

Power plant tour



June 25, 26 & 27



We are offering all North Star Electric members an exceptional summer opportunity that's fun for all ages. This year's tour has been expanded to three days, which should make the trip more relaxing.

The tour is scheduled for Monday through Wednesday, June 25-27. The first day, we will have a relaxing trip with several stops along the way to stretch your legs. We will arrive at the beautiful Seven Seas Motel at Mandan, N.D., at about 5:30 that evening.

On the second day, we will visit the Milton R. Young Station near Center, N.D., where most of our electricity is generated. This will include a tour of the open pit mines where huge machines strip the coal and reclaim the land so it can once again be used for agriculture. This is where we will see the new dragline, Liberty. Then, it's off to see Fort Mandan and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. We will end our day by staying at the beautiful Spirit Lake Resort & Casino by Devils Lake, N.D.

On the third day, we will see the *Infinity Wind Energy* generator by Petersburg, N.D., and then tour Minnkota's control center, diesel generator plant and the print shop in Grand Forks. We will be back to Baudette by Wednesday afternoon.

The cost of the tour is just \$75 per person or \$125 per couple. For further details, contact Wayne Haukaas at 634-2202 or 1-888-634-2202. Please use the handy registration form below.

Please print names of participants the way you would like them to appear on your name tags. Your deposit will be refunded if the tour is cancelled or if you should find that you cannot make the trip. We will send further details prior to departure. Return with check for \$75 per person or \$125 per couple to:

North Star Electric Co-op

P.O. Box 719 • Baudette, MN 56623

Name _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone No. _____

Room Preference: Smoking Non-smoking

Have you enjoyed this trip in the past? No/Yes If yes, what year? _____

JANUARY 2007

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Monday through Friday

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or 634-2603

e-mail us at nsec@wiktel.com
Visit our Web site at
www.northstarelectric.coop

North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Mission Statement

To improve the lives of our member-owners and community by responsibly providing electric energy and other beneficial services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance.

Gopher State
One Call



It's the **LAW**
CALL BEFORE YOU DIG
Minnesota Statewide One Call
Notification Center
1-800-252-1166

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held November 29, 2006. All directors were present. They acted upon usual, routine business. In addition, they voted to change the January board meeting to January 10, to approve Manager Hoskins' attendance at the NRECA (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) CEO meeting, to approve Finance Manager Ellis' attendance at the NRECA MIP (management internship program), to approve the spring planting of 3,000 seedlings on North Star property, to accept the audit report, to approve the 2007 Operating Budget, to negotiate a settlement for property damage, and to accept Director Allan Nygaard's resignation.

Guest speaker David Loer, president & CEO of Minnkota Power Cooperative, discussed power supply issues with the board. Load control is expected to total 300-400 hours this winter. Progress continues on the planning of a new power plant, Young 3. The price of wholesale power from the new plant will be 45 percent higher than the two plants built more than 20 years ago. If the new plant is also built to anticipate additional environmental legislation, the price of the wholesale power from the new plant will be nearly double the price of the power produced at the existing plants. The big question is the extent of future environmental legislation. He talked about the cost of new renewable energy, and if mandated, it would also likely increase members' bills. Mr. Loer reported on the 10 percent wholesale power increase just a few months away. The recent extended maintenance outage and environmental scrubbing equipment to be added to the Young 1 plant, have much to do with the current rate increase.

Reports from staff and discussion included the new district boundaries now that the board has reduced from nine to eight board members, the financial report, the progress of the AMR project, the new rates to become effective 12/25/06, the load management control hours, the successful voltage test to ensure that ripple receivers should work properly during peak time, the using of the AMR system to identify off-peak systems not shutting down during peak time, the increased interest in the ETS (electric thermal storage) heating systems that are allowed on off-peak without requiring a backup heat source, the Operation Round Up program, the periodical mailing permit for the new style *Enlightener*, the continued interest in off-peak heat, the Minnkota board meeting, a service territory issue, the line to Norris Camp, a public meeting in Orr to hear about the proposed neutrino-capturing facility near the Ash River Trail, the possibility of implementing a PCA (power cost adjustment) as a means to show the fluctuations in the wholesale component of members' bills, the plans to complete a new cost of service study prior to the next retail rate increase to fairly recover costs from all rate classes, member issues, and the Minnkota board meeting.

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.

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.

- *St. Louis and Koochiching counties:*
Bob Orgon
10111 Roosevelt Rd. S.E.
Bemidji, MN 56601
Phone: (218) 556-3829
Fax: (218) 751-3535
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)
- *Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties:*
Scott Stenvik
16409 State Hwy 1 N.W.
Thief River Falls, MN 56701
Phone: (218) 689-5406
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

We need your meter reading

If the box where you have always written in your meter reading(s) is still open, you must continue to read your meter as near to the 25th as possible. We must receive it by the 5th to avoid an estimated bill. If a bill consecutively estimates twice, the crew will read the meter and a \$15 fee will be added to the account.

For the meters that are communicating with the office through the AMR (automated meter reading) system, that box where you entered your meter reading before, is now filled in with the words, "Co-op Reads." In this instance, you do not have to read your meter.



I have always said that your Cooperative is not against renewable energy, and if they want 25 percent, that's fine, we just did not want a mandate, because that could cost you and me money.

Dan Hoskins, General Manager

Renewable energy

Hi, Folks, I hope all of you had a nice Christmas celebration and enjoyed the coming of a new year. As I write this, the weather is nice, but confusing; it's either 36 degrees or 10, the fisheries are frozen and the fishing has been very good.

It looks like this could be the beginning of a decade of change for most electric utilities, including your Cooperative. I won't keep you long just talk to you a moment and then move on. Let's see, how about if we do a short take on renewable energy.

Sounds like there will be another push for a renewable mandate for our industry, and it sounds like the Governor is behind it, also, but that's okay. If we are going into this mandate, it is best that all are on the same page. The mandate looks like it could be 25 percent renewable energy by the year 2025, or 20 by 2020 or 25 by 2020; any way you look at it, I believe there will be a mandate. I have always said that your Cooperative is not against renewable energy, and if they want 25 percent, that's fine, we just did not want a mandate, because that could cost you and me money.

Take wind energy, for instance. First of all, it costs about 3.5 cents to 5.5 cents just to produce a kWh from wind, and no, it is not free; it's just free of most emissions. Then there is the funding called subsidization, which helps fund all these projects. Now, if there is a mandate and the government decides to do away with the subsidy, you can add a few more cents onto each kWh produced, and that cost will be ours, also, but the wind towers are improving. Their efficiency is at about 40 percent.

Because of the efficiency and reliability of the wind turbines, you still have to have hard line backup, but there is an answer for that, also, natural gas-fired power plants. Sure, you can fire them

up when needed and the emissions are less, which is another big topic, but we will stay here for a short time. The cost of natural gas to coal is a large factor, but if you are required to have your coal shipped by rail, then there is another cost factor, shipping costs. (435-25-008-03 Ken Henrikson/Milo Larson) So, in short, although wind energy is producing economics and jobs for a lot of different areas, I still have a hard time believing that it is the answer to renewable energy, but everyone is jumping on the bandwagon, so, all aboard!

One more thing before I step down off the wagon and on good old Mother Earth; you know when they talk renewable energy, isn't it amazing that wind is renewable, solar (sun) is renewable, garbage is renewable, manure is renewable, but hydro (water) is not. Go figure!

Let's finish up here and talk about Minnkota Power Cooperative, our G&T (generation and transmission supplier), for a few seconds. Minnkota works hard to maintain some of the lowest wholesale rates in the nation. Our G&T is under pressure, as well as most other G&Ts in this country, to produce more and more

renewable energy. So, those folks at Minnkota are working diligently to come up with a way to satisfy the possible mandates that are headed this way, but not without consequences.

With all of their work and cost on this renewable energy area to satisfy the upcoming mandates or current 10 percent Renewable Energy Objective (REO), plus the work and cost on cutting emissions on the existing power plants to satisfy environmentalists, and the work and cost on the possible new power plant in the future to help satisfy energy needs, and all of this within the next 10 years, it looks like the low wholesale rates that we have enjoyed in the past could be on the rise. Of course, that is only speculation, and we know that we will have to take one year at a time, and as we know, time changes everything!

But whatever we have to do, or Minnkota has to do, I can honestly tell you that your Cooperative will do its part and its best to maintain the lowest cost of energy to you with our most reliable and dependable service.

God Bless you and our Troops,

Reliable backup systems a must!

Because increased load control hours are predicted in the future, electric off-peak heating installations must be capable of 600 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.

Up and running

Young 1 fine tuned for greater efficiency

Young 1 at the Milton R. Young Station is poised for a more efficient future. The unit produces low-cost, reliable electricity for customers served by the 11 member-owners of Minnkota Power Cooperative.

With the replacement of most of the inner workings of the turbine along with other projects that were completed during the recent scheduled maintenance outage, the 255-megawatt (MW) plant is capable of generating up to an additional 5 MW without an increase in fuel consumption or emissions. Monitoring and testing is still ongoing after start-up to determine the actual increase in efficiency.

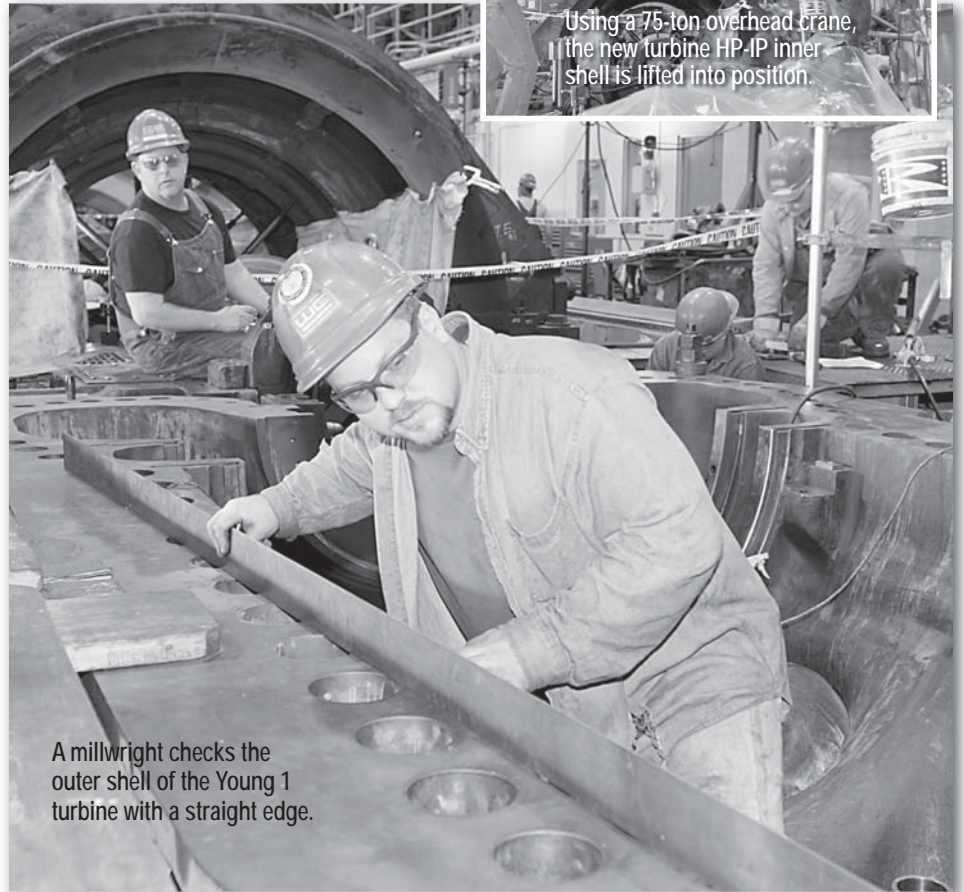
“We replaced the entire high-pressure and intermediate-pressure sections of the turbine at one time rather than replacing individual pieces of those sections over a period of time,” said Tom Anseth, plant manager - Maintenance. “The original General Electric high-pressure and intermediate-pressure rotors, turbine blades and stationary diaphragms were all taken out and replaced with new components designed by ALSTOM, a global company with headquarters in France and offices worldwide.”

Same outside, new inside

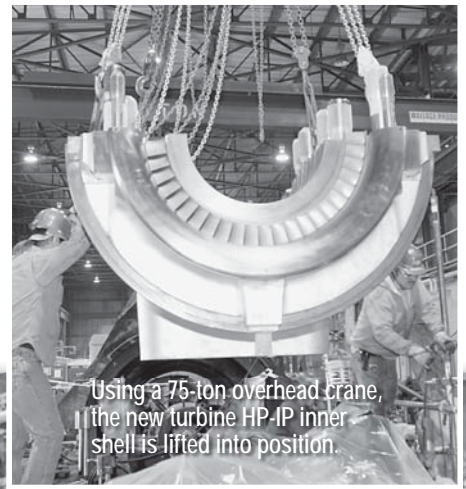
Looking at the Young 1 turbine from the outside, it may appear that nothing has changed. But inside, it is entirely new and more efficient.

“Greater efficiencies justify the cost of this project,” Anseth said. “Minnkota would have replaced these components over a period of time anyway, but doing it that way would not achieve the improved efficiency of doing it all at once. Essentially, everything has been modified or replaced.”

The outage, which was conducted over a period of six-plus weeks starting on Sept. 25, also included extensive boiler work plus maintenance of the coal and ash handling systems. (242-45-058-09 Jamie Stanton) During the outage, Young 1 was thoroughly inspected, which allowed Minnkota to address any additional issues while the unit was off line.



A millwright checks the outer shell of the Young 1 turbine with a straight edge.



Using a 75-ton overhead crane, the new turbine HP-IP inner shell is lifted into position.

Due to final machining of the HP-IP inner to outer shell and the low-pressure diaphragms, the outage was extended beyond the projected Nov. 1 return to production. It was discovered that the low-pressure steam seals were manufactured incorrectly, requiring piping changes inside the low-pressure turbine.

Tight tolerances

The vibration problems that developed in the turbine occurred because of efforts to make the new seals fit as tight as possible.

“We want to have very tight clearances, because if steam is leaking through the seal, it is not going through the blade and not making power,” Anseth said, noting that start-up of the unit is a lot like breaking in a new pair of shoes.

“When we are starting with a re-

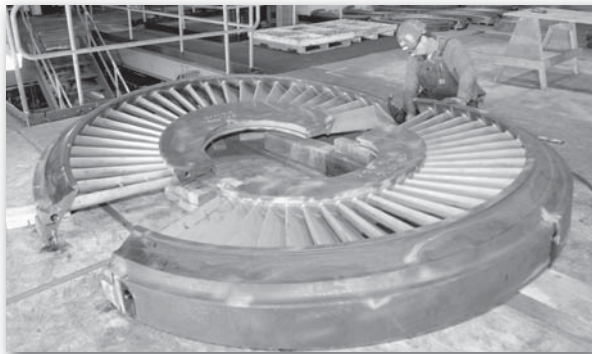
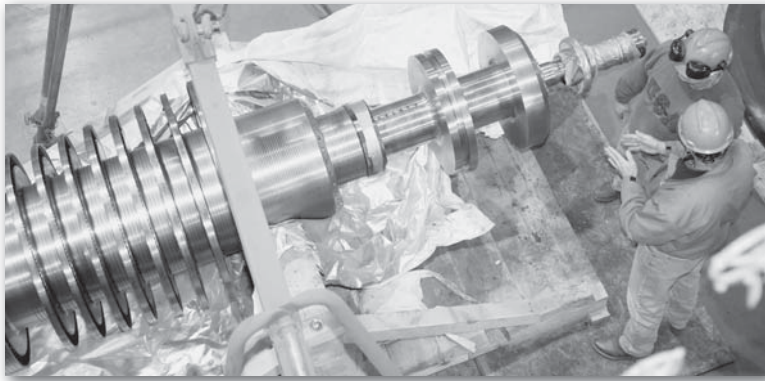
ally cold machine, which then heats up to 1,000 degrees in some areas and 800 degrees and 600 degrees in other areas, things have to be just perfect,” he explained. “If they aren’t, some of the tight clearances will start to rub and show up in vibration on the bearings.”

Anseth noted that during a couple start-up attempts, the vibration was so excessive that the tight clearances would have opened up more than desired if the unit had not been shut down.

“But the good news is we have now achieved full load,” Anseth stated. “I don’t know if we have ever had a start-up after a major seal replacement where we didn’t have some type of rubbing problem. We simply had to start and stop a few times.”

The gain in power production, according to Stu Libby, plant manager - Op-

Bruce Isaak, top, Young Station mechanical maintenance supervisor, and Rod Eckroth, maintenance superintendent, discuss the benefits of the new HP-IP turbine rotor.



A millwright cleans and inspects turbine diaphragms before installation.

erations, relates to a reduction in the heat rate.

“A reduction in the heat rate means more efficiency and that equates to additional generation with no increase in fuel,” Libby explained.

The replacement of the turbine components fits well with Minnkota’s objective to maintain and improve its generation and transmission resources over their life cycle.

“It didn’t make sense to go another 10 to 15 years

before changing these components out,” Libby said. “Doing it that way would just reduce the amount of time Minnkota has to recapture the benefits of the new equipment.”

Safe, successful outage

The outage required some 82,000 hours of work that was provided by 35 contractors, in addition to Minnkota plant employees.

“Overall, the projects went very well and it was a safe outage. We had only a few injuries and those that we did have were minor,” said Dale Toman, outage and resource coordinator.

The success of the outage was the result of the long-term planning that preceded it, as well as the coordination of work that was accomplished during it.

“We had good cooperation and teamwork from all of the contractors,” Toman said. “At the peak of the outage, we had 277 contractor personnel on site. In combination with plant employees, we had close to 450 people focused on making Young 1 an even more efficient generation source for Minnkota.”

Copper Theft is Deadly

Impacts from illegal activity are far-reaching

It’s a problem that has become an epidemic in the utility industry. Across the country, increasing incidences of copper theft are met with rising fatalities and outages to thousands of people.

As recently as November 2006, more than 15 states reported at least one or more fatalities. Nevada reported a record 43 break-ins resulting in injuries at substations across the state in a 30-day period. Authorities in Detroit are still trying to find the identity of a man found electrocuted beneath a power line on Nov. 8, 2006. The man was burned beyond recognition.

“Stealing material from a substation or utility pole can cause not only serious injuries and death, but extensive outages, fires and explosions – consequences that impact innocent people,” says Molly Hall, Safe Electricity Executive Director. “The minimum damage that can occur is an outage, which may affect thousands of individuals.”

These deaths and damages are completely unnecessary, and they could

happen anywhere.

“People must be aware of this kind of theft and that tampering with electric power facilities can result in extremely dangerous situations,” says Hall. “Always alert your utility provider, North Star Electric Cooperative, when you see or suspect suspicious activity.”

Safe Electricity offers these tips to help safeguard against electrical dangers and prevent copper theft:

- Never enter or touch equipment inside a substation; stay away from power lines and anything touching a power line.
- If you notice anything unusual with electric facilities, such as an open substation gate, open equipment, hanging wire, etc., contact your electric utility immediately.
- If you see anyone around electric substations or electric facilities other than utility personnel or contractors, call the police.
- Install motion-sensor lights on the outside of your house and business to deter possible thieves.

- Store tools and wire cutters in a secure location, and never leave them out while away.

- If you work in construction, do not leave any wires unattended or leave loose wire at the job site, especially overnight. Consider hiring a night security guard.

- Help spread the word about the deadly consequences that can result from trying to steal copper.

Copper theft is not harmless. Dealing with any metal and electricity is a dangerous combination, especially when it is done without permission or training, and places the thief and others in danger.

“If you think that stealing electric wire is a quick way to earn some easy money, think again,” says Hall. “The value of metal is not worth losing a life.”

For more information, visit www.SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is an electrical safety public awareness program supported by a coalition of several dozen organizations, including electric utilities, educators and other entities committed to promoting electrical safety.

Cold weather disconnects and the 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, weather-

ization, 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 percent 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. (242-42-022-01 George L Olson) 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 investigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied when a customer does not respond to a discon-

nection 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.

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.

Local 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

❄️ 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 Co-operative-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.

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).



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
634-2642

**Northwest Community
Action Council**
P.O. Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
800-568-5329

**Koochiching County
Community Services**
1000 5th St.
International Falls, MN 56649
283-7000

**Kootasca Community
Action, Inc.**
2232 2nd Ave. E.
P.O. Box 44
International Falls, MN 56649
283-9491 or 800-559-9491

**Kootasca Community
Action, Inc.**
1213 SE 2nd Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984
800-422-0312

**Arrowhead Economic
Opportunity Agency**
702 3rd Ave. S.
Virginia, MN 55792-2797
800-662-5711

Employee Sue Williams: *Littlefork District Office Supervisor*

If you have made a call to our Littlefork office during the past 18 years or so, you have probably talked with Sue. Sue began her employment at North Star part time in 1988 and went full time in 1990. What she likes best about her job is the variety of work that it involves. When the phone rings, she does not know if the caller wants to report an outage, has a question on a new service, load management, billing or other services that we provide. If she does not have the answer, she will find someone that does.

After graduating from Littlefork/Big Falls High School, she attended College at Hibbing and Rainy River, taking accounting and clerical courses and obtained her degree.

Sue's husband, Greg, works for the Koochi-

ching County Highway Department. Their daughter, Amanda, is attending her 4th year of college at the University of Minnesota studying natural resources, and their son, Kory, a 10th grader at Littlefork/Big Falls High School, enjoys snowmobiling and 4-wheeling.

On the weekends, one can find her 4-wheeling, snowmobiling or occasionally fishing with her family at their cabin on the Big Fork River. They love it there and spend as much time there as possible.

Other hobbies include doing crafts and flower gardening. Traveling is also a family favorite. The Williams love taking family trips and seeing new places. So far, their favorite was a cruise to Jamaica.



Contractor training set for February 2007

Minnkota Power Cooperative and the associated distribution systems will once again be hosting a Professional Contractor Program in 2007. This marks the 19th year of the successful program, aimed at providing area trade allies with the best in building and electrical practices.

The program is scheduled to begin Friday, Feb. 2, at the Doublewood Inn in Fargo, N.D. The program then moves to the Hampton Inn in Bemidji, Minn., on Wednesday, Feb. 7, and concludes at the Ramada Inn, Grand Forks, N.D., on Feb. 8.

Registration begins at 7:15 a.m. each day. Courses begin at 8 a.m. and conclude at 5 p.m. The cost is \$60 per attendee, and includes a noon lunch. Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credits will be available for electrical and building contractors.

A brochure, which details the course descriptions and includes a registration form, was mailed in early January 2007. The brochures are also posted on Minnkota's Web site www.minnkota.com.

For more information about the program, contact Lisa Pickard, Minnkota communications/member services specialist, at (701) 795-4218 or e-mail lpickard@minnkota.com.



In the October *Enlightener*, we asked members for help in verifying that their co-op number on their new AMR meter matched what was on their electric bill. We held a drawing from the members that responded for a \$100 credit on their electric bill. Stan Desrosier of Roosevelt was the lucky winner.