

# EMPIRE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

*Echoes of the Empire*

MAY 2022

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## EYES ON THE HORIZON

BY ANDY CARTER MEMBER ENGAGEMENT MANAGER



ANDY CARTER

If you can remember learning to ride a bike, you understand the importance of learning to keep your focus on what lies ahead and not just on pedaling and keeping your balance. Recognizing changing terrain or other dangers, like your neighbor's dog coming down their driveway, are important to an enjoyable and safe trip around the neighborhood. Providing power to our membership also requires Empire Electric Association to not only focus on day-to-day tasks but to also look forward and anticipate changes that may impact how we provide power to you.

As part of EEA's focus on the future, we strive to responsibly meet your electrical energy needs. "Responsibly" means that we provide affordable, equitable and environmentally-responsible services for the benefit of our membership. Affordability is on everyone's mind these days as we see increasing costs in every aspect of our lives.

EEA is a not-for-profit rural electric cooperative. We are working for you and are not driven by the need to make a profit for a third-party owner. Our rates are designed to charge each rate class the cost of service in as fair and cost-effective manner as possible. A rate class is a group of consumer-members that use power in a similar way. Our rates also provide our consumer-members the ability to reduce their monthly bills by changing when they use power or by using power in a more efficient way.

EEA's largest expense is the power it purchases from Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, its wholesale power provider. In 2021, 73% of EEA's expenses were for purchasing power from Tri-State. EEA's relationship with Tri-State resembles the relationship you have with EEA. There are 42 electric

cooperatives that are members of Tri-State. Each member cooperative gets a monthly bill from Tri-State that is based on the energy used and peak demand created for the month. Just like you, EEA cannot change the rate it pays Tri-State, but we can alter the way we use energy to reduce our monthly Tri-State bill.

How can EEA reduce the energy use or peak demand for the entire cooperative? By providing accurate pricing signals in our rates, you will know when it is expensive for EEA to buy power on your behalf and hopefully it encourages you to use power at a less expensive time. On-peak time is more expensive for you because it is more expensive for EEA to purchase power from Tri-State during peak time. If you take action to shift your energy use from on-peak to off-peak times, the savings that EEA receives in our monthly Tri-State bill is passed directly on to you on your bill.

Affordability is also part of Tri-State's mission in serving its member cooperatives and it has been working hard as part of its Responsible Energy Plan to lower our cost. Tri-State reduced its wholesale power rate in March 2021 by 2%. Tri-State also reduced its rate by an additional 2% in March 2022. EEA passed the 2021 reduction on to you by providing a credit on your September 2021 bill for the period of March to August 2021, and then incorporating the reduction into the new rates implemented on September 1, 2021.

The most recent Tri-State rate reduction has come at a time when we are seeing inflation increase the cost to operate and maintain the distribution system. EEA's 2022 budget included an increase in the cost for materials, but current price increases are

proving to be higher than expected and may last longer than anticipated. The reduction in the wholesale power rate will help to offset the additional costs EEA is seeing and reduces the likelihood of a rate increase in 2023. We at EEA are working hard to keep other costs in check as we balance the need to keep power bills affordable with the need for the cooperative to be financially strong for the future.

Providing equitable service is part of the first cooperative principle: voluntary and open membership. EEA is a voluntary organization that is open to any person able to use our services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination. It also means providing service in a fair way. EEA's rules, regulations and policies are all designed to direct its employees to meet your electrical energy needs in a way that provides value for you while maintaining service quality to other consumer-members and keeping the cooperative financially sound. Allowing special treatment for one member or a group of members always comes at the cost of the rest of the membership. The cost-of-service business model we use helps to maintain this balance and informs the decisions we make daily.

Providing environmentally-responsible service means doing our part to keep our community viable for the future. There are many aspects to being environmentally responsible, and it starts with our employees. EEA is at work each day as an environmental steward for our community. EEA employees work to keep in compliance with regulations for handling and disposing of hazardous materials it uses in operating and maintaining the system, from transformers to motor oil to wireless mouse batteries. EEA crews are conscientious and aware that the large vehicles they use can damage areas they drive on and take care to mitigate any potential damage while maintaining safety protocols.

The current drought makes wildland fire mitigation very important. Wildland

fires not only destroy forests, rangeland and personal property, but the after affects can also be damaging to water sheds. Vegetation management plays a large part in EEA's effort to provide reliable service as well as reduce wildland fires. Our vegetation management contractor works all year to maintain our rights of way and follows a planned rotation to make sure our entire system is maintained.

Tri-State is also helping EEA deliver responsible service. Tri-State is in the third year of executing its Responsible Energy Plan. The plan aims to increase the amount of clean energy in its portfolio and reduce emissions while continuing to support the communities it has been a part of. By 2024, 50% of Tri-State's electricity will come from clean energy sources. Part of that will be from two large solar generation stations located in EEA's territory. Their goal is to have 70% of the energy they supply come from clean sources by 2030. They also plan to eliminate their emissions from coal plants in Colorado and New Mexico by 2030.

We at EEA also support your efforts to be environmentally responsible. We offer energy efficiency rebates, advice about how to reduce your energy usage, and bill credits for recycling refrigerators and freezers. EEA also allows consumer-members to generate their own renewable energy through our net metering program, and for those for whom net metering is not feasible, EEA offers you the ability to purchase renewable power for your home or business through our Green Power program.

Responsibly meeting your electrical energy needs is a challenge for EEA. The balance between making bills affordable while safely maintaining reliability and the financial strength of our cooperative requires our full attention. Our promise to you is, while we work daily to keep your lights on, we will also keep our eyes on the horizon to ensure that we can all enjoy our community together for a long time to come.

## NOTICE OF 2022 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING EMPIRE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

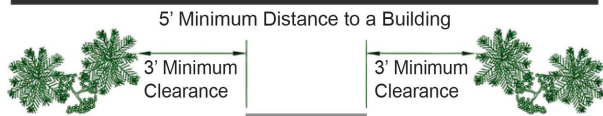
The Annual Meeting of the members of Empire Electric Association, Inc. is scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 23, 2022. The meeting will be held at EEA's Engineering & Operations Center located at 23999 Road L.4, Cortez, Colorado. The following business is scheduled to be transacted:

- I. Election of directors submitted by written petition pursuant to Article III Section 4 of the cooperative's bylaws. One director is to be elected from the following districts:  
DISTRICT NO. 3 [Four-year term]  
**(NOTE: Article III, Section 4 of Empire's bylaws states, "Should there be only one nomination from each district open for election then no ballots will be mailed or cast and the candidate will be declared elected as a matter of law at the annual meeting or within five (5) days thereafter as provided by law.")**
- II. Voting upon proposed amendment to the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation, if necessary  
**(NOTE: No Bylaw or Articles amendments are proposed at this time.)**
- III. Reports of officers, directors and committees and action thereon
- IV. Any other business transacted which may properly come before the meeting or any adjournment thereof.

Jerry Fetterman, Secretary-Treasurer  
Empire Electric Association, Inc.  
PO Box K  
Cortez, CO 81321

Planting guidelines around padmounted electrical equipment.

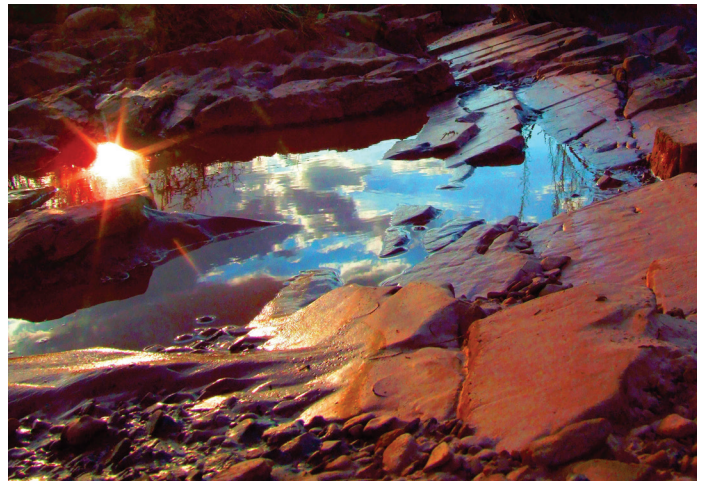
Fences, shrubs and trees located too close to padmount transformers can slow power restoration or create a serious safety hazard. If these items are in the way, crews may have to remove them to gain access. Avoid that situation by taking time to plan before planting shrubs or trees or installing a fence near a padmount transformer.



Call **811** to have the underground utility lines marked before beginning your landscaping project. Because transformers may serve several homes, underground lines may go out from them in many directions.



Maintain a 12-foot clearance in front of the transformer. Equipment inside is energized at high voltage. Line crews work on "energized" transformers to avoid interrupting your service. Our linemen use long fiberglass insulated sticks and need the clear space to work safely.



Co-op Photo Contest Winner May 2022 – Solar Dip by David Lee Reineke

LOOKING for ways to  
**REDUCE costs & IMPROVE SOIL HEALTH on YOUR FARM?**

*You DON'T WANT to MISS*  
**a day with RAY ARCHULETA**  
**MAY 20TH**  
**9am-5pm**  
Lewis Arriola Community Center  
21203 Rd S Cortez, CO 81321



- Improve your soil health
- Reduce your fertilizer costs
- Increase soil's water holding capacity
- Decrease input costs
- Increase your farm's profitability
- Improve nutrient density of food and agricultural products
- Soil health evaluation

**\$40 registration includes a full day of learning & LUNCH provided by The Gettin' Place**

\*REGISTER by **MAY 5th** to reserve your seat & lunch

**"THE SOIL GUY" is COMING to CORTEZ!!**

Find the registration link at the Montezuma County Conservation districts website!  
<https://montezumacountyconservationdistricts.org>

Brought to you by  
Montezuma County Conservation Districts



Contact Neva at 970-508-0674 with any questions

In summer months, adding insulation to your attic can keep your home more comfortable and save energy used by your cooling system. Attic insulation should be evenly distributed with no low spots. *Source: energystar.gov*

# LOOK OUT

## FOR POWER SOURCES



- 10'** Do not get within 10 feet (in any direction) of a power line.
- Be aware of power lines when working on the roof.
- Do not trim branches or limbs near power lines.
- Be careful when carrying long or tall objects such as ladders or poles.
- 811** Before you dig, call 811 to have underground utilities marked.



**DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE**

Do not dig near padmount transformers or other utility equipment.

SafeElectricity.org



# Prioritize Safety Year-Round

We at Empire Electric Association recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year-round. From our co-op crews to you, the consumer-members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the United States are critically injured or electrocuted every year by electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity — it powers our daily lives. But we know first-hand how dangerous electricity can be because we work with it 365 days per year.

Safety is more than a catchphrase at EEA. We focus on it daily because we want every employee to return to their family every evening. We also want to help keep you and all members of our community safe. That is why you'll see EEA hosting safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year — to demonstrate the dangers of electricity. We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines. We caution students on the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices. We demonstrate how unpredictable electricity can be and help students identify unsafe situations and how to avoid them.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the prevalence of electrical devices, tools and appliances, we want to pass along a few practical electrical safety tips.

**Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard.** Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use or excessive current flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them, as they could cause a shock when handled.

**Avoid overloading circuits.** Circuits can only cope with a limited amount of electricity. Overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit can safely



▲ EEA lineworkers perform hot line work with two bucket trucks.

handle — by having too many devices running on one circuit. EEA's equipment can also be overloaded. If you have installed or are considering installing any large appliances or equipment, EEA's rules and regulations state you must first contact EEA and request an inspection to ensure we can safely meet the increased power requirement. You can call the EEA engineering department at 970-564-4406 to request a consultation.

**Consider an electrical inspection for your home.** Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old or if you see signs of a problem like blackened outlets or circuit breakers that frequently open. Keep the electrical system in your home up to date and in good repair to reduce the risk of injury or a fire.

**Use extension cords properly.** Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you "daisy chain" cords together, it could

lead to overheating the tool or appliance you are using, creating a potential fire hazard. Do not exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so also creates a risk of overloading the cord and creating a fire hazard. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need additional outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.

EEA encourages you to talk with your kids about playing it safe and smart around electricity. Help them be aware of overhead power lines or pad-mounted transformers near where they play outdoors.

Our top priority is providing an uninterrupted energy supply 24/7, 365 days per year. But equally important is keeping our community safe around electricity. Contact EEA at 970-565-4444 for additional electrical safety tips or if you want us to provide a safety demonstration at your school or upcoming community event.

## Monthly Calendar

**May 8** – Mother's Day

**May 13** – EEA's board meeting begins at 8:30 a.m. at its headquarters in Cortez. The agenda is posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [eea.coop](http://eea.coop). Consumer-members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting. Meeting restrictions due to health concerns may require the meeting to be held remotely.

**May 30** – Memorial Day (EEA office closed)