

“To this day, our daughter is still nervous about fireworks and bonfires, regardless of location — from the beach in Oregon to our fire pit in the yard. She wants nothing to do with them.”

—Grand Lake resident

THE DAY OUR COMMUNITIES CAME TOGETHER

BY MARK JOHNSTON GENERAL MANAGER

November 30 marks the two-year anniversary of the “official” end of the East Troublesome Fire. It ignited on October 14, 2020, and destroyed more than 193,000 acres in the 47 days the fire burned. Government officials may have declared the fire over, but the work for communities, businesses and homeowners is still ongoing even now, two years later. The work continues for those rebuilding their lives and homes. The quote above is from a Mountain Parks Electric employee’s personal experience. For more reflections on the ongoing aftermath of the fire, read the article on the next page.

This tragic natural disaster caused damage, but it also brought out the best in us. While the fire was still burning, many opened their homes to provide a safe place for relatives, friends and strangers. Others donated clothing to those who lost everything and were forced to flee their homes at a moment’s notice. Many also reached into their pockets giving hundreds of thousands of dollars to provide temporary housing, basic necessities and food. It would be understandable if outside support dwindled in the days and weeks that followed, but it did not. Why? Because our communities know and care about each other.

Wouldn’t it be great if this were the only disaster? We all know it was not. Several other Colorado communities experienced similar fires, such as the Marshall Fire. And unfortunately, natural disasters are not just a Colorado thing. In 2021, the United States experienced 21 hurricanes, and 2022 looks to be close behind with 18 estimated to make landfall. With each natural disaster, electric cooperatives like MPE mobilize to help communities affected by these storms. It is all about people helping people get the lights back on. That is what happened with the East Troublesome Fire. Eleven cooperatives from across Colorado pledged assistance with equipment and lineworkers to help restore power locally.

The problem with recent hurricanes, like Ian, is that current global supply chain issues increase the cost of everything. And lead times of equipment has also increased; it is more difficult to reestablish a basic service like electricity to those affected. Of course, these rising costs are not just related to electricity. Shannon Holzwarth, ACCT 947010784

Rising costs and supply chain shortages are hitting rural, low-income households hard. On average, families across the country are paying \$350 to \$400 more per



MARK JOHNSTON

month for the same items they bought this time last year. According to the Associated Press, inflation has increased at the fastest pace in more than 40 years. Low-income households that were already struggling are beyond treading water trying to maintain their quality of life. Food pantry visits have increased 40% when comparing 2021 and 2022, while housing assistance (rent and utilities) registered increases of 30%.

Rural America is about providing a helping hand to our neighbors. This holiday season, if you want to give back, two organizations are doing valuable work: Granby-based Mountain Family Center or the Red Cross.

To help those struggling in Grand and Jackson counties, visit mountainfamilycenter.org/donate/. To help those affected by Hurricane Ian, visit redcross.org/donate/donation.html/.

This season isn’t all about natural disasters. It is about neighbors helping neighbors.

We wish you and your family a safe, peaceful and happy Thanksgiving.

TWO YEARS AFTER THE FIRE

Reflections from MPE employees



On October 21, 2020, the East Troublesome Fire crossed Colorado State Highway 125 and spread toward the Grand Lake area. In total, the fire burned nearly 200,000 acres, making it the second largest wildfire in state history — 366 homes and 214 other structures were either destroyed or damaged. Among the destruction were the homes of several MPE employees. Read what they had to say.



In the fire's aftermath, what were your biggest concerns?

- Not knowing if our home survived
- Where we were going to live with our infant son, two cats and two dogs
- Navigating insurance to rebuild our home and replace our personal belongings
- The well-being of the people who lost their homes
- Our daughter—she is still so nervous about fireworks and bonfires

What surprised you about the community's response?

- The care and concern of our neighbors
- Everyone stepped up to the plate in a big way — the response restored my faith in humanity
- People decorated our rental for Christmas, walked our dogs and donated clothing
- The outpouring of support played a major part in our decision to rebuild in this community
- Calls, visits and a place to stay while we were displaced

What wildfire prevention/preparedness measures do you recommend?

- Defensible spaces around your home
- Have your bag packed at pre-evac
- Have a fire zone around your dwellings
- Check your insurance policy yearly to make sure you have adequate coverage
- Use pre-evac time to access what is important to you

After the fire, how long did it take to rebuild or move back into your home?

- 22 months
- We are still rebuilding
- We were able to move back in April 2021—did not lose our home
- We broke ground on a new house in April 2021 and moved in December 2021
- February 2021, after four months of smoke, ash and soot mitigation

How long did it take you to settle affairs with your insurance company?

- Has not been settled yet
- Still not settled
- Still ongoing
- 12 months to settle the rebuild
- Fully settled after 20 months

POWER POINTERS



Each quarter, Mountain Parks Electric posts a new online survey (mpei.com/online-survey) where you can ask questions, leave feedback and be automatically entered into a drawing for a \$100 bill credit. **Chris Michalowski, MPE's power use advisor, follows up on a few survey questions below:**

“Glad you have peak and non-peak billing. We have an electric car we charge after 10 p.m.”

MPE's whole house time-of-use rate is ideal for those who want greater control over their energy costs. When members shift their energy usage outside the hours of 5-10 p.m., MPE saves money on wholesale power costs and passes those savings on to members. It makes driving an EV even more affordable because you are fueling with discounted energy. If you're interested in switching to the time-of-use rate, please call our customer service department at 970-887-3378.

“Offer grants or assist with solar.”

MPE's Clean Power Program offers a rebate of \$1,000 for member-owned renewable systems. The money for the program comes from voluntary contributions from MPE members. For a minimum of \$1 a month added to your electric bill, you can contribute to the program that has supported more than 1 megawatt worth of local renewable energy. Rene Bollier, ACCT 1030412

“Support the development and installation of EV charging stations in Grand County as well as support for personal residence installations.”

By taking advantage of MPE's Electrify Everything program, the towns of Grand Lake and Fraser installed publicly available DC fast chargers. The Electrify Everything program provides financial assistance for commercial EV charging stations. MPE also offers rebates of up to \$500 for residential EV chargers and installation. Terms and conditions apply. Byron Fry, ACCT 502490200

 **Got more questions?** Email cmichalowski@mpei.com.



WAYS TO \$AVE In the Kitchen

BY LINDSAY MCCANN MEMBER SERVICE SPECIALIST

- For quicker stovetop cooking (and to use less energy), keep a lid on your pots and pans.
- For oven use, glass or ceramic pans heat faster than metal pans. Glass pans also tend to bake things more evenly than metal pans.
- For small meals or when re-heating leftovers, use toaster ovens, slow cookers and microwave ovens.



Find Your Name Win \$5

If you find your name in this magazine, contact Mountain Parks Electric to receive a \$5 credit on your power bill. Winners must contact MPE within one month of the date of issue.



CONNECT WITH MPE






WEBSITE
mpei.com

FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM
@MountainParksElectric

TWITTER
@MtnParksElec



NOVEMBER 3, 9 AM - 12PM

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING IN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES, THE ROADMAP TO CLEANER BUILDINGS

Headwaters Center, 730 Baker Drive
Winter Park, CO 80482

BROUGHT TO YOU BY MOUNTAIN PARKS ELECTRIC AND THE CLEAN POWER COMMITTEE



PIE CRUST TIPS & TRICKS

From Walden's **Holy Grounds Coffee**

1. Cut butter into small cubes before adding it to your flour.
2. Mix butter and flour until a fine, sand-like consistency is achieved. Over-mixing will make a tough crust.
3. Add one tablespoon of water at a time and mix only until all ingredients begin sticking together to form a ball.
4. Chill dough in the refrigerator prior to rolling it out.
5. Place a ring of tin foil over the edge of your crust.
This helps prevent it from being overdone. Remove the tin foil when there's 10 to 12 minutes left to bake.

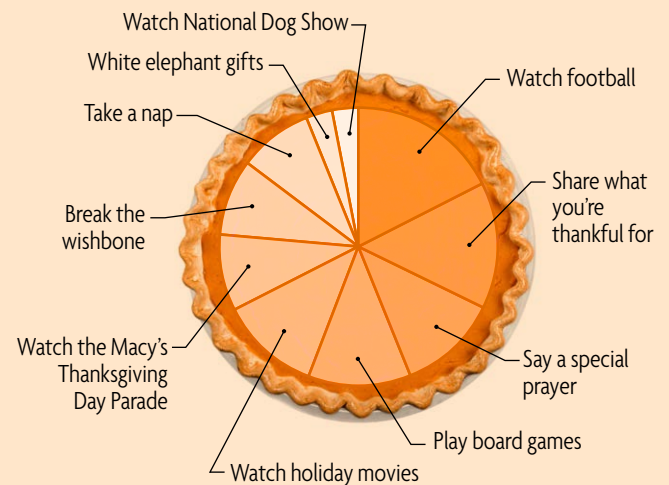
Holy Grounds Coffee | 219 Main, Walden

Summer Hours: June–November, Monday–Saturday, 7 a.m.–3 p.m.

Winter Hours: December–May, check @HolyGroundsCoffeeTrailer on social media



MPE EMPLOYEES' FAVORITE THANKSGIVING TRADITIONS



Looking for unique holiday menu inspiration outside the usual turkey, gravy, mashed potatoes, cranberries, stuffing and pumpkin pie? Here are some of our employees' favorite Thanksgiving dishes:

- lasagna • coconut cream pie • deviled eggs • chips & guac • coleslaw
crackers & pepper jelly cream cheese • broccoli • string beans • yams

