission line, were completed. The driving force behind this project was our system

growth over the last 20 years. The new line and substations will allow for future growth.

We completed many systemwide projects in 2021. Our top priority is keeping the lights on. Along with staying on top of outages, we also continue to build new services. Another area where we concentrate is identifying problem areas before they cause outages. We appreciate all the help we get from our members who report low-hanging lines, trees near power lines or anything else that doesn't look quite right.

May and June 2021 were a challenge. May brought a fire on the northwest part of our system. We lost

approximately 50 three-phase poles. With the help of a contract crew and McCone Electric Cooperative, we were able to restore power by the next night.

The community will remember June 8 and June 10 for years to come. Our system experienced extreme damage the evening of June 10. LYREC lost 69 large transmission poles, along with 200 distribution poles. Many of the distribution poles were three-phase poles. The storm damage stretched from our west border to the North Dakota state line.

Over 40 lineworkers from neighboring cooperatives, two contract crews and the entire LYREC staff worked to restore power. Some members were out of power for a short time, while others were out much longer. The two-way feeds LYREC built over the years paid off in this storm.

The rest of the summer and fall breezed by. We enjoyed the good weather in the fall and continued to work on projects. LYREC received inquiries for a few new large loads. There was also some new oil activity in 2021.

It's no secret that trying to anticipate the weather is a fool's errand. LYREC will continue to provide reliable, affordable and dependable service, regardless of what gets thrown at us. ■



Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative employees decorated "The LYREC Express" float for the Parade of Lights held in Sidney, Mont.

Nominating Committee to meet in March



Franzen



Schmierer

The Nominating Committee will meet Wednesday, March 2, at Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative's (LYREC) office. The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to select candidates for the board of trustees.

The Nominating Committee will consist of two members from District 3 and District 4. The committee will nominate one or more candidates for District 3 and District 4. The present trustees holding seats in these districts are Tim Franzen, District 3, and Dennis Schmierer, District 4.

Nominating Committee members are:

- Representing District 3 - Joy Buxbaum and Scott Sult
- Representing District 4 - Trey Bloesser and Matt Ler

If you are a member of LYREC, reside in District 3 or 4 and are interested in becoming a candidate for the board of trustees, contact one of the Nominating Committee members and ask to be considered for nomination.

If you have a joint membership, either member on the account can run for the board of trustees seat. A joint membership is entitled to one vote at any meeting of the cooperative. ■

Are portable space heaters efficient for my home?

by Abby Berry

Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. Unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home, which can really take a toll on your energy bills. Whether you should use space heaters really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home. If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weatherstripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose-fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot. Taking these proactive energy-saving measures, rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth, can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

Perhaps your home is energy-efficient, but you're cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter

months. Only use a space heater in small spaces you're occupying and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space; most heaters include a general sizing table.

A word about safety: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths. If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating, and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm, like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation (and appeal!) and maintain warmth.

We know it's cold out there, but remember in addition to safety concerns, space heaters can greatly increase your energy bills if used improperly. ■



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4. Download the SmartHub app on your iPhone or Android device. Log into your SmartHub account to view your bill as soon as it's available and make a payment or set up automatic payment.
5. Call us at 406-488-1602 to set up recurring automatic payment from your bank account via ACH.

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Need assistance heating your home this winter?

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) of Montana and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) of North Dakota are accepting applications. This program assists Montana and North Dakota residents and families with their heating bills through the winter months.

Eligibility is based on your household income (all money brought into the household) and resources (any assets you have in the bank, property or real estate, CDs and stocks and bonds).

If you currently reside in Montana and need help paying your heating bill, you can contact Energy Share at 800-227-0703. If you live in North Dakota, you can contact Community Action at 701-572-8191. You may also download an application at www.lyrec.coop or call Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative.

Once you have submitted your application, it can take up to two months before receiving assistance. If you need assistance, please download an application today. Failure to provide all requested information and verification will delay the eligibility determination and may result in application denial.

Below are the income eligibility criteria for Montana residents:

Number in household	Annual income
1.....	\$27,282
2.....	\$35,676
3.....	\$44,071
4.....	\$52,465

Below are the income eligibility criteria for North Dakota residents:

Number in household	Annual income
1.....	\$32,475
2.....	\$42,467
3.....	\$52,460
4.....	\$62,452

Scholarship opportunities available



Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship

Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC) is offering a \$1,000 scholarship to a Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) member's dependent. The applicant must be a student who is enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school in the fall of 2022.

Scholarship recipients are selected based on academic record; leadership and participation in school and community activities; honors; work experience; a statement of education and career goals; and an outside appraisal. To apply, complete the required criteria, which can be obtained at www.lyrec.coop. BEPC applications are due Feb. 11.

Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association memorial scholarship

The Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) is offering a \$500 scholarship to one eligible student from the northeast district of Montana. The applicant's parent(s)/guardian(s) must be LYREC members and the applicant must be attending college in the fall of 2022. Applications are judged on academic strength; school and community activities; employment; volunteerism; community service; and a personal statement.

A committee comprised of LYREC staff will choose one application to send to MECA for a chance to win a \$500 scholarship. If the MECA committee chooses an applicant from LYREC's service territory, LYREC will match the \$500 scholarship.

To apply, complete the application form, along with all required materials. You may get an application at www.lyrec.coop. MECA memorial scholarship applications are due Jan. 25.

Please send all applications to LYREC, P.O. Box 1047, Sidney, MT 59270. ■



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Fax: 406-488-6524

Website: www.lyrec.com

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