



Prepare Now  
for Power  
Outages



Enhanced  
Communications  
Save Lives



Small Utilities  
Doing Big  
Things

AUGUST 2021

# ENERGYWISE



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives  
The power of human connections®

YOUR SAN MIGUEL POWER MEMBER NEWSLETTER



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Both Offices Open:**  
M - TH, 7:00a.m. - 5:30p.m.

[www.smpa.com](http://www.smpa.com)  
[www.facebook.com/SanMiguelPower](https://www.facebook.com/SanMiguelPower)

In the event of a power outage,  
contact your local SMPA office to  
reach our 24-hour dispatch.

## QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

[energywise@smpa.com](mailto:energywise@smpa.com)  
(970) 626-5549 x212

## SAFETY TIPS

### BACK TO SCHOOL SAFETY:

- Obey school zone speed limits
- Follow your school's drop-off procedure.
- Make eye contact with children who are crossing the street.

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Person with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotype, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800)877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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(866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: [program.intakeusda.gov](mailto:program.intakeusda.gov).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

## Being Heard: New Communications System to Provide Strengthened Lifeline in the San Juans

**AIRPLANE AND HELICOPTER CRASHES, MISSING PERSONS, LOST HIKERS AND MASS EVACUATIONS. THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE EMERGENCIES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE BEAUTIFUL AND PERILOUS SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS. JIM DONOVAN, SAN JUAN COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGER, WOULD KNOW.**

Donovan coordinates the nonprofit San Juan County Search and Rescue (SJCSAR), an all-volunteer team that responds to hazards and emergency incidents in San Juan County.

"Rescue operations are inherently difficult and dangerous," says Donovan. "...but one of the biggest challenges for these mountain communities is emergency communications." Public safety agencies use a system that is secure and applied statewide, known as the "800 MHz (megahertz) system." For emergency responders, it works much like a cellular phone system. "While this system is robust for areas along roadways," says Donovan. "It does not work as well for backcountry and mountainous areas."

So, the SJCSAR proposed building out a VHF radio repeater system that could be used by public safety (law enforcement, search and rescue, EMS and wildland fire departments). This system would be used to enhance the current communication systems. It could also function as a backup to the 800 MHz system in the event of a disaster.

On behalf of SJCSAR, Donovan applied for a Community Focus donation from SMPA. The requested amount--\$6,000, far exceeded the typical donation amount from this fund, but the SMPA Board of Directors, recognizing what a benefit this could be for citizens, guests, and communities in the San Juans, granted the sum of \$3,000, asking Cooperative partner, Basin Electric to make a matching donation to meet the requested total. Basin agreed.



*We are very grateful to SMPA and Basin Electric for making this donation. We respond 24/7, 365 days a year in all weather conditions, and this new system will be an invaluable asset! – JIM DONOVAN, SAN JUAN EMERGENCY MANAGER*

*A VHF Repeater stands ready to relay life-saving communications. Photo by: Chris Depuy*



**Our offices will be closed on Monday, September 6th in observance of Labor Day.**

**Basic services are always available at [smpa.smarthub.coop](http://smpa.smarthub.coop)**

# Through Cooperation, Small Utilities are Doing Big Things

In the rapidly-changing industry of electric power, accurate data is essential for small electric cooperatives like SMPA to make informed decisions. As a current member of Tri-State Generation and Transmission, (Tri-State) which provides our wholesale power, SMPA has identified a need to determine what portion of our power supply should come from Tri-State in an optimal long-term power supply strategy.

In this, SMPA is not alone. Six other cooperatives, from Nebraska, Colorado and New Mexico have joined together to intervene in several dockets held by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). “We directed staff to be actively engaged in all facets of the FERC proceedings with regard to Tri-State,” said SMPA Board President, Rube Felicelli. “We [the SMPA Board of Directors] believe

they’ve done an excellent job and this has resulted in very positive outcomes.”

The FERC dockets cover a handful of issues like Tri-State’s stated wholesale electric rate and Tri-State’s Contract Termination Payment (CTP) methodology.

Regarding Tri-State’s rates, a settlement case at FERC, which SMPA actively participated in, has resulted in FERC’s preliminary acceptance of an accumulated wholesale rate decrease of 4% (2% retroactive to March 1, 2021, followed by another 2% wholesale rate reduction in 2022.)

Regarding Tri-State’s CTP methodology, FERC has directed Tri-State to “show cause as to why its [CTP] tariff remains just and reasonable or explain what changes... would remedy concerns [that it is unjust or unreasonable.]”

Currently the Tri-State method for calculation can only be done by Tri-State and Tri-State has not yet provided requesting cooperatives like SMPA with a CTP number. “Critical data like this is essential for us to determine whether we should pursue a partial-requirements contract or even a contract termination with Tri-State,” stated Felicelli.



*Our active engagement has resulted in conversations, refinements and FERC findings that are in alignment with our strategic objective and, ultimately, that are in the best interest of our members who want to continue to have reliable and affordable electricity. —BRAD ZAPORSKI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SMPA*

## Fire Prevention Means Extended Outages, Lower Risk

With Stage I fire restrictions in effect in San Juan, San Miguel, Ouray and Montrose Counties, as well as on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands, San Miguel Power Association (SMPA) is moving to its fire prevention procedures and settings. What does that mean for consumers?

“Under conditions like these, we take extra precautions to reduce the risk of fire when restoring power,” says SMPA Manager of Engineering, Jeremy Fox. “We continue to rely on our automated and remotely-controlled equipment; however, we additionally require our line crews to be on site when power is restored.” This practice reduces the risk of fire, but it can also extend the duration of a given power outage.

SMPA asks for patience from its members as power outages are addressed, but also asks for vigilance. When a power outage occurs, its cause is not always obvious. In some cases, a phone call from an observant community member can save hours of searching on the part of line crews. If you see something out of the ordinary concerning power lines or equipment:

- 1 Stay clear of the area.**
- 2 Call SMPA at 1-877-864-7311 to report the situation.**

Additionally, power users should take steps to prepare for extended power outages. Pack bags of supplies and flashlights with fresh batteries. If members have their own generators, they should be sure they are in proper working order and that fuel is available. [Get additional tips for outage preparedness at www.ready.gov/power-outages.](http://www.ready.gov/power-outages)



### RIGHT TREE, RIGHT PLACE!

Before planting new trees to improve the look of your yard, you will need to keep a few things in mind.

**Clearance Zone**  
Trees and shrubs should be planted at least 10 ft away from ground-mounted transformers.

**Large Tree Zone**  
Plant large trees (over 35 ft when mature) at least 50 ft away from overhead power lines.

**Medium Tree Zone**  
Plant medium trees (over 25 ft when mature) at least 25 ft away from overhead power lines.

**Low Tree Zone**  
It is best not to plant in this area. If you do, plant only low-growing trees and shrubs with a height of less than 15 ft when mature.

Infographic courtesy of Carthage Water and Electric Plant, Carthage, Missouri

## SMPA POWER PLAY

**This Month’s Puzzle:  
CEE CLONE AZ NEAR**

**Hint: The area within ten feet of ground mounted power equipment.**

**SUBMIT YOUR ANSWER** and be entered into a drawing for a fun prize to: **EnergyWise PO Box 1150 Ridgway, CO 81432**

Last Month’s Scramble Answer: TRIP SAVERS

Have you changed your phone # or email?  
Let us know at 1-877-864-7311.