



The winter heating season is here and North Star Electric members should expect load management to be about the same as the last two years.

Winter load management primarily occurs during December and January, but members may have noticed a slight increase during the fall months due to the planned maintenance outage on the Milton R. Young 2 generating plant. With limited outage time planned for the rest of the winter, adequate resources exist to limit control hours.

During generator maintenance outages and peak demand periods, Minnkota makes major purchases from the wholesale energy market. Ample power is available for purchase through the market, but it's not always at an affordable price. By controlling demand during these high-cost periods, affordable rates for all members are

maintained and the construction of new generation just to cover peak loads is avoided.

The off-peak electric heating program is for members who use electricity to heat their homes, while still having a non-electric backup heating source. Members continue to heat their homes with their electric heating system, but during periods of peak electric usage, their electric heating is shut off and their backup system is used.

The off-peak program is entering its 35th year. During that time, it has

yielded significant financial savings for the Joint System.

Cost-effective program

The choice to control off-peak loads is an economic one. By controlling peak loads during high-cost periods, members are effectively protected from the volatility of the wholesale energy market.

"The decision on whether to purchase energy from the market or control off-peak loads is based on the current market price, along

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McLennan selected as CEO

The Minnkota board of directors has selected Robert "Mac" McLennan to replace David Loer as Minnkota President & CEO, effective Jan. 10, 2011.

McLennan was previously employed by Tri-State Generation & Transmission Association based in Westminster, Colo., as senior vice president of external affairs & member relations. In that position he focused on member relations, corporate planning, environmental compliance and development of business strategies. He also worked for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) as director of environmental affairs and was an assistant to the chief of staff for Sen. Byron Dorgan. He is a graduate of Jamestown College in Jamestown, N.D.



Robert "Mac" McLennan

JANUARY 2011

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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.

Members' corner

We added a section called the members' corner. What we would like is for members to send in questions about your electric cooperative, and we will answer them for you. Please give us your name and a phone number in case we need to clarify the question, and send them to North Star Electric, PO Box 719, Baudette, MN, 56623, Attn: Wayne.

Highlights from the **BOARDROOM**

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held Dec. 1. The board acted upon usual, routine business and voted to approve the Use Agreement with MState Technical College regarding its use of North Star property, to increase the monthly fixed charge 3 percent, which is \$1/month in most cases, and to update the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policies.

Staff reports were provided and included the financial report, testing the large power and three-phase meters, projected load control, testing of the load management equipment, energy conservation, Operation Round Up, the NOvA project, a line extension for a MnDOT radio tower, work plan projects for 2011 and pole attachment billing.

The 2011 operating budget was reviewed in detail. With significantly

rising wholesale rates and declining electric usage, the average retail rate will be increasing, possibly in the range of 12 to 13 percent. This would include a 15.5 percent increase in the price per kWh effective March 20, 2011, and a 3 percent increase (\$1/month) in the fixed charge effective Dec. 20, 2010.

Significant discussion was held regarding the pressures on wholesale rates, the resulting increases and the impact on North Star members.

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.

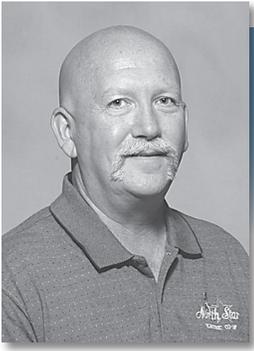
• **St. Louis and Koochiching counties:**
Bob Orgon
10111 Roosevelt Rd. S.E.
Bemidji, MN 56601
Phone: (218) 556-3829
Fax: (218) 333-0451
7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

• **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 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

Reliable backup systems a must!

Electric off-peak heating systems must be capable of 500 hours or more of interruption each winter season, although this year we are expecting only 270 hours of control. "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.



Dan Hoskins
General Manager

Manager's Report

“He always had a terrific connection with the member-owners and his compassion went above and beyond that of a lot of folks.”

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with a heavy heart that I visit with all of you about one of our board directors. LJ Anderson passed away Sunday morning, Dec. 26, but it is also with pride that I bring you this article about a friend, a neighbor and a North Star Electric family member. I would like to take a minute to tell you what kind of a person we thought LJ was, and that will give you a very good idea of what it takes to be a board member at North Star Electric Cooperative.

LJ was very competent. His experience as a lineman for PKM Electric Cooperative in Warren, Minn., and then his business venture of owning and operating his own underground electrical cable plowing business made him invaluable in his decision-making at our cooperative. He was the epitome of a director when it came to our industry, which made his decisions very informative for the other board members.

His ambition of going from a lineman to owning his own contracting business proved that LJ was for improvement and modernization, which comes with being innovative. The AMI system that we have at North Star was studied and thought through, and LJ's input into this technology move was of utmost importance because of his industry experience and knowledge.

LJ was very committed to his director position on the board. His dedication to that director's seat was his pledge and promise to the member-owners of his district and the entire membership of North Star Electric, that they had his assurance he would have their best interest in mind at all times.

Communication was right at the top of the list for LJ. He could talk to you about anything and then would sit and listen to what you had to say. And when he had something to say, I don't think you could ask for someone to be any clearer. He was precise about his decisions and spoke with intelligence about items that came up during discussion at the board table and did it with simplicity.

LJ had a connection with folks that bonded his relationship with the member-owners of his district to a point that the difference between being a North Star director and being a friend was hard to distinguish. He always had a terrific connection with the member-owners and his compassion went above and beyond that of a lot of folks. He had concern for them; his kindness was just overwhelming and his decisions at

the board table were always with compassion for his neighbors as well as all North Star member-owners.

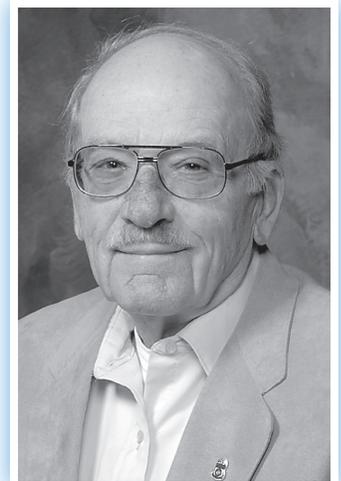
His steadiness and reliability were always there. When we were able to sit down and visit about issues that faced North Star, he was always calm, understanding and thought things through before making any decisions. This was probably the most difficult of all because LJ knew: “You have to do what is right, not what is easy.” LJ would be the first to tell the board that we must have some sort of moral fiber when making difficult decisions, but that we have to be fair and impartial and make the decision that is in the best interest of the cooperative.

LJ's role as a director really showed through by his participation at the cooperative's board table. His knowledge of the industry and his knowledge obtained from seminars, which he attended to become a certified director, made his contribution at the table invaluable. The decisions that LJ made at the board table were made with his personal integrity for all member-owners of North Star. He never considered it work; he considered it an honor that was bestowed on him by the members of his district.

LJ, we are going to miss you at the board table; the decisions you helped make, the discussions you helped lead and the knowledge that you shared. I will miss the visits we had in my office, the greetings in town when we met by chance and the good times as well as the not-so-good times at the board table.

But I know for certain, if the good Lord needs his lights fixed, or there is a pole to crawl, some “under-cloud” cable to fix up there, or just someone to talk with, he just got a real dandy in you!

God Bless you, Our Troops,
and LJ's family,
Dan



Winter load management



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with season-to-date energy purchases and control hours,” said Todd Sailer, Minnkota energy supply manager.

The off-peak program can provide great savings to the individual user as well. For members interested in a way to reduce their home electric heating costs, the program provides a much lower rate — about half of the standard retail rate.

“The ability to manage costs and plan for the heating season is one of the

many benefits of the off-peak electric heating program,” Sailer said. “With a good backup heating system properly installed and maintained, off-peak customers shouldn’t notice a difference in comfort level when the load control system is called to operate.”

Staying up to date

The best way for off-peak members to keep up with the program is through

the load management website. The website has recently been upgraded to better serve members and provide instant updates on the status of load control activity. It will continue to show the current state of load control, recent control history and the last switching cycle (121-34-012-03, Donald Schoewe). Members are also able to review the last 10 years of load control.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

North Star Electric Cooperative, Incorporated is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

The person responsible for coordinating this organization’s nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Ann Ellis, Finance 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 from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call toll free (866)632-9992 (voice) or (800)877-8339 (TDD) or (866)377-8642 (relay voice users). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

Contractor training set for February

Minnkota Power Cooperative and the associated systems will host a contractor training program again in 2011. This marks the 23rd year of the successful program, which is aimed at providing area trade allies with the latest information in building and electrical practices.

The workshops begin Wednesday, Feb. 2, at the Doublewood Inn, Fargo, N.D. The training then moves to the Hampton Inn, Bemidji, Minn., on Wednesday, Feb. 9, and concludes at the Ramada Inn, Grand Forks, N.D., on Thursday, Feb. 10.

For more information about the program, contact Sue Black, Minnkota communications/member services specialist, at (701) 795-4292 or e-mail questions to sblack@minnkota.com.

Beware of invitations selling energy-saving products

Electric cooperative members across Minnesota have been receiving postcards offering a free dinner in exchange for sitting through a presentation that can save you up to 45 percent on your electric bills.

One product that is being offered is a device claiming to correct the lag in the electrical current that happens when a power motor, such as the refrigerator, starts up. These ‘power factor’ units claim to cut monthly power usage by 10,000 to 20,000 watt-hours. Remember, energy is billed in kilowatt-hours (not watt-hours) so the savings amount is just a couple dollars at the most. These units sell from

\$200 to several thousand dollars.

Another product is a reflective sheet that sellers claim will save significant dollars on energy bills when installed in the attic space. The idea is to reflect heat that would come through the roofing, through the insulation and into your home and, as a result, require additional air conditioning costs.

According to Bruce Nelson, senior engineer for the State Energy Office, “Reflective sheets may slightly reduce cooling load in the summer, but its benefits for reducing heat losses in the winter are negligible. We know that Minnesota

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Energy efficiency: helping you take a bite out of your electric bill

When I go to the grocery store, I carry a list with me. Otherwise, I'm bound to forget something.

The same goes for the hardware store when I want to undertake some projects around the house. What materials do I need? And if the work involves weatherization, will it really help me save money on my electric bill?

Generally, the answer to that last question is a resounding "yes." Even small energy efficiency measures will save money. For as little as \$2, the cost of an outlet and switch plate insulator kit, you can begin to drastically improve comfort around your residence.

What areas should you focus on? Start with the basics: applying weatherstripping and caulk around doors and windows, replacing traditional incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) and insulating your water heater. Then look at some bigger expenditures: adding insulation to your attic, installing a programmable thermostat and sealing ductwork. You can find even more ways to save on the U.S. Department of Energy's website EnergySavers.gov. We at North Star Electric are committed to doing everything possible to keep your electric bills affordable. And we're controlling costs through innovation – our energy efficiency programs are just one way we can help you manage your energy use.

For more information about these projects and other energy efficiency programs, visit North Star Cooperative at www.northstarelectric.coop or call 888-634-2202. It's just one more way we're looking out for you.

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 (252-12-028-03, Charles Murray). 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).

❄️ Snowmobilers ❄️

Beware of hazards! Respect property rights!

of way. When snowmobiling, be aware of these obstacles. Guy wires need special attention as they can be difficult to see.

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

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.

Snowfall blankets climate debate

The belief that man-made greenhouse gases are destroying Earth's climate is an incredibly flexible idea. Last winter, warmer weather during the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics and record snowfall along the East Coast were both attributed to global warming.

So what have the climate alarmists done? Most advocates of man-made global warming have added "heavy snowfall" to the list of impacts from climate change. Now both heavy snow and the lack of snow are supposedly evidence of global warming.

In order to better understand possible triggers of last year's weather, scientists from Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory analyzed more than 50 years of snow data as well as measurements of atmospheric pressure and sea-surface temperatures. They found that a combination of El Niño with an irregular period of decreased variability in atmospheric pressure across the North Atlantic (known as the North Atlantic oscillation) frequently results in heavy snow in the mid-Atlantic region, *The Scientific American* reports.

"What happened this past winter has nothing to do with climate change," says Richard Seager, senior research scientist and lead author of the study. "Snowy winters like this will just remain a seasonal surprise that you can't predict. It's a complicated system out there. We have to expect the unexpected."

Unfortunately, scientists will be unable to use this information to anticipate when massive snowstorms are likely to occur. Seager says that El Niño events are predictable up to a year in ad-

vance, because they are related to slowly evolving sea-surface conditions over the Pacific Ocean. By contrast, the NAO is primarily an atmospheric phenomenon, and is only predictable to the same extent as weather forecasting.

Though we've seen several unusual weather patterns in recent years, it's important to separate individual instances of extreme weather from climate change, *Newsweek* says. Scientists say it's impossible to attribute one storm, even a massive one, to global warming.

Winter outlook

AccuWeather.com Chief Meteorologist Joe Bastardi is predicting that the worst of winter's cold and snow will be from the Pacific Northwest into the northern Plains and western Great Lakes. That will put cities like Seattle, which escaped with a mild winter last year, colder and snowier this year. Fargo and Minneapolis are also expected to receive above-normal winter snowfall.

Advocates for global warming use these local weather variations, and increasingly the term "climate volatility," to raise alarm. Natural local weather events, selectively amplified, provide an endless promotion to fast-track climate change legislation.

Ultimately, however, it's a mistake to use any one storm — or even a season's worth of storms — to prove climate change (428-34-007-01, Larry Willey). Weather is what will happen next week, while climate is what will happen over the next decades and centuries. And our inability to predict a long way into the future prevents scientists from being able to make accurate projections about global climate.

Staff Report

Ann Ellis
Manager of Finance
and Administration



With almost every recent *Enlightener* focusing on rising rates, the reasons for it and what we are doing locally to cut back, I really didn't want to have to talk about rates again when my turn came up for writing the staff report. But because the fixed charge has increased \$1/month effective Dec. 20, 2010, I do need to make a mention of at least that. The increase in the price per kilowatt-hour (kWh) will appear on your April bill. Minnkota Power Cooperative will set a new wholesale rate effective March 20, and that number will drive your retail increase. Our estimate is that retail bills in 2011 will average 12.5 percent higher than in 2010.

High bills

Did you open your bill last month and raise your eyebrows? I know I did. I first looked at my off-peak usage. Yep, it was up, and for two reasons. First, we had a very cold snap of weather in late November, and second, we had less load control, which is a good thing. Even though it means a larger electric bill, it means I was able to use my less expensive off-peak electricity more often than my propane backup. As I write this article in late December, we have experienced just 51 hours of load control compared to 102 hours last year.

The third factor in the higher bill was the rate increase from last March. If you've been following the articles in the *Enlightener*, you know why rates are rising. If you want to refresh your memory, all of the past newsletters are on

our website: www.northstarelectric.coop.

Year-end wrap-up

Although the books have not been closed for the year, we have a pretty good idea that, in spite of a sizeable loss in kWh sales, we have been able to cut expenses to the point of being on-target to reach our margin goal (revenue in excess of expenses). Some costs we can continue to avoid; however, most cannot be ignored for long. We must continue to keep our electric distribution system in good shape in order to deliver reliable and safe electricity to you, our member-owners.

In memory

I know Dan is writing about LJ Anderson, but I also want to honor his memory. Although a transplant from Warren, Minn., he became a "local" early on. A few of the things I admired most about LJ was his common sense approach to situations, his genuine caring for others and a phrase that has always stuck in my mind. When I first got to know LJ, his response to the typical "How are you?" question always was, "I've never had a bad day." To me, this is a testament to the type of person he was. He made a choice to take whatever the day had to give and look for the positive within it. His expertise, gentle wisdom and contributions will be sorely missed in our boardroom and community.



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

NOTICE TO COGENERATORS

In compliance with Minnesota Adopted Rules Relating to Cogeneration and small Power Production, chapter 7835, North Star Electric Cooperative is required to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers that satisfy the conditions of a Qualifying Facility. North Star Electric has available and will provide free information to all interested members regarding rates and interconnection requirements. An application for interconnection is required for a Qualifying Facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the cooperative.

Any disputes over interconnections, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. For more information, please call Wayne Haukaas at 218-634-2202.

Energy-saving devices can be *too good to be true*

“If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.” That saying rings especially true when it comes to claims about energy-saving devices, particularly those that indicate they can dramatically cut your heating and cooling costs.

Ads made to look like news stories abound for “Amish-style” fireplaces, a “miracle device” that supposedly can slash your heating bills. In actuality, the appliance is simply a space heater hidden inside a false fireplace with a wooden mantel.

If you were to use a space heater eight hours a day, five days a week for a month, it would cost approximately \$27. But whether it can cut your heating bill depends on several factors.

Space heaters only warm a small area.

You may save some money if you turn down the thermostat (sometimes to as low as 50 degrees Fahrenheit), site the space heater in a room with people in it and then close off that room from the rest of the house. But space heaters cannot come close to replacing energy-efficient central heating or weatherization improvements. So while it’s technically possible to cut your heating bill by 50 percent using space heaters, for most people, it’s impractical.

On the flip side are evaporative coolers that say they will inexpensively cool a room in your home. The inside of the unit

consists of cold water and frozen ice packs, like you would use in a lunch box. The water wets a curtain; a fan blows air through the curtain and over the ice packs, theoretically providing a cool breeze. Evaporative coolers operate best in low-humidity regions.

But do they actually work? A *Consumer Reports* experiment found that even in desert-like conditions, one device cooled a test room only 2 degrees over four hours.

“When it comes to saving energy, there are no magic solutions,” asserts Brian Sloboda, senior program manager for energy efficiency at the Cooperative Research Network, the research arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. “Anyone promising to slash your utility bill by double digits is stretching the truth to the breaking point. Buying ENERGY STAR-rated appliances,

unplugging battery chargers and other ‘vampire’ electronics and sealing air leaks around windows and doors are some of the best ways to save money and energy.”

The bottom line: there’s no substitute for good old-fashioned energy efficiency measures like weatherstripping around doors, caulking around windows, adding insulation to your attic, plugging leaks in ductwork and regularly cleaning or replacing furnace filters.

Sources: *ConsumerAffairs.com*, *Cooperative Research Network*, *Consumer Reports*



Beware of invitations continued from page 4

attics do not contain sunlamps or have sunlight shining down on the insulation. Rather, the roof stops solar radiation, and while some energy is re-radiated from the underside of the roof, it is at a dramatically lower energy level.” Nelson goes on to say, “Reflective insulation in attics may be an excellent idea for homes in the Sunbelt states, but it saves little, if any, energy in Minnesota. Adding conventional attic insulation would be a much better option for saving energy.”

Sales pitches like these combine little understood technology with marketing shrewdness to confuse people, often the elderly. Many different ways do exist to save on your energy

bill, ranging from turning off unused lights to buying energy-efficient appliances. Remember, if it seems too good to be true — it probably is.

If you have questions about a product and claims being made about any product, please call us at 634-2202 or 888-634-2202 during regular business hours. You may also contact the Minnesota Office of Energy Security at 800-657-3710 or e-mail: energy.info@state.mn.us, or, contact the Minnesota Better Business Bureau at 800-646-6222 or e-mail: ask@thefirstbbb.org.

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