

Celebrating Safety at CVEA



CVEA SRRT on Safety Day

CVEA is deeply committed to a strong safety culture, recognizing the inherent risks associated with nearly every task we perform at the Cooperative. We must take the time to properly plan work and identify and avoid potential hazards. Our ultimate goal is to achieve zero accidents or incidents. To make this happen, we know safety must never be compromised for expediency or short-term cost savings. This commitment is strongly supported by leadership at all levels, including the Board and CEO, who emphasize that health and safety are paramount for everyone in the organization.

Officially, CVEA's safety policy states that, "The health, safety and welfare of each employee are a top priority of CVEA. We are dedicated to making workplace safety as important as productivity and quality in conducting our daily business. Everyone at CVEA is expected to be committed to guarding against the occurrence of incidents and to comply with the applicable safety procedures and OSHA regulations."

More importantly, our employees are dedicated to keeping themselves and each other safe. They maintain positive safety attitudes, contribute to ongoing safety improvements, and feel confident reporting incidents and unsafe conditions through our open-door system. Every employee has the authority and responsibility to stop any task if there are concerns about health, safety, or environmental risks. Their pride in their work and commitment to good housekeeping are evident across all Cooperative facilities.

CVEA continuously works throughout the year to foster safe work habits, reinforce our safety culture, and enhance safety awareness. Our ongoing efforts include:

- Quarterly Health and Safety Newsletters
- Conduct safety inspections and correct hazards
- Leadership involvement
- Communication and feedback
- Provides safety equipment and Personal Protection Equipment
- Provides flame-resistant clothing
- Conducts safety orientation for new hires
- Participates in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP)
- Joined the NRECA Commitment to Zero Contacts
- Shares safety and wellness moment during monthly All-Employee Meeting
- Invited AKOSH Health and Safety Training and Consultation
- Reviews and updates the Health and Safety Procedures
- Schedules and tracks inspections of equipment, tools, fleet, and PPE
- Share and discuss incidents, near misses, and property damage
- Participating in the Alaska Power Association Safety Summit and Lineman Safety Week

In addition, this year, the co-op brought in safety professionals to train on the following:

- HAZCOM Right to Know/Fire Extinguisher
- Delayed Care First Aid using real world medical kits, applying trauma dressings in bleeding emergencies, stabilizing fractures, conducting basic cervical spine assessment, and improvising litters
- Bear Awareness and Shotgun Defense
- Annual HAZWOPER Refresher for workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials
- Avalanche Awareness to be scheduled in the fall

Annually, CVEA celebrates our commitment to safety during Safety Week, a series of daily activities focused on safety training and employee engagement, with incentives to encourage participation. The highlight of the week is Safety Day, an event that began in 2016, when an employee proposed it to the Safety Review and Recommendations Committee (SRRT). The SRRT, comprised of employees from all departments, meets quarterly to discuss safety issues and materials, assist with educational topics, and recommend improvements to our safety culture.

Coreen Palacios, CVEA's Regulatory and Compliance Specialist, along with the SRRT, plans Safety Day each year. The event includes safety training, lunch, games, and prizes, bringing



together employees from all departments in both districts. Past events have featured facility tours, presentations, and demonstrations on bucket truck operations, pole top rescue, and personal protective equipment. Safety accomplishments from previous years are highlighted, and employees receive safety-related gifts.

This year's Safety Day was especially notable as it was the first full day of off-campus, classroom-style sessions, featuring special guest speakers. It was also the first Safety Day under CEO Matthews' leadership, who emphasized, "We want everyone to go home in the same condition they arrive at work each day. The CVEA team is our family, and we care about your safety."

Thirty-one employees attended, reaffirming their commitment to zero contacts by signing a safety pledge that will be displayed at each office location. CVEA first made this pledge in 2018 when the NRECA, in partnership with the Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, launched the initiative to increase safety awareness and reduce significant injuries and fatalities due to electrical contacts.

We were honored to host Tony Anderson, retired NRECA Board President, who traveled from Michigan to share his experiences of growing up without a father, losing a lineman in an electrical contact, and the importance of supporting youth affected by such losses. He also urged us to commit to zero contacts and delivered a presentation on "Going Beyond Average: Key Attributes that Make Reaching Your Goals Possible," which resonated deeply and reinforced CVEA's growth mindset and commitment to continuous improvement.

Don Maynor, the Loss Control and Safety Specialist for ARECA Insurance Exchange, presented information on Alaska Power Association's (APA) safety programs and initiatives, many of which CVEA participates in. He also brought APA's new safety demonstration trailer, which our line crew used for a sample demonstration. This trailer will soon be available for CVEA's community engagement activities.

Employees enjoyed a safety slideshow highlighting eight years of safety challenges, accomplishments, statistics, trainings, inspections, and past events. The line crew demonstrated equipment safety, bucket truck operation, and Valdez Lineman Apprentice Justin Moncrief performed a bucket self-rescue. Employees also watched a video how-to on using fire blankets to extinguish fires and were given a fire blanket as a gift. The day concluded with team-building games, prizes, and a cake celebrating the importance of teamwork.

Working safely is crucial not only for our employees but also for our members. Ensuring the safety of the CVEA team means they can continue to work effectively, rather than being sidelined by injuries. Reducing work-related injuries has also resulted in significant savings on workers' compensation insurance each year. This past year, our workers' compensation experience modification factor was well below the industry average for the tenth consecutive year, marking the lowest rate in CVEA's history and saving over \$20,000 annually on premiums.

If you would like more information on CVEA's Safety Program, contact Coreen Palacios at cpalacios@cvea.org.