

# June storm causes havoc

BY CHRIS HILLESLAND



Several laminated poles snapped in the June 10 storm. These poles are rated to withstand 100-mile-an-hour winds with quarter-inch of ice.

**W**ind and hailstorms are not uncommon in our area. Typically, the storms do not last long or create too much turmoil. However, the storms that rolled through Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative's (LYREC) service territory in June brought severe damage to our system.

On June 8, we weathered a windstorm that did quite a bit of damage to LYREC's system. LYREC had numerous scattered outages and had to replace 30 poles due to the storm. By June 9, the poles were replaced and all services were restored.

However, on June 10, another storm hit, which was much more devastating to our system. It brought torrential rain, extreme wind and hail of various sizes. The evening quickly went from bad to worse. We received numerous calls from different parts of our system reporting downed power lines and poles, making some roads impassable. Western Area Power Administration, our transmission provider, reported its transmission line from Glendive to Williston was off and it was in the process of sectionalizing the line. Montana-Dakota Utilities also lost some poles on its transmission line.

All available crews were called to patrol lines and start gathering material. By the morning of June 11, we knew we had a big problem and we were going to need additional help. Only two of our 13 substations were operating. More than 80% of our meters were off, which was the first time we recall anything this catastrophic happening in LYREC's service territory. The ice storm in the fall of 2000 was close to this.

We called in both of our power line contractors, Power Line Pro and Synergy. We also requested help from three of our neighboring cooperatives, Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative, Goldenwest Electric Cooperative and Sheridan Electric Cooperative. We needed poles and material and we needed them in a hurry. We immediately started contacting our material vendors. By Friday afternoon, poles started arriving. We had a total of 55 lineworkers, the operations department and several other staff helping with the organization and restoration process.

By 8 p.m. June 11, we were able to get six of our 11 substations energized again. We were able to get a lot of members back on by backfeeding lines from different directions and substations. By the afternoon of June 17, 12 meters were still out of power and by June 22, we were able to get all the homes energized.

We ended up losing 69 transmission poles and roughly 250 distribution poles. The 3 miles of transmission line north of Sidney along County Road 346 took the most damage, with 3 miles of distribution and transmission lines down. The large poles and conductors make replacing the transmission line more difficult and time-consuming than the distribution lines.

LYREC was able to get help from five of our neighboring co-ops with poles, hardware and wire. Our neighboring cooperatives and contractors allowed us to get the line rebuilt as quickly as possible. LYREC would like to thank our members for their patience and understanding during this devastating event. ■

# 2021 virtual annual meeting held

**L**ower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) held its first annual meeting virtually on June 8. The decision on whether to have an in-person/virtual meeting was not made lightly. However, due to the time it takes to prepare and get the information to our members in accordance with our bylaws, the date and venue needed to be decided by early March. Due to the uncertainty of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines at that time, the board decided to err on the side of caution and opted for a virtual meeting.

## CEO report

Jason Brothen explained the precautions taken to keep our staff and members safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. He also reported the pandemic accelerated some changes on the horizon, such as the lobby being closed. Brothen reported that our doors are still locked and will remain that way.

Brothen stated since the 9/11 attacks, we have been following advisement from top security officials in our nation. The cooperative and other utilities fall within the Homeland Security protocol with the electric grid being a top concern for security; without the grid our country would be crippled.

The plan to secure the front door, yet give access to the public in a way to meet the security protocol, started two years ago. LYREC is close to having an automated system that will allow the public to communicate with us and enter our building. We have also increased security with gates, cameras and automatic locks, allowing LYREC to control access for protecting our employees, equipment and material.

Brothen informed the members the audit went well, and the cooperative is in a good financial situation. He also described some of the new software and technology LYREC has been implementing.

Brothen reported that LYREC has been working hard to upgrade transmission, substations and distribution facilities throughout the system. He updated the

membership on the new Romo and Sanderson substation project and talked about our shared service agreement with Mid-Yellowstone Electric, and our new agreement with Goldenwest Electric and Southeast Electric.

## Scholarships

Vice President Greg Rauschendorfer explained the scholarship criteria for this year, and that the funds for the scholarships come from the unclaimed capital credit that must be used for educational purposes. There was a total of 20, 1,000 scholarships awarded this year.

## President's report

President Allen Thiessen gave a recap on the 2020 financials and reported LYREC paid out over \$930,000 in capital credits this year. Thiessen reported on the Operation Round Up program and thanked the membership for participating in the program. He announced that District 3 Trustee John Redman will be retiring the end of June. Thiessen stated that District 3 will be up for election in 2022 and encouraged members from District 3 to contact the board if they were interested in the board seat.

## Bylaw, director election result

Attorney Jean Faure reported all proposed bylaws passed and LYREC had a record number of ballots turned in this year. She also reported that Jim Vitt was re-elected for District 1 and Colin Gartner for District 2 by acclamation.

## More information

If you would like to hear more, go to [www.lyrec.coop](http://www.lyrec.coop) to watch the full video. If you have questions or comments, please send them to [lyrecmeeting@lyrec.coop](mailto:lyrecmeeting@lyrec.coop) or call our office. LYREC's next annual meeting will be June 1 at the Richland County Event Center. ■

# Today's Members Program seeks attendees

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) extends an invitation to the Today's Member Program that will be held in Great Falls, Mont. on Oct. 5-6. This program is held in conjunction with the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) annual meeting.

The Today's Members Program is an educational opportunity for members to learn about the history, operations and some of the issues that affect

cooperative members, along with the future of electric cooperatives. If you choose to attend, it requires a two-day commitment. LYREC will pay for the conference fees, hotel room, meals and mileage for the meeting.

This program is an important piece of what electric cooperative are about - educating their members. If you are interested in learning more about this educational opportunity, please contact Jami at 406-488-1602. ■



*For a chance at a \$1,000 scholarship, the applicants needed to turn in a scenic photo they had taken from LYREC's service territory along with a tagline for their photo.*



North Dakota Sunrise



You're better than a Montana sunset...which says a lot ♡



Lambert Substation on a rainy day



LYREC the power that never goes out!



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Summer Nights



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Sidney Soaring Spring



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#LYREC inEastern406



LYREC proudly serving those of the Yellowstone



Miles and Miles



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Enlightening your everyday life for years to come



Greeting from Sidney, MT



Fiery sunsets in Eastern Montana

Congratulations to Alexa St. Pierre, Ali Meritt, Baylee Schlothauer, Blaine Frisbie, Boston Peters, Courtney Herman, Easton Hopes, Everett Jensen, Gage Bloesser, Gerit Johnson, Jade Schlothauer, Lexie Selting, Maddie Peters, Mollie Wilson, Taryn Hagler, Trey Schepens, William Van Hook III, Shelby Morlock, Liliana Johnson and Alyssa Hill.



## Co-op Day at the Fair is back!

Join LYREC at the Richland County Fairground on Thursday, Aug. 5.

*Free pushups starting at noon  
Free root beer floats starting at 4 p.m. until gone.*

## Redman retires from board



**John Redman**

**J**ohn Redman, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative District 3 trustee, retired from the board June 30. Redman was elected to the board in 1992. He served on the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association board from 2001-2018. He also served on the Montana Council of

Cooperatives for many years.

President Allen Thiessen states, "It is no secret that John's heart centered around the youth in our organization and in the entire community." Redman was a leader in 4-H for many years, is a strong supporter of the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., and was on the forefront of getting LYREC's annual scholarship program started. He continued to advocate for youth programs locally and throughout Montana through his final day on the board.

On behalf of the board and employees of LYREC, we would like to thank John for his dedication during his 29 years on the board not only to LYREC, but across the state and region. He has been instrumental in representing the morals and principles of the cooperative. ■



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### TRUSTEES

Allen Thiessen ..... President  
Greg Rauschendorfer ..... Vice President  
John Redman ..... Secretary/Treasurer  
Colin Gartner ..... Trustee  
Dennis Schmierer ..... Trustee  
Dennis Nelson ..... Trustee  
Jim Vitt ..... Trustee

### EMPLOYEES

Jason Brothen ..... General Manager  
Brenda Bond ..... Chief Financial Officer  
Jami Propp ..... Member Service Manager  
Kyle Kavanagh ..... IT Coordinator  
Margo Zadow ..... Billing Coordinator  
Pam Wilcoxon ..... Plant Accountant  
Tiffani Hentges ..... Customer Service Representative  
Melissa Buckley ..... Customer Service Representative  
Chris Hillesland ..... Chief Operations Officer  
Rich Gorde ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Eric McPherson ..... System Controller  
Kevin Goff ..... Operations Assistant  
Kelly Keysor ..... Operations Manager  
Aaron Eide ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Bryan Franck ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Jesse Obergfell ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Blade Jankovsky ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Tanner Roth ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Ryder Peterson ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Cole Jankovsky ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Lee Delp ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Preston Long ..... Apprentice Lineman  
Brandon Mueller ..... Master Electrician  
Mike Eberling ..... Mechanic  
Dan Gieser ..... EMS  
Lee Alvstad ..... Mechanic/EMS  
Richard Tremblay ..... EMS  
Bo Kindopp ..... GIS/Easement Technician  
Corey Candee ..... Chief Information Officer  
Jeremy Reese ..... Information Technology Technician  
Edwin Gatzke ..... Line Locator/Groundsman  
Justin King ..... Warehouse Supervisor

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Operating report

Year to date:	May 2019	May 2020
Total miles energized	2,104	2,127
Total number of meters	6,201	6,220
Kilowatt-hours sold	113,456,990	113,597,104
Revenue	\$11,753,689	\$11,865,304
Total expenses	\$11,623,461	\$11,516,089
Operating margins	\$630,510	\$1,145,201