

Your Benton REA Board of Trustees

Michael Freepons
President
District 2

Connie Krull
Vice President
District 7

Catherine Russell
Secretary/Treasurer
District 8

Buddy Treadway
Trustee, District 1

Bob Evans
Trustee, District 3

Ron Johnson
Trustee, District 4

Tim Grow
Trustee, District 5

Scott Fisher
Trustee, District 6

General Manager

Michael J. Bradshaw
mikeb@bentonrea.org

In This Issue

- 1** Spare Change for Good
- 2** Check Your Circuit Breakers, Poles Are Not Bulletin Boards
- 3** EIS Affirms Dams Should Remain, Who Powers You Contest
- 4** Update Your Contact Info, Labor Day Hours

Spare Change For Good

Round up your electric bill to help fellow members; Benton REA will match \$5,000

What can you buy with \$6? You could spend it on a large, flavored, cold brew and a tip at your favorite coffee drive-thru. Six dollars will almost pay for a car wash.

If that \$6 could be spent making a positive difference in your neighbor's life, would you spend it or share it?

Benton REA's new bill assistance program allows members to round up their monthly electric bill to the nearest dollar, donating the spare change to a fund that helps fellow members pay their past-due electric bills, enabling them to keep the lights on. The average donation is only \$6 a year.

If your total bill is \$105.25, it would be rounded up to \$106. The extra 75 cents is donated to the bill assistance program. By rounding up your bill, you would give 0 to 99 cents each month. Your annual donation would be between 12 cents and \$11.88.

If every member enrolled, more than \$5,250 would be raised each month for the program.

Members must opt in to round up their bill and can unenroll at any time. Larger one-time and monthly donations will also be accepted from members and nonmembers.

From September 1 to October 31, 2020, Benton REA will make a matching

donation to the bill assistance fund up to \$5,000.

If \$2,000 is donated by October 31, Benton REA will also donate \$2,000. If \$5,000 or more is donated Benton REA will add \$5,000 to the fund.

"This new bill assistance program is a great way to live the cooperative spirit by helping those in need," General Manager and Benton REA member Mike Bradshaw says.

Mike made the first contribution by rounding up his monthly bill and giving a \$200 one-time donation.

How to Contribute

Benton REA members can enroll in one of three ways:

1. Through your SmartHub online account or the SmartHub app. Click "Bill Assistance Program" under the "Billing & Payments" tab and click "Enroll" to select your round-up options.
2. Call 509-786-2913, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
3. Mail the enrollment form on the back of your payment stub to a Benton REA office. This can be found on page two of your monthly Benton REA billing statement.

Nonmembers who wish to contribute—including individuals, businesses or community organizations—may call 509-786-2913.



Applying for Assistance

Members who have a residential account with a past-due balance and have a combined gross household income equal to or less than 150% of the federal poverty guideline are eligible to apply.

Bill assistance will be granted as a credit on the electric account of the qualifying member once per calendar year. The amount of assistance depends on the family size, household income and amount due on the electric account.

Information about applying for bill assistance will be available this fall after funding is raised.

Help Choose a Name

Benton REA members and anyone who donates to the program will be allowed to vote on the official name.

To vote online and learn more about rounding up your bill, giving a one-time donation or applying for bill assistance funds, visit www.BentonREA.org/BAP. ■

Check Your Circuit Breakers Before Reporting An Outage

Parts of your home—including outlets and entire walls—can lose power when circuits are overloaded.

If your power goes out unexpectedly, check your home's circuit breakers and main breaker before calling to report an outage. If a Benton REA crew is dispatched and the problem is on your side of the meter, you may be required to pay for the cost of the service call.

Here's how to check your home's circuit breakers:

1. Find your electrical panel or breaker box. Inside are black switches. These are the circuit breakers.
2. If a circuit breaker is tripped, it may appear to be in the same position as the others, but it won't be pushed fully to the on position.
3. Find the affected breaker and flip it to the off position. If you don't think there is an electrical overload, try flipping the breaker back to the on position. If you suspect an electrical overload, unplug appliances and other items in the area not receiving power, then flip the breaker back to the on position.
4. Check to see if power is restored. Wait a few seconds, then slowly plug in and turn on the electrical

equipment to determine which item is causing the overload.

If the circuit trips again when an item is plugged in, that item is causing the overload. Try moving it to a different outlet in your home.

5. If the circuit continues to trip, or if it won't flip to the on position, stop trying to reset the breaker. There may be a fault in the circuit. Contact a qualified electrician.

When power goes out to a particular area of your home, it's often just a temporary power surge. You may be able to restore power on your own by simply resetting the breaker.

If the entire house is out of power, it could be caused by the main breaker. Look for the main breakers at the top of the electrical panel. Manufactured homes may have a main breaker on a pedestal away from the house.

If you discover the outage was not caused by your own equipment, please report it by calling 800-221-6987 or by using the outage reporting feature of your SmartHub app.

Outages impacting more than 10 Benton REA accounts will appear on the online outage map. To see the map, visit www.BentonREA.org, scroll down and click "View Outage Map." ■



Household items such as irons can cause a circuit breaker to overload.

IS YOUR POWER OUT?

If your electricity is out for more than a few minutes:

- Check your breaker box to see if a circuit breaker has tripped.
- Check to see if your neighbors have power.
- Report Benton REA outages by calling 800-221-6987 or use the SmartHub app.

COOPERATIVE INFORMATION

BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Prosser Office
402 7th St. | P.O. Box 1150
Prosser, WA 99350
509-786-2913

Office Hours: Mon. - Fri., 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

West Richland Office
6095 West Van Giesen St.
West Richland, WA 99353
509-967-2921

Office Hours: Mon.- Fri., 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Toll Free: 800-221-6987

www.BentonREA.org

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

MEMBER SERVICES

This newsletter is produced by the Benton REA Member Services and Economic Development Department:

Elecia Copenhaver, Marketing and Communications Coordinator

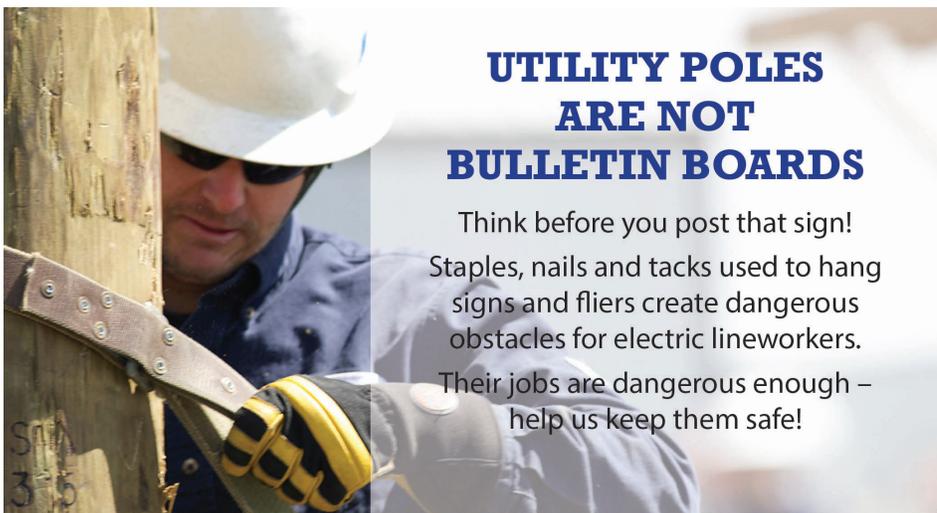
Troy Berglund, Community Development and Member Relations Manager

Shannon Olsen, Assistant Community Development and Member Relations Manager

May Hays, Community Relations Coordinator

Ron Mitchell, Electrical Advisor

Eric Miller, Energy Advisor



UTILITY POLES ARE NOT BULLETIN BOARDS

Think before you post that sign!

Staples, nails and tacks used to hang signs and fliers create dangerous obstacles for electric lineworkers.

Their jobs are dangerous enough – help us keep them safe!



**Benton Rural
Electric Association**

Final Environmental Impact Statement Affirms Lower Snake River Dams Should Remain



Ice Harbor Dam near Pasco. Photo courtesy of the Bonneville Power Administration

More than 56,000 comments were submitted to the federal agencies drafting the Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement. At least 173 of those were from Benton REA members. We know because you followed our call to action and mailed them to us in April.

The final EIS was released on July 31 by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and the Bonneville Power Administration. It evaluated recommendations on future operations of the federal hydro system, including breaching the four lower Snake River dams, and considered the environmental, economic and social effects of multiple alternatives.

The preferred alternative recommended maintaining the lower Snake River dams with adjusted operations. The report concluded the dams are critical to providing

affordable, reliable and carbon-free energy for the Northwest.

The three agencies plan to release a joint record of decision in late September that will document which alternative will be selected for implementation. Visit www.crso.info to review the final CRSO EIS.

Keep Fighting for Hydropower

Benton REA receives about 85% of its energy from renewables such as hydropower. As your cooperative, we will continue fighting for the lower Snake River dams and other carbon-free electricity to keep your rates low and the environment healthy.

Opponents of the dams are not quitting. There will be more work to do. Your voice was heard this time, but keep reading your Benton REA newsletters and Ruralite magazine for ways to keep hydropower here. ■



Touchstone Energy®
Cooperatives

Who **POWERS** you?

Inspired by someone making a difference in your community?
Tell their story and they could win a cash prize.

Visit whopowersyou.com between 9/8/20 and 10/9/20 and submit a photo of your nominee. Then tell us why that person inspires you and how they make a difference in your co-op community.



\$5,000 GRAND PRIZE

\$2,000 SECOND PLACE

\$1,500 THIRD PLACE

\$500 HONORABLE MENTION

Visit whopowersyou.com for full contest rules

Sponsored by Touchstone Energy Cooperative, Inc., 4301 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22203. © 2020.

Stay In the Know

Accurate phone numbers and email addresses help Benton REA communicate with you about outages and billing

At Benton REA, we strive to improve our operational efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for our members. That's you.

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service you expect and deserve.

Accurate information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive information about important programs, events and activities.

Up-to-date contact information can speed up the power restoration process during an outage. The phone number you provide is linked to your service address in Benton REA's outage management system. This means when you call to report an outage, the system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location.

Accurate information helps the outage management system predict the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for crews to correct the problem.

While Benton REA always does its best to maintain service, outages occasionally are planned to update, repair or replace equipment. In these instances, we can provide you advance



Benton REA can inform members about planned outages and account updates if Benton REA has accurate contact information.

notification if we have your updated contact information.

Keeping the co-op updated also helps when there's a question about energy use or billing. Email and text messages are used to notify members of account changes. In addition, discrepancies on your account can be taken care of promptly if Benton REA has accurate account information.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years. It is likely your account information has not been updated for some time. We recognize many of you now use a cellphone and

that number may not be in our system.

We will never share your contact information with third parties. It is only used by Benton REA to send important co-op information to you.

Please help us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all members of the co-op. Take a moment to confirm or update your contact information by emailing billing@bentonrea.org or calling 509-786-2913. ■



Happy Labor Day - Call Anytime

Although our employees will be home for Labor Day, you can still call 800-221-6987 if you experience a power or internet outage.

Benton REA offices remain closed during the COVID-19 outbreak, but we are still here for you.

During a non-holiday week, our employees work Monday through Friday answering your calls, emails and social media messages.

Our engineering and operations

departments work safely to keep the lights on for you, and PowerNET employees are here to help with your internet and networking needs.

Put our number in your contacts and don't hesitate to call.

We hope you have a wonderful holiday weekend as we honor America's working men and women. ■

Contact Us
800-221-6987