

# WATTS & VOLTS

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## DIRECTOR NEWSLETTER

Greetings from Parker, Colorado! I hope this summer finds you well and that you enjoyed the recent Parker Days celebration. That yearly event certainly has grown and changed from the time that I first moved here in 1987. For that matter, the town of Parker certainly has changed. IREA continues to change, as well, and the presence of viable energy alternatives and technology are certainly in the glide path for the association. I have a couple of updates I'd like to share with you regarding our cooperative association.

First, I would like to thank the members of District 7 that have granted me the privilege to serve on IREA's Board of Directors. Among my goals is to raise awareness of the cooperative model in providing power and doing so by supporting fair and reasonable rates. As a director I also help guide the association as it obtains more cost-effective and reliable renewable energy and implements new technology. Technology has many positives but we must keep a vigilant eye toward strengthening cyber and physical preparedness. The bottom line is that the board continuously works toward the promotion of the association's excellence.

### Proposed changes

The June issue of Watts & Volts contained a notice of proposed changes to IREA's Rates & Regulations. These proposed changes will not increase rates; they instead will adjust the charges for a few field and other customer-requested service calls, lower demand and time-of-use (TOU) residential rates and adjust the monthly service charges associated with those rates. Regarding the TOU rate, I have many members in my district that live in multifamily units. If you are such a member, you may want to contact the association at (303) 688-3100 to discuss with one of our member service representatives if such a TOU rate might reduce your bill.

A proposed change, if approved, will allow members who meet specific eligibility requirements to opt out of our Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). The board has listened to member requests to be given such an option. I have learned that many other utilities do not allow such an opt-out option, but I feel that our members should be given as many options as possible. The proposed policy will provide that a member will need to sign an agreement requesting an AMI opt-out



JAMES ANEST  
District 7



and pay an \$80 setup fee and a \$20-per-month meter-reading fee. These fees are to recover some, but not all, of our costs to install different meters, set up alternative billing, and pay meter readers to read the meters manually. If a customer elects to opt out after an AMI meter has been installed, there will be a charge to change the AMI meter with a non-AMI meter. That fee is \$20 if the meter is changed during normal business hours, and \$65 if it is changed outside of normal business hours.

Those who do not opt out will enjoy many benefits provided by the improved meters, which already serve nearly half of U.S. homes. The AMI system will give members convenient access to energy usage data, custom billing periods (within limits) and quicker service restoration following outages. We are also exploring the possibility of additional cost-saving programs and pre-payment plans. The AMI system will allow members to log into their account portal and see current electric use and charges.

We already have installed more than 10,000 AMI meters and expect to install many more throughout the rest of the year. The majority of meters will be upgraded by mid-2020. Members will receive notification postcards several weeks before planned installation. This postcard will contain details about the installation process, and contact information if you have questions. Meanwhile, you can visit [www.IREA.coop/ami](http://www.IREA.coop/ami) to learn more about AMI. There is no charge for the new meter or its installation.

### Rooftop solar

If you are considering rooftop solar, I encourage you to first contact our Engineering Services personnel at (303) 688-3100, ext. 5302. There are several important things for prospective solar generators to know. IREA accepts any and all rooftop solar applications that meet the criteria stipulated within our small interconnection procedures. The association will work with any solar provider, and any decision to not operate in our service territory is made by the vendor. If you have any questions about rooftop solar, please don't hesitate to call or visit [www.IREA.coop/rooftop-solar](http://www.IREA.coop/rooftop-solar).

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## Education grants

I would like to congratulate the recipients of this year's IREA education grants. The three names drawn of graduating high school seniors from District 7 at last month's Directors meeting:



**Katharine Bennett**  
Legend High School  
University of Wyoming



**Halie Gates**  
Legend High School  
University of Wyoming



**Cole Kroner**  
Legend High School  
Liberty University

Katharine, Halie and Cole will each receive a \$2,000 grant for higher education expenses. Next year's graduating seniors can expect the education grant application process to reopen in early 2020. Look to Watts & Volts and our social media channels – @IREAColorado on Twitter and IntermountainREA on Facebook – for updates on when applications will be available.

## Free and upgraded payment options

Many District 7 members expressed to me their interest in having free credit card payments available as an option. In my efforts to provide as many member options as possible and to improve members' experience, I recently supported the Board's decision to eliminate fees associated with electronic payments, including fees associated with payments made by credit card, debit card and ACH for residential accounts. In conjunction with the elimination of these fees, the association has implemented an improved version of Speedpay, our electronic payment system. It offers quicker, more convenient payment via desktop, laptop and mobile devices and allows you to save multiple payment types to a digital wallet. You will also be able to access your payment history. Speedpay can be accessed via the My Account feature on [www.IREA.coop](http://www.IREA.coop) and is also available through our automated voice service at (800) 332-9540. Commercial accounts now enjoy free ACH payments.

## Outage mitigation

In mid-March, IREA's 5,000-square-mile service territory was hit by a record-setting "bomb cyclone" that was later declared the strongest storm in Colorado's recorded history. Luckily, the Parker area was not impacted as much as adjacent areas that felt the brunt

of the storm on their service. Several of our neighboring utilities lost service to large numbers of their customers for long periods of time. Shortly thereafter, a late spring snowstorm wreaked havoc with unseasonable ice and fallen trees. Again, the number of affected IREA customers was minimal and the Parker area's interruption was minor. We believe our system's reliability during these storms confirms the effectiveness of our maintenance and mitigation programs.

Our linemen and other field personnel deserve credit for working around the clock during and after the storms to restore power to every affected customer. We understand the frustration our customers experience during outages and we will continue to explore ways to reduce the number and length of such service interruptions.

## Summer safety (Call 811 before you dig)

Many members are well into their summer landscaping and other outdoor projects. We encourage everyone to make use of the free 811 utility locate service for any projects that require digging. Hitting an underground utility line can have severe consequences such as bodily injury and even death. Legal liability for fines and damages also can be imposed for damage to underground utility facilities if a locate is not requested. It is worth the minimal amount of time it takes to simply dial 811 before you dig. Please make the call at least three business days before you break ground on any project.

Please be cautious when it comes to above-ground activity, too. Be especially careful when working or playing near overhead lines, transformers and other equipment, and consult our vegetation guidelines, available at [www.IREA.coop/irea-your-property](http://www.IREA.coop/irea-your-property), before planting trees, shrubs or other vegetation. If you spot any existing hazards related to our system, call us at (800) 332-9540.

## Energy efficiency

Higher energy bills during summer months sometimes catch customers off-guard. If you haven't explored the energy efficiency tips we've shared in previous editions of Watts & Volts, please visit [www.IREA.coop/energy-efficiency-is-a-breeze](http://www.IREA.coop/energy-efficiency-is-a-breeze). After utilizing these tips, if you still see a spike in your monthly bill, consider scheduling a free energy audit. Our energy efficiency specialist will visit your home, identify possible efficiency issues and provide recommendations for how to fix them. You can schedule your audit online via [www.IREA.coop/energy-audits](http://www.IREA.coop/energy-audits), where you also can find our updated energy use chart, which makes it easy to calculate your energy usage.

I look forward to meeting with any of my district members here at my office in Old Town Parker. In conclusion, it is my pleasure to continue serving as your representative on the IREA Board of Directors. I hope the remainder of your summer is safe and enjoyable!