

Big Skylights

An internal newsletter of the STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES



A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

December 16, 2005

Transmission developers eye '07 start-up

Providing it can obtain the necessary permits, the developers of a proposed 230 kilovolt transmission line from Lethbridge, Alberta to Great Falls, Montana, say they plan to have the line up and running by January, 2007. Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. (MATL), made that prediction at a public scoping meeting conducted Dec. 6 in Great Falls by the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEA). Spokespersons for the company said it takes about six months to build a 200-mile transmission line. Last week's meeting came just four days after the company had filed its application with DEQ for a permit under the state's Major Facility Siting Act. The company must also be certified as compliant with the Montana Environmental Policy Act and a decision on whether to require a full-blown Environmental Impact Statement under that law is expected to be made by early January. In addition, because the proposed line, which has four alternative routes, will cross the U.S.-Canadian border, the federal Department of Energy as well as Canadian government agencies must give their approval. A DOE spokesperson said her agency's decision will be based on whether the proposed line harms either reliability of the American power grid or the environment.

MATL officials said the line's firm-power capacity is 50 percent subscribed, adding that all the subscriptions were sold to developers of proposed wind farms near Cut Bank and on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in north-central Montana. They told meeting attendees that a wind farm must be capable of generating a minimum of 80 megawatts to tie into the line.

FERC adopts grid standards on wind farms

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on Tuesday issued an Order on the Interconnection for Wind Energy (or "Grid Code") case for large generators with a capacity of 20 megawatts (MW) and above.

The order establishes interconnection standards proposed by the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) and negotiated by AWEA with the North American Electric Reliability Council. The Order defines low voltage so that wind turbines can be built to specifications that allow them to remain on line during a momentary fault nearby, known as "low-voltage ride-through capability." However, the wind power generator is only required to meet the standard if it can be demonstrated that it is needed to ensure safety and reliability. The order also: 1) requires a case-by-case determination of power factor (reactive power) requirements. The costs of adding more of this capability would be imposed on wind developers only when system impact studies show them to be necessary, and; 2) Establishes a transition period so that wind turbines need not be re-engineered to comply with new requirements. In issuing the order, FERC denied requests that the rule be an interim order, and said it will remain in effect until a new one

is put in place. Transmission providers must file to comply with the order by December 31, 2005. The FERC order was not unanimous; Chairman **Joseph Kelliher** expressed concern in a partial dissenting opinion about the evidence provided to ensure the rule was not preferential.

The full order is available on the Web at:

<http://www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/Files/20051212171744-RM05-4-001.pdf>

Job market

Journeyman lineman

Vigilante Electric Cooperative, based in Dillon, has an opening for a journeyman lineman. Minimum qualifications include a high school diploma and completion of an approved apprentice program. Applicants must have a journeyman lineman certificate and have or be able to obtain a Montana Class A driver's license. Trade-related schooling and knowledge of RUS construction standards is a plus. To apply for this position, mail a resume' and cover letter to **Dave Alberi**, General Manager, Vigilante Electric Cooperative, PO Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725 or call 1-800-221-8271 and speak with Mr. Alberi or **Dan Snellman**, Line Superintendent.

2006 CALENDAR

January

24-25	Regulator School	Lewistown, MT
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February

19-22	64 th NRECA Annual Meeting	Orlando, FL
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March

13	Candidate School	Missoula, MT
13-15	RESMA	Arlington, VA
15	Candidate School	Great Falls, MT
17	Candidate School	Billings, MT
20	Candidate School	Bozeman, MT
20-23	Operations Conference	Great Falls, MT