



## EMPIRE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

*Echoes of the Empire*

AUGUST 2024

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# When the Lights Go Out

BY ANDY CARTER MEMBER ENGAGEMENT MANAGER



ANDY CARTER

There is never a good time for an outage, but when the power goes out, Empire Electric Association jumps into action to find the cause. You may not have thought about it, but your power turning off is the very first EEA action taken when there is a problem with our system. EEA's grid contains protective devices strategically placed on our lines to turn the power off whenever a dangerous condition exists. These protective devices range from a simple fuse to a sophisticated electronic switch that can open and close based on pre-programmed settings. Blinking lights or having to reset your clocks is a sign that one of our programmed switches opened to allow time for a fault to clear and then quickly closed, restoring power.

The dangerous condition that caused the protective device to operate can be the result of an outside force like lighting, animals, or a car accident. It can also be caused by a failed piece of EEA equipment. Remember to treat any downed power line as if it were energized. If you see one, stay at least 50 feet away and call EEA at 970-565-4444 or emergency services at 911 to report it.

EEA is alerted to the problem by our metering system transmitting a power failure signal, or by members reporting an outage. We still rely on members to report outages by calling us at 970-565-4444 or through your SmartHub account. Our phones are monitored all day every day. If you call and get a busy signal it means the phone system is overwhelmed. To confirm we know of the outage, you can check the outage map at eea.coop or in SmartHub.

When an outage is confirmed, EEA System Operations dispatches a crew to investigate. Their priority is to determine what caused the outage. Simply replacing the fuse or resetting the protective device before determining what caused it to operate is dangerous. If the fault still exists, energizing the circuit will cause more damage. Investigating the cause is especially critical during high fire danger conditions because damaged equipment and downed power lines can arc and start a fire. Additionally, during high fire danger conditions, EEA will adjust protective device settings to lessen the chance of starting a fire. This results in longer duration outages for our members but is necessary to reduce risk.

For an outage on an overhead line, the crew will visually patrol the line looking for the problem. Sometimes it is obvious, like a tree limb stuck in the line, but sometimes it is not. EEA uses specialized equipment to locate damaged underground lines. Weather conditions and the location of the line can also complicate outage restoration. Our service territory includes mountainous terrain where line patrol and repair must be accomplished on foot, so in the winter our linemen carry snowshoes just in case.

Once the problem is located, the crew develops a plan to repair the damage and restore power. Depending on where the problem is located, System Operations may perform additional switching to back feed part of the system that can be safely isolated.

If nothing is found, the crew will request System Operations reenergize the line to see if the protective device operates again. If it does, the crew will retrace their steps looking for the problem. If it does not, it means the original condition that caused the outage no longer exists. An example would be power lines that are pushed together by strong winds.

It is a team effort to restore power when the lights go out. EEA needs you to report outages when they happen as well as alert us to damaged or unsafe EEA equipment if you happen to see something. We appreciate your support as we work to keep the power flowing.

# 2024 Annual Meeting Recap

Empire Electric Association, Inc. held its 85th annual meeting on Thursday, June 20. After the meeting was called to order, District 4 Director Norman Butler gave the invocation followed by the pledge of allegiance led by District 2 Director Bob Barry.

The first speaker was Board President and District 6 Director David Sitton. Sitton provided an update on EEA's safety record, noting past achievements while encouraging continued diligence. He emphasized, "No matter how well we have done in the past, our minds must remain focused on working safely today and preparing to be safe tomorrow, both at work and in our spare time."

Sitton also provided an update on the sale of FastTrack. This will allow EEA to accomplish another strategic goal, which is to combine all Cortez-area operations into a single campus by constructing a new headquarters building at the L.4 location. It was noted that due to the sale of FastTrack, the existing headquarters building, and other EEA assets, this transition can be made with minimal impact on rates.

EEA Finance Manager Ginny Johnson provided a financial report for 2023. Johnson affirmed that the cooperative remains financially stable and continues to meet all mortgage covenants. While overall revenues decreased by \$664K compared to 2022, due to expense control, overall operating margins were only down \$75K. Johnson noted: "Even with an inflationary increase of 3% on expenses, operating margins for 2023 remain very similar to 2022 due to improved operations."

General Manager Josh then delivered his report with an overview on the progress EEA has made in executing its mission of safely, responsibly, and reliably meeting the electrical energy

needs of its member-owners. "While we continue to focus on getting our crews home safely to their families each night, we have also seen improvement in our electric rates. We have improved operational efficiencies which has helped us control costs and keep rates stable. Our rates are now in the lower echelon compared to other cooperatives in the state."

Dellinger also provided an update on EEA's progress in achieving its strategic goals. One of these goals was to provide members with quicker access to pricing



EEA General Manager Josh Dellinger addresses co-op members at the Annual Meeting on June 20.



An EEA member (standing right) has a question for Board President David Sitton (at podium) at the annual meeting in June.



Larry Archibeque, District 7 board member.



Bill Mollekopf was elected as the board director for District 4.



Tri-State's Elda de la Peña speaks to EEA members about the generation and transmission cooperative's progress on its responsible energy plan.

information when considering a line extension. “Previously, a member considering a line extension would need to wait to be contacted by an engineering technician to get a cost for installing a new service.” Dellinger continued, “By using the estimator tool on the EEA website, most members can now get an immediate, rough estimate of their line extension project as long as they know what size transformer they need, whether it is overhead or underground construction, and how many feet the line will need to be extended.”


Tri-State Chief Administrative and Human Resource Officer Elda de la Peña provided an overview of Tri-State and the members it serves. She spoke about the progress of Tri-State’s Responsible Energy Plan, and highlighted that Tri-State is “positioned to have 70% of their energy from renewable sources by 2030, all while reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Colorado by 89%.”

Kent Singer, executive director of Colorado Rural Electric Association wrapped up the reports by providing an overview of CREA’s services and an update on the statewide association’s efforts over the past year.

The annual meeting concluded with election results for two open board seats. Bill Mollenkopf challenged Norman Butler for District 4 while Larry Archibeque was uncontested for the District 7 seat he currently holds. Mollenkopf was elected with a vote of 1,271 to 844 and Archibeque was re-elected with a vote of 1,870.

EEA 2023 SYSTEM STATISTICS	
Total Active Services	17,035
Total Miles of Line	1,966
Kilowatt Hours Sold	604,930,999
System Peak Demand (kW)	96,754
Operating Revenue	\$ 58,219,115
Expenditures	\$ 56,930,710
Operating Margin	\$ 1,288,405
Capital Credit Retirement	\$ 1,684,038



 Elda de la Peña and Andy Carter answer member questions about Tri-State.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

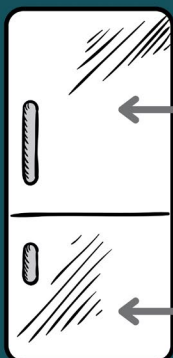
Placing heat sources such as lamps, computers, or TVs near your thermostat can result in false temperature readings, increased energy use, and inconsistent cooling/heating. Make sure your thermostat is installed in an area clear of obstructions, electronic devices, direct sunlight, and drafts.

Ensuring your thermostat is free from these types of interferences optimizes energy efficiency, improves indoor comfort, and reduces wear and tear on your cooling/heating system.

Source: [energy.gov](https://www.energy.gov)

## Keep Food Safe During and After a Power Outage

Refrigerated or frozen foods may not be safe to eat after a power outage. Use these tips to minimize food loss and reduce risk of illness.



4

Refrigerated food will last four hours. After four hours, place refrigerated foods in a cooler with ice.

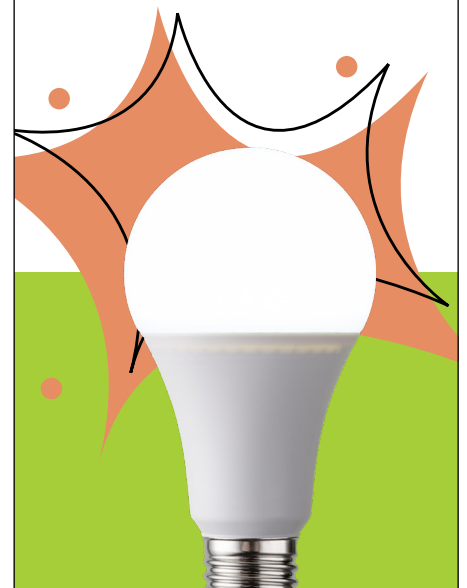
24 OR 48

Food in a half-full freezer will last 24 hours. Food in a full freezer will last 48 hours.

### Food Safety Tips

1. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
2. Throw out any food with an unusual odor, color or texture.
3. Throw out perishable food in your refrigerator after four hours without power or a cold source (like a cooler with ice).

When in doubt, throw it out!



# Power Up Your Lawn Care with Electric Equipment

The landscape of lawn and garden care is evolving, and electric equipment is at the forefront of this change. While electric lawn tools aren't new, advancements in technology and more options mean prices have become more competitive, making electric equipment an accessible option for many consumers.

Electric lawnmowers have come a long way since the days of extension cords tethering you to an outlet. Battery-powered mowers offer the same freedom of movement as gas-powered models but with reduced noise and maintenance.

Battery life was once a major drawback to making the switch to electric lawn tools. But today's growing demand for electric equipment has resulted in major advancements for lithium-ion batteries, making them more reliable, cost-effective, and efficient. For most consumers, electric lawn tools can get the job done just as well as gas-powered models.

Many electric mowers offer push-button starts, and because they are lighter, they are easier to maneuver around tight turns. Improved batteries provide longer run times to tackle larger spaces. Like their gas-powered counterparts, electric mowers are available in push, self-propelled/walk-behind and riding models. And there's no need to refill gas cans

or change oil and air filters, resulting in less hassle and maintenance.

Like mowers, electric blowers, string trimmers, and chainsaws have fewer moving parts, require minimal maintenance, and are quieter. Because electric tools are generally lighter weight, they're also more ergonomic and easier to maneuver. This feature is especially handy for projects that require tools like chainsaws for precise work.

Electric lawn tools have some limitations, so the size and terrain of your outdoor space are important considerations when purchasing new equipment.

When comparing gas-powered and electric mowers, consider the torque rating — this is the driving force behind a blade's rotation. On average, electric lawnmowers generate less torque than gas mowers. If you have a challenging outdoor space that includes overgrown brush, tall grass, or hills and dips, torque is a key factor.

Choosing the right type and size mower is particularly important for spaces larger than half an acre. If you have a large property, consider purchasing an extra battery to ensure uninterrupted workflow.

Many manufacturers offer interchangeable batteries and chargers, providing flexibility and convenience. Choosing a



▲ Battery technology improvements have made electric lawn care equipment competitive with gas powered models. Photo courtesy of Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association

single brand can ensure charging compatibility across your lawn tools and streamline charging.

While both gas and electric lawn tools can get the job done, electric equipment generally requires less maintenance, is less expensive to operate and is kinder to the environment.

Electric tools are quietly redefining the way we approach lawn care. If you're planning to make the switch to electric lawn equipment, visit Empire Electric Association's website at [eea.coop/electrify-save-program](http://eea.coop/electrify-save-program) to explore available rebates. Our energy management advisor is available to share energy-saving advice to help you save money and clear the path to a greener, more energy-efficient future.

## Calendar and Co-op Photo Contest August 2024 Winner

### August 9

EEA's board meeting begins at 8:30 a.m. at its headquarters in Cortez. The agenda is posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [eea.coop](http://eea.coop). Members may attend in person or remotely. Instructions to attend remotely are included on the agenda.

▶ "Hot Air Ballooning Over Parque de Vida," by Jonathan Brooks.

