

BIG FLAT NEWS



September 2025

www.bigflatelectric.com

I'm calling it a career after 36 great years at Big Flat Electric

COLUMN BY **DARREN DEMARAIS** | BIG FLAT ELECTRIC LINE SUPERINTENDENT

WELL, I have been asked so many times when I will be retiring. I have decided that Oct. 1 will be my last day with Big Flat Electric Cooperative.

I started at the co-op on July 10, 1989, as a meter reader. I was hired by manager Bill Henderson. I read meters for two years, then Big Flat Electric allowed me to start my apprenticeship to become a lineman.

I was thrilled to start this part of my career, having Jay Southwick as my mentor. In doing this, I still remember the day he told me many stories about this job and how he laid it on the line what is expected for this position. I continued meter reading while doing my apprenticeship until 1995. At this point, Big Flat Electric hired a new meter reader and I was promoted to a full-time lineman position by Line Superintendent Jay Southwick and General Manager Jeanne Barnard.

I will say being a meter reader was a very nice position as it allowed me to get to know a lot of our members and where they live.

I worked as a lineman until 2001, when Jay decided to retire from Big Flat. Jeanne had the courage and faith to trust me with my new position as line superintendent. I will not lie, this has been a very strenuous job at times, but also very rewarding as I have really gotten to know many of our members on a first-name basis.

While in the line superintendent



position, I have seen the cost of materials rise drastically. It is remarkable your board of directors have done such an incredible job of keeping rates down.

The cooperative has completed many maintenance projects such as installing more poles to shorten line spans and changing out underground power line to try and keep the power on as much as possible. But there is this person called "Mother Nature" and if she decides that you do not need power, you won't have power. I have told many of you to install a backup generator, as no matter how hard we try, we can't promise power at all times.

General Manager Gretchen Boardman, has been my third manager and she has chosen Joe Hould as my replacement. By the time you are reading this, all calls will be directed to him. I will be here helping him through this transition and having him make all the decisions for the line crew.

I am really grateful to all of you for your patience while helping you when "Mother Nature" strikes. I figure 36+ years will be enough time for me. So, if you see me before Oct. 1, I like coffee and treats! I would like to take the time to have coffee and visit with any of you before I turn to the next phase of life. Also, thank you all for the memories and time I had with Big Flat.

Open House

**Celebrating
Darren Demarais
and
Ross Hasler's
Retirement**

Join Us
at the
Big Flat Electric Office
10.01.2025
1:00 – 3:00 pm

RM

Win a free trip of a lifetime

ATTENTION high school sophomores and juniors: Here's your chance to win a free trip to Washington, D.C., from June 13-20, 2026.

More than 1,500 students from across America take part in the Youth Tour experience each year, and so can you! This unique trip will give you the opportunity to watch history come alive as you explore the museums, memorials, and monuments with students from Montana and other states.

Gain a personal understanding of American history and explore your role as a citizen by meeting your representative and senators. Bottom line, you will make friendships that will last a lifetime and be part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life.

Student and/or parent or guardian must be served by Big Flat Electric



Co-op. Contest rules can be found at bigflatelectric.com, with your school counselor or stop by the Big Flat Electric office in Malta. The essay topic for the 2026 Washington, D.C., Youth Tour Contest is:

All cooperatives share a concern for their communities. Write about how your local cooperative supports your community or detail new ways they could get involved.

Entry Deadline: December 5, 2025

SWIM DAYS

Big Flat Electric hosted free pool days in Malta and Harlem in July

YOUNGSTERS were treated to a free day at the Malta and Harlem pools this summer. Big Flat Electric Cooperative and Triangle Communications teamed together to sponsor the Swim Days.

We hosted free admission and a popsicle at the Harlem pool on July 14.

At the Malta swimming pool, children received a free pass and a concession voucher on July 21.



MALTA



HARLEM



AJ Marquis shows her steer (above) and Hadley Hammond shows her pig (right) at the Phillips County Fair. | **COURTESY PHOTOS**




BFEC supports local 4H

BIG Flat Electric is a proud supporter of the Phillips County Fair held in August. Pictured above are the animals purchased by Big Flat Electric.

A monetary donation was also made to the Blaine County and Hays/Lodgepole 4-H programs. The co-op congrat-

ulates all the area 4-H and FFA youth for the hard work they put into their projects.

Beef and pork bundles will be given away at our annual meeting on October 11. 

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- **Find us on Facebook** under Big Flat Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- **Visit our website** at www.bigflatelectric.com.
- **Sign up for budget billing** and/or ACH (auto payments) by calling our office.
- **Bills** are generated on the 1st working day of each month, and are due on the 20th of each month.
- **Bills that are 60 days in arrears are subject to disconnect.** Once disconnected, a reconnect fee will be charged. The bill will then have to be paid in full to be reconnected.
- **We have a secure, automated toll-free phone number** for members making payments by credit card and/or bank account: 1-844-968-1965. You will need to have your account number and/or phone number that is on file with our office to access the automated system.
- **Take control of your electric account with SmartHub.** You can pay your bills; set up and cancel reoccurring payments; set up notifications; obtain duplicates of your bills; and view your monthly and yearly usage, all at your fingertips. Visit our website: www.bigflatelectric.com or download the SmartHub app from your Play Store on Android or the App Store on Apple devices.
- New service and service change quotes are only **valid for 30 days**.

For Sale by Bid

~ 2019 Ford F550 Bucket Truck ~

136,000 miles. In working condition, we just upgraded. Recent brake job. Motor has some oil leaks. Boom and bucket are full functioning. Silver tool box not included.

Submit sealed bids to: Big Flat Electric Co-op., PO Box 229, Malta, MT 59538. Bids need to be physically in the office by 5:00 p.m. on September 15, 2025.

Call 406-654-2040 for any questions.



Big Flat Electric reserves the right to accept or reject any bid.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Act like you expect to get into the end zone.

Christopher Morley

FROM SEPTEMBER 1967: BFEC NEWSLETTER

Big Flat to Help Indians With Home Improvements

An 83-year-old Gros Ventres woman on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation will benefit from newly acquired Home Improvement funds.

She lives in a one-room log cabin. She has lived there many years and does not want to move and it is kinder to leave her in the little cabin that has been her home. She is used to carrying water and wood and sleeping on an old cot which has springs only.

Through the Home Improvement funds, available through the federal slum improvement project and obtained through the efforts of the Welfare and Public Health services, her home will be warmer. She will have a new stove and a comfortable bed.

Some 20 other Indian families on the reservation will benefit to a greater degree from the \$38,000 available. Administered by C. Shorer, housing coordinator for the Belknap and Rocky Boy Reservations, an average of \$1,700 will be spent for improvements and additions to homes.

The Blaine county welfare department will assign five semi-skilled workmen, now on the relief rolls, to assist the homeowners in construction.

The work will consist of renovating walls and floors and building additions for sleeping quarters and bathrooms. The Public Health Service will spend approximately \$1,500 per unit for sanitary facilities including, in some cases, new wells.

The Big Flat Electric Cooperative which serves 90 per cent of reservation homes, will upgrade its service, improve the wiring to make the homes safer. The upgrading will result in lower service costs to the consumer.

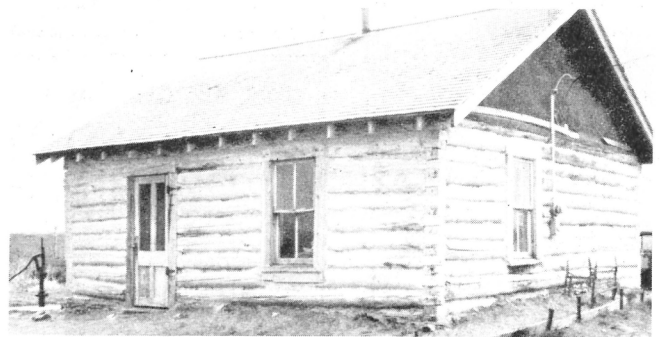
The average applicant's dwelling at present is a log cabin with a lean-to. Walls and floors are in poor condition, doors and windows are inadequate, a dilapidated old stove is used for cooking and heating. One or two bulbs dangle from poor-

ly installed and unsafe wires. There are no sanitary facilities, sometimes not even a well. An average family of two adults and eight children live in these homes.

The Big Flat Electric crew is at work on service lines to a number of homes constructed under another building program. This is known as the Mutual Help Housing Project. Nine homes are completed and 18 are under construction. Under the program applicants are approved for loans.



TYPICAL OF HOMES TO BE IMPROVED



THIS FAMILY HAS NEVER HAD ELECTRICITY — Under the Home Improvement Program, funds will be furnished to enable the Big Flat Electric Cooperative to build a distribution line to serve this home, after it has been remodeled. In similar type homes there are instances of 13 children and several adults who live without electricity, sanitary facilities or water and sewer connections.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1	Duane Klindworth
District 2	Alan Van Voast
District 3	Alan Wasson, President
District 4	Betty Campbell, Sec. /Treas.
District 5	Roger Solberg, Vice President
District 6	Patty Quisno
District 7	Kevin Koss

General Manager: Gretchen Boardman



BIG FLAT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

SERVING BLAINE, PHILLIPS AND VALLEY COUNTIES

P.O. BOX 229 • MALTA, MT 59538 • WWW.BIGFLATELECTRIC.COM

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**AFTER HOURS
OUTAGE:**
(406) 654-7400

PAYMENT OPTIONS:
1-844-968-1965 or
bigflatelectric.com