

# SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC Cooperative



PO BOX 369, EKALAKA, MT 59324 • PH 406-775-8762 • WWW.SEECOOP.COM

## SAVE A LIFE:

### AVOID DISTRACTIONS WHILE DRIVING

By **TYE WILLIAMS** | Manager

**WOULD** you drive on a highway blindfolded? Of course not! However, if you text or snap chat while driving 55 miles per hour on a highway, you are essentially doing just that.

While driving, we typically hear that “ding” on our phone, alerting us to a text or call coming through, and we sometimes feel the urgent need to check it. We know we shouldn’t, but we reason that we’re going to make an exception – just this once.

So, why do we indulge in behavior we know to be wrong, dangerous and, in many states, illegal? According to AAA research, most people feel they are better-than-average drivers. After all, we have busy lives and are accustomed to multitasking. But mounds of research and thousands of deaths every year prove otherwise.

August is Back to School Safety Month. As a new school year begins with young drivers and children and school buses back on the road, I thought it would be a good time to remind folks, including myself, of the dangers of distracted driving.

The reality is that using a phone while driving creates enormous poten-



tial for injuries and fatalities. Distractions take a motorist’s attention off driving, which can make a driver miss critical events, objects and cues, potentially leading to a crash.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, one of every 10 fatal crashes in the U.S. involves distracted driving, resulting in more than 3,000 deaths annually. I find this statistic heartbreaking, considering so many of these accidents could easily be avoided if we’d simply put down our phones while driving.

Distracted driving is considered any activity that diverts our attention, including texting or talking on the phone, and adjusting the navigation or entertainment system. Texting is by far one of the most dangerous distractions. Sending or reading one text takes your eyes off the road for an average of five seconds. At 55 mph, that’s like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

In addition to refraining from

texting while driving, we can help keep the roads safe by moving over for first responders and other emergency vehicles. Additionally, if you see utility crews conducting work near the roadside, I’d encourage you to move over when possible and give them extra space to perform their work safely.

At Southeast Electric Cooperative, safety is foremost in everything we do – for our employees and the members of the communities we serve. We routinely remind our crews of the dangers of distracted driving, and we hope you’ll have similar conversations with your teens who may be new to the roadways and are especially susceptible to the lure of technology.

Let’s work together to keep everyone safe on the roads. Remember: that text can wait, and waiting just might save a life. 

#### CONTACT NUMBER UPDATE

Southeast Electric - 406-775-8762  
Jake Hammel - 406-581-0884  
Adam Kuntz - 406-941-0861  
Sam Erfman - 605-347-1687



# 2022 ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

**JUNE** 10th turned out to be a beautiful day for a picnic . . . oh, and the Annual Meeting. Wagon Wheel Catering prepared a delicious meal of roast beef, potato salad, coleslaw, baked beans and cookies. It was so good, as all 287 guests would agree. While folks ate, Jerilyn Wiseman and Ty Taylor of Mendenhall Crossing entertained the crowd with down home country music. To open the meeting, Jerilyn played the national anthem on her fiddle. With the calm of the evening and the birds chirping, it was absolutely beautiful.

Dave Hayden's crew, Jalyn Klauzer and Kayla Olsen, kept the kiddos busy by giving them rides in the horse-drawn wagon. I did see a few adults sneak a ride as well.

The business meeting was well attended. Albert Paul, president of the Southeast Electric Board, and Tye Williams, general manager, gave short reports. DeeDee Isaacs, Montana Electric Cooperatives'

Association president, shared news about what the statewide organization has been involved in and what they are looking at in the future. Jeremy Mahowald, Upper Missouri Power Cooperative general manager, gave us an update as to what is happening at their level. We were also very pleased that Chris Christensen, National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association board president, came to share his vision for NRECA, and a few great stories.

The door prizes are always a big hit, and without our donors we would not be able to offer as many. Anixter/Wesco, Electrical Consultants Inc., A&A Stieg Wholesale, NISC and Red Rock have been strong supporters of this popular segment of the annual meeting. The big winners this year were members Robin Kawecki and J.O. Tooke. They walked away with \$500 cash in their pockets.

Hope to see you all next year! RM



Line Foreman Jake Hammel, right, presents Tanner Fix his journeyman certificate.

## CONGRATS! Tanner Fix obtains journeyman certificate

**TANNER** came to Southeast Electric Cooperative (SECO) in July 2018. While Tanner was in high school he spent a year as a school-to-work student at Southeast Electric. He was only allowed an hour a day, but in that hour he worked in the shop and was able to shadow the linemen while they worked in town.

Upon graduation Tanner attended a semester of college in Rapid City, when he decided that he liked being outdoors and lineman school better suited him. Tanner attended Northwest Lineman College in Meridian, Idaho, where he completed the powerline construction and maintenance program in April 2018.

At SECO, Tanner was required to complete the Merchant Powerline Job Training and Safety Program, which he did in two years. Logging more than 6,000 hours of on-the-job training, Tanner obtained his journeyman certificate in July from Line Foreman Jake Hammel. Tanner has proven himself as a hard and dedicated worker and has developed good working knowledge of the powerline construction and maintenance industry.

We are pleased with Tanner's accomplishments and look forward to his many years as a journeyman lineman for SECO. When not working, Tanner enjoys playing basketball, hiking, and hunting. He also enjoys playing tunes on his guitar. RM

JOIN US IN EKALAKA  
**DAY'S OF '85  
FAIR & RODEO**  
AUGUST 11 - 14

