



Wildfire Season is Here!



LED's & Night Sky Protection



What is SMPA Franchise-Fee?

AUGUST 2020

# ENERGYWISE



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives  
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YOUR SAN MIGUEL POWER MEMBER NEWSLETTER



## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Nucla**  
170 W. 10th Ave.  
P.O. Box 817  
Nucla, CO 81424  
(970) 864-7311  
Toll Free: (877) 864-7311

**Ridgway**  
720 N. Railroad St.  
P.O. Box 1150  
Ridgway, CO 81432  
(970) 626-5549  
Toll Free: (877) 864-7311

**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 TIPS:**  
As children start heading back to school, it's important to remember some key tips:

- Whether children walk, ride their bicycle or take the bus to school, help them remember the rules of loading and unloading near traffic.
- Teen driver? The more experience, the better. Practice before and after they get their license.
- Coronavirus awareness: Whether in a classroom or not, help kids remember their social distancing best practices.

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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.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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

## Taking it Seriously: Fire Mitigation and Prevention

Perhaps you've heard it on the radio or read about it in social media. You may have seen or smelled it in the air. ...Or maybe you've just been around long enough to expect it this time of year. However you know, you're probably left with little doubt... Fire season is here.

Wildfires are an inevitable part of living in Western Colorado and dealing with them safely and effectively is in everyone's best interest. As your electric service provider, we carry a special responsibility for fire mitigation and prevention. Here's how we handle it:

### 1 WE INSPECT AND MAINTAIN OUR RIGHTS-OF-WAY.

In compliance with Rural Utility Service guidelines, we inspect every Right-of-Way on our distribution grid on a three-year cycle. We conduct extra inspection in high risk areas during fire restrictions. We work with a contractor to study our system and prioritize vegetation management based upon risk and need.

### 2 WE COMPLY WITH LOCAL RESTRICTIONS AND RELY ON THE EXPERTS

SMPA takes its cues from the U.S. Forest Service. When stage I, stage II or III fire restrictions are declared, we follow the appropriate checklists.

### 3 WHERE NECESSARY, WE PUT THE SYSTEM ON A "NON-RECLOSE" SETTING

What is the "Non-Reclose" setting? When interruptions in power occur, they often clear themselves. Under normal conditions, our equipment automatically makes several attempts to re-energize a line in order to restore power quickly.

Under the "Non-Reclose" setting, we set certain equipment to lock out after a single fault and we send a crew out to investigate. It may take longer for outages to be restored, but we think it's worth it.

### 4 WE TRAIN AND EQUIP OUR CREWS TO RESPOND TO WILDFIRES

When it comes to fire assessment, reporting and response, nothing beats a trained professional. Our line crews are often the first to report and/or respond to a fire. During the summer months, they carry special fire mitigation equipment and are trained to use them. With line trucks carrying extra fire extinguishers, end-to-end water pumps with extra water, shovels and axes, our line crews are ready to help combat an errant blaze and prevent it from getting larger.

**Without a doubt, safety is the #1 concern of all SMPA crews and staff. When there's a heightened danger of fires in our territory, we take it seriously.**

*PLEASE BE AWARE: SMPA lines are currently on the "non-reclose" setting. During this time, unplanned power outages may last longer than usual. We appreciate your patience as we take extra steps to ensure safety near our power lines.*



SMPA Line Foreman, Brad Boulden displays the fire mitigation gear that is kept on SMPA line trucks. These items include extra fire extinguishers, water pumps, spark arresters and specialized axes, called "Pulaskis."



# Ridgway: Leading the way to Night Sky Protection

Congratulations to the Town of Ridgway for becoming Colorado's third International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) designated Dark Sky Community! The designation follows approximately two years of efforts by a local group known as the Ridgway Ouray Community Council, led by resident Val Szwarc. The application process required applicants to demonstrate robust community support for dark sky protection. SMPA was happy to aid with LED lighting programs, technical information and assistance during public testimony.

**“** We are excited and honored that IDA has elected to welcome Ridgway into the IDA Dark Sky Places Program. It's an incredible accomplishment. The town's policies and community actions will help to protect and preserve the region's incredible night skies for years to come.”

—RIDGWAY MAYOR, JOHN CLARK

For more information about IDA and to learn more about their plan to protect the night from light pollution, visit [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org). For questions or more information about Ridgway's designation as a Dark Sky Community, please call 970-318-0081 or email [pneill@town.ridgway.co.us](mailto:pneill@town.ridgway.co.us).



## Close up on the Bill: What is a Franchise Fee?

When you hear the word “franchise,” you may picture a fast food restaurant or a convenience store. You don't typically think of it having anything to do with your electric power, but there are cases in which you might see a “Franchise Fee” in the Detail of Charges section of your monthly power bill.

### Here's Why:

A “franchise” is a type of license that a party (franchisee) acquires to allow them to have access to the assets of another organization (franchisor). In our case, SMPA is the franchisee, purchasing a license to use the streets and alleyways of a given town (franchisor) in order to distribute electricity. Since the consumers receive the benefit of this service, the franchise fee is passed directly to them on the monthly power bill. 100% of these fees are paid to the town. In essence, the power company is acting as a collection mechanism with no control over how the funds are eventually used.

*If you have other questions about your bill, you can view a sample with explanations at [www.smpa.com](http://www.smpa.com)>>Account Services>>Understanding Your Bill.*

Detail of Charges		
Address		322 SQUARE CIR
Access Charge		21.00
Energy Charge	550 kWh x 0.134725	74.10
Anywhere County Tax @ 2.66%		2.52
Someplace City Tax @ 3.2%		3.04
Franchise Fee-Someplace @ 2.5%		2.38
<b>Total Current Charges</b>		<b>103.04</b>
<b>Balance Forward</b>		<b>0.00</b>
<b>Total Amount Due</b>		<b>103.04</b>

## Have You Ever Gotten a Call from James?



If you live or work in an area that has experienced a planned power outage, you may have received a call or email from our automated message reader. We call him “James.” He may not be much of a conversationalist, but his message gives important details about where, when, and for how long you can expect your power to be out. James doesn't always give a full explanation for why SMPA is planning the outage. For that, remember the key concept of “System Hardening.”

The industry defines System Hardening as “a combined system of actions that create a strong infrastructure to better protect utility customers from weather-related outages.” In our region, concerning weather & environmental events include: rock slides, tree falls, avalanches, extreme wind and fire. There are many actions that we, as your electric provider can take to help “harden” your power distribution grid.

Although we may not be able to control the weather, one specific thing SMPA can do is minimize the number of members that are affected by these events. We can do this by installing specialized equipment at key points on our system. These devices can sense abnormal system conditions and isolate the damaged or “faulted” parts of the system from the parts that are still functioning properly.

SMPA crews just completed two of these projects in the Telluride/Mountain Village area. One on the Illium Road near Two Rivers Subdivision and one on Mountain Village Blvd. near San Joaquin Drive. Both devices will provide increased reliability and redundancy by reducing the number of member impacted by downstream faults.

## Do you wish you could pay your power bill on your own schedule?

A new program from SMPA may be right for you. Learn more about SmartPay.

<https://www.smpa.com/content/smartpay>

- No deposits, late fees, or reconnect fees.
- Pay whenever it makes sense for you.
- Convenient texts or emails help you keep track of your balance.



# SMPA POWER PLAY

**This Month's Puzzle: D TRAINER N LOVE FOLKS**  
**Hint: In 1935, he created the Rural Electrification Administration which made Electric Cooperatives possible.**

**SUBMIT YOUR ANSWER** and be entered into a drawing for a fun prize to:

**EnergyWise**  
**PO Box 1150**  
**Ridgway, CO 81432**