

RE

RURAL ELECTRIC MAGAZINE

RE

RAISING THE BAR

The evolution of the co-op CEO

Serving the Rajneesh

Wasco EC's 'Wild Wild'
connection p. 9

Blockchain Explained

Will cryptocurrency technology
impact co-ops? p. 28



BY TODD H. CUNNINGHAM



Photo courtesy Laminated Wood Systems

Valley Electric Association recently buttressed its poles to carry fiber.

VEA SAVES TIME, MONEY BY REINFORCING POLES

Valley Electric Association (VEA) had a weighty problem: Its power poles weren't up to the task of carrying the heavier loads of fiber-optic cable. The problem was widespread, with hundreds of poles needing attention to the tune of about \$10,000 apiece, says Kristin Mettke, the Pahrump, Nevada, co-op's executive vice president for engineering and compliance.

Looking for alternatives, the co-op found reinforcements—literally—in the Pole Reclassification System, which buttresses existing poles with a two-piece steel system. The lower steel unit is driven 6 feet into the ground, transferring additional load to the soil. An upper unit is placed over the lower unit, temporarily secured, and subsequently cross-bolted to the pole.

According to the manufacturer, Laminated Wood Systems (NRECA Associate Member; lwsinc.com), a reinforced pole eliminates the need to replace poles with sturdier, larger-class ones, as the Pole Reclassification System can increase pole strengths by three or more classes.

In addition to allowing poles to carry the added weight of fiber, older ones can be refurbished using the reclassification system, extending their lives by 20 years in some

cases and saving VEA about \$9,000 per pole.

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STRONGER STORAGE RACKS AT CLAY ELECTRIC

Clay Electric Cooperative had a problem. Forklifts operating in the tight confines of the co-op's warehouse often clipped storage racks holding maintenance items that keep the Florida co-op up and running. Collisions with racks using three-sided upright columns with open backs put twisting, torsional loads on the structures, shortening their useful lives and threatening tip-overs. So when Clay rebuilt the warehouse, enlarging it to consolidate more than 2,700 maintenance items into the single location, it looked for improvements.

Working with Kardex Storage Systems (kardexstorage.com), the co-op chose a racking system with closed tubular uprights and supplemented the most impact-prone areas with additional protection. According to manufacturer Steel King Industries (steelking.com), these uprights are 44 times more torsion- and twist-resistant than those they replaced, with 250 percent greater frontal-impact resistance