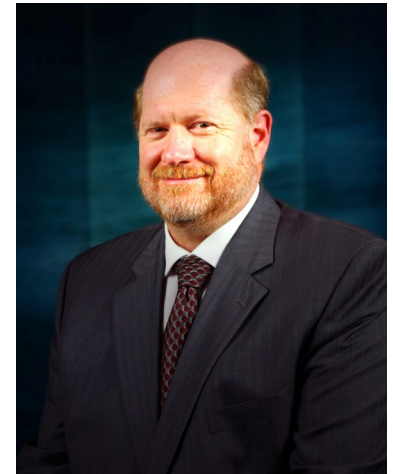




We continue to ride through 2020! With all the ups and downs that have occurred, we continue to press on. As I begin writing this article, it is Veterans Day. We are hosting our 6th Annual Veterans Day Open House, and it has grown! We have outgrown our office for the display, and moved it to the First State Bank Conference Center, but it is almost too big for that! Al Teel counted displays this morning, and we had 45 uniforms and 24 table displays. All of this memorabilia has some connection to our members. It ranges from the Civil War, to present day, and includes active duty personnel, and all branches of service. It is quite remarkable to see and read the history in the room! Whether war time or peace time, it is because of these veterans, and those that served, that we enjoy the freedoms that we do in this country. As it is said, freedom is never free, and our veterans have given part of their lives to protect our freedoms. Thanks to those who have served!



As we begin our budgeting process, the question has been asked, “What are we doing to save our members money?” This is a very appropriate question that we consider, not only during the budget season, but throughout the year. As we look at cost saving measures, there are several; both past and future. We have to look at our costs in the long-term. Maintenance and safety are significant parts of our budget. Just as changing oil on your truck is a maintenance necessity, so is maintenance on the distribution system.

One area of maintenance that has made a significant difference in our reliability, as well as our costs, is the right-of-way maintenance and tree trimming. Over the years, we have worked to maintain required clearances between trees, branches and our lines. This cutting must be done by workers qualified to work near energized power lines. It has been difficult for us to stay current on this work, and still take care of the system and other things linemen have to do. About three years ago we contracted with a firm that specializes in power line right-of-way work. This contractor has saved us money; rather than using our linemen to cut the trees, the contractor does it more efficiently, as they can focus on their work and not have to be called off the job when there is an outage or another project. The contractor uses certified arborists that know how to prune the trees to guide the future growth away from the lines. This is not only a cost savings now, but reduces costs in the future.

One investment we have made to extend the safe and useful life of our poles is our test, inspection and treatment program. Overall, poles are the single largest investment in the distribution system, and with nearly 30,000 poles out there, we need to care for this investment. In working with pole experts, we have developed a program that inspects 10% of our poles each year to test for remaining strength, as well as inspect for conditions and things such as fungus, which may speed up pole degradation. Should the inspectors detect a fungus, the pole can be treated, which kills the fungus and extends the life of the pole. We can also identify damage that can be repaired early and save money. We hope to get about 50 years out of each pole, but over the last few years, we have seen poles fail in as little as 10 years. When you are looking at over \$1,250 for an average scheduled pole change, this can have a significant cost impact, not to mention the safety of our members and livestock! This program allows us to catch problems early and minimize the cost of repairs.

These are just a couple of things we are doing to save our members money, as well as increase system reliability. We have already seen benefits from these programs when we did not lose power during recent storms, but neighboring utilities weren't so fortunate. Not only did we avoid broken equipment, but we also did not have to pay overtime to restore power!

If you would like to know more about any of our cost saving maintenance programs, please stop in and see us. As always, it is a pleasure to serve you! Hope you had a great Thanksgiving, and you have a wonderful Christmas! Here is to a less eventful 2021!

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From the office of RKA...

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you! With 2020 being as difficult and trying as it is, this time of year should be a reminder to all of us to be more than grateful for all the blessings that we have in our lives! In fact, let us take each day going forward to be thankful.

As 2020 ends, we are getting ready to close the year end books. It keeps us very busy, as all expenses must be posted correctly, and all accounts must be in balance. Several tasks at the end of the year are only "once a year" tasks which also make it difficult. I cannot even remember what I did last week... much less last year! Thank goodness for notes and checklists.



This is the time of year that we usually hear from our G & T, Tri-State, announcing an increase in their electric rates. I am happy to report that once again, Tri-State will not be increasing their rates for 2021. Management has started working on a cost of service study, which is a comprehensive analysis of all the expenses involved in operating the cooperative, and what it costs us to provide you with safe, reliable electric service. It gives management a thorough analysis of what rates are currently, versus what they should be, based on costs. Last year, we had a similar study completed, which we will be updating with the new cost of service analysis. This will show us if we are on the right track with rates, or help us re-assess our current rates. The final study will be completed in the 1st quarter of 2021.

As we move forward into 2021, our biggest concern (as is for all) is the COVID19 pandemic. Literally, every day is a different day for us as the nation, state government, and local government entities update or endorse new orders or regulations. We, here at the co-op, are fiercely trying to keep all employees safe and healthy. We are considered one of those "essential businesses" that must keep going. As management, we have in place a COVID-19 policy to guide our employees on steps and expectations during this pandemic. We are committed to you, as members, to stay healthy and safe.

We are looking at different options for our annual meeting. It will be very different from past annual meetings. For one thing, we will not be able to utilize the 4-H Building, so a large enough space to accommodate our meeting is very, very limited. We must also consider that the pandemic will be a factor, so getting together will be literally difficult, if not impossible. But co-ops around the nation have come up with some very innovative ideas that we are also considering. Please stay tuned!

Again, still quiet at my house. The dogs have loved pheasant hunting again. I did go and walk just to watch the dogs work. They absolutely make me laugh! First, they are just running back and forth and you think that they are just having a free-for-all, but then all of a sudden they catch a scent, and they are nose to the ground and working. They get on point and wait for someone to shoot. Well, ok... someone to try and shoot! I am pretty sure the dogs look back and think "WHAT THE HEY!" LOL!!



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**MERRY CHRISTMAS
&
HAPPY NEW YEAR**



from our REA family to yours!


**The office will be closed
December 25th and January 1st.**





**Information and applications
for our scholarships can be found at
the REA office, www.wheatlandrea.com,
or at your high school!**

**Applications are due at the
Wheatland REA office by
February 15, 2021!**

**CHRISTMAS
LIGHTS EDITION!
Did you know?**

 In 1880 Thomas Edison invented long strands of lights. They were used 2 years later as decorations.

 The Guinness World Record for the most lights hung is held by a family in New York in 2014. The lights covered a 2-acre space with a total of 601,736 lights!

 Outdoor lights weren't available until 1927.



THANK YOU VETERANS!



WOW! WHAT A DISPLAY OF PATRIOTISM!

Approximately 90 people visited, and paid their respects to our heroes represented at the open house. There were 69 veteran's displays.

We wish to recognize the following for their support and assistance in making the 6th Annual Veterans' Honor Display and open house a tremendous success:

**Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 3558
First State Bank
Laramie Peak Museum
Radio Stations KYCN, KZEW, KANT**

And "Thank You" to all of the businesses that graciously allowed us to hang our flyers!