

## Electric co-ops take action to prevent wildfires

**A**cross the United States, wildfires have become more common and more dangerous in recent years. For electric utilities, this is a serious concern. Dry grass and trees can catch fire if they touch power lines, especially when strong winds are blowing, which can quickly spread the flames.

Sometimes, electric utilities can be held responsible for wildfires, even if they aren't at fault. This includes paying for the cost to fight the fire and for damage to the land. Even if a wildfire starts because of things out of their control, like flying debris hitting a power line, they can still be held liable under federal laws.

### Pushing for better rules

Electric utilities, including electric cooperatives, are asking lawmakers to fix rules that slow wildfire prevention. One big issue is the long, complicated process of getting federal permits for projects that would make the power grid safer or help clear dangerous trees. In some cases, it takes years to get permission to remove just one hazardous tree, replace a wooden pole with a metal one or bury a power line underground. Sometimes, even after getting approval, utilities are told to leave cut trees on the ground, which just adds more fuel for future fires.

A new bipartisan bill in Congress, called the Fix Our Forests Act, hopes to make these processes faster. The bill would allow utilities to clear more space – up to 150 feet – around power lines and protect them from some lawsuits. Utilities are also working with the U.S. Forest Service to create forest agreements that reduce their legal risks.

### Planning and new technology

With wildfire risk on the rise, many electric co-ops are making detailed plans to reduce danger. These plans include trimming trees, improving equipment and sometimes shutting off power during high-risk conditions to keep people safe.

Co-ops are also using new technologies to help protect their power lines. Some tools can lower the chance of starting a fire or help prevent damage, like fire-resistant covers for utility poles and special



fuses that don't release sparks or hot metal. Other tools help detect fires or the weather conditions that can cause them. These include satellite and drone cameras, sensors on power lines and cameras on poles that help monitor for danger.

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) has adopted an aggressive wildfire mitigation plan in conjunction with the new Montana and North Dakota state laws. The main objective is to implement an actionable plan to create increased reliability and safety, while minimizing the likelihood LYREC assets may be the origin or contributing factor in the ignition of a wildfire.

LYREC held a public comment period from July 25 to Sept. 2 on the proposed Wildfire Mitigation Plan. A public meeting was held at LYREC's headquarters building Aug. 19 to review and discuss the proposed plan.

Along with better rules and smart technology, electric co-ops know working with the community is also important. By teaming up with local governments, businesses and groups, co-ops can be better prepared to prevent and respond to wildfires. ■





## Co-op helps sponsor golf tournament

**L**ower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) was proud to sponsor a hole at this year's Ag Appreciation Golf Tournament, held in July at the Sidney Country Club. This year's tournament drew a record 158 golfers, making it the biggest one yet.

At LYREC's hole, golfers had the chance to play a

round of bocce ball. Top performers were entered into a drawing for gift cards to the Sidney Country Club. Congratulations to Chad Molden and Laurence Romo, this year's lucky winners!

Golfers also received cooling towels from LYREC, which were put to good use on the hot summer day. ■

### TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Solar energy is rising in popularity, and so are solar scams. If a salesperson knocks on your door promising free solar panels at zero cost or that you'll never have to pay your energy bill again, it's likely a scam. If you're interested in solar panels for your home, do your research, get multiple quotes from licensed providers who are reputable, and most importantly, take your time to ensure a smooth process.

Source: Federal Trade Commission



**LYREC**  
LOWER YELLOWSTONE  
RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
Your Yellowstone Energy Cooperative

## SCHOLARSHIP

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- The applicant's parent/legal guardian must be a LYREC member.
- The applicant must be enrolled as a full-time college student in the Fall of 2025.

### TO APPLY:

- Download an application at [www.lyrec.coop](http://www.lyrec.coop).
- Analyze the impact of social media on teenage mental health. Provide three specific examples on how social media has affected you or someone you know.

**JOHN REDMAN MEMORIAL**

**DEADLINE: OCT 20**

■ [www.lyrec.coop](http://www.lyrec.coop)





# WATCH FOR HAZARDS ON THE FARM

Power lines and other equipment are necessary to deliver electricity to hardworking farmers and ranchers, but those same power lines can also be deadly if not treated with respect.

As long hours, increased stress and tight schedules loom, sometimes power lines fade into the background. Even a split-second distraction can lead to contact with a power line and hazardous results.

## BE AWARE

- Be aware of overhead power lines and keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines on all sides.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of a grain truck. It can be difficult to estimate distance, and a power line may be closer than it looks.
- Always lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level before moving or transporting them. Encourage folding and unfolding to be done well into the field, not at the field's edge, which could have power lines running next to it.

## USE A SPOTTER

Avoid moving large equipment alone and be aware of overhead power lines when using machinery. Have someone watch as you move equipment to ensure you have at least 10 feet of clearance from power lines. And don't rely on autosteer around power lines and poles.

## REALIZE THINGS CHANGE

- If you have purchased new equipment, be aware of antennas or other attachments that may pose new hazards. A newer, bigger piece of equipment may no longer clear a line. Shifting soil may also affect whether or not machinery avoids power lines from year to year.

- Wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can cause you to lose control of equipment and make contact with power lines.
- Power lines also may sag over the years. If power lines on your property are sagging, contact your electric cooperative to repair the lines. Never try to move a power line on your own.

## EDUCATE THE CREW

- Look over work areas carefully for overhead power lines and utility poles. Make sure you, your family and employees know the location of overhead power lines, and use routes to avoid the lines when moving equipment. Do this every year, as equipment sizes and soil conditions may change.
- If someone operating a vehicle comes into contact with a power line, educate them to stay in the vehicle and contact 911. Utility workers will come to your location and make sure the line is de-energized and it's safe to exit your vehicle.

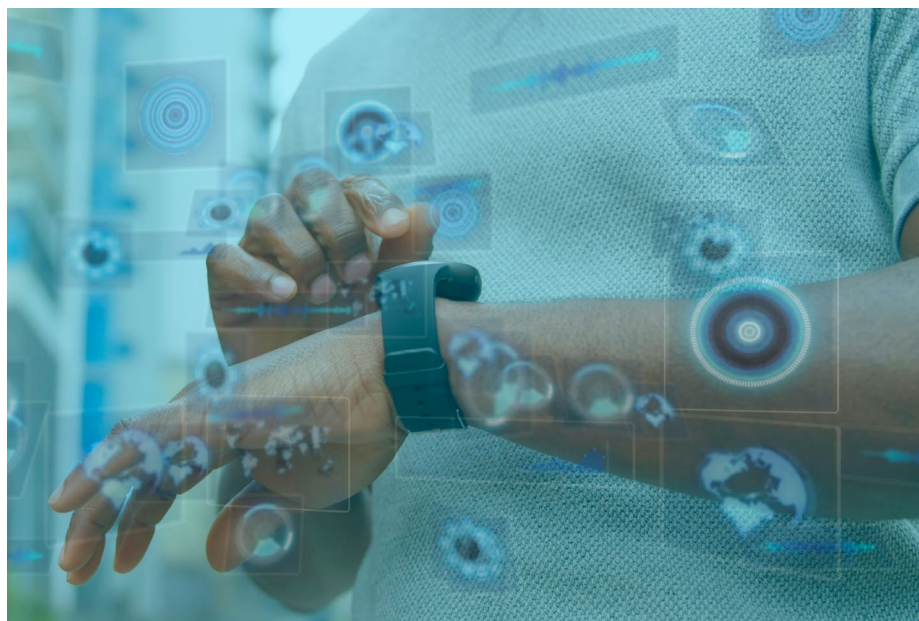
## LOOK AROUND

Overhead power lines are not the only electric hazard on the farm. Pole guy wires, used to stabilize utility poles, are grounded. However, when one of the guy wires is broken, it can become charged with electricity. If you break a guy wire, call the cooperative to fix it. Don't do it yourself.

## USE THE PROFESSIONALS

Use qualified electricians for work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems. Don't try to use quick fixes for wiring or electrical issues. It's best to call a licensed professional. ■





## LACE UP YOUR FIREWALLS:

# It's time to tone your tech

**Y**ou've heard of physical fitness, but what about cyber fitness? In a world where so much of our personal information lives online, being cyber fit is just as important as staying in shape.

Cyber fitness means building strong habits that protect you and your family from identity theft and scams. It doesn't need to be complicated, but like a workout routine, it needs to be consistent.

Think of it like brushing your teeth. Small actions, repeated daily, make a big difference over time.

Start with your passwords. Think of them as the core strength of your digital routine. Use unique passwords for each account – especially your email, banking and social media accounts – and avoid obvious choices like “password.” A password manager can help you keep track of them without breaking a sweat.

Next, activate multifactor authentication whenever you can. It's like adding a second lock to your front door. Even if someone

gets your password, they won't be able to login without the extra layer of security.

Watch out for phishing scams. If something looks suspicious, don't click. Hover over links, double-check senders and, when in doubt, go directly to the source. This kind of vigilance is your cyber cardio. It keeps you alert and agile.

Keep your devices updated. Regular updates are like stretching for your tech. They patch up weaknesses and help your systems run smoothly.

And don't forget your home network! Change the default password on your Wi-Fi router and give your network a name that doesn't reveal personal details. Like your home gym, only you and the people you trust should have access to it.

Being cyber fit doesn't require a tech degree. You don't need to be an expert – you just need to be consistent. A few small steps today can help prevent a cyber injury tomorrow. ■



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