



Colony Christmas in Palmer  
Photo: Cecil Sanders

## Holiday Edition

### Meter Upgrade Project Wrap-Up

After five years of installations, MEA is in the final stages of our meter upgrade project. By the end of the year we anticipate all 65,000 meters on our system will be Aclara Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters.

#### Why did we upgrade?

The previous meters had reached the end of their lifespan. Most electric meters have a service life of roughly 15 years. MEA's previous meters were installed in the mid-1990s. Our system pre-Aclara was a mix of two different meter types. The recent upgrade project ensures all meters will utilize the same system and brings efficiencies by automating communication between MEA and our members.

#### What is an AMI meter?

The AMI meters developed by Aclara have a two-way automated communication system (TWACS). This allows the electric meter to communicate with MEA and vice versa. Communication between the meter and MEA is accomplished through our existing power lines, similar to our previous meters.

#### What kind of information does the meter gather?

Meters are sending load data back to MEA allowing us to better manage electricity generation, track outages and identify power theft and meter tampering. For our members, the upgraded meters mean more accurate, real-time data on electricity being used in homes or businesses every day and can be found on Smarthub™, MEA's online member resource.

#### Do members still need to report outages?

Yes. MEA relies on members to report outages via the SmartHub™ app or by calling us (746-POWR for the Mat-Su or 696-POWR in Eagle River). Once reported, MEA then sends a signal out to nearby meters to determine the extent of the outage.

#### What happens next?

The MEA team will continue to improve reliability and decrease costs to our members using this new meter system. We will also investigate programs like pre-paid metering and other member service options. For more information on our meter upgrade project and other major projects in our service area, visit [www.mea.coop](http://www.mea.coop).

### Looking Ahead: Upcoming Projects for 2019

#### Infrastructure upgrades

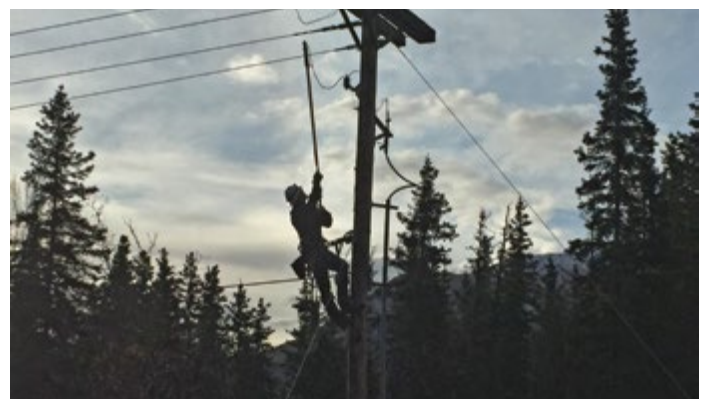
In 2019, MEA will focus on two large-scale infrastructure upgrades: improvements to Theodore and Herning substations. Substations bring high voltage transmission power down to a level that can be distributed to our members and must be upgraded as demand increases. Both substations serve members in the Wasilla area, where the Borough is seeing the highest population growth. Theodore (near KGB and Vine) upgrades will be constructed in 2019 while Herning (near downtown Wasilla) upgrades will focus on design in 2019.

Crews will also work on smaller improvements around our service area including replacement of failing underground and underwater cable, increasing the size of distribution lines to accommodate growth and improving our ability to isolate and reroute power during an outage.

#### Clearing

Our six-year clearing cycle will be in its final year with portions of Wasilla, Chugiak, Eklutna and Trapper Creek all slated for right-of-way clearing.

In addition to working through our standard clearing cycle, trees damaged by the spruce bark beetle continue to present potential safety and reliability issues for our crews and members. Our Operations team is currently exploring proactive ways to manage this growing risk to our system.



Crews energize a new subdivision before the first snowfall. Infrastructure improvements in 2019 aim to accommodate our service area's growing population.



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### MEA 2019 Annual Meeting and Election

**When:** Tuesday, April 23, 2019

**Where:** Curtis D. Menard Memorial Sports Center in Wasilla

**Election Details:** This year, MEA members will elect three at-large representatives. Interested in running for a board seat? Candidate applications will be available on the MEA website beginning December 17. All applications are due February 11.

**Other things to note:** New this year, members will be able to vote electronically through the SmartHub™ app. Visit [www.mea.coop](http://www.mea.coop) and click 'Account Login' to sign up for SmartHub™.

#### Upcoming Dates

**December 7-14:** Vote for MEA's Christmas Lights Contest on our Facebook page

**December 17:** At-large Board candidate applications available online

**December 24-25:** MEA offices closed for Christmas

**December 31-January 1:** MEA offices closed for New Years

**February 11:** Board candidate applications due by 5pm

**February 15:** Board candidate profiles available online

**February 22:** Last day to withdraw from Board candidate election

**March 1:** Deadline for comments and pro/con statements of submitted bylaw changes

**March:** Election materials will be delivered to all members by mail or electronically

**April 22:** Online & mail-in ballots must be received by MEA by 5pm

**April 23:** MEA Annual Membership Meeting and Election at the Curtis D. Menard Memorial Sports Center (Wasilla)

### Power Pledge Challenge Winners Announced

Alaska's annual Power Pledge Challenge, an initiative to encourage middle school students to become more energy efficient, recently came to a close. David Knopp's 6th period science class from Teeland Middle School was MEA's regional winner. The class will receive a tour of the Eklutna Generation Station and a pizza party.

Over 3,000 students from 128 classrooms participated in this year's statewide challenge, marking it the largest geographic reach of the initiative to date. A seventh grade science class from Hanshew Middle School (Anchorage) was this year's statewide winner. Susan Tifental's third period class will receive a power plant tour, a pizza party and over \$1,700 worth of energy education materials.

MEA delivers the Power Pledge Challenge in collaboration with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), Alaska Energy Authority (AEA), Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP) and other Railbelt utilities. Information on the Power Pledge Challenge and MEA's other free energy education programs can be found at [www.mea.coop/mea-in-the-community/energy-education/](http://www.mea.coop/mea-in-the-community/energy-education/).

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