



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Departments

Member Service Option 3
Engineering Option 4
Marketing Option 5
Operations Option 6

After-Hours Outage and Emergencies:
541-536-2165 or 800-752-5935

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday
7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Closed Fridays and holidays

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Vic Russell, Fall River

Vice President

Dick Luebke, Sunriver

Secretary/Treasurer

Tanna King, Chemult

Daniel Jansen, Christmas Valley

Alan Parks, Fort Rock

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Ron Cass, La Pine

Gordon DeArmond, Crescent

Ron Sommerfeldt, Gilchrist

Board meets the fourth Monday
of each month at the co-op office.

STAFF

**Interim General Manager/
Operations & Engineering Manager**

Ned Ratterman

Marketing Manager

Vacant

CFO/Accounting Manager

Jami Steinhauer

Information Services Manager

J.D. Powers

Human Resources Manager

Sina Streeter

Attorney

Raymond Kindley

OR-23

Public Safety Power Shutoffs

As Oregon experiences more intense wildfire seasons, the topic of Public Safety Power Shutoffs has been in the news.

The Oregon Public Utility Commission requires investor-owned utilities to adopt PSPS as part of a mandated fire mitigation plan. PSPS is fairly new to the Pacific Northwest but has been used as a fire mitigation tool in California for a few years. PG&E has used PSPS to shut the power off to hundreds of thousands of utility customers to eliminate fires ignited by power lines during red-flag conditions.

The National Weather Service issues red-flag warnings when strong, gusty winds combine with high temperatures and low humidity. The PUC does not mandate PSPS for co-ops but recommends it is considered in fire mitigation plans due in 2022.

Last September, a statewide red-flag warning was issued, prompting Gov. Kate Brown to ask utilities to enact a PSPS. Rather than opting for a PSPS—which would have shut power off to the entire service territory—MEC, along with many other utilities, opted to place its system on a hot line tag. A hot line tag is the process of placing a recloser—an automatic high-voltage switch that operates like a breaker—on non-reclose mode so the breaker will trip off and the line will be deenergized when an object contacts a power line.

A hot line tag can cause more short outages. Line crews have to patrol the lines once the breaker trips, and power is brought back up in sections. This procedure is inconvenient at times, but it is the safest option we have for the protection of our employees and communities.

The problem with implementing a PSPS systemwide is that all lines would have to be patrolled before power could be restored. This could take weeks. By setting the system on a hot line tag, only those lines

Member Survey

We value your opinions and suggestions because we know we are only as good as you perceive us to be. A member survey will be conducted in July to see how well we are doing. A small number of members will be selected randomly to participate.

If you receive a phone call or email from our surveyor, we appreciate you taking the time to share your opinions with us.

that lose power have to be patrolled.

The other benefit to setting the system on a hot line tag versus PSPS is fire districts, businesses and homes still have access to water to defend properties. The Oregon PUC has acknowledged using a hot line tag is an appropriate tool in lieu of a PSPS.

During red-flag situations, MEC's management staff evaluates conditions and takes actions deemed appropriate. MEC's electrical system is well-maintained, and rights-of-ways are in the best shape in years. Therefore, in most cases, a hot line tag will be the first line of defense.

Only under imminent danger to life or property will MEC implement a PSPS. Examples of this would be where firefighting crews need the power shut off for their safety or if energized lines are on the ground.

The Bonneville Power Administration notified its customers it will enact a PSPS when it believes it is appropriate. If possible, advance warning will be given to MEC and, therefore, you—the members—if this occurs. Unfortunately, if BPA implements a PSPS, MEC has no other options. We will be without power. We are hopeful this will be an extremely rare occurrence.

Ned Ratterman

**Interim General Manager/
Operations & Engineering Manager**