

Playing it Safe at CVEA

by Coreen Palacios



CVEA joined 570 co-ops across the nation in the Commitment to Zero Contacts Initiative that was launched in April 2018 by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange. The purpose of the program is to increase safety awareness and reduce significant injuries and fatalities due to electrical contacts.

This initiative was a great addition to CVEA's already successful safety program spearheaded by CVEA Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Safety Coordinator, Travis Million. The program was launched in 2012 when COO Million recognized that preserving a safe and healthy workplace needs open, two-way communication between employees, managers, and supervisors, on workplace health and safety issues.

To reiterate the importance of the zero contact initiative, CVEA invited Bud Branham, NRECA Director of Safety and Loss Control, to speak with employees in April. Bud explained the challenges of human behavior and recommended solutions to increase skill awareness.

There are safety risks with nearly every task performed at CVEA. During storms or construction activities everything from driving to the work site, oper-

ating heavy equipment, climbing poles, pulling conductor, and felling trees near energized lines all pose serious risks to team members. It is important that time is taken to properly plan work and identify and avoid hazards.

In 2019, to aid in this effort, CVEA implemented the S.A.F.E. (Stop and Focus Everyday) app; an automated, user-friendly job planning tool that helps keep crews safe and saves on time and paperwork.

The Co-op also brought in safety professionals to train the team on the evacuation plan, use of the PASS (Pull, Aim, Squeeze, Sweep) fire extinguisher method, delayed care first aid, avalanche awareness, an annual HAZWOPER refresher for workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials, and a forklift refresher.

Further opportunities for training and education take place during the annual safety event in June, when National Safety Month is celebrated. This also serves as an opportunity to present prizes, acknowledge program successes, and recognize employees who work safely.

Employees who have worked more than five years without an injury on the job are rewarded for their safety achievements; in 2019, eight employees were

recognized. Congratulations to Dave Coon, Mark Kirkpatrick, Walt Lynch, Lindsay Malone, Wayne McKinzey, and Todd Stahley, who were all recognized for 5 years without an OSHA Recordable injury, and to Mike Rego and Anthony Martin, who were recognized for 10 years. A recordable injury or illness under OSHA is one that requires medical treatment beyond first aid, as well as one that causes days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

Another new program was launched at the June safety event when safety coins were distributed to all employees. These coins are part of the Commitment to Zero Contacts Initiative and help drive safe behavior, promote awareness, and reinforce the commitment made by individuals to these life protecting initiatives.

These safety incentives were established by the Safety Review and Recommendations Team (SRRT), otherwise known as the Safety Committee, to promote the importance of the Cooperative safety program.

The SRRT includes management, office personnel, and members of operations and production. The group meets quarterly to review safety incidents, recommend improvements, plan safety



trainings and events, update on new standards, bring forward safety issues, and develop or revise safety rules. Additionally, the SRRT recommends future safety meeting subjects and safety newsletter topics.

Educating on incident reporting, prevention and reduction of injuries, property damage, close calls, and related costs play a significant role in the CVEA safety program. Safety walk-throughs, regular safety audits, job briefings, and safety trainings have also contributed to meeting Cooperative safety goals.

Working safely is not only important to employees but good for the Membership. Staying safe keeps the CVEA team working hard for the members, instead of at home due to injury.

A safe workforce is also typically more effective and efficient than one prone to accidents and injuries. Additionally, a reduction in work related injuries saves CVEA significant money on workers' compensation insurance, avoiding large increases that could lead to increased member rates.

Here are a few highlights of recent safety successes:

- For the second consecutive year, CVEA ended 2018 with zero OSHA Recordable injuries. In 2019, the

workers' compensation experience modification factor was well below industry average for the seventh consecutive year. This will add up to another year of savings on workers' compensation premiums.

- Reporting of Near Miss events and First Aid cases continue to increase; a major focus of the safety committee. Near misses and first aid cases occurred in the past, but were rarely reported. The intent is to report and bring these incidents to safety meetings where prevention can be discussed, lowering the possibility of a same scenario injury in the future.
- In 2019, CVEA received the Northwest Public Power Association Safety Award for the second consecutive year. This award is based on a review of each utility's safety contest form, the number of recordable injury/illness cases (the incident rate), and the lost work days (the severity rate).

Due to CVEA employees' commitment to safe practices, the Co-op maintains below industry averages in workplace injuries and illnesses. The Cooperative is proud of this effort and will continue to encourage and support safe work habits, strengthen the safety culture, and ensure



OPPOSITE: Safety incentives and prizes at the 2019 safety event
TOP LEFT: Copper Basin plant operator, Alex Gearhart, during fire extinguisher training
TOP RIGHT: Travis Million recognizing Dave Coon for working safely for five years
ABOVE: Glennallen Chief Plant Operator, Mike Rego, and Copper Basin Lineman Walt Lynch, holding up their safety coins

PHOTOS COURTESY COREEN PALACIOS

employees go home safely to their families, which is the ultimate goal of CVEA's Safety Program.

If you have questions related to the safety program, contact Coreen Palacios at 907-822-3211 or send an email to palacios@cvea.org. ■

Employee Spotlight-Mark Kirkpatrick



Mark started his career with CVEA as a Lineman in the Valdez District five years ago. He is now the Copper Basin Line Foreman, a position he's held for nine months.

John Schenck, CVEA Operations Manager had this to say, "Mark was recently promoted to the position of Line Foreman in the Copper Basin District and has proven himself to be an asset to CVEA. His professionalism and strong work ethic have had positive influences on our entire team. He has a calm demeanor that is invaluable in his position, and I have had many people compliment him on this. He never shies away from hard work or increased responsibility, and always leads by example. I look forward to working with Mark for years to come."

In order to highlight Mark, we recently asked him a few questions:

Q. What do you do as the Line Crew Foreman?

A. I supervise the line crew in maintenance, repair, and installation of power lines.

Q. What things do you enjoy doing in the community?

A. I enjoy being involved in sports and going to tournaments.

Q. What are some of the big projects or changes you've been involved in since you began working at CVEA?

A. In the last five years, we've completed the AMI deployment, built the new Stuart Creek Substation to include the installation of 27 miles of underground line through Thompson Pass, and expanded our right-of-way clearing program.

Q. What do you like about living in the Copper Basin?

A. The Copper Basin is a great community of people that make it an excellent place to raise a family.

Q. What are some things you do that might surprise members?

A. Being a crew of only four guys, we have to do everything; line work, substation work, and right-of-way clearing.

Q. What do you like about your job at CVEA?

A. I like working with a good group of people and being outdoors.

Q. What do you do in your spare time?

A. I enjoy hunting and spending time with family and friends.

Q. What about your job are you most proud of?

A. I am most proud of the teamwork; being a small company, we all have to work together. ■



Community Foundation Contribution Recipients



ABOVE: CVEA CFO and Foundation Contributions Committee member Jaime Matthews presenting a check to Gina Hoke of CRB Child Advocacy Center
ABOVE MIDDLE: Sharon Scheidt giving Andy Shidner of the Valdez Adventure Alliance a contribution to support programming at the upcoming Fat Bike Bash
ABOVE RIGHT: Lindsay Malone, CVEA Office Manager and Foundation Contributions Committee member, with Tamara Hamby of the Copper Valley Community Library

Each year the CVEA Community Foundation (Foundation) contributes funding to local nonprofit organizations looking to fund new or expanding programs that meet the Foundation's contribution guidelines.

In 2019 a record \$16,182 was awarded to 11 organizations. Contributions were awarded to the following non profit groups in December:

- Copper River Watershed Project for aquatic ecology field trips for students in the Copper Basin
- Wrangell Institute For Science and Environment for continuation of the In-Class Science Programs
- Copper Valley Community Library to fund the purchase of K-12 books for the Battle of the Books competition
- CRB Child Advocacy Center for community CPR and Basic First Aid class and books on body safety and prevention for K-3
- Valdez City Schools 4th Grade Class to fund a Fish & Game biologist to demonstrate egg take and salmon release
- Valdez Museum & Historical Archive for the production, implementation, and programming of temporary fine art

exhibitions

- Valdez Adventure Alliance for family friendly activities, safety materials, and classes for the annual Fat Bike Bash
- Glennallen School for storyteller Tim Lowry to present 'A Christmas Carol' and storytelling workshops for the school and the community
- Prince William Sound College Archery Club for the Vegas in Valdez Archery Tournament
- Valdez Senior Center to support the senior activity program and Phase 2 of the Memorial Garden
- Valdez Torpedos Swim Club to fund the annual Banana Meet

The Foundation's Board approved \$17,575 to fund the 2020 contribution season; the largest amount of available funds to date. Local organizations who meet Foundation guidelines are encouraged to apply.

Applications will be available in July 2020, due in August, and awards will be distributed in November/December. ■

CVEA Adopts Incident Command System for Large Scale Events



CVEA is preparing to launch the Incident Command System (ICS) at the Cooperative in 2020. ICS is a nationally recognized standardized management tool for emergency preparedness and response, and will be activated and utilized during extraordinary, large scale events that affect the electrical grid within the CVEA service territory.

The Cooperative made the decision to utilize the ICS after an extreme winter storm in the Copper Basin caused the longest outage in CVEA history, in December 2017. CVEA managed to ensure the employees and public were safe from electrical hazards, brought in multiple support crews, and restored service in a manner considered timely for the circumstances, but realized there was definitely room for improvement. During the post-event debrief, the biggest lesson was that CVEA needed a written plan for all aspects of large scale event response, and ICS fits that need.

Utilizing this system will be highly beneficial as it is a proven system used by many other companies, emergency response

personnel, and government agencies. The ICS will allow CVEA to use this system independently during smaller scale events, or seamlessly work together with other organizations during larger scale community or statewide events. According to Travis Million, CVEA COO, “for the members, it means CVEA will be better prepared for large scale events. Having a formal plan, training, and preparation will make us better able to restore electrical services more safely and efficiently, resulting in quicker restoration times overall.”

Implementation combines establishing an incident command center using predetermined and prepared locations in both district offices, with a shift in personnel roles and responsibilities, all in an effort to efficiently manage the event while maintaining staffing and necessary crew support 24 hours per day throughout the duration.

Once the ICS has been activated, contract crews and support staff are mobilized, unsafe conditions will be made safe, and magnitude and damages will be assessed. This information



will be used to develop the most efficient plan, then the repairs and restoration efforts will begin.

As mentioned, once ICS is activated, roles and responsibilities of key CVEA personnel shift from typical, daily duties to support functions. Support can be many things, but often include contacting support crews and contractors for assistance, answering phones, working with local businesses on lodging and food for crews, safety assessments, running tools and equipment, and communications.

If a large scale event takes place, regardless of the district it is in, the offices in both districts will close for normal business to allow all necessary personnel to focus on the emergency event. Once restoration efforts are complete the contract crews and supporting CVEA staff will be demobilized. At this time CVEA offices will open and resume normal business activities. Finally, CVEA will hold a companywide debrief to determine what went well and what can be improved.

Smaller scale events that can be mitigated utilizing in-house resources, that are shorter than 24 hours in duration, will be handled as they have in the past. If an emergency incident or event is likely to cause significant outages or damage; affecting more than 10 percent of the Membership for longer than 24 hours, affecting more than one feeder (circuit from substation) for longer than 24 hours, or distribution system damage beyond CVEA's normal capabilities and requiring support from outside of CVEA, ICS may be deployed.

Possible events include severe weather, flooding, avalanche, fire, or any other event where the incident commander determines that additional assistance or coordination is needed. Larger events, requiring additional outside resources to mitigate hazards and restore electrical services, require a more methodi-

cal approach to addressing the issues. The biggest difference noticeable by the Membership would be during the initial stages of the event, there would be CVEA personnel patrolling and assessing damage, rather than immediately beginning repairs and restoration. This could seem frustrating, but this step is actually critical to ensure the depth and breadth of the damage is understood. Only then can decisions regarding safety and restoration be made strategically. Restoration efforts will typically begin in areas with the largest number of members, and continue methodically until the entire system is repaired. It's important to recognize that if crews are in your neighborhood and leave prior to making repairs, you are not forgotten, it is because they are in the process of collecting information before restoration efforts will begin.

In a community-wide or regional emergency scenario, CVEA can now integrate into the larger ICS structure lead by other agencies; emergency services, Department of Homeland Security, American Red Cross, etc. CVEA would continue to function within the CVEA ICS, but also be a part of the larger response effort. Each entity would have their own part to play. CVEA recognizes the need to be more involved with the local emergency planning groups and is making participation in community emergency planning a greater priority in 2020.

All CVEA team members will participate in ICS-100 (Introduction to the Incident Command System) and electric utility specific ICS training classes in 2020. Going forward, annual ICS training will be conducted.

If you have questions regarding CVEA's implementation of the Incident Command System, contact Travis Million at 907-822-3211 or email million@cvea.org. ■



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Important Dates

January

CVEA Offices Closed:

The CVEA offices will be closed Wednesday, January 1, 2020, for the New Year's Holiday

CVEA Bylaws Amendment Petition

Deadline: Recommended Bylaws amendments must be submitted by petition no later than 6 p.m. Thursday, January 9, 2020

CVEA Board Meeting: The January meeting of the Board of Directors is 1 p.m. Thursday, January 16, 2020, in Valdez

February

CVEA Board Meeting: The February meeting of the Board of Directors is 1 p.m. Thursday, February 20, 2020, in Glennallen

CVEA Offices Closed:

The CVEA offices will be closed Monday, February 17, 2020, for President's Day

Scholarship Application Deadline:

Thursday, February 20, 2020, prior to 6 p.m.

Director Nomination Deadline: Thursday, February 13, 2020, prior to 6 p.m.

AK-34



Want Your Vote to Count? Update Your Signature Card!

When you vote on CVEA business, such as the Board of Director election coming up in April, you are required to sign the ballot envelope. If the signature does not match the signature on the membership card on file with CVEA, the vote cannot be counted.

For residential customers, if you have changed marital status, or names, please contact CVEA to ensure those changes are reflected on your signature card. If you receive a card in the mail, please complete and bring to your local CVEA office or mail it in.

Organizations, businesses, and associations usually have board members who are authorized to transact business. The person who signs the election envelope must be an authorized signer on the account. If your Board of Directors or executive officer has changed in the past year, then it is time to update your CVEA membership card.

Many times, we see envelopes signed by people in the household who are not listed on the signature card, or by current organization leaders whose names have never been added. It is very important that residential and business members ensure that the people they want to be able to transact business with CVEA or vote on CVEA issues, have signed the signature card kept on file.

If you have questions or are unsure what is on your residential or business signature card, please stop by the office in either district or call 822-3211 in Glennallen or 835-4301 in Valdez.