



30th year 10th Issue

November 2019

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

*Scholarship Information* 1

*RF Metering Pictures* 2

*RF Metering* 3

*Manager's Message* 4



#### CO-OP CONNECTIONS LOCAL BUSINESS PARTICIPANTS

(CHECK WEBSITE FOR REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DISCOUNTS):

- Herren Brothers True Value
- Same As It Once Was
- Country Corner Hair Shop
- Miller Soap Company
- Bloomers

Members, do you have a college bound student at home?

Look for postings about Scholarship information on our Facebook page & website in December.

Applications will be available at the High Schools, on-line and at our headquarters by the first of the year.



#### NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK IN NOVEMBER

We love to celebrate our people and National Apprenticeship week in November is a perfect time to highlight a few of them.

Jim Pontarolo (3rd year), Chance Wilder (2nd year), Austin Francis (1st year) and Dalton Schilz (brand new); our four apprentices.

We're a team—your education and commitment to safety and proficiency, as well as ours, is key!



Photos Left: A collector box, which holds meter readings, hangs on the side of this pole and from the meter running up the pole is an antenna that rises a few feet above the 65ft pole. At the top, sharing space on the pole, Vistabeam's equipment supplying internet to the area and sending our meter signals to a Landis & Gyr service center in Kansas.

Below photo: Leveling the newly installed router box, which helps transmit the meter signal to the collector box.





## Radio Frequency (RF) metering has made its way to Niobrara Electric Association.

Obsolete technology and equipment, like the TS 2 meters no longer being made for our old Power line Carrier System, prompted the switch to RF. Deployment of the new metering started in October and has been proceeding at a rapid pace.

Journeyman lineman and meter tech, Will Smith, has been incredibly busy with schooling to learn the new system with all of its computer applications as well as the field work the change-over entails.

Smith is primarily responsible for getting the metering installed and working. He has had help from Chris Rejda with IT issues and from the system designers with Landis & Gyr; who spent the better part of a week on site helping with setup.

Training is also underway for department leaders and other employees who'll be working with the new system.

"Almost everyone will have a hand in it at some

point, but to varying degrees and levels of access," according to Line Superintendent Rick Bridge.

Members will notice line workers changing meters out over the next couple years, as this is roughly a two year project. Unlike a number of our previous meters, these new meters will have good displays.

According to Bridge, the first two areas being addressed will be the Van Substation and Lusk Rural Substation.

*Photo: Nebraska Line Forman Justin Huston working from the bucket truck to assist Will Smith with installing routers.*



nea@niobrara-electric.org

PO Box 697 Lusk, WY 82225

**"This institution is an equal  
opportunity provider and  
employer."**



**Touchstone Energy<sup>SM</sup>**

### **Office Hours**

**Monday—Thursday**

**7:30 am—5:00 pm**

**Fridays 7:30 am—  
4:00 pm**

**Electrician Department**

**6:00 am—4:30 pm (M-TH)**

**Outages** ....1-800-322-0544  
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.

For those of you that are part of the email notifications for political action, this won't be a surprise. For the rest of our membership, I'd like to share some information on the RURAL Act circulating in Congress now.

An electric cooperative is a not for profit organization, which typically makes it tax exempt as far as income tax. We still participate in sales tax and property tax. As the rules were, up to a couple years ago, the revenue that we take in had to be 85% from "program revenue" or sales of electricity to members, and no more than 15% from other sources. NEA has typically not had a problem with this measurement over the years.

Recently, there were some changes to the tax code that begin to include government assistance as one of the "other sources". Sources of this assistance include grants for broadband installation and FEMA damage assistance. While we have not pursued the broadband grants, the possibility of utilizing FEMA for significant damage to the system is a very real possibility.

Describing the FEMA qualified disaster process is a bit cumbersome, but had the two winter storm disasters that happened in October of 2013 fully qualified for FEMA assistance in both WY and NE, we would likely have crossed the threshold and become a taxable co-op. NEA and other co-ops with relatively low revenue and lots of miles of line are particularly susceptible to the situation that would put us over the edge. It is our very nature of serving sparse areas that we were brought into existence in the 1930's with the Rural Electrification Act. These additional taxes would have a spillover into the rates that you pay for electricity.

For this and other issues as they come up, visit [action.coop](http://action.coop) and remember that your voice counts.

Kenny Ceaglske

### **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	
Neal Wurdeman	2	Lusk, WY	
Andy Greer	1	Lance Creek, WY	
JD Wasserburger	2	Lusk, WY	Vice President

### **Board Minutes**

- Manager Kenny Ceaglske discussed upcoming large loads, donation requests and the proposed daycare center in Lusk.
- Line Superintendent Rick Bridge spoke on work plan updates, staffing issues and both metering and PCB training.
- Director Keener spoke on NREA business.
- Director Greer spoke on WREA business.
- Director Hammond spoke on Tri-State business.