



For Immediate Release
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Beartooth Electric acts to reduce chance of fires

In the midst of a potentially nasty fire season, Beartooth Electric has reduced the chance its power lines will start a fire by setting its breakers to cut power faster in forested areas. As a result, members who live in areas such as the main and west forks of Rock Creek may experience more frequent and longer power interruptions until the fire season is over.

During much of the year, BEC sets its breakers to cut power only after they reset three times in an attempt to restore it. A tree limb that momentarily brushes against a high voltage line in a heavy wind, for instance, will typically cause a short break in power as a breaker trips and then resets.

Although BEC constantly trims trees to keep them away from its lines, allowing breakers to reset in areas with a lot of trees increases the chance of fire. If the cause of the original break remains, every reset causes sparks and heat that may ignite nearby trees already dry and weak from a lack of rain.

By setting breakers to cut power after tripping once and not resetting them until line personnel can determine the cause, BEC reduces the chance of fire but increases power interruptions to members who live in forested areas. Dick Peck, BEC's interim manager, says, "We work very hard to provide reliable service to our members and regret inconveniencing them. However, we think members will understand that we do it to protect their homes and property. Co-ops throughout southeastern Montana are taking similar actions. As soon as the fire season ends, we'll reset breakers to reduce the number of power outages."

For additional information on details in this release, contact Dick Peck, interim manager, Beartooth Electric, 446.2310.

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