

PARK SPARKS

JUNE 2023

The Office Has Reopened!

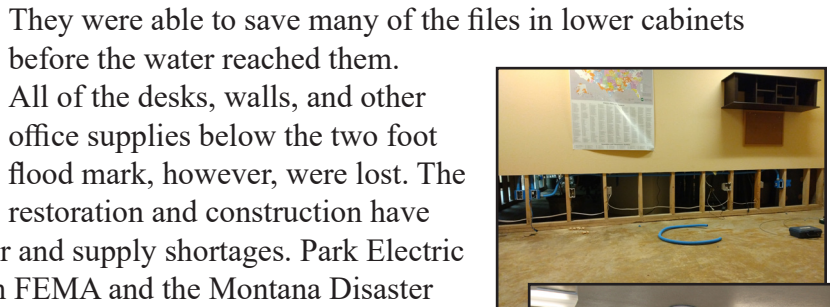
After a long wait, the repairs to the Park Electric office are finally complete and we have moved back in. The flood in June of 2022 pushed nearly two feet of water and muddy sludge through the entire building. As the flooding started that night, some of our linemen were returning to the office after an outage.

They were able to save many of the files in lower cabinets before the water reached them.

All of the desks, walls, and other office supplies below the two foot flood mark, however, were lost. The restoration and construction have

taken time due to labor and supply shortages. Park Electric has been working with FEMA and the Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) to secure funding for this large and unexpected reconstruction project. Upon approval, FEMA and the DES should cover approximately 85%

of the restoration and repair costs. We want to thank the entire membership for your patience during our displacement. Please feel free to stop by and see the updated office in person.



PAYMENT INFORMATION

The office has been receiving an uptick in calls from members and renters who would like to pay their bills on the phone with us. Please remember, we cannot accept payments over the phone for two important reasons:

1. For security reasons, verifying the callers information over the phone is very difficult. The card number being given could be fraudulent.
2. At this time, we cannot process any card payments in the office, including walk in members. Sometime in the future, this may change but right now, we have no way of securely processing card payments in the office.

We ask that all card and e-check payments be made using the customer service portal. There is a small processing fee, but this outweighs the unknowns of sending a check through the mail or having a late or missed payment. Simply go to www.parkelectric.coop and click on the "Quick Pay" button at the top of the page. This will take you to our secure, on-line customer service portal where you can make a payment using your account number and the last four digits of your phone number. The payment will be posted directly to your accounts.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Looking for additional ways to save energy this summer? Your laundry room is a great place to start. Wash clothes with cold water, which can cut one load's energy use by more than half. Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy no matter the size of the clothes load, so fill it up when you can. When drying clothes, separate the heavier cottons. Loads will dry faster and more evenly if you separate heavier cottons like linens and towels from your lightweight clothing.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Managers Comments

by Matt Haggerty

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JUNE 2023

Did you know the last Park Electric rate increase occurred in 2012? Starting this month, I am writing a three-month series about factors that will likely cause a rate increase at some point in the near future. Each month, I will review one of the three main factors that may contribute to a possible change.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

At our annual meeting a few years ago, I spoke about how Park Electric has grown by about 60% over the last 20 years. We have seen growth in almost all parts of our coverage area. (Our coverage area includes parts of Park, Sweet Grass, Gallatin, and Meagher counties.) In recent years, we have seen substantial growth in the Paradise Valley, Wilsall, Clyde Park, and Bozeman areas. As new services are added to our lines, we have to increase the distribution capabilities in our substations and on our lines. Some examples include the following: two years ago, we upgraded the transformer in our Chico substation, which is located near Emigrant, to increase capacity. This spring, we upgraded our transformer in our Pine Creek substation to expand capacity to the north end of Paradise Valley. Later this year we plan to upgrade the transformer at our Dailey substation located at the south end of Paradise Valley, near Dome Mountain. Over the last year, we have completed a three-phase rebuild of four miles of distribution line on Shields River Road, northeast of Wilsall. This project will improve voltage and add three-phase power to that area. These are just a few examples of projects that are necessary for our system to continue to provide reliable service to our members.

The process we use to determine the order projects will be completed is called a construction work plan. We have an engineering firm analyze our system, review usage and growth data, then determine where the upgrades are needed. From that point, they create a four-year construction work plan for us. Once we have these plans we review them, create budgets, then present the outline to our board of trustees to approve

the projects and funding. Once approved, the final step is to schedule crew time or contractors to complete the work.

The most important question is: how do these investments and upgrades affect my rates? The answer is complex because each year, we budget a certain amount for upgrades. Sometimes, the growth outpaces the budget. In recent years, we have seen a growth of nearly double our ten-year average on residential and irrigation services. This growth has created a need for system upgrades to accommodate it. The upgrades need additional funding, creating a larger annual cost for the cooperative. Another factor of how much each of these upgrades cost depends on what type of electrical load it is. For example, irrigation loads affect our system differently than residential loads. Irrigation loads take place in the spring, summer, and early fall. Our residential load has its highest usage in the summer and winter when heating and cooling systems increase our members' usage. As a power provider, our system has to be able to provide enough energy for your needs whether the temperature is -35 or 110 degrees. Take a minute to imagine what would happen if we did not complete these upgrades, and you lost power when it was -35.

The Park Electric Board of Trustees, in conjunction with the management team, analyzes distribution growth and system upgrades to maintain a reliable power supply. Part of the analysis includes looking into the cost of growth and how it affects our members. We strive to keep our operating costs as low as possible, but with system increases, this may contribute to a rate change in the near future.

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