



26th year 10th Issue

November 2015

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**LOCAL BUSINESSES PARTICIPATING
IN THE CO-OP CONNECTIONS ®**

SAME AS IT ONCE WAS - 10% off store items.

HERREN BROTHERS - 10% off True Value items not otherwise marked for discount.

THE FINE GRIND LLC - 10% off.

MILLER SOAP COMPANY LLC - 10% off products (does not include shipping)

COUNTRY CORNER HAIR SHOP - 10% off products.

LICKETY STITCH QUILT SHOP - Free pattern with purchase.

Help us recruit local business by encouraging your favorite business to contact us to learn about joining the program. There is no charge to the business and all advertising is done through us - it is a **FREE** service to connect businesses and members for a mutual benefit!



Construction on NEA's new parking lot has been completed. We now have better visibility and access for handicap parking and our previous safety/drainage issues have been fixed. The new layout allows for much easier snow removal during the winter—it will take less time and be less problematic. Improvements to the lighting have also been made for your safety and ours.



The Wyoming Rural Electric Association (WREA) recently put out a flyer about scholarship opportunities for a career in Linework. Go to wyomingrea.org or our Facebook page to take a look.

Available scholarships are:

WREA LINEMEN SCHOLARSHIP - A minimum of \$3000.00 each year to one or more individuals, including recent high school graduates or GED recipients, who plan to attend an approved regional lineworker training program.

ADKINS LINEMEN SCHOLARSHIP- \$1000.00 to one individual who plans to attend an approved regional lineworker program.

DAR HACKWORTH LINEMEN SCHOLARSHIP- \$1000.00 to up to three students who plan to attend an approved regional lineworker training program.

Opportunities in Wyoming are growing for skilled lineworkers. Job security is quite good because much of the work cannot be outsourced to machines—the future looks stable for the industry. Education is required to become skilled in the craft, but a college degree is not necessary. Wages and benefits through Coop employment are generous.

If you believe you have the skills, the fitness, a mind for safety, and a team member attitude, you should consider a future in Linework!



This year, pole testing was done in the Lusk to Node area and south. Approximately 100 of the 3900 poles inspected/tested, failed, or about 2.5%. Add to that some that tested “soft”, shell rotted or other issues noted, and we will be replacing 150-200 poles next year. We fell behind with the blizzard of 2013, so we were replacing 2013 and part of 2014 failures this spring and hope to get caught up on the rest of the 2014 poles with this group.

Since 2012 we have stepped up the number of poles tested each year to accommodate roughly a 10 year cycle, to get through the whole system more often and adhere to the nationally recommended standards. Previously it was a 20 year cycle. Given the age of our system, and the expansive nature of it, testing more often is important.

A 10 year cycle also gives us a more frequent and closer look at pole top hardware and ROW conditions. The problem with pole tops is that one storm with heavy ice, wind or lightning can damage insulators and poles and make for a bad situation that can be created overnight. As much as we can, we look for potential problems. However, some problems still get past or show up in the time after inspection.

National Apprenticeship Week - November 2-8, 2015

Apprenticeship is a time honored and extremely useful route for development and placement in a wide range of careers. NEA Linemen are put through the Merchant Job Training and Safety course where they devote more than 500 hours, over four years, to education and testing. During the same period, they work fulltime in the field, under the direct supervision of a Journeyman.

Charles (Chuck) Kleinberg, is nearing the end of his first year of apprenticeship. Currently, Charles is the only lineman apprentice with NEA. During this time of recognition we want to thank Charles for his commitment and service!



Niobrara Electric will be closed on Thursday, November 26 and Friday, November 27.

We wish all our Members a blessed and happy Thanksgiving holiday.

www.niobrara-electric.org
www.facebook.com/NiobraraElectric



NEA NEWS is a publication of Niobrara Electric Association., Inc

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Touchstone EnergySM

Office Hours

Monday—Thursday

7:30 am—5:00 pm

**Fridays 7:30 am—
4:00 pm**

Electrician 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.

We've got the surveys in and have done a brief review of the responses. One of the first observations is the limited number of responses. We got back about 140 out of about 1100 sent or only about 13% response rate. I was hoping for a little better response, particularly on the annual meeting schedule. The responses were split between keep the date/time as is, and reschedule it to ?? That is one of the toughest questions to get a good answer for, partly because of limited attendance at the event. For those in attendance, that date seems to work, and those not there can't suggest a time that does work.

I appreciate the mostly positive feedback on the crews and responsiveness; we try to get folks' needs taken care of as quickly as we can. I also know we have a lot of work to do on the system to reduce momentary and sustained outages. Both of these things come at a cost. We can't send the crews out on evenings and weekends without paying OT, and we need to spend money to make large scale pole changes and rebuilds. Trying to balance the rebuilds so that we don't do too much at once, which would result in increases in rates, with trying to keep OT calls down is a very large challenge.

I can see by the responses to community involvement, we fail to "toot our own horn" sometimes. We do actively work with the schools with a safety demo on an annual basis, focusing on the elementary aged kids. It's a table top demo, but it does seem to get their attention. Back in May, NCHS had a career day that we were invited to and we did have a lineman there to talk about line work specifically. We were recently in the homecoming parade in Lusk, in a combined float with the preschool. For the last few years we have split the costs of a meal at the Sioux County Fair. For many years, we have helped with the setup for the Rawhide Pageant. We helped sponsor the youth baseball team in Lusk. That gets your name on one uniform, I didn't follow up to see if our uniform made it onto a player and out onto the field. We have donated to emergency service in both Sioux and Niobrara counties. Many of the donations we make come from capital credits that are not claimed (typically members who've left the system or gone out of business).

"Why do we advertise?" Much of it is community involvement. Our ads are usually connected to "sponsoring" the broadcast of school games and events, safety messages and holiday good will. If our sponsorship of the events helps keep it available for families of the athletes, or others that can't make it to the games due to ranch chores or other complications, at least they can listen in and that is the value for our members. After sitting at an intersection watching a large piece of farm equipment get too close to an anchor and tear down a transmission line many years ago, putting a MN town in the dark for a few hours, I wonder on the safety messages, "if that ad would have come on the radio just before he got to that anchor, would it be different?", hard to say, but those basic safety messages go out in the hopes to prevent something from happening.

Much of the costs of advertising are repaid through our membership in Touchstone Energy. Which raises the question "what is the value of Touchstone Energy membership? Most folks around here know NEA, why do we need the national branding?" The biggest part of it is for the national level benefits and political needs. If we try to bend the ear of someone in large scale politics and we represent NEA, a group of a couple thousand voters, we might get them to look at us, if we're lucky.

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

If we work through Touchstone Energy, we have the backing of over 800 coops, most of which are larger, some much larger, and we can carry a little more clout when it gets to DC politics. As the country moves forward dealing with the EPA's Clean Power Plan, that clout is definitely what we need.

Kenny Ceaglske

August Board Meeting

- Director Greer reported on WREA business.
- Director Hammond reviewed Tri-State business.
- Director Keener spoke concerning NREA business.
- Manager Ceaglske reported on underground failure at Node, repairs scheduled for this fall, FEMA trailer service installs, personnel updates, policy updates & decline of activity in the West end of the system.