



Educating students about safety

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) took part in the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day hosted by the Lambert school. The LYREC crew took the opportunity to educate the students about the dangers and hazards of electricity.

The students learned what to do if a power pole lands on their vehicle, and how to exit the vehicle in a life-threatening situation. With the help of "Oscar" the hot dog, they were able to see the outcome of making contact with an energized line. Throughout the demonstration, key electrical components and their functions were explained.

The truth is there are too many deaths and injuries each year because of electrical shock. By educating our youth about the dangers of electricity, we hope to prevent injuries and save lives. Thank you, Lambert school, for inviting LYREC to share in your safety day. (Meter No. 21672) ■

*Journeyman Lineworker **Aaron Eide** received a lot of "Do it again!" shouts from the students when he demonstrated the myth that tires can be electrical insulators.*

What is a capacity minimum charge?

The reason for the capacity charge is to pay the costs of maintenance and for overhead costs of poles and wires, so the capacity is available when requested.

Larger transformers require heavier infrastructure and heavier infrastructure costs substantially more.

A capacity minimum charge is derived from the size of transformer or transformers a service requires. For services requiring more than 15 kilovolt-amperes (kVA) of transformer capacity, the capacity minimum monthly charge shall be \$1 for each additional kVA.

For example, a single-phase service with a 25-kVA transformer will have a monthly minimum charge of \$25. The base rate is \$15 and the additional \$10 is for the kVA size (25-15=10). If the member uses at least 141

kilowatt-hours (kwh) a month, there will be no monthly capacity minimum charge because the 141 kwh will make up the \$10 for the additional 10 kVA (0.071 per kwh X 141=\$10.01). If this was a house with no usage, the service will be billed the \$15 base rate plus \$10 capacity minimum to equal the \$25 minimum monthly charge.

Typically, a 10-kVA transformer is sufficient for a standard home that does not use electric heat. A home using electricity for heat may need anywhere from 15 to a 25 kVA or more, depending on the size of the home and type of heating units. Most residential services will not see any charge for the capacity minimum charge unless the residence is unoccupied or the residence uses less than \$10 of kwh a month. ■

Budget billing

Sign up April through August



Are you having a difficult time budgeting for your monthly electric bill? Heating and cooling your home is one of the biggest users of energy and takes the biggest bite out of your energy budget. If you would like to take control of your budget, budget billing is the answer for you.

This service is available to all residential consumers

who are current, have an “A” credit rating, and have established a 12-month history with Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC). The consumer can remain on budget billing as long as the account remains current.

How is budget billing calculated? To determine your budget billing amount, LYREC takes the simple average of your current and last 11 months of bills. Therefore, if you sign up for budget billing, your bill will NOT be the same amount every month. There will be variations each month, but the change will not be as drastic and will make it easier to budget.

If you would like to sign up for budget billing, give LYREC’s office a call to see if you qualify. To sign up, all you will need to do is submit a form between April and August. You can stop into the office to get a form or go to www.lyrec.com.

Your monthly investment ensures you have access to safe, reliable and affordable power when you need it. We appreciate and value the investment that you make in your co-op each month, and we strive to use that investment wisely for the benefit of all members of our community. ■

Easy steps to greater efficiency

BY ANNE PRINCE

Do you want to save money and electricity but have limited time, money and patience? According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a “typical American family” spends nearly \$2,000 per year on the home energy bills. Much of that money, however, is wasted through leaky windows or ducts, old appliances or inefficient heating and cooling systems.

Luckily, there are several relatively easy ways to save energy without a substantial commitment of time and money. These efforts will help you save whether you own or rent an older or newly constructed home. And, you won't have to hire a specialist or call in a favor from someone who is handy with tools to help you.

Where to start

According to *Money Magazine*, “improving the envelope” of your home is a good place to start. Sunlight, seasonal temperature changes and wind vibrations can loosen up even a tight home, increasing air leakage. Doors and windows may not close tightly, and ductwork can spring leaks, wasting cooled and heated air. By placing weather stripping and caulk around windows and doors, you can keep cool air inside during warm months and prevent chilly air from penetrating the indoors during colder months. Sealing gaps around piping, dryer vents, fans and outlets also helps to seal the envelope and creates greater efficiency. Apply weather stripping around overlooked spaces like your attic hatch or pull-down stairs.

Replacing incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs can make a big difference in home efficiency and is one of the fastest ways to cut your energy bill. Known for their longevity and efficiency, LED bulbs have an estimated operational life span of typically 10,000 to 20,000 hours compared to 1,000 hours of a typical incandescent. According to the Department of Energy, by replacing your home's five most frequently used light fixtures or bulbs with models that have earned the ENERGY STAR rating, you can save \$75 each year.

Wrapping up savings

Installing a blanket around your water heater could reduce standby heat losses by 25 to 45 percent and

save you about 7 to 16 percent in water heating costs, according to the Department of Energy. For a small investment of about \$30, you can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets and install them in about one hour. On a safety note, the Department of Energy recommends that you not set the thermostat above 130 degrees on an electric water heater with an insulating jacket or blanket; the higher temperature setting could cause the wiring to overheat.

Given that a large portion of your monthly energy bill goes toward heating and cooling your home, it makes sense to ensure your home's heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system is performing at an optimal level. Checking, changing or cleaning your filter extends the life of your HVAC system and saves you money.

Air filters prevent dust and allergens from clogging your HVAC system. Otherwise, dust and dirt trapped in a system's air filter leads to several problems, including: reduced air flow in the home and up to 15 percent higher operating costs; lowered system efficiency; and costly duct cleaning or replacement. Many HVAC professionals recommend cleaning the system filters monthly. A simple task like changing the filters on your HVAC system makes your unit run more efficiently, keeping your house cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Take control of your energy savings

Take a look at your programmable thermostat. When was the last time you checked to make sure it was programmed for the current season and family schedule? This is one of the best energy-saving tools at your fingertips. It enables you to fine-tune the temperature during particular hours of the day. Many models allow you to differentiate between weekday and weekend schedules, and Internet-connected thermostats can learn your schedule and make adjustments automatically. Most models come with an override option so you can make manual adjustments without losing overall programming. You can only achieve these efficiencies and savings if it is programmed properly and adjusted periodically to keep pace with changes in household routines. ■

Help with heating is available

If you or someone you know needs help this heating season, funds are available. If you reside in Montana, you can contact Energy Share at 800-227-0703. If you reside in North Dakota, contact Community Action at 701-572-8191.

Montana residents may pick up an application at Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or Energy Share. Once you submit your application,

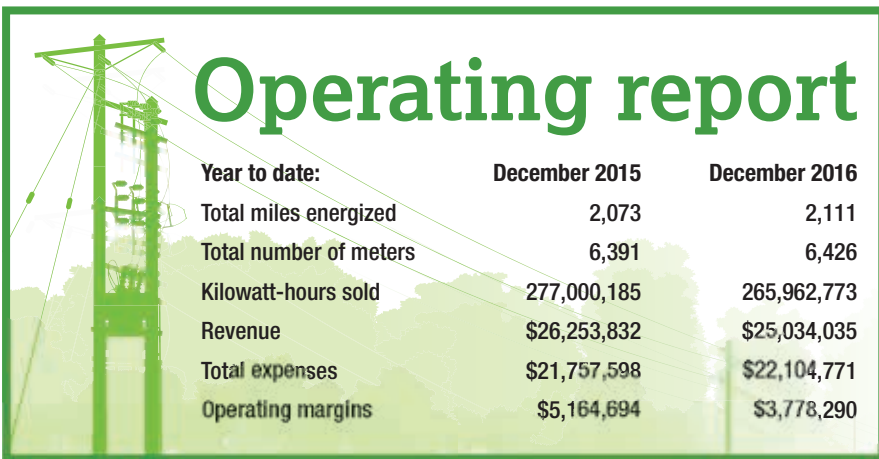
it can take up to two months before receiving assistance. If you are finding yourself in a financial bind, please pick up an application today. Applications for LIHEAP are only accepted through April 30. ■



FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

HIDDEN NUMBERS

If you find your meter number hidden in this issue, it is worth a \$25 credit on your next statement. The meter number will appear within the four Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative pages. Give us a call during the month your meter is listed, and claim your \$25 bill credit.

Operating report

| Year to date: | December 2015 | December 2016 |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Total miles energized | 2,073 | 2,111 |
| Total number of meters | 6,391 | 6,426 |
| Kilowatt-hours sold | 277,000,185 | 265,962,773 |
| Revenue | \$26,253,832 | \$25,034,035 |
| Total expenses | \$21,757,598 | \$22,104,771 |
| Operating margins | \$5,164,694 | \$3,778,290 |



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