



# [MCREA News]

## [what's inside]

- Capital Credits Issued
- Scholarship Applications Due
- A Spotter's Guide to Distribution Poles
- MCREA Employees Celebrate Service to Co-op
- Meth Awareness

MAILING ADDRESS  
P.O. Box 738  
Fort Morgan, CO 80701-0738

STREET ADDRESS  
20169 U.S. Highway 34  
Fort Morgan, CO 80701-4401

970-867-5688 [phone]  
970-867-3277 [fax]  
mcrea@mcrea.org [email]  
www.mcrea.org [web]

BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
Larry Hoozee [President]  
Tim Peggram [Vice President]  
Casper Hergenreter Jr. [Secretary]  
Allyn Wind [Treasurer]

BOARD MEMBERS  
David Arndt  
Randolph D. Graff  
Bill Midcap  
Brian Schlagel  
Cary L. Wickstrom

GENERAL MANAGER  
David Frick

Dave Henderson [Director of External Affairs]  
Debby Gachne [Manager of Office Services]  
Steve Sundet [Manager of Engineering]  
Gayle Volz [Executive Assistant and Human Resources]

*Morgan County Rural Electric Association is a member-owned cooperative that exists to provide goods and services that enhance the quality of life in rural America.*



## MCREA Announces No Rate Increase

The Morgan County Rural Electric Association Board of Directors and management team are proud to announce that the electric cooperative will not be imposing a rate increase on its members for 2012, despite rising costs in purchased power. "At Morgan County REA, our mission is to provide reliable electricity for our members at the lowest possible cost," said MCREA General Manager David Frick. "We understand that, in these economic times, a higher electric bill is a big deal for many of our members."

In October, the Board of Directors of Tri-State Generation and Transmission, Morgan County REA's power supplier, voted to impose a 4.8 percent wholesale power rate increase on its member cooperatives, including Morgan County REA, beginning January 2012. More often than not, this will result in pass-through increases to consumers.

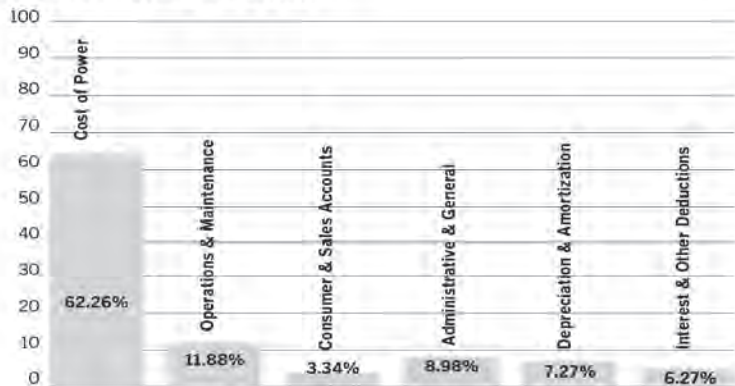
However, the MCREA management staff presented a plan to the board of directors that maintained the same 2011 electric rates for the coming year. "It's important for our members to

understand that more than 62 percent of the electric rates they pay to Morgan County REA are actually to purchase the wholesale power from Tri-State," Frick said. "Any kind of wholesale power cost increase presents a serious challenge for us to keep our rates the same," the general manager said. The MCREA board approved the 2012 rates — which absorbed the wholesale power cost increase — at its November 28 meeting.

In addition to wholesale power costs, other factors must be considered when dealing with rates, according to Frick. Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit entities, so their operating margins are narrower than those of investor-owned utilities. Additionally, electric cooperatives generally serve rural areas and therefore have more miles of line to maintain and fewer meters per mile of line than more densely populated regions.

Frick said he certainly understood why Tri-State imposed the wholesale power increase on its member cooperatives. "It's costing them more and more to deliver the power to us, and they [continued on page 8]

### EXPENDITURES IN 2010



## Capital Credits Issued to Members

Cooperative businesses like Morgan County Rural Electric Association differ from investor-owned utilities because MCREA operates to serve the needs of members, not to increase the profits of stockholders. For example, when MCREA experiences greater income than expense, the margins are returned to you, the members. These returns are called capital credits. In contrast, investor-owned utilities return their profits to their stockholders.



In December, Morgan County REA issued capital credits to members totaling \$600,000 based on 1991 and 1992 generation and transmission margin allocations. If you were a MCREA member in either (or both) of those years, you should have already received a capital credit check. If you have not received a capital credit check, and you were a Morgan County REA member in 1991 and/or 1992, please contact MCREA at 970-867-5688 to verify that the co-op has your current address to ensure that your capital credits find you.

## No Rate Increase

*[continued from page 7]*

have to cover their bottom line, too,” he said. “Rising transportation costs, raw materials and compliance with environmental regulations are all factors in their decision.”

Additionally, Frick pointed to MCREA’s board of directors, staff and employees for making the prospect of no rate increase for 2012 a reality. “We have a fantastic team here,” he said. “I feel that everyone at Morgan County REA has a genuine sense of service to our members. We’ll do everything we can to keep your lights on, keep you informed, provide quality service and do so for as low an electric bill as possible.”

MCREA Director of External Affairs Dave Henderson was quick to point out that Morgan County REA offers many services to its members to help them use electricity more efficiently. “We have several products, including Marathon water heaters and compact fluorescent lightbulbs that members can purchase at reasonable prices. And we offer free energy audits to our membership that can point them in the right direction for low-cost or no-cost energy savings.”

## REMINDER — SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

Morgan County Rural Electric Association is once again partnering with Tri-State Generation and Transmission and Basin Electric Power Cooperative in sponsoring six scholarships for youth in our service areas. One \$1,500 and two \$1,000 scholarships will be provided by Morgan County REA, with Tri-State offering two \$500 scholarships and Basin Electric Power sponsoring one \$1,000 scholarship. A reminder to high school seniors wanting to apply: all completed application materials must be postmarked or delivered to MCREA headquarters by February 1. Only one set of application materials is necessary to apply for scholarships from all three cooperatives.

To be eligible, applicants or their family must receive electric service from Morgan County REA, must be starting at the freshman level

at a vocational school or college in the fall of this year and must plan to maintain a full-time schedule in any accredited institution that offers at least a one-year degree program. These scholarships are one-time only and not renewable.

Completed application materials may be delivered to the MCREA office at 20169 U.S. Highway 34, Fort Morgan, or mailed to:

Scholarship Committee  
Morgan County REA  
P.O. Box 738, Fort Morgan, CO 80701

Applications can be picked up at the Morgan County REA office or downloaded from the website at [www.mcrea.org](http://www.mcrea.org). (Albert Bernhardt, acct. #514000)



# A Spotter's Guide to Distribution Poles

BY MAURICE MARTIN || COOPERATIVE RESEARCH NETWORK

Ever look up at a utility pole and wonder, “What is all that stuff?” Everyone knows wires carry electricity, but what about those attached metal boxes and other mysterious gadgets? What are they called? What purpose do they serve?

With a little information, you can understand a lot more about the utility line you pass every day. Not only could “pole spotting” shed light on the work done by your local electric co-op, but you just might be able to impress your friends and family.

Before you read this guide to pole spotting, please keep in mind:

- Utility poles are not for climbing. You may look, but keep a safe distance from all of the equipment described in this article.
- The measurements and descriptions given here represent common configurations, but in the real world, design varies greatly. Part of why electric co-op employees undergo such extensive training is to enable them to identify components in the field with a high level of confidence and certainty.

## TRANSMISSION VS DISTRIBUTION

Distribution poles are those you see in your neighborhood, unless your distribution lines run underground. They are generally 25 to 55 feet high and made of wood. Power running through distribution lines ranges from 4,600 volts to 33,000 volts.

Transmission lines are designed to carry electricity longer distances and at higher voltages — 69,000 volts or more. Transmission poles are much larger than distribution poles. They range from 55 feet to more than 100 feet and the conductors are higher off the ground. Some large transmission lines use steel poles and tower structures.

In cases where a pole carries both transmission and distribution lines, the transmission lines will run above distribution lines. An easy rule to follow is the lower the voltage of the line, the lower it is on the pole.

## FOUR COMMON DISTRIBUTION DEVICES

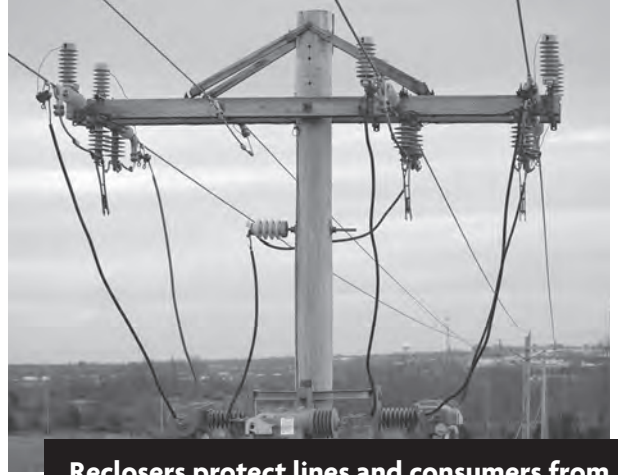
**TRANSFORMERS** are something most people can readily spot; they're hefty metal cylinders or cans that hang off poles. The transformer that connects your home to a distribution line lowers the distribution voltage to what you need in your house, generally 120 volts for your outlets and 240 volts for your air conditioner and clothes dryer.

At the top of a transformer you'll see bushings: ceramic projections with several disks running around the outside. Metal conductors are on the inside of bushings and the outsides are insulators. When bushings are attached to a transformer, insulators ensure the metal casing doesn't become electrically charged.

**CAPACITORS** look somewhat like transformers with bushings on top, but they have flat, rectangular casings. While transformers change voltage, capacitors improve the power factor on the utility lines. They prevent power from being wasted and help boost the voltage on long rural distribution lines.

**RECLOSERS** protect lines and consumers from short circuits. For example, if a tree branch touches a line, electric current will flow through the tree, burning it and overheating the wire. Eventually, this will result in a fault that causes a protective device, like a fuse or circuit breaker, to operate and interrupt the power. Circuit breakers “open” the circuit, cutting off the power.

Because many shorts correct themselves in a few seconds — as the high current will usually burn a tree limb away from the line — most modern circuit breakers have a mechanism that allows



**Reclosers protect lines and consumers from short circuits and they allow temporary faults to clear, which helps keep service energized to the members without needless interruptions.**

them to reclose a moment later, hence the name “recloser.”

Like transformers and capacitors, reclosers also have bushings. They tend to be rectangular, like capacitors, but squatter.

**FUSES** are also designed to protect lines and homes from short circuits, but they are one-shot devices. A fault, like the tree branch described previously, on the load side of the fuse will cause it to burn out.

High-voltage fuses look like a bar offset from the pole by one or more insulators. When a fuse blows, line workers have to go out and find why the fuse blew, fix the problem and fuse the line again to restore power.

These four devices are the most common on distribution poles. Once you know what they look like, you'll realize you've been seeing them every day for years.

*Maurice Martin is senior program manager for the Cooperative Research Network, a service arm of the Arlington, Virginia-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



## MCREA Employees Celebrate Service to Co-op

Morgan County REA honored several employees for their years of service to the electric cooperative at their annual employee Christmas party in December. Recognized for their contributions were (from left) John Underwood — 40 years; Debby Gachne — 25 years; Rodney Rhoades — 30 years; Susie Norton — 15 years; Doug Cook — 10 years; Curtis Berg — 5 years; Amanda Green — 5 years; Frank Mehling — 5 years; and Cirildo Estrada — 5 years. Pictured on the right: Brad Boppre — 15 years and Chris Pachek — 5 years. MCREA salutes all these individuals for their commitment and sincerely thanks them for their years of service.



Brad Boppre



Chris Pachek

## Win \$25 Off Your Electric Bill

Each month Morgan County REA gives two lucky members a \$25 credit on their electric bill, just by reading *Colorado Country Life*.

Congratulations, Lisa Hardy (account #2308000) and Katie Warfield (account #1975300).

You saw your names and account numbers in the November edition of *Colorado Country Life* and received a \$25 credit on your bill.

There are two more MCREA member names and account numbers hidden somewhere in this issue. If you find your name and account number, call member services at 970-867-5688 by January 31 to claim a \$25 credit on your electric bill.

## Moving Forward with Meth Awareness Efforts

Morgan County Rural Electric Association joins Colorado Rural Electric Association, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, CoBank and *Colorado Country Life* magazine in supporting the Colorado Meth Project and its efforts to provide information and education about the detrimental affects of meth in rural areas.

Methamphetamine is poisoning Colorado communities and it doesn't discriminate; it will attempt to destroy anyone in its path regardless of age, race, gender or the area you live in. Our state ranks number seven in the country for total meth users age 12 and older.

### Meth can:

- Cause significant changes to the brain, such as depression, obsessive behavior, uncontrollable movement, paranoia and aggression. Some changes are im-

mediate and some happen over time.

- Cause psychosis where users see, hear or even feel things that aren't really there.
- Cause involuntary muscle contractions, uncontrollable twitching and strange movements like facial tics.
- Rot teeth. This is so common to meth users that the effect has a name — meth mouth. A combination of factors contributes to this dental decay, from tooth grinding to users' disregard for hygiene or brushing.
- Speed up the heart, and with extended use it can cause a host of problems, including heart and organ failure. It can also damage the way the nerves conduct electrical activity, creating a condition known as arrhythmia.

Visit [www.coloradomethproject.org](http://www.coloradomethproject.org) for more information about meth addic-

tion. You can also learn how to help get the word out and find a list of treatment facilities and support groups if you know someone who needs help.

### Follow MCREA on Twitter

Morgan County REA is now on Twitter. The social medial tool will allow MCREA to issue short "bursts" of information when necessary, such as outage updates, upcoming events and other important information (Richard and Rhonda Blake, acct. #2180800). To become a follower of MCREA on Twitter, simply go to the Morgan County REA website, [www.mcrea.org](http://www.mcrea.org), and click on the Twitter icon on the home page.

