



27th year 1st Issue

February 2015

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LIEAP is a state and federally-funded program that helps people pay home heating bills November through June. The program is open to homeowners and renters. It helps cover the costs of electricity, natural gas, propane, wood, diesel heating oil, coal and pellets when these are used for heating a home.

Applications for the LIEAP program are available beginning October 1, 2014 and are accepted until February 28, 2015.

Application forms and information are available by clicking the link below:

[2014-15 LIEAP Application Instructions and information](#)

To get specific information about your application or to ask that an application be mailed to you, call: 1-800-246-4221.

WAYS TO PAY

- **Write a check.** Remember when you make out your check to pay attention to both the amount box and the written line for value. These two money amounts need to match. If they don't match, the bank will take the written line value as the intended payment. Also, signatures on your check are a must.
- **Pay with cash.** Cash is always accepted, however, sending cash through the mail is not a recommended practice and be sure to seal your envelope if you are dropping a cash payment in our drop box.
- **EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer).** This automatic draft option is simple, easy, convenient and FREE. Never forget to pay your bill again. Late fees and check writing are a thing of the past. Ask our billing department for more information to get started. Automatic drafts are done on the 20th of each month or the closest business day after. Proof of payment will appear with your monthly bank statement.
- **Pay over the phone.** Using your checking information to pay bill(s) over the phone is convenient and saves writing and delivering a check. A receipt of payment will be sent by mail.

Our **SmartHub** feature is of value regardless of how one chooses to pay bills. Because **SmartHub** allows online access to billing information you can access all the information concerning your service. You can see new bills as soon as they are created, view usage information, review past billing, and check out payment history.

We strongly encourage all members to use the **SmartHub**. If you are interested in learning more, call our office (307-334-3221 or 800-322-0544) and ask for Julie or Chris.



Pictured Left:

NEA Apprentices Charles Kleinberg and Levi Clark, along with Wyoming Line Foreman Jason Fish helping the Tri State crew with PT replacement following the December 2014 substation outage.



In the above, right photo, we see the cause of the Tuesday, December 16th outage. It is a substation PT (potential/voltage transformer.) This is the device that steps the 69,000 volts down to a safe, workable voltage in the station metering and protection equipment. These are similar in construction to the CT that failed in October. The one in front is the bad one (split and blackened) and there is a good one behind it. The flash when it failed was bright enough to be noticed in the office. The PTs and CTs are Tri State equipment, so it was up to them to source the replacements. At least one had to come from as far away as New Mexico. While these devices rarely fail, as a precaution, all of the CTs and PTs in the substation have or will be updated.

In the course of repairs for the PT issue Tuesday, we had switched our source to the 69,000 volt backup line. At about 3:00 a.m. Friday, December 19th, that backup failed. Early reports were of a line down close to the Glendo source. NEA, Tri-State, Town of Lusk, and Western Area Power crews worked to restore power. Everything on our system was up by around 7:45 a.m., but the town of Lusk had another circuit switcher open for an unknown reason. They were able to close it successfully about 15 minutes later. The backup line was available for service by noon.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.



February is a short month, packed with a lot of company business. Among the most notable; Nominating Committee will meet in early February, which starts the process for Annual Meeting and board member elections to come in May.

The Billing department will start compiling irrigation packets in late February and those packets will be sent out in March. Early irrigators need to be in contact with us for special connection arrangements.

Non-tradition, Basin Electric and NEA scholarship applications are due by close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Friday, 20th. Scholarship Selection Committee will meet the last week of February and winner notifications will be made afterwards.

Final preparations for the introduction of the Co-op Connections program will be completed and member's cards will be delivered in March. We hope you will put your member cards to use in our service territory with businesses who have joined the program and around the country during your travels with all the other Co-op Connections businesses.

www.niobrara-electric.org

www.facebook.com/NiobraraElectric



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Touchstone EnergySM

Office Hours

Monday—Thursday

7:30 am—5:00 pm

**Fridays 7:30 am—
4:00 pm**

Electricians Department

7:00 am—5:30 pm (M-F)

Outages1-800-322-0544
or 307-334-3221

Phones are answered 24 hours a day. Phones will be answered by Niobrara Electric Association during office hours and the Niobrara County Sheriff's office will take all other calls and dispatch NEA personnel.

More details of the "late breaking news" from last year. Our area of Wyoming and Nebraska, from the west end of the NEA system, down through Wheatland and into Torrington/Scottsbluff has been seeing slow but steady growth through the years as new housing, irrigation, oil and other commercial uses have increased. The backbone transmission system that feeds the area has seen very limited improvement. The main source 115,000 volt line that feeds all of NEA and Lusk that was built in the 1970's was built to have enough capacity to feed our area for a long time, and it still has excess capacity, but the source lines in the Glendo area serve more than just us, so by the time all of the power is spread out in southeast Wyoming, our growth capacity is limited. It's sort of like trying to feed a fire hose from a garden hose (not quite that extreme, but it paints a good picture).

Mom's advice was "don't put all your eggs in one basket" add to that "don't carry both baskets in the same hand", that is what our delivery system looks like. Our main source from the Glendo area and the backup line follow the same route as the main. We are set up for weather related problems that can damage both the primary and backup sources. If you put this together with the capacity limitations, you can see why a better solution is needed to be found.

The new project that Tri-State approved will bring a new source into the NEA territory from the west and deliver it to the Lance Creek area where it will tie into the NEA 69,000 volt system, allowing us to separate the load between the two stations. This way, if either source is damaged only part of the system will be out, and we should be able to modify the system to feed what is out from the other half. It will take some time to do the switching when it is needed, but for those that were here in the late 1990's when both sources were laying on the ground from the ice storms, a few hours is way better than a few days.

This new source will also allow NEA to continue on growing to serve the many needs of our members. As a part of being members of the Tri-State G&T Cooperative, the costs for the new line, approximately \$35 million (twice the book value of NEA today), will be covered by them. The new line should be ready for use by 2017.

Boardroom News

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District

John Hester	1	Keeline, WY	President
Andy Barnette	2	Lusk, WY	
David Keener	3	Marsland, NE	Sec./Treas
Bill Wilson	3	Harrison, NE	
Jack Hammond	1	Lance Creek, WY	
Jim Dunn	3	Harrison, NE	
Kenny DeGering	2	Lusk, WY	
Andy Greer	1	Lance Creek, WY	
JD Wasserburger	2	Lusk, WY	Vice President

December Board Meeting

- Director Hammond spoke regarding Tri-State business. Director Keener discussed NREA business and Director Greer shared WREA information.
- Attorney Skavdahl spoke on collection matters.
- Line Superintendent Bridge reported on OSHA required climbing gear, December outages, and the Harrison generator.
- Manager Ceaglske's report included west load service, budget, and RUS O&M requirements survey information.