



On behalf of the board of directors and staff, we wish each of our members and their families the warmest of greetings and best wishes.

## HOLIDAY GIFT TO MEMBERS: Capital credits returned

**A**s the holiday season draws near, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) is excited to spread some cheer and appreciation by returning capital credits to our members this month.

LYREC has allocated capital credits from margins generated in 2008, 2009 and 2023. In 2024, we are returning a total of \$2,062,336, which will be distributed to members based on their patronage.

We understand December can be tough on the wallet, with higher electricity bills due to colder weather and the costs of holiday festivities. In the spirit of Christmas, we hope to bring a smile to your face and a little extra cheer to your budget this holiday season. Members will receive their capital

credits as a bill credit or by check in the first half of the month.

LYREC is proud to be a member-driven cooperative, and your ongoing support has enabled us to grow and continue providing excellent service. Returning capital credits before Christmas is our way of expressing our heartfelt gratitude for your trust in us.

As we head into the holiday season, we send our warmest wishes to all our members. May your Christmas be filled with joy, love and the warmth of your family and friends. We hope the capital credits you receive add an extra touch of comfort and happiness to your celebrations. ■



## Rate increase addresses rising material, power costs

**I**n light of escalating operational costs, the board of directors of Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) has announced a rate increase effective Jan. 1, 2025. The adjustment is necessary to account for the rising cost of both materials and power generation, which has significantly impacted the cooperative's finances in recent years.

As a not-for-profit cooperative, LYREC's primary mission is to provide reliable and affordable electricity, while covering the operational and infrastructure costs necessary to maintain the power grid. When these costs rise, the co-op must adjust rates to stay financially viable and to continue to deliver reliable electricity.

The cost of critical infrastructure has surged due to global supply chain disruptions, inflation and a shortage of key commodities, such as copper and steel. These materials are crucial for the maintenance and repair of power lines, transformers and substations. Additionally, the prices of equipment, such as poles, insulators and circuit breakers, have risen, increasing the cooperative's costs for both maintenance and emergency repairs.

The cost of generating electricity has also spiked. Fluctuations in fuel prices, particularly natural gas, have raised the cost of purchased power. Regulatory changes aimed at reducing carbon emissions have added compliance costs, further impacting overall power generation expenses.

To enhance efficiency and reliability, the cooperative

has been investing in its power grid. The aging infrastructure needs upgrades, and the implementation of smart grid technologies has enabled better monitoring and quicker response times during outages. However, these advancements come at a cost.

Under the new rate structure, residential members will see an increase of \$5 per meter for their facility charge, and the rate per kilowatt-hour (kWh) will rise by 0.003 cents. For example, a residential member with an average usage of 2,000 kWh per month will experience the changes in the graph below.

While this increase may cause concern among members, LYREC CEO Jason Brothen emphasizes it is a necessary step to ensure the continued reliability of the grid and to adapt to the rising costs outside of the co-op's control.

"We understand the impact this may have on our members, but we are committed to providing transparency and ensuring this adjustment will allow us to maintain and improve the services you rely on every day," Brothen says.

LYREC is actively monitoring material and power generation costs and will continue to evaluate its financial position. While rate increases are necessary in the short term, the co-op is focused on long-term solutions to stabilize costs and provide reliable service our members expect.

For additional information on rates, please visit [www.lyrec.com](http://www.lyrec.com). ■

	Old rate	New rate
<b>2,000 kWh</b>	<b>2,000 × 0.071 = \$142</b>	<b>2,000 × 0.074 = \$148</b>
<b>Facility charge</b>	<b>\$20</b>	<b>\$25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$162</b>	<b>\$173</b>



## Meet the challenge of gift giving

**G**ift-giving can be a joyful experience, but what happens when you are faced with finding the perfect present for someone who seems to already have everything? You know who that is. We all have at least one in our circle. However, for that hard-to-buy-for individual, there are plenty of ways to give meaningful gifts.

One thoughtful approach is to focus on safety, which is something everyone values, regardless of how much they already own. A safety-minded gift not only shows you care, but also provides something practical. Here are some great examples of safety-conscious gifts even those who seem to have everything can appreciate.

- Smoke or carbon monoxide detector.
- A flashlight with extra batteries for emergencies.
- A roadside emergency kit.
- A smart doorbell to see who is at the door while at home or away.
- Gift certificates for home services, such as an HVAC inspection or chimney sweeping.
- A fire extinguisher for the kitchen.
- A cozy bed blanket to replace an older electric blanket; those more than 10 years old are often unsafe.
- Proper safety gear, such as helmets and knee



Give safety-minded gifts this season for those people on your list.

- and elbow pads, to go along with a scooter, bike or rollerblades.
  - Reflective clothing for runners or walkers.
  - Motion sensor lights.
  - Security cameras.
- As you create your holiday gift list this year, consider adding safety-minded gifts as a way to show you care. From a smart doorbell to a smoke detector, a gift that keeps our loved one's safe gives peace of mind and could help save lives. ■

## Be prepared for winter's wrath

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

### 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 LYREC. We will be glad to work with you to make sure your generator is used properly.

### 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 LYREC 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.

### TO REPORT AN OUTAGE

Because power outages can't be totally eliminated, your 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. LYREC 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 your electric cooperative. ■





## Memorial scholarship could help you!

The Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) is offering a \$500 scholarship to one qualified student from Montana's northeast district. To be eligible, the applicant's parent or guardian must be a member of Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC), and the applicant must be enrolled in college for the fall of 2025.

Selection criteria include academic achievement, involvement in school and community activities, work experience, volunteer efforts and a personal statement.

A committee of LYREC staff will select one applicant to advance to MECA for a chance to win the \$500 MECA scholarship.

In addition, LYREC will award a \$500 scholarship to the applicant chosen to send to MECA. This means the selected student will have the opportunity to earn a total of \$1,000 in scholarships. ■

## Hopes wins Redman scholarship



Hopes

**K**allee Hopes, a freshman at Williston State College, has been awarded the \$1,000 John Redman Memorial Scholarship.

Her winning essay, titled "Take a Chance," reflects on an important lesson she learned in high school she wishes she'd known earlier in her high school years.

In the essay, Kallee shares her struggle with "playing it safe" during her early high school years, which led to missed opportunities. Now, as a business management major, she is embracing the importance of stepping out of her comfort zone. Congratulations, Kallee! ■



3200 W. Holly - Sidney, MT 59270

Phone: 406-488-1602

Fax: 406-488-6524

Website: [www.lyrec.com](http://www.lyrec.com)

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