

The

Enlightener



North Star
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



VOLUME 50 NUMBER 1

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

JANUARY 2005



Enhancing conservation

Utilities required to meet Minnesota conservation legislation

By Dan Hoskins
General Manager

I trust that all of you had a nice holiday season and weathered the cold nicely; I know we did here at North Star Electric. Although there was less load control than last year during the first part of December, it averaged out the week before Christmas. I know it did seem like a lot, but we have been controlled about the same number of hours as last year. Minnkota Power Cooperative is always working to secure energy for demand use.

Well, with the holiday season past us and all the goodies eaten, we can now concentrate on the New Year, 2005. We have a lot of exciting things planned at your Cooperative for the upcoming year. One of them is the Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) that is mandated by the State of Minnesota.

First, I have an article written by Michael Nisbet, Senior Publications Editor for Minnkota Power. Then Wayne Haukaas, Manager of Member Services at North Star Electric, will explain some of the programs that we have. If you have any questions about any of the programs, give Wayne a call; he is overseeing the project.

God Bless You and Our Troops.

Public utilities operating in the State of Minnesota are required to invest a portion of their state revenues in projects designed to reduce their customers' consumption of electricity and natural gas, and to generally improve the efficient use of energy resources. Through the Conservation Improvement Program (CIP), the Department of Commerce (DOC) Commissioner ensures that the electric and natural gas utilities serving Minnesotans invest the required amount in a cost-effective conservation program. (Ed P. Hilbrand 383-33-003-03) Utilities with nuclear power facilities must invest 2.0 percent of their revenues, other electric utilities must invest 1.5 percent, and natural gas utilities must invest 0.5 percent. In total, utilities annually spend about \$80 million on energy conservation projects. The costs are passed on to their customers.

*Energy
conservation
is good for
everyone.*

Utilities, like North Star Electric Cooperative, use these funds to offer conservation opportunities to both residential and commercial/industrial customers. Examples of residential conservation projects include home energy audits and rebates for the purchase of energy efficient appliances. For commercial and industrial customers, conservation projects include assistance in purchasing and installing energy efficient coolers, lighting systems and motors.

Every two years, the state's utilities must submit conservation improvement plans to the DOC for comment and approval.

On behalf of North Star Electric and the other associated systems, Minnkota Power Cooperative submitted the latest aggregate report in the fall of 2004.

Energy conservation is good for everyone. North Star Electric members can benefit by replacing old equipment with high-efficiency electric technologies and appliances. And you may qualify for rebates on energy-related purchases and products. Read the article on page 3 of this newsletter for more information.

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Baudette 888-634-2202
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e-mail us at nsec@wiktel.com
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1-888-6OUTAGE
(1-888-668-8243)
634-2603



November 2004
Operating Report

| | |
|--|------------|
| Revenue | \$ 713,142 |
| Cost of Power | \$ 356,777 |
| Operation, Maintenance, Administration | \$ 224,609 |
| Depreciation, Interest | \$ 129,807 |
| Margin on Operations | \$ 1,949 |
| Average use per Residential | 1,726 |
| Total kWhs Sold | 10,137,298 |

Off-peak loan program for automatic backup systems

If your off-peak backup heating system is in need of repair or replacement, we may be able to help.

From 1977 to 2000, we had an average of 34 hours of load control per heating season. This past heating season, we had 414 hours. The years of 20 to 40 hours of control are gone. This year, Minnkota Power Cooperative estimates 400 to 600 hours of load control.

You must have a reliable backup heating system.

North Star Electric will lend up to \$2,500 for upgrading members' existing off-peak backup systems when the following terms and conditions are met:

1. On approved credit.
2. \$2,500 maximum.
3. 6 percent interest.
4. 1 to 3-year term.
5. Payment will be added to existing electric bill (\$25 minimum per month).
6. \$35 filing fee.
7. Must be existing off-peak member.
8. Automatic backup system only (no wood or manual systems).
9. Must furnish sales receipt from contractor or vendor.
10. Job must be completed before loan is approved for payment by our member services department.
11. Outstanding loan balance at termination of service is due in full.

WE NEED YOUR METER READING!

Please read your meter on or as near the 25th of EACH month as possible. We must have your reading by the 5th of the next month to avoid an estimated bill. If a bill consecutively estimates two times, the crew will read the meter and a \$15 fee will be added to the account.

— Please Note —

Bills that are past due will be charged a 1.5 percent late payment fee. Bills that are 30 days past due will also be charged a \$2 delinquent notice fee.

North Star conservation improvement program

By Wayne Haukaas
 Manager of compliance and member services

Starting in January 2005, North Star will be offering rebates on ENERGY STAR appliances. You can save energy and money if you follow the ENERGY STAR label next time you shop for appliances. The ENERGY STAR label gives consumers an easy way to recognize the most efficient heating systems, cooling systems, appliances and electronics. The ENERGY STAR label means that the product wearing the label is in the top 15 percent of efficiency compared to similar products. The ENERGY STAR symbol is now recognized in Canada, Australia, Europe, China and many other countries.

You can participate in the efficiency revolution led by ENERGY STAR by insisting on the ENERGY STAR label whenever you buy any home appliance. You can find out more information about ENERGY STAR and advanced household appliances at the ENERGY STAR Web site: www.energystar.gov. North Star rebates are only available on appliances that are listed on the ENERGY STAR Web site. Rebate forms are available at both the Baudette and Littlefork offices and at some of the area appliance dealers.

The rebates will be as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Ground-Source Heat Pumps | \$500 |
| Air-Source Heat Pumps | 200 |
| Central Air Conditioners | 100 |
| Refrigerators | 100 |
| Clothes Washers | 100 |
| Room Air Conditioning | 50 |
| Dishwashers | 50 |
| Dehumidifiers | 25 |
| Freezers | 25 |

Stop by either the Baudette or Littlefork office to pick up your FREE compact fluorescent lamp. If you would like more than one lamp, just bring a donation for the food shelf. One can of food = one compact fluorescent lamp. If you don't feel like bringing in any cans of food, just donate \$1 per lamp. (Limit six lamps per household.)



CURRENT ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

State law requires that every new electrical installation in any construction, remodeling, replacement or repair shall file a certificate for inspection with the State Board of Electricity and be inspected by a Minnesota electrical inspector.

- *Koochiching and St. Louis counties:*
Lee Herseth
 10078 Gappa Road
 Ray, MN 56669
 Phone: (218) 875-3028
 7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)
- *Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties:*
Laurence Otto
 60426 County Road 12
 Warroad, MN 56763
 Phone: (218) 386-2299
 7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

Reliable backup systems a must

Because increased load control hours are predicted in the future, electric off-peak heating installations must be capable of 400 hours or more of interruption each winter season.

“In order to realize the full benefits of the load management program, it is very important that our members work with a qualified heating contractor to ensure that they have an automatic, adequate and well-maintained backup heating system,” said Wayne Haukaas, manager of compliance and member services.

The electric off-peak heating program continues to provide great value to members today, just as it did when it was first utilized in the late 1970s. The winter heating season is here, and North Star Electric stands ready to assist our members with their electric home heating options.

Gopher State One Call



It's the LAW CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Minnesota Statewide One Call
 Notification Center

1-800-252-1166



Office notes

From Ann Ellis, Manager of Finance and Administration

"Success is never final and failure never fatal."

—George F. Tilton



Nieman Marcus bars

1 "Butter Pecan" cake mix
1 stick of butter or margarine melted
Mix together and press into a jelly roll pan.

Mix together and spread on top of crust:
1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
1 stick of butter
2 eggs
3 1/2 cups of powdered sugar

Sprinkle with 1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts. Bake at 350° for about 35 to 45 minutes.

Submitted by:
*Dani Birkeland
Baudette, Minn.*

Extremely cold temperatures will affect the operation of your rented security light



If you notice a problem with your security light this winter, such as intermittent failure or it remains dimmer than normal, you're not alone. Severe cold weather, specifically -10 degrees or colder, may seriously affect the operation of security lights.

The problem involves the formation of a gas in the bulb, which can be hampered by the cold. Usually, when the weather warms up, the lights will return to normal operation and will not have to be replaced.

If your security light is owned by North Star, we would appreciate it if you could bear with us during the coldest spells. If the light does not return to normal operation when the weather warms up, please notify our office and we will repair it for you (Baudette 634-2202, Littlefork 278-6658).

Security deposit interest changes

As of Jan. 1, 2005, the interest rate earned on security deposits will be lowered to 2.5 percent as mandated by the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

AMR

As I write this article, we are preparing to take a recommendation to the board regarding the cost effectiveness of AMR (automated meter readings). The payback appears to be reasonable, and in addition to getting on-demand meter readings without members having to trudge through the snowbanks, we would be able to make many other processes MUCH more efficient. We will be able to share more on this with you next month!

WildBlue

Again, this is a topic for the upcoming board meeting. When we decided to participate in the WildBlue satellite Internet project, we were moving full steam ahead with our own DirecTV business, with plans to grow the business. As you know, this changed abruptly in July 2004.

In addition, several options for high-speed Internet have entered the area, making WildBlue less sought after than it had been back when our original survey of the membership was done.

It is possible that WildBlue will not be offered by North Star, but for those few of you who are still interested, WildBlue would be available by one of the many providers that will be marketing it in April. (Mark/Tammy Stoltman 252-13-033-01) Again, more info next month.

Down the road

As I sit here at the end of 2004, I wonder what unforeseen events that the new year will bring for the cooperative. Some we expect to some degree, like storms and outages, but others just blindsides us, like the DirecTV buyout. We faced some difficult decisions this last year, and these pushed the status quo to the limit.

But one thing remains the same. We are here to protect the assets of the cooperative because they belong to you, our members. And what we do best is to provide reliable, competitively-priced electricity to improve your lives. We hope that you continue to be satisfied customers of this business that you own, we look forward to the new year, and we thank you for your continued support. Please let us know, at any time, of any concerns or suggestions you may have.

At your service, we remain . . .

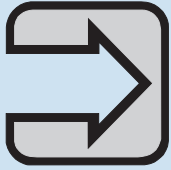
Share a favorite recipe with your North Country neighbors!

Send to:

North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Attn: The Enlightener
P.O. Box 719
Baudette, MN 56623





West End News

By *Steve Ellis*
Baudette District Operations Supervisor



We will be starting our annual line inspection and meter readings. This is done to make sure that all meters and readings are correct; we also examine our lines for safety hazards that may occur over time. It is always better if we can identify and correct problems before they have a chance to cause us even worse problems. So, when you see the Cooperative's truck in your yard or property, this may be what we're doing. (Kelly Krueger 363-28-003-03) This year, we will also be identifying pole attachments from other companies.

Crews will also be out cutting

and trimming rights of way. It is very important for us to keep the rights of way clear of trees and other hazards. If you have any right-of-way problems, please contact us.

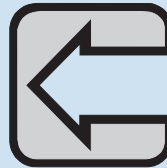
Just a reminder, if you have added, or are planning to add, electric heat or some other large user, you need to let us know, so that we can size your service accordingly. If we are not told of this increase, it is likely that your power may go out when it is neither convenient to you nor us, so please keep us informed of your changes.

Until next time, be safe!



East End News

By *Allan Baumgartner*
Littlefork District Operations Supervisor



Most of the crew time this past month was spent reading the seasonal meters throughout our system. Construction work this year pushed us back a little later than most years.

We have been clearing rights of way in the Big Falls area with our ASV brush cutter. A few minor breakdowns and some cold weather slowed us down some, but now, we're back on the project.

The crew has been changing out old air gap lightning arresters on transformers at Ash Lake. In cases where the transformer is so old that it won't allow us to switch to the new style arrester, we change out the

transformer and the arrester. The first three services built by North Star Electric to the Ash Lake area were in the spring of 1950. One was to the resort on the east side of the lake, which is now William Freeman's, one that is now the Cletus Shoen residence and another that still has the original 5 kVa transformer to what is now the Ed Norton residence. We will be working east to west on this project.

North Star had only five outages during the month of December, which is good considering the ice we had hanging over our system early in December.

Problems paying your electric bill?

Energy assistance may be available!

If you are receiving a low income or suffering from a temporary financial shortfall, the following agencies may be able to assist you with your electric bill. We urge you to contact them immediately to avoid disconnection if you feel you are eligible for aid.

- **Lake of the Woods County Community Services**
P.O. Box G-0200
Baudette, MN 56623
Phone: 634-2642
- **Northwest Community Action Council**
312 N. Main St.
P.O. Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
Phone: 218-528-3258
or 1-800-568-5329
- **Koochiching County Community Services**
1000 5th St.
International Falls, MN 56649
Phone: 283-7000
- **Kootasca Community Action, Inc.**
2232 2nd Ave. E.
P.O. Box 44
International Falls, MN 56649
Phone: 283-9491 or 1-800-559-9491
- **Kootasca Community Action, Inc.**
1213 SE 2nd Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984
Phone: 1-800-422-0312
- **Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency**
702 3rd Ave. S.
Virginia, MN 55792-2797
Phone: 1-800-662-5711
or 218-749-2912

Have you filled your tank yet?



Highlights of the board of directors meeting

December 1, 2004

Matt Brown joins North Star's line crew

North Star Electric hired Matt Brown as an apprentice lineman on Dec. 16. Matt will be working with the line crew out of our



Brown

Littlefork office. Matt is not a stranger to North Star. For the past two summers, Matt was a part-time apprentice lineman in Littlefork. Matt will assist with the maintenance and repair of our high-voltage electrical system. Matt is from International Falls so he knows the area.

After graduating from the Falls High School, Matt enrolled at Northwest Technical College in Wadena, Minn., for one year for lineman's training. There he earned his electrical line worker diploma.

In his spare time, Matt likes to hunt, fish, snowmobile and go four-wheeling. We are glad to have Matt working with us at North Star.

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on Dec. 1, 2004. Detailed minutes are available at the Cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally held the first Wednesday of every month. If you wish to speak with the board or have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda, please contact Manager Dan Hoskins at least one week in advance to be included on the agenda.

All directors were present. They acted upon usual, routine business. In addition, they voted to move the March board meeting to March 9, to direct Manager Hoskins to purchase a cooperative vehicle for multi-purposes including aiding the operations department and traveling to meetings. They also approved the 2005 Operating Budget.

Management and operations report

Manager Hoskins reported on management's study of AMR (automated meter reading) options and costs, the expiration of the contract with Solvay that ended a special rate at their hormone facility, questions surrounding a joint effort to market WildBlue satellite Internet, an easement issue, MREA dues structure, lengthening the Center Tour, and safety meetings and items.

Office report

Finance Manager Ellis provided the financial report and discussed the migration of remaining DBS expenses to the electric side of the operations, DBS patronage and health insurance. The income, that is expected from the DBS buyout, will all show on the 2004 operating statement, similarly to earned capital credits from other organizations. She also presented the 2005 Operating Budget, which does NOT call for a retail rate increase in 2005, has the blended residential retail rate at 6.9 cents/kWh and includes a

\$400,000 capital credit retirement in the fall.

Compliance and member services report

Manager of Compliance and Member Services Haukaas reported on load control and the beginning of daily cycling for storage loads, WildBlue satellite Internet scheduled for retailing in April, a minimal adjustment in subscribers counts, which are the basis for the calculation of the buyout payments, the anticipated \$60,000 payment from DirecTV for subscribers whom the cooperative has already upgraded to Phase III equipment, and complete elimination of DBS inventory.

Board reports

Minnkota Delegate Arnesen reported on their monthly board meeting. Director Anderson reported on his credentialing training.

Professional Contractor Program dates set

The 2005 program marks the 17th year that Minnkota Power Cooperative and the associated distribution systems have been providing educational training opportunities for electrical, HVAC and building contractors in our region. The following workshops have been scheduled for 2005:

- Electrician workshop – February 1 and 2 – Fargo Doublewood Inn
- Electrician and builder workshop – February 9 – Grand Forks Ramada Inn
- Electrician and builder workshop – February 10 – Bemidji Northern Inn
- Builder workshop – March 24 – Fargo Doublewood Inn
- Several other HVAC workshops are also being scheduled – dates and locations to be announced later

Vendors will be displaying new and existing products for total home comfort. The registration for each workshop is \$60. Watch for an upcoming brochure with registration information. For further information, contact Marlene Shimpa at Minnkota Power, (701) 795-4212.

Statement of nondiscrimination

North Star Electric Cooperative, Incorporated, is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on basis of race, color, national origin, age, or handicap shall be excluded from participation in, administration or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance effort is Ann Ellis, Office Manager.

Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250; or the Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Washington, D.C. 20250. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

Notification to members

In order to comply with Minnesota Statute 216B.164 and the final published rules of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC), North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc. is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers which satisfy the conditions and become qualifying facilities. North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc. is obliged to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any disputes over interconnections, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the MPUC.

Energy tip:

Compact fluorescents save money and energy

ENERGY STAR labeled light bulbs, or compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), are up to 75 percent more efficient than standard incandescent light bulbs, give off the same light output and last up to 10 times longer.

CFLs have changed a lot in recent years. They are available in various sizes to fit almost any lamp, chandelier or other light fixture, including dimmable and motion detector fixtures. The bulb's appearance ranges from a globe shape to two slender tubes twisted like a coil.

"You'll find the quality of light is equal to that of incandescents," said Phil Smith, energy specialist. "And there is no hum or noise that is sometimes associated with older tube-shaped fluorescent lights."

CFLs emit the same amount of



light as standard bulbs, but because they use significantly less energy than incandescent bulbs, they have lower wattage ratings than people are accustomed to purchasing. For example, a 15 watt CFL replaces a 60 watt incandescent bulb, an 18 to 20 watt CFL replaces a 75 watt bulb and a 25 to 28 watt CFL bulb replaces a 100 watt bulb.

While all CFLs use less energy than incandescent light bulbs, it is a good idea to watch for the ENERGY STAR symbol when shopping around.

The potential savings on energy bills is significant. The typical household spends about 10 to 15 percent of its electrical bill, an average of \$110 a year, on lighting.

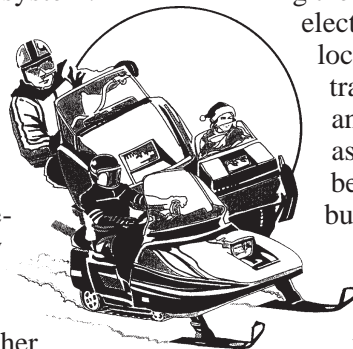
Source: Minnesota Department of Commerce

❄️ Snowmobilers ❄️

Beware of hazards! Respect property rights!

As snowmobiling becomes more popular, the number of accidents are increasing. Very few accidents occur on Minnesota's trail system. Most accidents occur along roads and ditches. Obstacles encountered along roads and other cleared rights of way can be very dangerous, especially in low visibility conditions.

North Star Electric Cooperative and the other Minnkota Power Cooperative associated systems have poles, guy wires, metal enclosures and pedestals installed on hundreds of miles of rights of way. When snowmobiling, be aware of these obstacles. Guy



wires need special attention as they can be difficult to see.

Some snowmobilers are mistaking the private property where electric transmission lines are located for snowmobile trails. North Star Electric and the other Minnkota-associated systems have been granted easements to build and maintain lines in these cleared areas, but the land still belongs to the landowner. Be sure to check with the landowners before snowmobiling on their property.

Enjoy snowmobiling in Minnesota, but keep safety in mind. Slow down, don't drink and stay alert for obstacles.

Cold Weather Law

THE COLD WEATHER LAW DOES NOT TOTALLY FORBID WINTER CUTOFFS. IF YOU RECEIVE A DISCONNECTION NOTICE THIS WINTER, YOU MUST ACT PROMPTLY.

An electric cooperative must not disconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between October 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit when the following conditions are met:

(1) the customer has declared inability to pay on forms provided by the utility. For the purposes of this clause, a customer that is receiving energy assistance is deemed to have demonstrated an inability to pay;

(2) the household income of the customer is less than 50 percent of the state median income. All income documentation must be returned along with your Inability To Pay form unless you have verified income eligibility with an energy assistance provider in clause (3);

(3) verification of income may be conducted by the local energy assistance provider or the utility, unless the customer is automatically eligible for protection against disconnection as a recipient of any form of public assistance, including energy assistance that uses income eligibility in any amount at or below the income eligibility in clause (2);

(4) a customer whose account is current for the billing period immediately prior to October 15 or who, at any time, enters into a payment schedule that considers the financial resources of the household is reasonably current with payments under the schedule; and

(5) the customer receives referrals to energy assistance programs, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

THE COLD WEATHER LAW PROVIDES YOU WITH THESE OPTIONS

The RIGHT to declare your inability to pay. If you do so and if your household income is less than 50% of the state median income, the service affecting your primary heat source cannot be disconnected for nonpayment of your bill. However, we have the right to accept or reject your request based on information supplied or other supporting documentation.

The RESPONSIBILITY, if you choose to declare inability to pay, you must complete an "Inability to Pay" form and return it to us within fifteen (15) days of the notice to disconnect. You must contact us immediately to arrange a payment plan.

The RIGHT to a mutually agreeable payment schedule with us. The schedule will cover your existing arrears plus the estimated usage during the payment schedule period.

The RIGHT not to be involuntarily disconnected on a Friday or on a day before a holiday, or until at least twenty (20) days after the postmark on the notice to disconnect or until fifteen (15) days after the notice and information has been personally delivered.

The RIGHT not to be disconnected until the utility in-

vestigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied when a customer does not respond to a disconnection notice. If the unit is found to be occupied, the utility must immediately inform the occupant of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the utility must give seven days' written notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider before making a disconnection.

The RIGHT to receive budget counseling from your local energy assistance provider or another organization of your choice.

The RIGHT to appeal the disconnection of service to the North Star Electric Cooperative Board of Directors. If you choose to appeal, you must deliver or mail a personal letter stating your situation and issues in dispute. Your letter must be in our hands before the date of disconnection. You will be notified when the Board of Directors will review your appeal and you may be present at the review. No disconnection of service will take place during the appeal process.

Energy assistance providers

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Lake of the Woods County | 218-634-2642 |
| Koochiching County | 218-283-7000 |
| Northwest Community Action | 800-568-5329 |
| Kootasca Community Action | 800-422-0312 |
| Arrowhead Economic Opportunity | 800-662-5711 |

IF YOU DO NOT MEET ALL THE CONDITIONS OF THE COLD WEATHER LAW AS OUTLINED ON THIS NOTICE, YOU DO NOT QUALIFY FOR WINTER SHUTOFF PROTECTION. However, you still can continue to receive electric service if you call us to set up a mutually acceptable payment arrangement. Call North Star Electric at 218-634-2202 or 888-634-2202, BEFORE the due date on your disconnection notice.

IF YOU MEET ALL THE CONDITIONS OF THE COLD WEATHER LAW, CAN'T PAY YOUR ELECTRIC BILL, AND NEED COLD WEATHER PROTECTION FROM UTILITY SHUTOFF, call North Star Electric to have an Inability To Pay form sent to you. Complete the form and return it to North Star Electric Cooperative immediately along with your income documentation.

