



KEC AND PARTNERS DONATE \$22,500 TO LOCAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE

KEC, its lender CoBank and the Kootenai Electric Trust/Operation Round Up® program donated a combined \$22,500 to the Community Action Partnership/Project Share program last month. These funds are available to KEC members who qualify for help paying their energy bills. **Photo at left (from left):** Cheri Zao, Kootenai Electric Trust Board Member; Gery Hirsch, KEC Manager of Member Services; Paige Bingham, KEC Member Services Representative; Kimberly Spencer, Community Action Partnership Community Services Manager; Maureen Lynn Brower, Community Action Partnership Community Services Assistant, Kootenai Electric Trust Board Members Tom Craig and Jim Kehrer.

Latest Operation Round Up® Grants Awarded

The Kootenai Electric Trust Board recently awarded quarterly Operation Round Up® grants. The Trust Board received 13 grant requests and awarded more than \$21,000 to the following applicants:

- \$7,500 to Project Share (see details above).
- \$2,500 to Adopt Idaho to assist in finding adoptive homes for kids in foster care.
- \$2,500 to On-Site for Seniors to purchase a new sink and an ADA electronic door opener.
- \$2,500 to the Rathdrum Senior Center to purchase an oven.
- \$2,400 to Tesh, which provides choices and opportunities to people with disabilities of all ages, to purchase new computers.

- \$1,984 to Dalton Elementary School to purchase a new music curriculum.
- \$1,750 to Panhandle Symphony Orchestra to help provide a free concert in the spring of 2020.

Want to support Operation Round Up®? Simply check the box on your bill stub or log in to SmartHub at www.kec.com and select the Billing and Payments tab. Members who choose not to contribute to Operation Round Up®, or who would like to begin contributing, may simply “opt-out” or “opt-in” in SmartHub, on their bill or contact KEC by phone, letter or email.

The next grant application deadline is January 24, 2020.

2020 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM DEADLINE

KEC is accepting applications for \$2,000 academic and professional technical program scholarships. KEC members or their children who are either seniors in high school or currently enrolled in an accredited college, trade or training institution for fall 2020 or spring 2021 may apply. Online applications are due February 14, 2020. For details, eligibility and applications visit www.kec.com. Winners will be selected by the Kootenai Electric Trust Board, who also disburses Operation Round Up® funds contributed by KEC members.



System Maintenance and Vegetation Management

Wind, snow, ice and drought can cause trees and branches to break and fall into energized power lines.

This can cause outages, forest fires and other safety hazards for our members and the community. Because of these risks, KEC has a comprehensive plan for managing the vegetation that grows around those lines. In this article, I'll describe that plan and how it affects members and property owners.

I'll start with an interesting fact: did you know that over half of our existing power lines and almost all new power lines are built underground? We also routinely review overhead lines for potential conversion to underground. Overhead line requiring major upgrades and those most prone to outages or forest fires offer the best candidates. As a case in point, KEC is almost finished converting 50 miles of overhead lines most affected by the 2015 wind and snowstorms under a grant we received from FEMA. This work alone represents a \$10 million investment in our system. Since the majority of outages are tree-related, eliminating this exposure is an important and foundational facet of our maintenance program.

Still, we have almost 1,000 miles of overhead lines requiring routine vegetation management. This work is spread over a five to seven-year maintenance cycle and represents an investment of approximately \$1.5 million each year. When crews are clearing vegetation from around power lines, trees must be sufficiently cut back so that seven years of regrowth will not encroach on safe line clearances. The prevention of fires is another important factor. Trees growing underneath a power line are combustible and must be removed regardless of height. For these reasons, all trees or limbs growing in the right-of-way are customarily removed when maintenance is performed. The typical right-of-way width for overhead lines is 30 feet, or 15 feet either side of the power line.

While KEC has the authority to cut trees that grow within its easements, we do not have the authority to cut those growing outside of them. Yet, many outages are caused by them. Before removing a tree growing outside our easement which threatens our power lines, landowner permission is needed and sought. KEC makes this easy for landowners. All they need to do is say "yes" and the trees will be removed at no cost to them. But what if they say "no?"

Landowners who are unwilling to allow KEC to remove trees on their property which threaten our power lines maintain liability for damage those trees cause. When this occurs, KEC will generally pursue financial restitution for any damages that are caused. Landowners may also face liability for the costs of firefighting if authorities determine such a tree was the cause.

All of KEC's efforts to clear trees around our power lines are rooted in safety, fire prevention and improving system reliability. It is an effort that requires our partnership with those we serve. If you have a tree on your property that could fall into a power line and needs to be removed, please don't cut it down yourself. Contact KEC. If it's a threat to our power lines, we will be happy to remove it at no cost. If it's not, we can help you identify a qualified arborist who can help you remove it.

You can contact us about problem trees using our website reporting form at www.kec.com. You may also call our Vegetation Management Hotline at 208.292.3292.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Doug Elliott
KEC General Manager/CEO

Watch Out for Scams

It's unfortunate that in today's world, scams are inevitable. Utility scams often involve an individual or group posing as an employee of your electric cooperative. The scammer may use threatening language to create a sense of urgency in order to frighten you into offering your credit card or bank account information. Don't fall victim to these types of scams. If someone calls demanding you pay your electric bill immediately, gather as much information as you can from the caller, hang up and contact KEC.

A KEC employee or our automated phone system may call you to inform you of an unpaid balance and pending disconnection. Legitimate calls from KEC will only direct you to make payment in one of the following ways:

- **Web:** www.kec.com
- **Pay by Phone (automated):** 1.877.999.3371
- **KEC's Office Phone:** 208.765.1200
- **In Person at KEC's Office:** 2451 West Dakota Ave. in Hayden

KEC will never demand you purchase a pre-paid credit, debit or gift card or use money transfer services, such as Western Union or Money Gram, to make a payment. KEC employees who come to your home for any reason usually drive company vehicles and always carry company identification badges which they are happy to show you. You may also contact our office at 208.765.1200 to verify that an individual is a KEC employee. If you feel unsafe or threatened, please call local authorities. KEC wants to make sure you avoid any and all types of scams that could put you or your financial information in jeopardy. If you have any questions about your account call us at 208.765.1200 or visit www.kec.com.



THE 2020 ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTION

The 2020 annual meeting is scheduled for the evening of Monday, May 4, at Lake City Church in Coeur d'Alene.

KEC Board of Director districts 3 and 4 are up for election this year with one candidate in each district seeking election. Per KEC's Bylaws, if there is only one candidate per district seeking election, then the candidates are elected by acclamation at the Annual Meeting. The election process is governed by the KEC Bylaws. To receive a copy visit our website at www.kec.com or call 208.765.1200. Look for more details about the annual meeting in future newsletters.



Photo above KEC Board of Directors (front to back, left to right): Todd Hoffman; Dave Bobbitt; Roger Tinkey; Jim Robbins; Crystal Musselman; Tim Meyer; Doug Elliott, KEC General Manager/CEO; and Bill Swick.

NEWS BRIEFS

CREDIT & COLLECTION REMINDERS

As a reminder, KEC does not mail a final notice of disconnect for past due accounts. Past due accounts will have the amount that is past due reflected on the bill with a note in the account message block stating the account is past due and subject to service disconnection if not paid by the noted date. Payment in full is required whether the account is disconnected or not. We will make payment arrangements with those unable to pay in full; however, the number of times those arrangements can be made is limited and must be made prior to any disconnection. Please visit www.kec.com to learn about agencies in the community that can help with utility payments. Please contact our office at 208.765.1200 if you encounter problems paying your bill.

BILL CREDIT WINNER

Last fall, members were encouraged to take KEC's annual satisfaction survey. We offered a chance to win a \$300 bill credit to all members who took the survey. Congratulations to winner Jayson Cornwell of Post Falls. Thank you to all the members who participated in the survey.

OFFICE CLOSURE

The KEC office will be closed on Monday, February 17, 2020, for employee training.

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. 1714132, 1757415, 1265252, 1816913, 1706232, 1680313, 1813862, 1285854, 1550045, 1313095

KEC BOARD MEETINGS

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

Space Heater Safety Tips

Space heaters are a great way to warm specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using space heaters doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to keep your home safe.

DO: Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet.

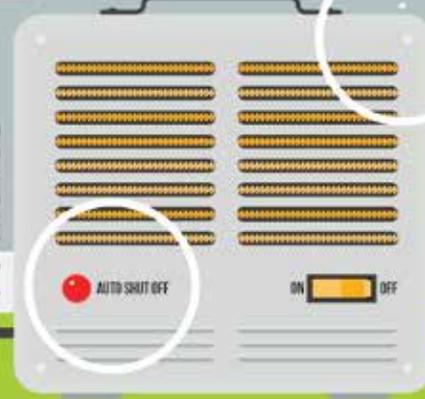


DO: Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms.

DO: Keep your space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from kids, pets and flammable items.



DO: Buy a unit with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over, or you forget to shut it off.



DO: Always follow the directions and take a broken space heater to a qualified appliance service center.



DON'T: Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.



DON'T: Use an extension cord to plug in your space heater. It can cause the heater to overheat, and can be a tripping hazard.

DON'T: Place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.



DON'T: Try to repair a broken space heater yourself.



DON'T: Put your space heater in your bathroom. The moisture can damage the unit, which could cause it to malfunction.