

# SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC Cooperative



CELEBRATING 80 YEARS

THIACOL - early 50's



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## Reducing the risk of wildfires

Plus tips you can do to protect your home and community

By **TYE B WILLIAMS** | *Manager*

**A**T Southeast Electric Cooperative, protecting our members and the communities we serve is our highest priority. As we recognize National Wildfire Awareness Month in May, I want you to know that wildfire mitigation is not seasonal work for us. It is a year-round commitment embedded in how we operate and invest in our local system.

One of the most important ways we reduce wildfire threats is through our comprehensive vegetation management program. Overgrown trees and powerlines are a dangerous combination, particularly during dry and windy conditions. Throughout the year, Southeast Electric crews — along with our trusted local contractor — proactively trim and remove vegetation that could come into contact with powerlines and other critical infrastructure. This work requires careful planning, coordination with property owners and ongoing inspection. While it may not always be visible, it is one of the most effective tools we have for preventing ignition and maintaining reliable electricity.

Wildfire mitigation also requires thoughtful public policy. Managing electric infrastructure in and around



public lands can present unique challenges. That is why we support practical, common-sense solutions such as the Fix Our Forests Act, which would streamline the ability

of electric cooperatives and other utilities to maintain powerlines on federal lands and reduce hazardous “fuel” buildup. Policies that promote responsible land management are an essential part of a comprehensive wildfire prevention strategy.

While we are committed to doing our part, wildfire prevention is a shared responsibility. Dry conditions are a way of life in eastern Montana. Our local volunteer firefighters and DES officers provided us with a few important steps we can each take to protect our homes, neighborhoods and livelihoods.

- If you see smoke or a fire, please call 911 immediately
- Check with local officials (fire warden) for fire restrictions.
- Be aware of sudden changes in the weather. For example, if you see a thunderstorm approaching, consider leaving the area. Fires started by lightning strikes are not unusual.
- Be careful when parking or driving your car or ATV in tall, dry vegetation.

The hot underside of the vehicle can start a fire.

- Use established fire rings or pits, if available. Before leaving the area, make sure the campfire is fully extinguished. Douse the fire with water and stir it. Nine out of 10 fires are caused by humans.

- Practice “leave no trace”. Pack out cigarette butts and burned materials from your camping area.


- Check your trailer tires, bearings and axles. And when pulling a trailer, make sure the chain is not dragging.

- If using equipment that produces sparks, always clear the area around your workspace from vegetation. Always have water available in the event of a fire.

- Avoid outdoor burning on windy or excessively dry days.

- Maintain a defensible space around your home by clearing dry leaves, dead branches and other flammable debris.

- Use lawn equipment carefully, particularly during hot conditions, and always check local regulations for burn bans or restrictions.


At Southeast Electric Cooperative, we take this responsibility seriously. Our members depend on us not only for reliable power, but for leadership in safeguarding the communities we call home. 

# Williams celebrated for 20 years of service

**W**<sup>E</sup> had a great celebration for Rita Williams, the Queen Bee, on March 17. Rita retired as of March 31st.

We enjoyed a delicious and beautiful cake created by Karmen Bagley of Baker. Savannah Ashbrook of Ekalaka made some amazing cookies!

The best surprise was when Rita's sisters from the eastern part of South Dakota surprised her. Rita has been a quiet, organized, efficient fixture at Southeast Electric for 20 years.

She will be missed by all of us. We wish her the best retirement, and we warned her not to let her husband, Greg, work her too hard. Thank you Rita for all your time and energy and all the laughs! 



A large banner for the 2026 Annual Meeting. The text "2026 ANNUAL MEETING" is in large, bold, yellow and white letters. Below it, "JUNE 12, 2026" is in white on a yellow background. Underneath, "Registration/Meal at 4:30 pm" and "Meeting at 6:00 pm" are in white on a yellow background. At the bottom, "CELEBRATING 80 YEARS!" is in large, bold, white and yellow letters. The background is a collage of photos of people at a meeting.

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# CARRY ON

Poem by **LES POLAND**  
Southeast Electric Member

READER SUBMISSION

The sun was setting in the west,  
Dusk was upon our rural cemetery.

It had been a beautiful Memorial Day.  
The local program had come off without a hitch.  
The band played, the speaker was short and to the point,  
And the potluck dinner had been grand.

A fellow comrade and I were retiring the colors  
Posted at the cemetery. Just making the final tuck  
In folding the flag, I thought I heard  
"Carry On Comrades".

No wind blowing.  
No other noise about,  
I shrugged it off 'till I heard again  
"Comrades, Carry On".

In awe we turned and there they were.  
I would guess 50 or so,  
All dressed in different uniforms  
Of our history.

Their faces shined bright, men and women alike.  
Four were posed in the front,  
Each of the four had the Congressional Medal of Honor  
Around their neck.

One of the four spoke:  
"We have been allowed by the Supreme Commander  
To come down here and tell you  
To carry on our efforts.

Keep our spirit alive.  
Let no one forget our great country.  
Let all know our Pledge of Allegiance  
And respect our flag".

As if reading my mind,  
A second said:  
"You wonder why we carry neither saber or gun?  
This is our weapon against evil".

And with that, they all raised the Holy Bible.  
"Comrades, keep up the work and never forget our God  
and country.

We will be up there to welcome you  
When your work is done. Carry on."

In a flash they were gone.  
It was a quiet trip back to town.  
My comrade and I said not a word,  
But we both were going to CARRY ON.  
FOREVER MORE.

# How low can you go?

Low current can be an issue too

**M**OST people know that a surge of too much electricity running through a home or building is a bad thing (equipment can be damaged, could catch fire or cause shock). However, many of us don't stop to think about what too little voltage, or not enough electrical power, can do.

Anemic or low voltage is often caused by an overloaded power grid during high-demand times, such as weekday afternoons or during the dog days of summer when air conditioners are running high. Regional energy shortages and other extreme weather events can cause brownouts as well. Problems can also originate from faulty electrical circuits in a home.

## What is considered low current?

Low current is defined as 90 percent or less of normal capacity for one minute or more to a device. Evidence of a power supply dip includes poor appliance performance, dim or flickering lights (aka brownouts) and intermittent outages.

It's important to know equipment may malfunction or even overheat simply because it's not getting an adequate supply of the power it needs to operate. This could be due to a limiting source in your home or a low supply from our electric provider, causing brownouts.

Unfortunately, there is not a lot homeowners or renters can do to protect themselves against the "ebb" in the ebb and flow of power that sometimes happens, but here are a few options to consider:

1. Look into appliance-specific protective devices such as a brownout surge protector for your refrigerator.
2. Consider the bigger and stronger brother of surge-protector strips, known as uninterruptable power supply devices. They plug in to an outlet but also contain battery backup to keep your devices running smoothly during surges, power reductions or brief outages.
3. If you can, limit major appliance use (washer and dryer, oven, dishwasher) during peak energy-usage times (usually weekday afternoons and on hot days).
4. Turn off any appliances you're not using.
5. If you suspect your home has faulty wiring, consult a qualified electrician.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [safe-electricity.org](http://safe-electricity.org).