



**Doug Elliott**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

### 2022 Annual Meeting & Election

At Kootenai Electric Cooperative (KEC), your voice matters. For more than 80 years, we've been owned and governed by those we serve. Your participation in our Annual Meeting and vote in our board election is your voice in our cooperative. We look forward to once again hosting our members at our traditional annual meeting after two years of the pandemic.

Join us for KEC's 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on May 16, 2022, at Lake City Church in Coeur d'Alene. Registration begins at 5 p.m. with exhibits, refreshments and coffee. The meeting starts at 6 p.m. The KEC office will also be closed on May 16, 2022, for staff training and meeting preparation.

#### Annual Meeting Prizes

Each member household attending the Annual Meeting will have a chance to win many prizes, including a \$300 KEC bill credit. Members must be present to win. Each member household attending the Annual Meeting will also receive one \$25 meal certificate redeemable at local participating restaurants. In addition, the meeting will be recorded and posted online for viewing.

#### Director Elections

Watch your email and mailbox this month for details about our board election. This is your chance to elect those who will represent you and your interests on our Board of Directors. In 2022, members will elect directors for districts 1 and at-large. Elected directors serve three-year terms. Visit [www.kec.com](http://www.kec.com) to review board candidate bios and speech videos. For your convenience, you can vote by mail ballot, online or via SmartHub.

If you plan to vote online, please do so by April 21, 2022. Mail-in ballots must be postmarked by April 21, 2022, to be

counted. The results will be announced at the Annual Meeting, online and in our June newsletter. **Please note: in-person voting will not be available at the Annual Meeting.**

#### Election Prizes

Members who cast their votes online and have a KEC SmartHub account will be entered into a drawing for a \$300 KEC bill credit. Visit [www.kec.com](http://www.kec.com) to learn how you can register as a SmartHub user. Those voting by mail or online without a SmartHub account will be entered into a drawing for one of three \$100 KEC bill credits.

I encourage you to take the time to vote. Should you have any questions about the candidates, please contact us at [kec@kec.com](mailto:kec@kec.com) or 208.765.1200.

**Watch for details in next month's newsletter about the new facility groundbreaking.**



## Employee Spotlight: Thomas Maddalone



**Thomas Maddalone is KEC's Safety Director and has worked for KEC for nearly six years.**

### **What made you interested in working for KEC? How did you train for work in this field?**

My family loves North Idaho, and we were looking to relocate. KEC has one of the strongest safety cultures in the electric cooperative industry. Prior to getting hired at KEC, I worked as a journeyman lineman and safety coordinator for a cooperative in Colorado.

My training includes line school and an apprenticeship. I gained interest in the safety industry after working with fellow crew members to improve the safety culture at my previous cooperative. I have also served as a volunteer firefighter for many years.

I completed the Certified Loss Control Professional Program, which is co-sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the National Utility Training and Safety Education Association. The purpose of the program is to provide an educational foundation for safety professionals, giving them the information and tools needed to be effective leaders of the safety function for their organization.

### **What does a day look like for you as the Safety Director?**

In my role, I coordinate the planning, development and implementation of safety programs, safety orientations

and emergency preparedness programs. I serve as a resource to the cooperative for safety, including ensuring safety equipment is current, conducting field visits, providing personal protective equipment (PPE) and more. I've also been very involved in the design of the new headquarters, as well as the indoor training facility described on the following page.

I serve as the primary investigator when damages occur on our system. This includes vehicle vs. power pole accidents and when homeowners or contractors dig into our power lines. Related to this, I am on the Kootenai County Utilities Council, which provides Call Before You Dig (811) service to Kootenai County.

### **Tell us about KEC's safety program.**

KEC has a robust safety program with an excellent safety record. Our goal is to send all our employees home safe each day to their families. We hold regular safety trainings and promote employee feedback through our three safety committees. KEC's safety culture is one with open communication and we encourage discussions about safety issues. In fact, any employee can stop work if there is a safety concern. The group can then assess and identify the hazard before continuing work.

### **What is the biggest challenge in your job?**

My day can change at a moment's notice. I could be in the office at a meeting in the morning and out in the field investigating an incident involving damage to KEC's equipment that afternoon. It is a fast-paced environment, but I really enjoy it. Managing safety through the pandemic has also been a challenge as we monitored changing guidelines, implemented CDC protocols and procured PPE through material shortages.

### **What is the best part of your job?**

I enjoy meeting our members and coordinating with other organizations on safety issues. I appreciate my co-workers—they take such pride in safety that they make my job easier.



## New HQ Update: Training Facility

By the time this newsletter is printed, we will have broken ground at our new Rathdrum location. We expect to provide regular updates and images as work continues. This month we'd like to feature the new training facility at our headquarters.

The growth in our area has increased our workload and that means we need more lineworkers. It can be a challenge to find qualified lineworkers and there are few training opportunities for this trade in the Northwest. During the design process of our new headquarters, we began considering the development of an indoor training facility and began collaborating with the North Idaho College Workforce Training Center, NW Line Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee, and neighboring cooperatives, municipal and public utilities.

The KEC training facility emerged as a best practice from those discussions and will allow us to train our apprentices right here in our community, with both an indoor and outdoor training area. The indoor portion will be about 8,000 square feet and 43 feet tall, which provides the necessary space for our line workers to set power poles inside and to pull bucket trucks into the facility to work next to the poles. The design allows for flexibility and updates so our lineworkers can test new and emerging technologies in a controlled environment rather than putting it in the field first, which improves reliability for our members. A huge benefit of the indoor training facility is that it allows apprentices and lineworkers to train safely regardless of weather, season changes and or daylight to better prepare for work in less favorable conditions.



## OPERATION ROUND UP® GRANTS AWARDED TO OUR COMMUNITY

Operation Round Up® is supported by KEC members who voluntarily “round up” their monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar to help our neighbors in need. The extra pennies go into the Kootenai Electric Trust fund, which distributes grants to worthy causes in KEC’s service territory. Through this program, more than \$1.2 million has been invested in our community.

In February 2022, the Trust Board awarded Operation Round Up® grants to the following organizations:

- \$2,500 to Camp Fire Inland Northwest to help fund the replacement and installation of the electrical panel at a large building at Camp Sweyolakan on Lake Coeur d’Alene.
- \$2,500 to Create Your Statement to help bring education and awareness to the prevention of dating abuse while promoting leadership and character development to youth in North Idaho.
- \$2,500 to Orchard Ridge to purchase new recliners for their memory care unit.
- \$2,500 to the Rathdrum Community Center to replace aging reach-in freezers and coolers.
- \$2,500 to the North Idaho Fair Foundation for the Farm to Table event for area fifth grade students to learn where their food comes from.



- \$1,500 to Project Beauty Share to help support the purchase, collection, sorting, sanitizing and distribution of personal, feminine and oral hygiene supplies to organizations and families in need in North Idaho.

**Grant applications are available at [www.kec.com](http://www.kec.com) and the next quarterly deadline is April 25, 2022.**

Members who choose not to contribute to Operation Round Up®, or who would like to begin contributing, may simply “opt-out” or “opt-in” on their bill/in SmartHub or contact KEC by phone, letter or email.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### APRIL IS NATIONAL SAFE DIGGING MONTH

Before you start any digging project be sure to call 811. Digging without calling can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm you and those around you, and potentially result in fines and repair costs. Calling 811 gets utility-owned underground lines marked for free and helps prevent undesired consequences.

### KEC BOARD MEETINGS

Members are welcome to attend monthly board meetings. Meeting dates vary—please call Constance Felten at 208.292.3211 for details.

### WIN A \$50 ENERGY CREDIT

Below are 10 KEC account numbers. If you find yours contact us at 208.765.1200 to receive a \$50 bill credit.

**1239230, 1828365, 1265252, 1685027, 1842568, 1846223, 1486535, 1310043, 1819884, 1582261**



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**