

# 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

January 21, 2010

## NRECA assists in Haiti relief efforts, urges co-op donations

Montana electric co-ops interested in assisting with relief efforts in Haiti may do so through the NRECA International Foundation's website, [www.nrecafoundation.coop](http://www.nrecafoundation.coop). Donations will be restricted for the Foundation's Haiti Relief Efforts. Donations will continue funding the rapid response team currently in Haiti as well as travel for future linemen crews.

When news of the massive earthquake that affected Port-au-Prince and many surrounding communities in Haiti reached NRECA headquarters, NRECA International Ltd. and the Foundation staff drafted an immediate plan to send a rapid response team to Haiti. The International Programs staff quickly established contact with USAID and other international and local partners to coordinate field activities and rehabilitation efforts of the electric sector.

The four-person team in Haiti is being led by **Myk Manon**, NRECA International's most experienced electric power distribution engineer. The NRECA Foundation is contributing \$50,000 to this initial effort, and has issued a call for additional contributions to the greater NRECA membership. The response team was given two principal assignments: (1) to perform a rapid appraisal of the short term measures required to repair critical segments of the electric power system in Port-au-Prince; and (2) to identify the emergency power requirements for hospitals, health centers, refugee camps, and other public facilities both in Port-au-Prince, and at border towns along the Haitian-Dominican frontier.

By Sunday (Jan 17), the team completed an initial field assessment of the Electricite du Haiti (EDH – the national electric company in Haiti). Significant damage was noted in three of the substations, while the transmission and distribution circuits sustained relatively minor damage. Focus was then shifted to reviewing

power needs at principal relief centers, where efforts were again coordinated with local and international partners. A decision was quickly reached to install a 500 kVA emergency generator donated by the Dominican Republic at the principal hospital in Port-au-Prince; two additional 1000 kVA generators will be installed this week to augment power to the hospital and to other relief centers. The team will continue to support immediate needs in Port-au-Prince, and will begin efforts to assess emergency power needs outside of Port-au-Prince in the immediate future.

## Sen. Tester names new chief of staff

Sen. **Jon Tester**, D-Mont., has hired Helena native **Tom Lopach** as his new chief of staff. Mr. Lopach, 36, has more than a decade of experience on Capitol Hill, working as a key adviser in a number of roles. Most recently he has worked as senior vice president for congressional and intergovernmental affairs at the Export-Import Bank of the United States, the nation's official export credit agency since May 2009.

He will succeed **Stephanie Schriock** as Tester's chief of staff. Ms. Schriock next month will take over as president of Emily's List, a national group that assists Democratic women candidates who support abortion rights.

As Sen. Tester's top aide, Mr. Lopach will oversee the senator's 42-person staff in Montana and Washington, D.C. "Tom is a Montanan who brings a great deal of experience and know-how to my office, and he's a dedicated public servant who knows and understands our state and the challenges we face," Sen. Tester said. "Tom's a smart guy with an impressive record of working hard in the Senate and in Montana." Mr. Lopach is a Helena High graduate and received a bachelor's degree in political science from Gonzaga University. After graduating from college, he began his career working as a Helena field representative for U.S. Rep. **Pat Williams**, D-Mont.

"It's an honor to be back serving fellow Montanans again," Mr. Lopach said. "Jon Tester is a genuine voice and a strong, one-of-a-kind leader for Montana's families, veterans, small businesses and family farms and

ranches.” Mr. Lopach said he looks forward to working with Sen. Tester on behalf of all Montanans to create jobs and new opportunities in the state for the years to come. He previously was national finance director for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee from January 2007 to January 2009. Mr. Lopach worked as national finance director and executive director of the (Sen. **Edward M.) Kennedy** for Senate/Committee for a Democratic Majority from January 2001 to January 2007, and was its director of operations in 2000 and office manager in 1999. Mr. Lopach worked as a legislative aide for the late Sen. Kennedy in 2001.

Rural Utilities Service is urging electric co-ops’ attendance at an “Avian Interactions With Power Lines Workshop” Feb. 23-24 in Pierre, S.D. The workshop begins 8 a.m. on Feb. 23 at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Pierre. It concludes at noon on Feb. 24. Registration information is available on-line at [www.aplic.org](http://www.aplic.org) or contact Deborah Trotter at (202) 508-5583 or at [dtrotter@eei.org](mailto:dtrotter@eei.org).

Workshop topics will include: History of avian electrocutions, agency and utility resources; an overview of laws protecting avian species and applicable permits; an introduction to electrical systems; an overview of biological factors influencing electrocution risk; species that nest on power poles, reliability impacts and nest management; causes of avian collisions with power lines and methods for collision reduction; mitigation of utility project impacts; history of cooperative utility/agency efforts to reduce bird mortality and improve service reliability; examples of utility avian protection plans and programs and an open discussion and questions on various approaches to development and implementation of avian protection measures.

#### Seminar planned on cost-of-service, rate design

Depending on interest, MECA is planning a training seminar on cost-of-service and rate design. The seminar, which was requested in the past two weeks by our membership, would 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. The exact dates for the seminar are not yet known but it will be held no later than mid-March.

Total cost of holding this two-day seminar is expected to be around \$650 per person for MECA member cooperatives. The exact cost will depend on enrollment. Anyone interested in attending this seminar 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.

### Care to go paperless?

As part of the MECA board's desire to move toward less use of paper, we are asking Big Skylights readers to be sure to let us know if they would like to receive this newsletter only in electronic form. Please contact Sharon McDonald or Lea Potoczny of our staff. You can email Sharon at [sharonm@mtco-ops.com](mailto:sharonm@mtco-ops.com). You can email Lea at [meca@mtco-ops.com](mailto:meca@mtco-ops.com). Our phone number is (406) 761-8333.

## CALENDAR

### January

26	Candidate School	Great Falls, MT
27	Candidate School	Missoula, MT
28	Candidate School	Bozeman, MT
29	Candidate School	Billings, MT

### February

11-17	NRECA Annual Meeting	Atlanta, GA
16	CFC Annual Meeting	Atlanta, GA

### March

9	Effective Lighting Retrofits (the basics and beyond) Workshop	Missoula, MT
10-11	Improving Your Photoshop Skills Workshop	Missoula, MT