

# Big Skylights



An internal newsletter of the STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

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A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

February 22, 2010

## MECA hosts workshop on basic computer skills

The Education & Training committee of Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association is sponsoring a 4-hour workshop for directors with basic computer skills in conjunction with the April MECA Board Meeting. The course will be taught by directors **Kathern Munteer** of Lincoln Electric Cooperative and **Emery Smith** of Flathead Electric Cooperative.

The course is scheduled for Tuesday, April 6 starting at 1 p.m. at the Statewide office in Great Falls.

Topics to be covered include learning how to make your computer a helpful tool; housekeeping on your computer; tips and technique; file organization, naming convention, folder management; ways to find things on your computer you have lost; surfing the web, specifically the new MECA website; basic use of some Microsoft programs like Word and Excel; question and answer period.

Hill County Electric Cooperative and Triangle Telephone have graciously donated their traveling computer lab to facilitate this training. Therefore, the class will be limited to 20 participants unless you are able to bring your own laptop.

There will be no charge to our member cooperatives. To register, please complete the enclosed registration form and return to the MECA office by Friday, March 26, 2010 and be sure to indicate whether you will be bringing your own laptop or not. If you have any questions, please contact **Sharon McDonald** at [sharonm@mtco-ops.com](mailto:sharonm@mtco-ops.com) or (406) 761-8333. Enrollment in this course has not yet met the minimum number required for this course to be held.

## Supervisors urged to take training on management

MECA will hold two back-to-back workshops focusing on effective management skills. Anyone who supervises employees is welcome to attend. Both courses are offered through NRECA. Tools for Effective Performance Management will be held April 20 from 8:00 – 12 noon while the Motivating Employees course will be held from 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided to participants. Performance management involves daily activities to help the employee and supervisor create and meet development goals for both the individual and the co-op. Effective performance management involves coaching, evaluation, and discipline. This course discusses the best way to conduct a performance appraisal and how to use disciplinary action.

You will learn to identify the aspects and value of performance management at your co-op, develop day-to-day coaching skills, demonstrate effective evaluation skills, decide when to use formal discipline. Motivation can lift your employees' level of performance, increase job satisfaction, and promote teamwork. This course will explore the co-op supervisor's role, value, and rewards in motivation. You'll review a self-evaluation tool to help identify your motivational strengths and weaknesses.

The fee for each course is \$85 with a minimum enrollment of 25 for each course by the early registration date of March 19 or the course(s) may be cancelled. There is a small discount of \$15 if the courses are taken together. To register, please complete the enclosed registration form and return to the MECA office by Friday, March 19, 2010. If you have any questions, please contact at [sharonm@mtco-ops.com](mailto:sharonm@mtco-ops.com) or (406) 761-8333. Enrollment in this course has not yet reached **Sharon McDonald** the minimum number required for the course to be held.

**Class brings line crews  
up to speed on tree  
trimming topics**

Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association will hold a one-and-a-half day class on tree trimming, March 9-10. The class will be held in Billings. Topics to be covered include: Herbicides, tree trimming, public relations and legal issues; chain selection, chain sharpening and chain saw safety; directional tree falling, rigging and climbing trees; and, wood chipper safety and use.

The class will be at the Wingate Hotel, located at 1801 Majestic Lane, in Billings. The course will run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 9, and from 8 a.m. to 12 noon on Wednesday, March 10. Lunch will be served on March 9. The cost of the class is \$250 per person. The registration deadline for this class is Wednesday, Feb. 24.

For those participants needing overnight accommodations, please contact the Wingate Hotel at (406) 839-9300. Ask for the Montana Electric Co-ops' (MECA) room block. Reservations must be made by Tuesday, Feb. 9 to get the special rate of \$89.00 + tax.

To register, return the enclosed registration form to **Lea Potoczny** at the Statewide office. If you have any questions, please contact **Gordon McConkey** at (406) 868-0632 or Lea at [meca@mtco-ops.com](mailto:meca@mtco-ops.com) or, via telephone, (406) 761-8333.

**Attendees needed  
for rate design seminar**

MECA will hold a training seminar on cost-of-service and rate design, March 9-10 in Great Falls. The seminar, which was requested recently by our membership, will be conducted by a reputable consulting company, C.H. Guernsey. Texas electric cooperatives are among those utilizing this company's training expertise in the near future.

Eight people are currently enrolled in the seminar. Anyone interested in attending should contact **Sharon McDonald** of our staff at (406) 761-8333 or [sharonm@mtco-ops.com](mailto:sharonm@mtco-ops.com)

**MECA to sponsor  
two workshops  
in Missoula**

MECA is sponsoring two back-to-back workshops focusing on the needs of member services staff. The first course, *Effective Lighting Retrofits (the basics and beyond) Workshop*, will be held March 9, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. It will be taught by **Jeff Robins** of the Seattle Lighting Design Lab. The second workshop, *Improving Your Photoshop Skills*, will be held March 10-11, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day. This workshop will be provided by the Rocky Mountain School of Photography.

The lighting retrofits workshop will examine how new or improved lamps, ballasts, and controls in this evolving and changing lighting industry are creating exciting retrofit opportunities. Among these are LED's, the new generation of electronic ballasts, and wireless controls. This class will look at how to effectively apply these advances, and how to calculate the economic justification behind the investment. Included in the discussion will be the latest updates in pertinent energy codes, and LEED language. The half day course will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn in Missoula and will begin at 1p.m.

The Photoshop skills workshop is designed to walk you through the latest version of Adobe Photoshop CS4. This hands-on learning experience will take place in Rocky Mountain School of Photography's digital lab in downtown Missoula. Learn how to manage and find your files easily, what new features Photoshop has to offer, review enhancing images for brochures, post cards and newsletters, and how to export into your desk top publisher, printer or an online photo finisher. This is a follow-up course to the one offered a few years ago; however, anyone can attend whether they attended the previous course or not. A minimum of 14 participants is required for the class to make with a maximum participation of 18.

A room block has been established at the Hilton Garden Inn where the Effective Lighting Retrofits course will be held. To make reservations, please call the hotel directly at (406) 532-5300.

To register for either or both workshops, please complete registration with the MECA office by Friday, Feb. 26. If you have any questions, please contact **Sharon McDonald** at [sharonm@mtco-ops.com](mailto:sharonm@mtco-ops.com) or 761.8333.

## CALENDAR

**February**

26 Vigilante Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting Dillon, MT

**March**

9 Effective Lighting Retrofits (the basics and beyond) Workshop Missoula, MT  
9-10 Tree Trimming Class Billings, MT  
9-10 Cost-of-Service, Rate Design Seminar Great Falls, MT  
10-11 Improving Your Photoshop Skills Workshop Missoula, MT