

Watts New

March, 2020

From The Desk Of . . . Don Smith, Manager

March already! The official beginning of Spring! It has been a whirlwind winter (pun intended)! Blustery, chilly, some snow and now springtime is just around the corner!

With spring comes newness and I am hoping the newness is more than just the new life in plants and animals! This has been a very interesting year in the electric utility industry. As you have read in my previous articles, the controversy with our neighbors to the south has been considerable. Tri-State has been under significant attack and “Tri-State” means all of the Tri-State members, including Wheatland REA. The utility industry is very complex and has many aspects, not just the generation, poles and wires aspects, but political aspects as well. These politics act heavily when some folks play in this political world to gain an advantage over others.

Boiling this down, there are some Tri-State members in Colorado who want to leave Tri-State. Their problem is that they, like all Tri-State members, have contracts that do not expire for another 30 years. Tri-State has put a price on getting out of these contracts and the disgruntled members think this price is too high. Instead of settling the matter through appropriate legal channels, the members have filed with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission. This means you have a Colorado political entity deciding the value of this contract, without regard to the impact to those systems outside of Colorado, such as Wheatland REA. As you may imagine, the current Colorado administration really doesn't care much about Wyoming. They care even less about a community that has a very large coal fired power plant.

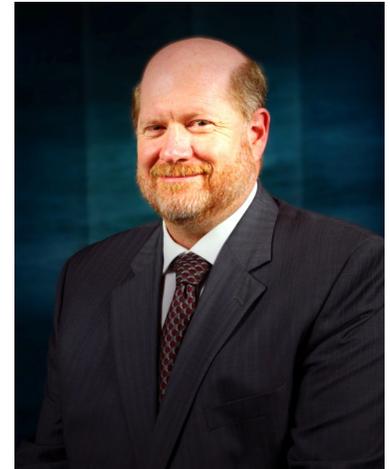
Tri-State has invested literally billions of dollars in infrastructure to ensure ALL members have the power they need to serve the end of line customers (you, the REA members) with hundreds of millions of this money spent in the Colorado Front Range area. The difference between the value that Tri-State has determined and the value the dissatisfied members have determined is substantial. Anything these departing members do not pay when they leave Tri-State is left upon the backs of the remaining members like Wheatland REA.

Tri-State has been fighting this fight but the politics are enormous, and the attacks are coming at them from various angles. I have always believed that we must do all we can to control our own destiny. As a member of Tri-State, we have had to join in the fray. Through our statewide association, we plan to pull in Governor Gordon and the Wyoming Attorney General's office in order to file an intervention with the Colorado PUC. When we filed for our own intervention, we were told we have no standing before them. By partnering with other Tri-State members not only in Wyoming but in Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico. We are progressing through legal channels in our effort to protect you, the end user on the system, the members of Wheatland REA.

This is a huge disappointment and departure from the cooperative perspective as one of the key cooperative principles is “cooperation among cooperatives”. When one cooperative starts being concerned only with themselves, the concept fails, and all pay the price. We will continue to keep you informed and do our best to protect your Association.

On a lighter note, the Wheatland REA Annual Membership Meeting was March 18th at the 4H Building! As always we had lots of door prizes and great food! Hope you were able to attend!

It is a pleasure to serve you! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to give me a call or stop in!



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From the desk of RKA....

Happy March 2020! The first 2 months of the new year sure went fast! I can't believe that spring is just around the corner!

As with March being here, so is our Annual Meeting. The 83rd Wheatland REA annual meeting was held on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 at the 4-H Building. We offered the Wellness Fair, as in years past, and the lunch was served by the 4-H Leader's Council. We also had Shred-It at the meeting to take any items you wanted to shred. I hope you took advantage of not only this service but the many other booths that were available.

We gave out capital credit retirement checks at the annual meeting. For the REA, we paid the remaining margins from the year 2003 and approximately 42% of 2004. From our G & T, Tri-State, we paid the remaining margins from the year 2000, all the year 2001, and 31% of the year 2002. Any capital credit checks that were not picked up at the meeting were mailed March 19th. If you have any questions about capital credits, please give us a call!

One item that I would like to discuss that seems to be a hot topic right now is sales tax exemption for our members. You should have received a bright colored stuffer in your electric bill regarding this topic. Wyoming Law allows some agricultural consumers to receive an exemption from paying sales tax on their electric bills. IMPORTANT! It is strictly up to you, the member, to make sure that you are eligible. If you have an accountant that prepares your taxes, I recommend that you discuss this issue with them. The only thing that we do is keep the exemption certificates on file. We cannot make the determination for you. If you have any questions, please give us a call.

First quarter here at the coop has been furiously busy. Not only are we getting ready for the annual meeting, we are also working on annual year end reports that are required by various government entities. Each report is different because each government entity requires different information in various formats. We also have been busy researching and putting together information for a cost of service study. This study is done to give us, as management, information on what we are charging for rates in each class compared to all the costs involved with that class. There are a lot of expenses involved with distributing power and maintaining our electric system. Cost of materials in our world is not going down either. This report is our due diligence to the members in understanding how the rates for each class substantiate the daily operation of the co-op.

Homefront is anticipating spring and the time to head out for fishing. Last year, we headed up to Canada and did some fishing... kind of got spoiled there. So, if we struggle this year, it will be even harder to take!!! We have been busy starting Phase 2 of the remodeling at my son's house. This 2nd phase has not gone quite as smoothly as the first phase, but we are getting closer. My daughter is staying busy at her new job as an RN and loving it. Again, I reminded her of the possibilities of "family geriatrics" and again the answer was NO! (LOL!)

Until next month....



LIGHTNING SEASON IS NOT FAR OFF!

Do you lease a meter socket or a direct-wired surge protector? It is hard to remember to do this, but you should check the indicator light (or lights) on the outside of your surge protector at least once per month, and after every thunderstorm. If the lights are on, your surge protector is working properly.*

If a light (or lights) is out, it needs to be replaced because it clamped-down on a surge and protected your appliances. **You must have additional protection for your other items such as computers, TVs, game consoles, etc.** If any of the lights are out, call us and we will replace it.

No lights equal no protection!

Members who have a surge protector (similar to the ones pictured below), but are not billed monthly (\$4.95), own their surge protectors. If you own your surge protector, and it is over 10 years old, it is out of its manufacturer's warranty. We will lease you a new one (we do keep track of leased protectors) if you want to replace your old surge protector.



* If you lose a piece of equipment after a thunderstorm and the indicator lights are still on, the surge DID NOT enter your wiring through the power line. When lightning strikes a tree, or hits the ground, the electricity travels away from the point-of-entry in all directions and can enter a home's breaker panel through the ground rod connected to that panel. This is the reason you need additional surge protection inside your home for your appliances and electronic equipment.

Is there a new electric irrigation motor in your future? We offer cash rebates on premium efficiency motors 10HP to 500HP. Rebates are good for new installations and replacements. Used and rewind motors do not qualify. You must apply within 120 days of installation.



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