

Powering life from a lineworker's perspective



Lineworkers have one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the country. The lineworkers at Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) work during rain or shine in often challenging conditions to ensure you have reliable electricity. As we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8, we share a column from Tanner Roth, one of our many dedicated lineworkers.

BY TANNER ROTH

I am one of 11 lineworkers at LYREC who works every day in all weather conditions to make sure our community has power. Sometimes, being a lineworker is hard work, but it is rewarding. I hope this will give you a better look into what we face, and more importantly, why we do it.

The danger

A lot of people know being a lineworker is dangerous, because we work near high-voltage electricity. You must know the power source, if there is power going through the line and to check all variables to know if the line is energized or de-energized. You must be aware of your surroundings, and of those next to you to make sure everyone is safe.

Electricity has an element of danger that requires concentration, and there is no margin for error. We are often working in storms with rain or wind, during extreme heat and cold, in the dark or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it is dangerous, but that is what we're trained to do.

The training

The typical training is five to nine months of college to get your certificate of completion. Most lineworkers try to get hired by either a contractor or a cooperative. We typically start as a grounds person, helping crews with tools and keeping job sites safe, then we transition to apprentice status, which typically spans four years. After an apprenticeship,

with more than 7,000 hours of training under our belts, we transition to journeyman lineworker.

But the education is ongoing. Lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and to stay up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

The physical demand

The job of being a lineworker changes from day to day. A few examples are building new services, troubleshooting when outages occur, maintaining the electrical system and making sure we are keeping up with tree trimming, which is all physically demanding.

The sacrifices

When on call in the evenings or on weekends, you must make sacrifices. That may mean missing a holiday meal, an event you had wanted to attend or just missing time with your family. The good thing is my family is very supportive when it comes to this.

We are often first on the scene of an emergency, from car accidents to structure fires to severe storms that have damaged our electrical system. You never really know what you are going to come across in this trade. But we are always glad to get the power restored to our consumers.

It is worth it

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the *continued on next page*



L to R Back Row: **Bryan Franck, Aaron Eide, Ryder Peterson, Jesse Obergfell, Rich Gorde, Tanner Roth**
Front row: **Lee Delp, Jory Bell, Preston Long, Trey Schepens, Cole Jankovsky**

continued from previous page

camaraderie. My co-op is my second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood. In this work, it is a culture of trust, teamwork and service. It is all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on for everybody else.

Regardless of the weather conditions, I know I am working to keep people warm on cold nights or just so they can live their normal lives. There is a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell “thank you” from the window after power is restored or seeing people

flipping the light switches on their porches. No matter how tired I am or how long I have been working, that feeling always makes it worth it.

LYREC and its employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhood. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off, too. So, you can trust we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible, so you can get back to normal life. ■

Scholarship recipients named

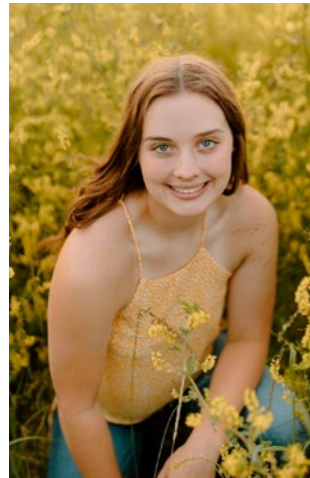
Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC), a power supplier of Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperatives (LYREC), has awarded two \$1,000 scholarships to LYREC members’ dependents.

After a rigorous selection process, which included reviewing applications from a pool of exceptionally talented and deserving students, the BEPC committee has chosen two outstanding individuals whose academic achievements, leadership qualities and commitment to community service have distinguished them among their peers.

Among the recipients is Hannah Karren, a senior at Fairview High School, whose dedication to academic excellence has earned her this esteemed honor. She has demonstrated exemplary leadership skills and commitment to giving back to the community.

Additionally, Lauren Prevost, a senior at Lambert High School, has been recognized for her outstanding achievements. She has not only excelled academically, but has also shown exceptional leadership qualities and a strong commitment to making a positive impact in her community.

The BEPC scholarship aims to empower talented students like Hannah and Lauren by providing financial



Lauren Prevost



Hannah Karren

assistance and support to pursue their educational aspirations. Through this scholarship program, BEPC continues to invest in the future leaders of tomorrow.

LYREC extends its heartfelt congratulations to Hannah and Lauren and wishes them continued success in their academic endeavors. ■

Rural Development Finance Corporation grant available

The Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC) is offering a grant up to \$3,000 per member cooperative to be used to support community-owned entities, nonprofits and community-based projects. Eligible projects include: community-owned businesses; community facilities; workforce development; or community-based projects that benefit

rural areas and lead to community betterment. Medical fundraisers or general operating costs are not eligible for the grant.

This grant is based on matching funds. If you would like more information on this grant, or to download an application, go to www.lyrec.coop. ■

The landscape of reliability

Tree trimming keeps power flowing safely

Trees may seem harmless on a calm, sunny day. But add a bit of wind or ice on a stormy night and those towering pillars may threaten your home's electric supply.

Storm outages are sometimes related to trees contacting power lines, so regular trimming of trees and brush along power lines helps cut down on the number of outages as well as annoying blinks.

Electricity interruptions can occur when branches break and fall across power lines, or when trees tumble onto power lines. When strong winds blow, limbs growing too close to power lines may sway and touch wires, causing those annoying "blinks" in power.

To fight these potential problems, electric cooperatives clear growth away from power lines as a way of reducing potential outages and safety risks.

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative is committed

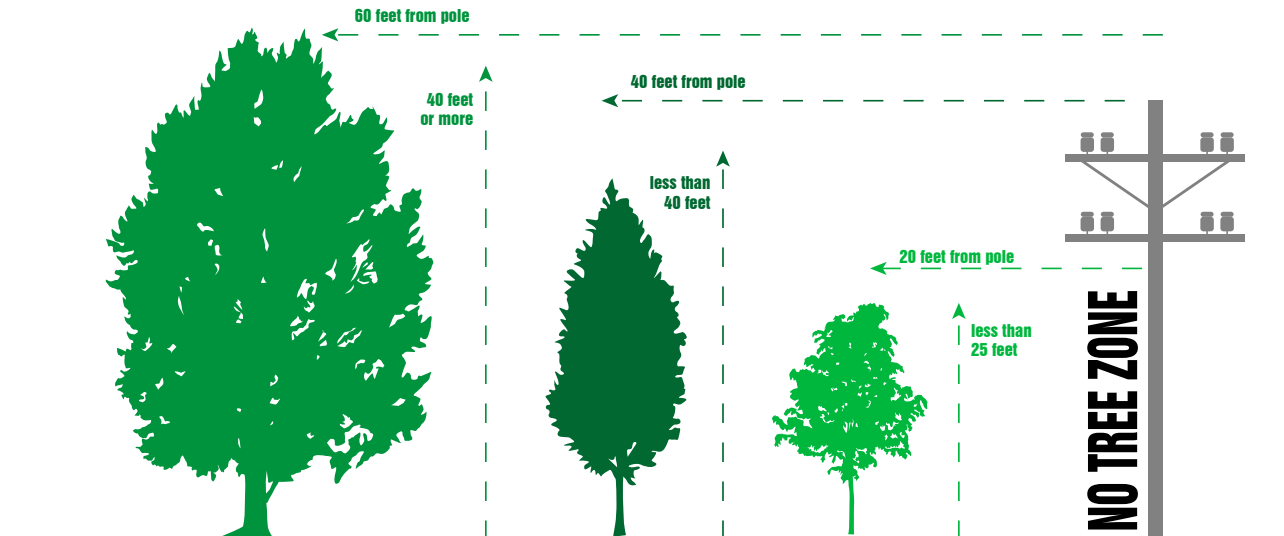
to providing safe, reliable and affordable power, and a tree-trimming program is key to fulfilling that promise.

Crews look for foliage growing under lines, overhanging branches, leaning or other types of dangerous trees that could pull down a power line if they fall. As a rule of thumb, 25 feet of ground-to-sky clearance should be available on each side of utility poles to give power lines plenty of space.

If a tree is growing underneath or near a power line, it should be cut down completely, to avoid dangerous situations.

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative also advises members to consider where they plant new trees. While a sapling may seem fine where it's planted, members should consider what the tree will look like at maturity.

If trees in your area are growing into power lines, please call Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative. Crews will trim as soon as their work schedule allows. ■



When danger looms

Sprawling tree limbs look beautiful when covered with leaves, but what's hiding among those branches? If it's a power line, call a professional to trim that tree before it causes a hazard for you or leaves you without power.

When a tree touches an overhead power line, danger looms. Children climbing that tree can get shocked or killed; branches can break or fall onto the wire, causing an outage; or the wind can whip a limb into the line and cause an outage. But remember: When power lines are involved, always leave the trimming to professionals.

Plan, then plant

Trees can filter the sunlight to help cool your home, and break cold winds to lower your heating costs. But before you plant that tree, look up. Is there a power line overhead or nearby? If so, you may need to change your landscaping plans.

Always consider the mature height of the trees and shrubs you plant. Ask professionals how tall your sapling will be when it's mature. If it is expected to reach within 25 feet of a power line, plant it somewhere else. Also find out how sprawling the tree's branches will be at maturity. A tree planted 25 feet away from a power line could still interfere with the wires.

SAVE THE DATE

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative annual meeting

Wednesday, June 5
 Richland County Event Center
 Registration starts at 5 p.m.

Energy Share of Montana's art winner

Paityn Huft, a fourth-grader from Lambert, Mont., won third place in the Energy Share of Montana's statewide art contest. Kevin Thompson, energy programs director at Action for Eastern Montana and the Energy Share coordinator for eastern Montana, presented Paityn with her prize in March. Paityn received a \$25 check from Energy Share. Her teacher, Val Frisbie, received a \$25 Amazon gift card to use for classroom supplies. Additionally, Energy Share bought pizza for the class as a "congratulations" for all their fine artwork.

Using the medium of art, Frisbie taught her students about our Montana neighbors who sometimes need a little additional help with keeping warm in the winter. The drawings by her students depict what Energy Share means to them.

The art contest is part of Energy Share's overall efforts to educate the public on the energy needs of our neighbors across the state. Donations from individuals and businesses, including Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative, Montana-Dakota



Utilities, NorthWestern Energy and the propane industry, make it possible for Energy Share to help Montanans who face emergency, no-heat situations when they encounter temporary financial difficulties. Energy Share partners with Action for Eastern Montana to help Montanans keep their homes warm and safe.

If you or someone you know would like more information on how to apply or how to help, please call Action for Eastern Montana at 406-377-3564 or 800-227-0703. ■

3200 W. Holly - Sidney, MT 59270

Phone: 406-488-1602

Fax: 406-488-6524

Website: www.lyrec.com

TRUSTEES

Allen Thiessen	President
Greg Rauschendorfer	Vice President
Dennis Schmierer	Secretary/Treasurer
Colin Gartner	Trustee
Tim Franzen	Trustee
Dennis Nelson	Trustee
Jim Vitt	Trustee

EMPLOYEES

Jason Brothen	General Manager
Jami Propp	Member Service Manager
Pam Wilcoxon	Chief Financial Officer
Melissa Buckley	Plant Accountant
Kyle Kavanagh	IT Coordinator
Margo Zadow	Billing Coordinator
Tiffani Hentges	Customer Service Representative
Chris Hillesland	Chief Operations Officer
Rich Gorde	Journeyman Lineman
Eric McPherson	System Controller
Kevin Goff	Operations Assistant
Kelly Keyser	Operations Manager
Aaron Eide	Journeyman Lineman
Bryan Franck	Journeyman Lineman
Jesse Obergfell	Journeyman Lineman
Tanner Roth	Journeyman Lineman
Ryder Peterson	Journeyman Lineman
Cole Jankovsky	Journeyman Lineman
Lee Delp	Apprentice Lineman
Preston Long	Apprentice Lineman
Trey Schepens	Apprentice Lineman
Jory Bell	Apprentice Lineman
Brandon Mueller	Master Electrician
Mike Eberling	Mechanic
Dan Gieser	EMS
Lee Alvstad	Mechanic/EMS
Richard Tremblay	EMS
Bo Kindopp	GIS/Easement Technician
Tom Hall	GIS Specialist
Corey Candee	Chief Information Officer
Jeremy Reese	Information Technology Technician
Braden Kindopp	Information Technology Technician
Edwin Gatzke	Line Locator/Groundsman
Justin King	Warehouse Supervisor
Dennis Fine	Summer Help

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 