

SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC Cooperative



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SECO SUMMER UPDATE

Sales up, Highway 7 rebuild, line inspections, fire mitigation

By **TYE WILLIAMS** | Manager



SOUTHEAST Electric Cooperative is doing well through the first half of 2025. Energy sales are up 11 percent through May 2025, compared to the same time-frame in 2024. We

were able to provide an interim solution for our newest pump site, and it has been using all of the allotted capacity over the last few months, which accounts for a majority of our energy sales growth. In the summer of 2024, we initiated a project to construct 40 miles of 115 kilovolt transmission line and a substation, providing a long-term solution for these pump sites. This is a massive project, but we are on track to complete and energize the line, substation and pump sites in June.

We anticipate further energy sales throughout 2025. With the completion of the Mill Iron transmission line and substation, contracted capacity for four of our pump sites will increase to 23 megawatts (MW) from 15 MW. We are also working to make updates to the substation along the Miles City cutoff, which supplies another pump site and utilizes an additional 4 MW of power. To put this growth into perspective, without these pump sites, our load




capacity typically ranges from 4 to 5 MW of power.

Inflation has slowed, but our energy suppliers will have energy rate increases starting in January 2026. Once we know our power suppliers' proposed rate increases, we will determine how they will affect our rates, taking into account the increased sales we are seeing and upcoming capital projects.

Montana Department of Transportation plans to begin construction to rebuild a portion of Highway 7 in 2028. We have met with them a few times to discuss the work Southeast Electric will need to complete to make room for the road's widening. Although they are only in the preliminary design

stage, our lines along Highway 7 will be affected by this project. Due to the need to accommodate the Highway 7 work by the end of 2027, and considering the age of the lines along Highway 7, the board in May approved moving forward with rebuilding the lines between Baker and Ekalaka. We are currently working with ECI to schedule a drone survey using LiDAR along the line this summer.

Crews spent a significant portion of the winter inspecting the 1,700 miles of lines and 28,000 poles throughout our system and repairing issues. We patrol our entire system on a three-year rotation and test all of our poles on a 10-year rotation. Crews have already changed 500 poles out this year, and will continue to replace poles. The work our crews complete in the field is vital for mitigating outages, and increasing power quality and reliability throughout our system.

During the 2025 Montana Legislative session, a wildfire liability bill, HB 490, passed. Electric cooperatives supported this bill to declare that strict liability does not apply in Montana. Another part of this bill is for Southeast Electric to develop a documented wildfire mitigation plan. We are working with Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association and other state agencies to ensure our plan is in compliance and will be implemented by the end of 2025. 

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

COLUMN BY **VICKI L. FIX** | SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

SOMEONE asked why I hadn't written a personal article as of late. I think it's because there doesn't seem to be anything interesting to share with folks. My son no longer asks me to paint — if you do a bad enough job the first time you don't get asked back to do it again. This made me giggle because I recently had a scholarship application cross my desk, and the advice her dad always gave her was, "If you are going to do something, do it right the first time."

I pondered what to write about and the saying, "Do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life" kept popping into my head. I have been fortunate enough to have loved every job I have had. Why did I leave them if I loved them? Sometimes you just need to spread your wings and see where the wind takes you.

My work at the "law office" was very interesting. A few things I took from that job were miracles happen, you are innocent until proven guilty, you can't spell some names by simply sounding them out and people don't always look like they sound. I was very certain that one of the attorneys we worked with was short and of round stature and lacking any hair. When a tall, dark, handsome man with a full head of hair walked into my office I was shocked to find out that my vision was entirely wrong.


Working at Ekalaka Public Schools

brought on a whole new set of learning moments. I loved working with the kids. A sixth grade student called me the "mom" of the school and a high school student called me the "attendance police" when he was caught wandering during class. I learned that you wear a lot of hats — custodian, cook, bus driver, substitute teacher, chaperone, school nurse, counselor (mainly to teachers and parents), but that it also takes all of those people to love and care enough for your children to make them love school. I learned that blowing up rockets in the classroom and driving motorcycles down the hallway may be fun to the students, but frowned upon among teachers. I learned that those you work with become life-long friends.

Working at the hospital brought change to my heart. The hospital gave me confidence by giving me responsibilities that made me think and learn. I gained empathy and love for residents and their families. The employees were dedicated, and I loved watching the activity staff, nurses and CNAs with the patients and residents. One of the residents was getting her hair curled one day and I said, "Do you have a date tonight?" she turned around and said, "Yep with your husband!" What really struck me was that the CNA cared enough to make that resident look and feel better. They are amazing and you should hug a nurse or CNA today!

It also gave me the opportunity to be with friends and families as they said goodbye to their loved ones. Yes, my office was in the basement in a dark, dark hole, but you can't contain a social butterfly!

This brings me to Southeast Electric Cooperative. You would think that working in an office with two other women might find some challenges. You are right. They challenge me to think for myself, to better myself, to learn new things and to be a kinder, more thoughtful person. They challenge me to make them laugh once in a while because you never want anything to be too serious. They challenge me to put my faith and my family first. Working with a general manager and board of directors who are concerned about your cooperative and care deeply that it is financially secure and moving forward, continuing to supply reliable, dependable and safe electricity for our members is a privilege. The linemen work day and night to make sure you get your power on or take care to patrol those lines and replace those poles so that we don't lose the power during storms. The members bring goodies, send notes of encouragement, or are simply understanding when the power goes out or we have to do maintenance. All of these make the challenges worth every minute.

So, there it is in a nutshell — I am blessed. I have had the best jobs with the best people. 



HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

CLOSURE

Southeast Electric Cooperative's office will be closed Friday, July 4

Understanding power surges, blinks

By **ABBY BERRY** | NRECA

HAVE you ever noticed your lights blink during a thunderstorm? Or perhaps you've noticed a blinking microwave clock when you arrive home. When this happens, you've likely experienced a brief disruption to your electric service, which could result from a power surge or blink. While the symptoms of surges and blinks can appear similar, what's happening behind the scenes can be quite different.

What's a power surge?

Power surges are brief overvoltage spikes or disturbances of a power waveform that can damage, degrade or destroy electronic equipment within your home or business. Most electronics are designed to handle small variations in voltage; however, power surges can reach amplitudes of tens of thousands of volts — this can be extremely damaging to your electronic equipment.

Surges can be caused by internal sources, such as HVAC systems with variable frequency drives, or external sources, such as lightning and damage to powerlines and transformers.

Southeast Electric Cooperative encourages all members to install surge protective devices (such as surge protector power strips) to safeguard your sensitive electronics. If you're experiencing frequent surges in your home or business and you believe the cause is internal, contact a qualified electrician to inspect your electrical system.

What's a power blink?

Power blinks are also brief service interruptions, but they're typically caused by a fault (short circuit) on a powerline or a protective device that's working in reaction to the fault. Faults can occur through a variety of instances, such as squirrels, birds or other small animals contacting an ener-

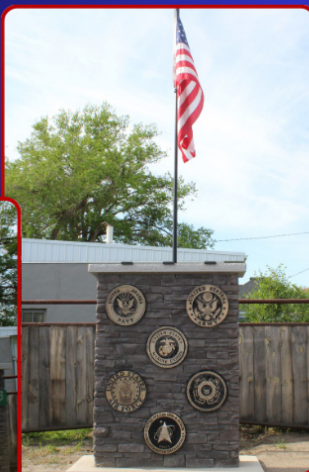
gized powerline; tree branches touching a powerline; or lightning and other similar events. In fact, when it comes to power disruptions caused by critters, squirrels reign supreme.

Any of the events noted above can cause your power to blink, but you may also experience a brief interruption when protective devices that act like circuit breakers are working to detect the fault. Believe it or not, these brief power blinks caused by protective devices are actually good because that means the equipment is working as it should to prevent a prolonged outage.

Regardless of the cause, Southeast Electric crews will be on their way to inspect the damage and make necessary repairs after a power outage. And you can help, too! Any time you experience repeated disruptions to your electric service, please let us know by calling us at 406-775-8762 or you can also send a quick email to info@seecoop.com. RM

Carter County VETERANS TRIBUTE

Thanks to many generous donations, including \$7,500 from Southeast Electric, Basin Power Electric, and CFC, the construction of the Veterans Tribute is nearly complete.



ALWAYS
CALL

BEFORE YOU
DIG



THE 13TH ANNUAL DINO SHINDIG

CARTER COUNTY MUSEUM EKALAKA, MONTANA



Named Montana's Event of the Year by Brand MT

July 26th 9am—5pm
\$7 Children | \$10 Adults

Featuring lectures from leading paleontologists, fun kids activities, a robo rex, and street dance!

July 27th 10am—2pm
Free Event

Science & Cultural History Gathering at Medicine Rocks State Park, with lectures, fossil activities, and a hike!



CARTERCOUNTYMUSEUM.ORG



THE MONTANA
DINOSAUR TRAIL 

Extend your stay and join us on July 24 at 8 p.m. for yoga, a bat walk and stargazing, and July 25 for an art workshop and SCIFriday with special guests from Museum of the Rockies!