The year was 1987 when three Montana electric cooperatives joined together to bring Electric Hazard Awareness (EHA) training to their service area 5th and 6th-grade students. Together the group purchased the first EHA Display Graphics Electrical Board for $3,200 (photo below).

Since then, BEC Sub-Foreman, Lee Hauge has taught electrical safety to over 6,000 kids in the Beartooth Electric Co-op service area.

You may ask, “What is EHA training?”

“Well, it’s electrical safety made fun,” explained Lee. “EHA is not a boring session of rules to memorize how to be safe around electricity. It’s a group effort of minds exploring the basics of electricity and problem-solving. It becomes a forum where everyone gets involved.” One of the training goals is to get every kid involved in some fashion before the day is over. “Once we get going, it is really pretty easy getting all the kids to participate in some fashion,” added Lee.

He arrives at each school armed with a Powerpoint training presentation developed over the years, an important tool to teach the kids basic electrical concepts. The slides are designed to stir the kids’ minds and to create questions and thoughts about electricity that they solve as a group. Lee also brings the Display Graphics Electrical Board. This unit is a model of a small town set up to display several electrical hazards that one might encounter out in the real world. “It’s pretty cool,” added Lee, “it operates at 1,400 volts running at a very, very small amperage. It can draw some pretty impressive arcs of electricity that usually gets the kids attention.”

The first 45-minute session begins with learning basic electrical stuff through the Powerpoint slides. Kids will be kids, so a break to stretch is taken before launching into the exciting second half of training where the group moves over to the Display Graphics Electrical Board to apply what they have learned.

Here, the group talks about things like flying kites around power lines, how to...
NATIONAL LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY

113th CONGRESS
1st Session, S. RES. 95
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES
April 10, 2013

Mr. Isakson (for himself and Mr. Bennet) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION
Recognizing linemen, the profession of linemen, the contributions of these brave men and women who protect public safety, and expressing support for the designation of April 18, 2013, as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

Whereas the profession of linemen is steeped in personal, family, and professional tradition;

Whereas linemen are often first responders during storms and other catastrophic events, working to make the scene safe for other public safety heroes;

Whereas linemen work with thousands of volts of electricity high atop power lines 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to keep electricity flowing;

Whereas linemen must often work under dangerous conditions far from their families to construct and maintain the energy infrastructure of the United States;

Whereas linemen put their lives on the line every day with little recognition from the community regarding the danger of their work; and

Whereas April 18, 2013, would be an appropriate date to designate as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

Now, therefore, be it

That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the efforts of linemen in keeping the power on and protecting public safety; and

(2) supports the designation of April 18, 2013, as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

The observance of April 18, has carried forward every year since. In addition, in December 2014, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Board adopted a resolution recognizing the second Monday of each April as National Lineman Appreciation Day. Here at BEC, we’ll be celebrating our linemen all month. Please join us!

#thankalineman
The lights go out. You see and hear tree limbs falling. Power poles and wire once powering your home lay on the ground. The service that powers the lives of your family is no longer there.

This is the potential scene when summer storms roll through or severe winter weather changes the landscape of our daily routines. This is when the lineman goes to work, in the worst of weather and conditions, with a steady focus on the hazardous job at hand.

“Our linemen work with thousands of volts of electricity on power lines, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, often under dangerous conditions far from their families. To say the least, travel conditions and storm restoration work can be challenging,” said Kevin Owens, BEC general manager, “Working together to get power on for our members after severe weather is the most rewarding and gratifying part of our job. Power is something we all need, want and expect, and there is no better feeling than completing the job and seeing home lights back on.”

National Lineman Appreciation Day is set apart to recognize linemen, the profession of linemen, and the contributions these brave men and women make daily to protect public safety. This day serves as a small token of thanks to the hardworking linemen across the country for everything they do to keep our electricity on.

“Our linemen truly are public safety heroes, often being the first to respond during storms and other emergencies, and our appreciation for them should not go unnoticed,” noted Kevin.

To participate in honoring line workers and their families across the country, use the hashtag #thankalineman in social media. More importantly, if you see a line worker today, thank them for their service.

Thank you BEC Linemen, today and every day!

GENERAL MANAGER’S MESSAGE
Our April Rural Montana focuses on the fact that April is National Lineman Appreciation Month. It’s nice that the nation takes time to honor those who brave the elements every day to keep the lights on and your homes nice and warm.

I have worked in this industry for over 40 years and have had the honor to work with a significant number of linemen working for investor-owned utilities, Peoples Utility Districts and now Cooperatives. It takes a special breed of individual to perform this work. Consequently, I have worked with a number of really good linemen. At Beartooth, members need to realize that they have something special to be proud of in their lineman crew.

At Beartooth, they go beyond good linemen; they are exceptional in their work ethic, character and commitment to the members they serve. They are embedded in the communities they live, work and play. It’s not just a job for them and I see it every day.

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look for power lines before climbing trees, what to do if you encounter a down power line after a big wind or snow storm, and the dangers of—and how to deal with a damaged power “green box” if one is ever encountered.

EHA training is wrapped up with one very important topic, how to deal with an electrical emergency in the event of a motor vehicle crash involving a power line.

Before leaving, Lee asks the kids to help him create a teaching tool for the next group by giving him tips on how to be safe at home with electricity. Lee said, “I’ve had a lot of fun working with the kids,” and added, “I hope that each of the more that 6,000 kids I’ve encountered went home a little more knowledgeable about electricity and a little safer.”

This year, Lee’s last before retirement, he prepared to pass the baton and for the first time, shared the stage with instructor recruit, Jake Wright, BEC Journeyman Lineman. Lee, we thank you for your 31 years of leading BEC’s EHA training. Jake, training the youth of our service area is now yours. We’re excited about the next era of EHA training.

Happy Retirement Lee!

May you look back with pride on everything you’ve accomplished...May you look to the future as the beginning with new joys ahead... May you look at today and know how happy we are for you!

Lee, we cannot begin tell you how important you have been to all of us. Thank you for a job well done!

Congratulations on your retirement!

continued from page 3.

It’s important to recognize one of these individuals that just retired after serving members for over 38 years. I have only known Lee Hauge since August, but I feel like we have worked hand in hand for years. Lee has burned through eight General Managers in his career at Beartooth, so I feel good that I am the one to send him into a happy retirement with Teresa post-Beartooth. Lee set a very high bar at Beartooth for all to aspire as someone committed to its members, family and community. He personally taught electrical safety to over 6,000 youngsters in our grade schools and remained very active in BRTA and the Red Lodge Fire and Rescue. I am not sure Lee ever viewed his work at Beartooth or within the Community as a job or an obligation. He did it because he enjoyed it and the people with whom he worked. Now it’s time to pass the torch.

In the next couple months, we will begin the recruitment process to fill Lee’s shoes with a new Apprentice Lineman. That individual will need to share Lee’s values, commitment and character and hopefully enjoy 38 years, or maybe more, at Beartooth before it will be his time to hang up the hooks.
The forecast analysis is a critical component of integrated financial planning and management at BEC. The 2018 budget shows stable rates and a secure financial position. The analysis model adds five years and, using data from BEC strategy and plans; forecasts increased plant investment and reduced debt with no need to increase revenue from members. Rate stability is a primary strategic plan goal.

The five-year forecast extends through 2023. At that point, we will be receiving electricity from a Montana-based supplier, Energy Keepers, Inc. that operates the Seli’s Ksanka Qlipse’ dam on the Flathead River. Our cost of power will be fixed through September 2027 at the rate we currently pay and have factored into our planning. Power purchase rates are documented in the forecast on the BEC website http://bit.ly/2DmWuHF.

The forecast lists assumptions followed by operations, cash flow, and balance sheet reports comparing years 2018 through 2023. To understand items and activities represented by line items in the financial reports read the Budget Narrative section of the 2018 budget. The narrative details the strategy and objectives for budgeted activity in the context of longer-range plans. The 2018 Budget Narrative is available on the BEC website http://bit.ly/2FANaBL.

Numbers and assumptions in the forecast analysis are derived from the BEC strategic plan, the 2018 budget and co-op work plans.

Working assumptions:
- Power costs remain constant.
- Revenue grows 0.5% per year (from new memberships).
- Co-op plant growth is approximately $800,000 per year.
- $1.5 million is borrowed to finance meter replacements in 2018-2019.

Highlights of Projected Results:
- Requirements for revenue from member rates and facility charges do not increase.
- Capital Credits are retired annually based on 20-year rotation resulting in 5% of outstanding patronage retired each year and $2.7 million retired paid over six years.
- Annual plant additions increase after installation of TWACS digital meters in 2018 and 2019.
- Long-term debt decreases by approximately $1.5 million over five years.
- Year-end cash balance jumps to approximately $1 million in 2022 following completed payment of CFC loan to finance RUS Cushion of Credit investment.
- Debt Service Coverage and other financial ratios meet industry standards and lender requirements.

The forecast model is a tool for testing proposed budgets and plans. Financial management decisions made over the next six years may change projected conclusions. The forecast model is meant to support evaluation of what-if scenarios and assess the impact of proposed changes.

The financial consultant who developed the BEC forecast model and the current analysis provides financial expertise for the co-op. In a presentation in Red Lodge on April 3, Consultant Kim Mikkelsen outlined best practices and business models for rural electric cooperatives. She discussed development and monitoring of load forecasts, long-range plans, work plans, strategies and annual budgets with the risk management committee, board, staff and co-op members. A report on the day-long workshop is available on the BEC website http://bit.ly/2pau26Z.

What’s next? The co-op is launching its meter replacement plan and investigating two potential initiatives. BEC will replace obsolete Turtle meters in 2018 and 2019 with TWACS (Two-Way Automatic Communication System) digital meters.

The equipment is ordered, members have been notified of the need to borrow approximately $1.5 million to finance the system and installation plans are in place.

We will report soon on analysis of the potential for a community solar facility. The project would be driven by member interest in low-carbon electricity and would require individual member investments to develop a generation facility powered by solar energy and connected to the BEC grid.

We are scoping the timeframe and outside resources required to analyze rate structure alternatives that might help BEC ensure fair rates for all customer classes as power generation distribution and transmission requirements continue to change.

Please contact the co-op or a board trustee for information: www.beartoothlectric.com, 406-446-2310.