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Accounting Department Behind the Scenes

BY TAMMY RUSSELL || ACCOUNTING SUPERVISOR || GCEA@GCEA.COOP

I was approached to do an article for *Colorado Country Life*, which ended up being a big challenge for me. I struggled to think of what people might find interesting about the accounting department at Gunnison County Electric Association. I also struggled with the fact that I am a numbers person and not a writer. What I realized is that most people don't even know what happens here behind the scenes, so I decided to take this opportunity to give you an overview of a typical month.



Tammy Russell

GCEA has three wonderful accounting assistants who help make this department run smoothly: Kelley Willis, Cindy Muirhead and Jo Anne Bateman. Duties are divided among the three of them throughout the month.

A typical month starts with doing the semimonthly payroll, which includes hours worked from the 16th through the end of the month. The department works to ensure that everyone's time is charged to the proper accounts and employee and employer taxes and deductions are being withheld properly. Once this payroll is finished we begin the month end payroll process. Once again, we check to make sure that the correct accounts are being charged and that the taxes and deductions are correct. We also make sure that fixed and variable costs are distributed appropriately.

While payroll is going on we reconcile our bank statements to the penny, we

collect transportation cards and break down the miles so we can expense or capitalize the miles to the proper accounts. Once payroll month end is done and transportation charges are completed, we can start our overhead process.

We have several small inventory accounts (Buck-a-Bulb, Marathon water heaters, Convectair heaters, surge arrestors, etc.), which we balance on a monthly basis. We have to verify inventory on hand and ensure that consumers have paid for the items they purchased.

Accounts payable is a never ending process. Invoices need to be matched up with purchase orders and pricing needs to be checked. All invoices must be coded with the proper accounting codes and approved by supervisors before payment can be made. Once all expenses for the month have been processed we can move on to our material inventory month end process. We check to make sure all material received in the month has been paid for and that our inventory balances with our general ledger. We also have shipping and handling charges that need to be distributed.

After materials have been reconciled we roll into closing work orders. This involves a collaborative effort with the operations and engineering department. Each work order is checked to make sure all materials have been charged out, transportation and labor charges have been ac- [continued on page 8]

Behind the Scenes

[continued from page 7] counted for and work orders have been coded properly. During this process we make sure that all materials are put into our plant (that is, the material that we have out in the field) and that any material taken out of use has been retired from our plant.

The asset management and depreciation process can be started after all invoices have been paid and work orders have been closed. This process ensures all new material out in the field is accounted for and depreciated correctly. We also make sure that any new assets purchased for our use in maintaining our electrical distribution system have been added to our general plant and that those items are depreciating according to the Rural Utilities Service standards.

Once depreciation has been completed we perform a trial balance to make sure everything has been accounted for accurately. At this point we can start compiling information to produce financial reports for our board of directors. While these board reports are being drafted we begin our next semimonthly payroll. This payroll includes hours to be paid for work performed

from the first through the 15th of the month.

We have about a week that we call our down time. We utilize this time for special projects and other reports that are not done on a monthly basis. We are constantly looking for new ideas that would make us more efficient while completing our duties. Currently we are working on document imaging, our purchase order system and a miscellaneous receivables system. Document imaging will help us research information in a more timely manner. We are hoping to get our purchase order system up and running so we can start saving paper, and miscellaneous receivables would allow us to track our small inventory accounts more efficiently.

Working in the accounting department at GCEA is a challenging, but very rewarding, experience. We feel that we are part of a supportive and caring family. We are able to depend on others while completing our tasks in a fun and exciting atmosphere.

Although you might not see the accounting department as much as you see other members of our staff, we want you to know that we are here working hard to keep your local cooperative balanced.

SAFETY TRAINING TAKES TO THE SKIES

BY VICKI SPENCER || ENERGY USE/COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST || GCEA@GCEA.COOP

Our employees are the reason that GCEA is successful. Because we value each of our employees and his or her contributions toward providing reliable, affordable energy to our members, we uphold a corporate commitment to ensure everyone's safety.

Each month all employees attend a safety meeting where we discuss any accidents or close calls, and how they could have been prevented. We also learn how to be more aware of our surroundings and how to identify potential safety hazards, which can be rectified before anyone is hurt. We also hear presentations on a variety of safety topics.

One morning this fall, Flight For Life's three-person crew landed on the Spahn hayfield across from GCEA headquarters to

Flight For Life crew members (l-r) Matt Bowe, Noah Cravin and John Peterson explain their services.



GCEA employees learn about Flight For Life in their monthly safety meeting.



introduce us to its recently expanded services. Flight For Life now offers efficient, safe transportation paired with skilled medical care community service from its Frisco base seven days a week. The Lifeguard 2 helicopter is in service from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily with 24-hour emergency ground coverage.

The helicopter pilots average 9,500 flight hours and 14 years with Flight For Life. They are familiar with the regional terrain and geography and are more experienced in mountain flying than any other medical pilots in the area.

The flight nurses, paramedics, emergency medical technicians and respiratory therapists are hospital based and bring superior skill and expertise to the critically injured or ill patient in any life-threatening situation. Flight nurses,

who assist in Saint Anthony Central Hospital's emergency department and intensive care units when they are not flying, have an average 14 years experience in critical care. Flight paramedics average 16 years experience.

Flight For Life has been accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems since 1993. Over the years, Flight For Life has transported more than 90,000 patients. It was the nation's first medical air ambulance program and has become a model for more than 300 air ambulance programs worldwide.

We are privileged to have such an exemplary program available to provide emergency transportation and medical services to GCEA employees, members and visitors to our community.

It's Scholarship Application Time!

It's that time of year again. High school seniors are flocking to their counseling offices to pick up scholarship applications while juniors are trying to decide whether to continue their education after high school or look for a job.

Opportunities for high school seniors

Students living in the Gunnison County Electric Association service area are eligible for a variety of scholarship opportunities. Our scholarships are made possible through the generosity of Tri-State Generation and Transmission, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Gunnison County Electric Association Board of Directors donations, member donations to Operation Roundup and returned and unclaimed association capital credit funds.

Here is how our scholarship program works. We have just one application form for all our education scholarships. Each application consists of the form, letters of recommendation, a list of extracurricular school activities, community civic activities and signatures of the student's parents or legal guardians.

Students can get a form from their high school counselor during the third week of December. Application forms are also made available on our website, www.gcea.coop, or at GCEA's offices in Gunnison and Crested Butte.

All completed applications are due at the headquarters building no later than February 3, 2012, by 4:30 pm. No applications will be accepted after that date.

The selection process begins Monday, February 6, 2012. A special committee meets to review and discuss each application. Then the committee submits its recommendations to the board of directors for consideration and approval. The winners are notified in writing in May, prior to the end of the school year. Scholarship checks are mailed before school begins directly to the college that each student has selected.

Opportunities for high school juniors

Last summer, for the first time, GCEA offered two wonderful opportunities to help juniors develop leadership skills and build their resumes while having a good time. The students had such positive experiences that our board of directors has decided to offer the scholarships again in 2012.

Two students are eligible to join 1,500 other students from across the country for an expense-paid tour of our nation's capital. Two more students are eligible to attend a summer Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, where they will make new friends and enjoy rafting the Colorado River.

The application form and guidelines for both programs will be available from high school counselors in December. But you don't need to wait until December to learn more about these exciting programs. Check out our website, www.gcea.coop, or call Vicki Spencer at 970-641-7359 for details.



Steven Starkebaum and Brent Diderickson attend last year's expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. GCEA will be sending two high school juniors again this year. Applications will be available in December.

SUPPORT GREEN POWER

If you are interested in solar power but find it impractical to build your own system, you can still support renewable energy by signing up for GCEA's Green Power Program. One block of green power (or 100 kilowatt-hours) only costs 25 cents.

The average GCEA residential member uses approximately 700 kWh per month. It would only cost an additional \$1.75 each month to purchase seven blocks of green power to offset this member's energy use.

For more information, call member services at 970-641-3520.



ATTENTION BUSINESSES

DON'T WAIT TO SCHEDULE YOUR ENERGY AUDIT

If you are looking for ways to reduce your overhead, now is the time to schedule your commercial energy audit. Businesses receive an audit at only 25 percent of the cost. Most audits are free after a rebate from the Office for Resource Efficiency. Contact Member Services at 970-641-3250 for more information.

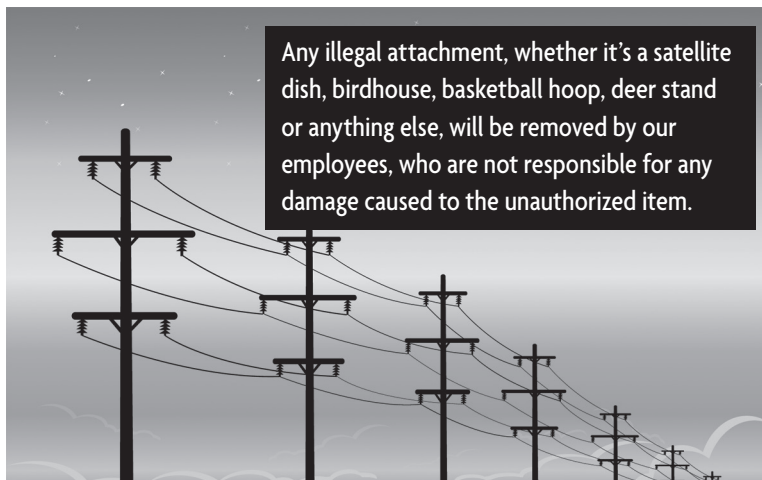
Protecting Our Silent Sentinels

It's easy to take something for granted when you see it every day. We drive by row after row of them, but how often do we think about utility poles? Yet these silent sentinels are often under attack in our community and are critical to GCEA's mission of delivering safe, reliable and affordable power.

Electric cooperatives like GCEA own and maintain more than 2.5 million miles of distribution lines stretching across two-thirds of America. Some of these lines can be found underground, but for the most part they stretch above ground, chasing after us on roadsides and doggedly climbing through harsh terrain to deliver power to homes.

Co-ops rely on more than 41 million utility poles to deliver these lines, and these staunch supporters of electricity are under constant attack from the elements, storms, woodpeckers, insects, moisture and harsh soils. But people play a part in pole erosion, too.

How many times have you driven by a pole and noticed yard sale signs or ads tacked to the base. It's illegal to attach unau-



thorized items to poles; when a line worker is responding to an outage and climbs a pole, abandoned nails or tacks can rip through protective gloves, leaving the line worker potentially exposed to thousands of volts of energy.

Even when nails are removed, the leftover holes provide easy entry for bugs and water, causing a pole that should have lasted four decades or more to weaken much faster.

We need your help. If you notice anyone trying to attach something to a utility pole, let them know it's dangerous and against the law. Whenever we at GCEA see an illegal attachment, whether it's a satellite dish, birdhouse, basketball hoop, deer stand or anything else, our employees will remove it and are not responsible for any damage caused to the unauthorized item.

Thanks for your help as we work together to prolong the life span of these silent sentinels that provide us with safe, reliable and affordable electric service.

An Energy-Efficient Thanksgiving

Seven simple tips to gobble up during the holiday season

Thanksgiving is a time for giving thanks and for cooking. Although your electric co-op can't help you become a better cook, it can help you get more value from every dollar you spend on electricity. And that is something to be very thankful for, indeed. It's important to use electricity wisely year-round, but during Thanksgiving and the holiday season it becomes especially significant. More people are at home, using more appliances and electronics. This creates added demand for electricity.

Follow these seven easy tips to help ensure you have an energy-efficient Thanksgiving:

- ✱ Check your refrigerator's door gaskets to be sure they seal tightly. This will keep the cold air in and the warm air out. To check the condition of the gasket, place a dollar bill against the frame and close the door. If the bill can be pulled out with a gentle tug or, worse, simply drops out on its own, the door requires adjustment, or the gasket needs replacing.
- ✱ Use the "lids-on" approach to cooking. Tightly fitted lids help keep heat within pots and pans, permitting the use of lower temperature settings and shorter cooking times.
- ✱ Always cook on highest heat until liquid begins to boil. Then lower the heat control setting and allow food to simmer until fully cooked.
- ✱ Use the microwave whenever possible. Microwave ovens draw less than half the power of a regular oven, and they cook for a much shorter period of time. For example, an item that needs an hour in a full-sized oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit will take only 15 minutes to cook in a microwave on the "high" setting.
- ✱ When preheating a regular oven, time the preheat period carefully. Five to eight minutes should be sufficient. There is no need to preheat for broiling or roasting.
- ✱ When using an electric oven, cook as much of the meal in it at one time as possible. Foods with different cooking temperatures can often be cooked simultaneously at one temperature — variations of 25 degrees Fahrenheit in either direction still produce good results and save energy.
- ✱ If a large group of people is expected for the dinner, lower your home's thermostat a degree or two before the guests arrive. Otherwise, the house may become too warm, which wastes electricity.