

PARK SPARKS

MAY 2023

Service and Maintenance Costs are Increasing

Inflation is a word that is everywhere these days. It is apparent in everything from the price of a can of beans to a new car and everything in between. Rising costs have also effected the cost of all the materials Park Electric uses for new services and the repair of existing services. As seen in the chart on the right, the cost of some items has more than tripled in the last four years. This rise in cost has impacted the membership through higher new and upgraded service costs and increased maintenance related costs. Park Electric works hard every day to keep costs down any way we can, however we cannot control the cost of goods from our suppliers. The price increase of supplies is one of several factors that might make a rate increase likely in 2024.

PRICE COMPARISON 2019 to 2023

Item	Cost in 2019	Cost in 2023	Percent Increase
Anchor Plate	\$20.44	\$55.17	170%
15 kV Cutout	\$98.35	\$149.74	52%
Hotline Clamp	\$13.99	\$24.88	78%
Aluminum Conduit	\$3.54	\$10.85	206%
Crossarm	\$157.93	\$214.94	36%
Ground Rod	\$11.22	\$22.24	98%
Guy Wire	\$0.40	\$0.61	53%
Insulator	\$4.45	\$5.78	30%
Meter Base Pedestal	\$346.90	\$639.35	84%
Meter Base	\$828.16	\$1321.33	60%
Pole Top Pin	\$9.48	\$15.79	67%
35' Pole	\$338.00	\$490.00	45%
40' Pole	\$420.00	\$523.00	25%
Weather Head	\$14.17	\$24.49	73%
#2 Solid Wire	\$1.65	\$2.29	39%
4/0 Wire	\$1.40	\$3.31	136%
PVC Conduit	\$1.16	\$2.91	151%

MEET OUR MEMBERS

by Sarah Boyle



GREENS! We have all been told we need to eat more greens, whether we want to or not. In Montana finding fresh, local greens to eat in the winter can be very challenging. On a cold morning in February,

I headed up the Shields Valley just a few miles north of Livingston to visit a local farmer who is producing just that, loads of greens.

During the pandemic, Shannon Gaines and her husband Dustin were looking for a way to grow their own food in the Montana growing climate, which can be unfavorable most of the year. Controlled Environment Agriculture seemed to be just the answer.

Story continued on page 7

Meet Our Members Continued...

This type of self-contained, vertical growing operation enabled them to grow produce all year round. Their operation consists of two climate controlled shipping containers converted into vertical growing centers. The containers are fully sealed and insulated. The water and nutrients used are fully filtered and recycled.

The containers greet you as you pull up to their property. I met Shannon and she led me inside. The blast of warm, humid air hit me and instantly refreshed me. The greens were growing from white, vertical racks hung from the ceiling, lining both sides of the container. There were seedlings on the starter table and lettuces, kale, parsley, basil and many other varieties of edible greens and flowers peeking out from the rows. As I looked around, Shannon explained the process to me.

The process from seed to edible greens takes about eight weeks. It starts with a seed that is planted in a coconut plug and is maintained on a table with water and red and blue LED lights as it germinates and sprouts. After sprouting, the plants move to the seedling bay for about two weeks until they are mature enough to be transplanted into the growing racks. Each rack consists of a wool felt wick strip running up the middle that is surrounded coconut fibers. The strip is the medium that transports water from the drip lines above to the growing plants roots. The plants are set in these strips and hung to grow vertically until they can be harvested about four to five weeks later. They are watered from

the top by a series of drip tubes that allow the water to run down each strip. The spillover water is reclaimed, filtered, and used in the process again. All of the water used in the system is recycled. Organic nutrients are added to the water tanks to feed and maintain the health of the plants. Shannon said she harvests between 150 – 300 pounds of produce each month, depending on the variety. I was able to sample some of the kales and chards and the different flavors of the varieties were amazing.

Shannon and Dustin also wanted to be able to give back to the community in a meaningful way through locally grown greens. While growing vegetables is not her main source of income, she has grown the business to sustain itself. Her greens can be found at Woods Rose Market in Livingston, and at the winter farmers markets in Bozeman. Several Bozeman restaurants also serve Crazyhead produce such as Plonk and Feed. The learning curve for her and her husband was steep, and she is still tweaking the process every day. Shannon welcomes any questions

or inquiries about her business. She can be reached at Shannon.omalley@gmail.com or on Instagram @Crazyheadproduce. I can attest to the fact that her

kale was tender and delicious, a yummy green treat on a cold winter day.



Managers Comments

by Matt Haggerty

May is National Electric Safety Month and this is a great time to raise awareness of how to avoid potential electrical safety hazards. I would like to cover three of the most common scenarios and the best way to stay safe when you encounter them.

Scenario one: Imagine you lose control of your vehicle on an icy road and hit a power pole and the power line falls across the hood. While instinct may tell you to exit the vehicle quickly, this is not the right choice. Staying in the vehicle is the safest option as long as there are no greater dangers present such as fire or other hazards. If there are people around trying to help, let them know to stay back 30 feet or more. Call 911 right away. The dispatchers will send out first responders and notify Park Electric so we can send out a line crew to de-energize and fix the downed lines. Remaining inside the vehicle is the best choice because the vehicle itself creates a path for electricity to reach the ground. Stepping out of the vehicle gives the electricity a new path to the ground which is through your body. This is called touch potential. When your body comes in contact with the vehicle and the ground, the electricity will travel through the two points of contact, causing serious damage and possibly electrocution. The only exception to staying in the vehicle is when it is on fire. If a person needs to get out, they need to exit the vehicle without touching any part of it as they leave. Cross your arms, swing your legs around and jump with both feet together and “bunny hop”, keeping both feet together as you jump away from the vehicle. This hopping action reduces the possibility of step potential, the ability of the electricity to find a new path through your body and harm you. Keep in mind that this scenario applies to any type of equipment that may have come in contact with a power line, whether it’s digging into a power line in the ground or tearing an overhead power line down with tall equipment.

Scenario two: Let’s say you are working around the house in an area that may bring you close to power lines. Think of jobs such as trimming trees or working on your roof that can present this hazard. The first step is to look up and assess the situation

by evaluating any potential hazards. When it comes to power lines, always maintain a safe distance of 10 feet or more away from power lines. This includes any tools you are holding like ladders or power tools or any materials you may be using. The reason you should stay 10 feet or more away is that electricity can arc or jump across the gap to ladders or materials you are using. By maintaining this distance, you will protect yourself against electrical hazards. After all, the goal is to safely complete your work. If it seems that the scope of your work would draw you closer than 10 feet, call Park Electric before you plan to start the work. We usually can come by within a few days to help advise how to safely do the work, or in some situations, the lines could be de-energized.

Scenario three: You have a digging project to do that will be over 12 inches deep. This could be for planting large trees or building an addition to your house. The first step in this situation is to outline the area that you plan on digging then give yourself a buffer of extra space in case there are buried utilities nearby. This area can be marked by painting the outside perimeter of your project with white spray paint. Next, call 811. This is the call-before-you-dig national hotline number. Before making this call be prepared to provide them with the address of the work site, the nearest intersecting street, and a description of where the digging site is located at the address. Being very specific about where the digging will take place. This is very helpful for the locator to that will need to find the area that needs to be marked. Remember, 811 generally only locates up to the electric meter. If your work will be taking place between the meter and your house, you may need to call a private locate in. Most electricians are able to perform this task, but there may be a fee. Make sure to call in any locates a minimum of three business days before the work will start.

I hope you find these scenarios helpful. There are many different kinds of electrical safety situations that can arise. If you ever have a question, please feel free to contact our office for further assistance. Remember safety first, because electricity generally does not give you a second chance.

Electric Co-ops Go the Extra Mile for You

Electric co-ops serve **8 consumers** per mile of power lines. Other electric utilities serve **32 consumers** per mile. Even though we serve fewer consumers along the lines, that won't stop us from going the extra mile for you, our members we're proud to serve.

Green Power Cost Change

The rate for Green Tags as of May 1st has been lowered to \$0.0023/kWh thanks to a change from our power supplier. Green tags are available for purchase by contacting the office. By purchasing green tags, our members can voluntarily contribute to the development of alternative energy sources. The board of trustees has increased the amount of tags purchased for Park Electric services from 5% to 10%. This increase reflects Park Electrics' commitment to the development and innovation of renewable energy sources.

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

The Albertsons drop box location is no longer available. Due to corporate changes at the Livingston store, the box had to be removed. We still have a drop box available outside our office at 5706 US Hwy 89 S, just past the hospital. Payment by credit card or check can also be made online through our customer service portal.



Park Electric would like to welcome our newest trustee, Matt Jesson, to the board of trustees. Matt was elected by the board after Brad Hanson vacated his seat in District 4. Matt is a 5th generation Livingston resident who currently resides off Highway 10 West. He chose to represent District 4 on the board to try and help the coop maintain reasonable electrical rates and consistent power. He would like to see Park Electric stay strong and viable while also keeping the rates low. His first few board meetings have been very interesting and he has been learning a lot about how the coop operates. Thank you for your time and welcome to the board, Matt!

Park Electric Board of Trustees

District 1 - Alan Johnstone 406-220-2186
District 2 - Dan Skattum 406-223-0545
District 3 - Craig Yost 406-222-3008
District 4 - Matt Jesson 406-939-2306
District 5 - Bert Otis 406-333-4802
District 6 - Melanie Roe 406-932-4366
District 7 - Perry Anderson 406-537-4546
General Manager - Matt Haggerty 406-222-3100

Connect with Park Electric

Billing and general information: 406-222-3100
Outage and project information: 406-222-7778
Online: www.parkedelectric.coop
Email: info@parkedelectric.coop
Office hours: 8-5 Monday - Friday
Location: 5706 US Hwy 89 S
Livingston, Montana

