

OCTOBER 2017

MWEC

Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



WILLISTON
577-3765

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628-2242

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COOPERATIVES ARE:

VOLUNTARY • DEMOCRATIC • EQUITABLE • INDEPENDENT • INFORMATIVE • COLLABORATIVE • COMMUNITY

Our history, our future

Looking back provides the path forward

BY ADAM SCHWARTZ

One of my favorite quotes has always been, “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Yet sometimes remembering our history with the goal of repeating it can actually be a good thing. As the nation’s 30,000 cooperatives celebrate National Co-op Month this October, it is a great time to take a look back – and a look forward.

Take the history of your electric co-op. Mountrail-Williams Electric cooperative was founded when neighbors worked together to bring electricity to our rural community. Big investor-owned power companies thought they couldn’t generate enough profit so they bypassed rural areas. Back then, there were frequent meetings among neighbors to discuss the formation of the cooperative. Once established, annual meetings were the “must-attend” event of the year. The co-op – on behalf of the member-owners – committed to provide the community with electricity.

Fast forward to today – and tomorrow. Mountrail-Williams Electric currently serves 7,591 members. We have returned \$21,822,973 worth of capital credits to our members since 1991.

We understand the spirit that helped create this co-op must be continually nurtured. While times and technology will continue to change, our commitment to you will not.

Although we started out to provide electricity, our impact (with your support) has grown.

As we continue to look to the future, you can be confident that Mountrail-Williams will commit to explore new ways to help our members and our community.

Over the years, as we’ve listened to you and your fellow co-op member-owners, we know that we have to keep pace as technology and consumer tastes evolve. As always, we welcome your participation as we plan for the future. ■



CO-OP STATS

- ▶ There are 900 electric cooperatives located in 47 states.
- ▶ Electric co-ops provide power to 18 million homes, schools and businesses.
- ▶ Electric cooperatives serve 56 percent of the nation.

#coopmonth

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR CO-OPS DURING THE MONTH OF OCTOBER

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month.

Cybersecurity Tip

Create long passwords that only you will remember and change them every six months. Remember, a strong password is at least 12 characters long.

Are you secure? October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month

BY ALISON KENNEDY

Sony, Target, Home Depot, Yahoo and even the U.S. Office of Personnel Management have all been attacked by cybercriminals. Let's face it: In today's world, the cybersecurity threats facing our nation can seem overwhelming – and downright scary. Cybersecurity, specifically the protection and security of consumer-members' assets and the nation's complex, interconnected network of power plants, transmission lines and distribution facilities, is a top priority for electric cooperatives and other segments of the electric power industry.

This October, Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative is participating in National Cybersecurity Awareness

Month (NCSAM). Since its inception under leadership from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the National Cyber Security Alliance, NCSAM has grown exponentially, reaching consumers, small and medium-sized businesses, corporations, educational institutions and young people across the nation.

By raising awareness and understanding of basic cybersecurity practices, we can all work together to combat cyberthreats.

You have a role to play in ensuring the security of your personal and professional data. Use the tips below to safeguard your computer:

- Keep all software on internet-connected devices – including PCs, tablets and smartphones

- up-to-date to reduce risk of infection from malware.
- Create long passwords that only you will remember, and change them every six months. Remember, a strong password is at least 12 characters long.
- Avoid the use of thumb drives and other portable memory devices.
- Don't click on weblinks or attached files in emails when you're not certain of who the sender is.
- Keep pace with new ways to stay safe online. Check trusted websites for the latest information. Share security tips with friends, family and colleagues, and encourage them to be web wise.

We hope you will join us in raising cybersecurity awareness. Use and follow #cyberaware on social media to show and share your support. To learn more about NCSAM, visit www.staysafeonline.org. ■

Smart lighting made simple

LIFX is an LED smart light that uses Wi-Fi to bring vivid color to your home. A simple-to-use app allows you to fine tune the experience; control a single light or your entire home.

What is the LIFX Color 1000 bulb?

The LIFX Color 1000 bulb is an LED light bulb that fits into a standard screw-in receptacle. When you flip the light switch on, the LIFX lights up and when you flip it off, the light goes out. But that's just the beginning of what this bulb can do because the LIFX Color 1000 can be controlled with your smartphone and can be customized to shine up to 16 million colors and 1,000 shades of whites.

Design and features

The LIFX A19 style bulb has a similar size to a traditional incandescent light bulb, but it definitely has a different look. Light only comes out of the top section of the bulb. The rest of the bulb is made of thick plastic.

The A19 bulb has the equivalent brightness of a 75-watt incandescent bulb (1055 lumens), so it works well in lamps and ceiling fixtures, but where it really “shines” is the ability to be controlled with your smartphone and with services like Amazon's Alexa, and more.

Installation and setup

Installing the LIFX Color 1000 LED smart bulb is no different than installing any other bulb. You just screw it in the socket. From that point, you can use it just like an ordinary bulb by using your existing light switch. But to take full advantage to all of the features, you need to install the LIFX iOS or Android app on your smartphone or tablet.

The app takes you through the steps to connect to the LIFX bulb. Once connected, you can change the bulb's output color. If a normal white bulb is way too boring for you, then you'll love the LIFX because you



can choose from millions of colors as well as different themes, effects and dimming.

Things to be aware of...

- The app will show the status of the bulb as long as the bulb has power – the light switch is in the ON position and no one has turned it off. If the light switch has been turned off, the status shown in the app won't be accurate. The app does not know if there is power to the LIFX.

- If you have kids that like to flip the lights on and off a million times in a row, you'll have issues with this bulb because flipping the lights on and off five times in a row will reset the bulb's settings.

- If the power flicks on and off, the bulb will turn on and stay on when the power comes back on. I had this happen last week when we had a storm in the middle of the night. The power went off and on several times in a row and each time it did, the LIFX bulb in our bedroom ceiling

fixture turned on.

- If you don't have a local Wi-Fi connection, the app will not allow you to control the bulb and if you don't have a connection to the Internet, you won't be able to use services like Alexa. The regular light switch still controlled the bulb though.

- This bulb does not support Apple HomeKit or Google Home yet.

Final thoughts

The LIFX Color 1000 A19 WiFi LED Smart Bulb costs about \$55 per bulb. Is it worth it? If you're only comparing the price of a traditional bulb to the price of the LIFX, it's hard to say that the LIFX is worth the price. But, when you also realize that the bulb has an estimated energy cost \$1.32 a year based on using the bulb for three hours a day and it should last more than 22 years, it starts sounding more attractive. Then add the fact that you can customize the brightness and color as well as control it with your phone and other services, the LIFX Color 1000 smart bulb has some benefits worth checking out. ■



Portable Generator Safety



Portable generators can provide a good, temporary source of power during storm-induced electrical outages, but can become deadly if improperly installed or operated. Taking a few simple precautions can keep you and your family safe from the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and electric shock resulting from the improper use of portable generators:

Generator Installation Safety Tips:

- ESFI strongly recommends that a **licensed electrician** install home generators to ensure they meet all local electrical codes.
- Do not connect generators directly to the household wiring without an appropriate **transfer switch** installed. Power from generators connected directly to household wiring can **backfeed** along power lines and **electrocute** anyone coming in contact with them, including utility lineworkers making repairs.
- Make sure your generator is **properly grounded**. Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to prevent electrocutions and electrical shock injuries. Portable GFCIs require no tools to install and are available at prices ranging from \$12 to \$30.



Using Your Generator Safely:

- Make sure your home is equipped with a battery-operated or battery back-up **carbon monoxide alarm**.
- Never operate a generator inside your home** or in other enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces. Generators can very quickly produce high levels of carbon monoxide (CO), which can be deadly.
- Opening doors and windows or operating fans to attempt to ventilate a generator **will not prevent carbon monoxide build-up** in the home. Even with a working CO alarm, you should never use a gasoline-powered generator inside your home or in a garage.
- ESFI recommends positioning the generator at least **25 feet outside the home** and **away from doors, windows** and vents that can allow CO to enter.
- Carbon Monoxide is the "silent killer."** Don't take chances. Get to fresh air right away if you feel dizzy or weak.
- Do not **overload** the generator.



- Do not use a generator in **wet conditions**.
- Plug appliances **directly** into the generator or use a heavy-duty, outdoor rated extension cord.
- Make sure extension cords used with generators are **rated for the load** and have **three-pronged plugs**. They should be **inspected for damage**, such as cuts and/or worn insulation before use.
- Turn off** all appliances powered by the generator **before** shutting down the generator.
- Make sure fuel for the generator is **stored safely**, away from living areas, in properly labeled containers, and away from fuel-burning appliances. Before re-fueling, always **turn the generator off** and let it cool down.
- Keep children away** from portable generators at all times.
- A generator is a **temporary power source**. Use a generator only when necessary to power essential equipment or appliances.
- Warn those in your home **not to open windows** or **leave doors open** while a generator is operating outside.



BE PREPARED FOR WINTER'S WRATH

Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative strives to provide you with reliable, uninterrupted service every day of the year, but sometimes Mother Nature creates unavoidable power outages. Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative wants you to remain safe during severe winter weather, so consider preparing now for the possibility of power outages this winter.

BEFORE A POWER OUTAGE

- Build or restock your emergency preparedness kit, including a flashlight, batteries, cash and first-aid supplies.
- Make sure you have alternative charging methods for your phone or any device that requires power.
- If a storm is predicted, charge cellphones and any battery-powered devices beforehand.
- Know where the manual release lever of your electric garage door opener is located and how to operate it.
- If you rely on anything that is battery-operated or power dependent like a medical device, determine a backup plan.

DURING A POWER OUTAGE

- Only use flashlights for emergency lighting. Candles can cause fires.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Most food requiring refrigeration can be kept safely in a closed refrigerator for several hours. An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours.
- Put on layers of warm clothing if it is cold outside. Never burn charcoal for heating or cooking indoors. Never use your oven as a source of heat. If the power might be out for a prolonged period, plan to go to another location (the home of a relative or friend, or a public facility) that has heat to keep warm.
- Turn off or disconnect appliances and other equipment in case of a momentary power "surge" that can damage computers and other devices. Consider adding surge protectors.

TO PREVENT AN OVERLOAD

To prevent an overload on the system while power is being restored, take these steps:

- Turn off every inside light except one.
- Turn down your thermostat.
- If the outage lasts more than 60 minutes, turn off your electric water heater.
- Make sure your kitchen range is off, both the surface and the oven.
- Turn off all unnecessary appliances and unplug sensitive electronic equipment.
- When power comes back on, slowly switch your appliances and lights back on and gradually return your thermostat to its normal setting.



STAY AWAY FROM DOWNED POWER LINES

Mother Nature isn't always kind to power lines. Winter winds, snow and ice often prove to be too much for utility poles and power lines. If you see a downed power line or utility pole, contact Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative immediately.

Do not go near the line or the pole. Just because it's on the ground doesn't mean it's safe to approach.

OPERATE GENERATOR SAFELY

If your standby electric generator has been in storage since last winter, make sure it is still operating properly – before an outage occurs.

And always follow the manufacturer's recommendations on how to use your generator. Most important is the transfer switch that disconnects the farm or home from the power

line and connects it to the generator. It must be a double-throw transfer switch which prevents the generator from feeding electricity back onto the power line. This protects the lineworkers who may be working to restore your service.

If you have additional questions, please call Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative. We will be glad to work with you to make sure your generator is used properly.



Because power outages can't be totally eliminated, Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative offers these steps to follow if an outage occurs:

- Confirm the outage. Check your own fuses and circuit breakers first.
- Check with a neighbor to confirm if he or she is also experiencing an outage before you call the cooperative. This will help your cooperative determine the extent of the outage.
- Call the cooperative. If the outage is widespread, the phone lines may be busy, but keep trying. Your cooperative will send a line crew to find the problem and restore power as quickly as possible.

If you have additional questions about outages, please call Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative.

AFTER A POWER OUTAGE

- Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures of 40 degrees for two hours or more or that has an unusual odor, color or texture. When in doubt, throw it out!
- If food in the freezer is colder than 40 degrees and has ice crystals on it, you can refreeze it.
- Contact your doctor if you're concerned about medications having spoiled.
- Restock your emergency kit with fresh batteries, canned foods and other supplies.

Unofficial minutes
of regular board meeting
August 2017

Directors present: Hartsoch, Johnson, Lahtinen, Ludwig, Lynne, Grant, Jorgenson and Lalim.

Directors absent: Sorenson.

Others present: Manager Haugen, attorney Foust and staff members.

The meeting was called to order at 8:34 a.m. in a meeting room at the Williams County Highway Complex, Williston. Minutes of the June 28, 2017, regular board meeting were approved as corrected. Minutes of the July 27, 2017, regular board meeting were approved as presented. The agenda for the meeting was approved as presented.

Vice chair's report: Director Grant discussed a director's role as a rural electric cooperative board member as well as board member communication during board meetings.

Director Grant also gave a report on the statewide managers meeting he attended and presented at in Grand Forks in August.

Attorney's report: Attorney Foust gave an update on resolution to clean up record title on the Osborn Substation land.

Operating and financial report: Jay Lux presented the operating report for the year to date and for the month of July. The total margins for the year to date is \$11,731,060; OTIER is 2.24; TIER is 2.34; MDSC is 2.17; and equity is 30.78 percent.

Tax return filing: Jay Lux reviewed the Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative tax return filing – Form 990 for the year ending Dec. 31, 2016, with the board. The board approved a motion to accept Form 990 as presented.

Special equipment/work order closeouts: The board approved the closeout of the following special equipment/work order:

- Closeout work order 671
- Closeout work order 672
- Closeout work order 673

Capital credit retirements: The board approved the retirement of the following capital credit accounts:
Patricia Marburger estate

Larry Horob estate
Chet Hammers estate
Jerry Erickson estate
Flora Smith estate

Bad debts: The board approved a transfer from accounts receivable to bad debts. Efforts will continue to collect these sums including the retention of capital credits.

Meeting reports:

Upper Missouri Power Cooperative (UMPC) – Director Jorgenson gave a report on the UMPC meeting he attended in Medora. The written Aug. 25 general manager update was made available.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative – Director Jorgenson gave a report on Basin Electric Power Cooperative. The written Basin Electric update for August was made available.

North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) – Josh Kramer, executive vice president and general manager of NDAREC, was present for a portion of the board meeting. He spoke to the board about what is coming up for NDAREC and gave a report on the summer session meeting. He also spoke about how local cooperatives could be affected by the legislative session and what is happening at a national level. The written notes from the NDAREC regular board meeting for July were also made available.

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) – The board approved a motion for Director Grant to serve as delegate and Director Lynne to serve as alternate at the upcoming NDAREC board meeting in October.

Manager's report:

Safety – Manager Haugen reported there were no lost-time accidents in July.

Southwest Power Pool (SPP) – Manager Haugen reported on MWEC's first Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) hearing in Washington, D.C., and the issues that the intervening parties have raised. The transmission facilities that are under SPP control have FERC-regulated transmission rates.

Reliability and outage report – Jerry Rehak presented the July outage

report. There were 141 outages in July and the year-to-date SAIDI is 89.603.

MWEC building update – Manager Haugen presented an update on the progress of the MWEC office building. The board plans to do a full walk through of the building in September. PIE is still on site overseeing the roof construction.

Construction notes – The latest construction notes were made available.

Employee update – MWEC has hired an engineer who will start on Oct. 1.

Union contact – Manager Haugen reported that a union contract has been approved.

Member concerns: MWEC communication with members over disconnected services was discussed. The board will continue to discuss how member disconnects are handled and if changes need to be made to the current way MWEC communicates with members about disconnects at upcoming meetings.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. ■

**MOUNTRAIL-WILLIAMS
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

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