

The Enlightener



North Star
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



VOLUME 51 NUMBER 2

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

FEBRUARY 2006

March is food shelf month

Donations from North Star Electric help local food shelves

North Star Electric is working with Lake of the Woods Food Shelf and the Fall's Hunger Coalition by collecting money and food donations to help our neighbors in need. In 2005, North Star collected and donated, equally between the two organizations, 231 pounds of food and \$2,987.

The money we collected was from the sale of compact fluorescent lamps, which we sold for \$1. each. A 26-watt compact fluorescent lamp will give off the same amount of light as a standard 100-watt incandescent lamp and can last up to 10 times longer. The selling of the compact fluorescent lamps was one part of the Conservation Improvement Program that we are doing for the Minnesota Department of Commerce.



Dan Hoskins, North Star Electric General Manager, presents a check to Jean Houska and Jan Turban representing the Fall's Hunger Coalition.



Dan Hoskins, North Star Electric General Manager, presents a check to Bernice Merschman representing the Lake of the Woods Food Shelf.

“Since 2001, there has been a statewide increase of 40 percent in food shelf usage.”

—Hunger Solutions Minnesota

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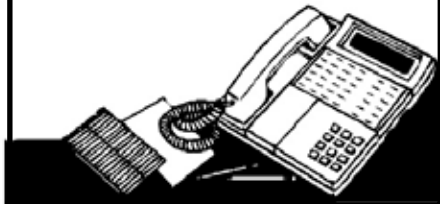
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**Electrical
after-hours
emergencies
1-888-6OUTAGE
(1-888-668-8243)
634-2603**



December 2005

Operating Report

Revenue (Includes annual Seasonal Billing)	\$ 1,086,967
Cost of Power	\$ 441,398
Operation, Maintenance, Administration	\$ 205,172
Depreciation and Interest	\$ 140,718
Margin on Operations	\$ 299,679
Average use per Residential	2,207
Total kWhs Sold	15,244,807

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 527 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 an 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 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.



Nice weather helps keep heating costs lower

By Dan Hoskins
General Manager

You know, I like to read the news, and with all the devastation in the world, isn't it nice to have good news in our area such as the success of the Marvin Window Company. I would like to congratulate the Marvin family in Warroad and their company, Marvin Windows, and all their employees for an outstanding and successful 2005. That company has been successful for many years, and that is a tribute to the Marvin family and their employees. Congratulations!

New generation

Did you read last month's *Enlightener* article on the possibility of a new Minnkota power plant? Although it is just in the discussion stage right now, there are a few things that need to happen before the project would come before the Minnkota board of directors for a vote in 2008. First of all, and most importantly, is this new generating plant warranted?

We just completed a 10-year Power Requirements Study with Minnkota this past month; this

was done by an outside firm, Clearspring Energy Consultants. The 11 electric cooperative owners and Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA), which serves 12 municipal utilities, all have a combined projected load growth of approximately 2.4 percent over the next 10 years, which would constitute building a new generating plant. Your Cooperative's energy use is expected to grow 2.5 percent per year for the next 10 years.

Load control

Have you noticed that the load control hours haven't been quite as often so far this season? There are some contributing factors, such as the mild weather we have been having this winter and the fact that the Schedule L power has not stayed through the roof. (Orville O. Fish 131-31-002-07) Oh, yeah, it has gone through the roof a few times, but it doesn't stay there, and

Minnkota is able to buy power on the energy market and, therefore, avoid some load control hours. I believe the control hours for dual heat stand at 181 hours as of this date, (02-02-06), and that is 204 hours less than the total hours (385) on this date last year. Keep up the good work, Minnkota, (and Mother Nature)!

Nicer weather

One thing about the weather being so nice is that it does assist everyone with their heating bills, which were projected earlier to be awfully high, but this mild weather has kept them down. Oh, by the way, the nice

weather did open up the Rainy River by Birchdale, and there were even fishermen fishing from boats in January. It just doesn't seem right, fishing in January from a boat in northern Minnesota! I'll take the fish house and heater; I

have done some fishing lately also, and right now, I would have to say the fish are winning the battle.

I would like to end this article by saying Thank You to Jim Levasseur for 33+ years of service in our Operations Department. Jim retired at the end of January, and his work and service for the Cooperative will be missed. Good luck, Jim, on your retirement, and may you be blessed with many long, healthy retirement years.

"Your Cooperative's energy use is expected to grow 2.5 percent per year for the next 10 years."
-Dan Hoskins

God Bless you and our Troops,

Dan

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 county:*
Lee Herseth
10078 Gappa Road
Ray, MN 56669
Phone: (218) 875-3028
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)
- *Roseau, Lake of the Woods and Koochiching counties:*
William Crunden
29513 Corlan Dr. N.E.
Blackduck, MN 56630
Phone: (218) 835-8567
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)



Office notes

From Ann Ellis, Manager of Finance and Administration

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement”
~ Helen Keller

First bill with rate realignment

For most of you, the new rates used to calculate this bill will show a decrease in your energy costs. Although the higher fixed charge may make you wonder, don't forget to look at the reduced cost of the kWhs. The average member will see a \$10 reduction in their non-off-peak costs.

The rate realignment affects only GSP (general single phase) and seasonal accounts.

On a separate note, the off-peak rate has increased, as reported to you earlier. (Michael Pfeifer 556-45-064-08) Minnkota Power Cooperative, our power supplier, decided that charging a little extra to generate revenue to purchase higher-cost power during peak times, therefore reducing the number of off-peak control hours, was a wise move, and we agree.

At your service, we remain . . .

Employee Ron Lee: Helping to keep the power on



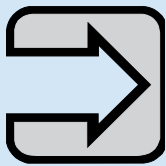
For Ron Lee, line crew subforeman at our Littlefork office, keeping the power on for our members is Priority #1. And since July of 1982, he has been doing just that! Ron did not always plan on being a lineman. After graduating from high school in Littlefork, Ron went to Bemidji AVTI for carpentry and worked as a carpenter in the Littlefork and International Falls areas for a few years. In 1981, he decided to go back to school, but this time he went to Wadena AVTI to become a lineman. He was hired by North Star on July 1, 1982, as an apprentice lineman, worked his way up to journeyman lineman and is now the subforeman for the Littlefork shop.

Ron is a lifelong resident of the Littlefork area where he lives with his wife, Cathy. They have four grown children and three grandchildren. In Ron's spare time, he enjoys doing some carpentry work, hunting, fishing and working on his yard with his wife. Of course, they do make some trips to visit the grandkids!

Don't become a power line casualty

When electricity comes into contact with a person or something he or she is touching, the results can be deadly. The unfortunate electrical contact accident and the deaths of four Boy Scout leaders in Virginia last July remind us of just how powerful electricity can be.

- Use wooden or fiberglass ladders instead of metal. Never place a ladder or antenna where it can fall onto a power line. Carry ladders and long-handled tools low enough to avoid contacting overhead power lines.
- Before digging into the ground, always call Gopher State One Call, 1-800-252-1166 at least 24 hours in advance, to have underground lines marked.
- Do not plant trees under power lines. If a tree has lines running through it, do not climb it or build anything in it. Please call North Star Electric to have these trees trimmed or removed.
- Never fly kites, model airplanes or metallic balloons near power lines. If your kite or balloon gets snagged on overhead lines, call North Star Electric.
- Teach your children to stay away from substation fences and pad mounted transformers, and to heed danger signs displayed on all high-voltage equipment.
- When you have work to do on your roof, look for overhead lines before getting up on your roof. Be extremely careful for overhead lines when working on your roof for snow removal or re-shingling.



West End News

By Steve Ellis
Baudette District Operations Supervisor



We are gearing up for the AMR (automated meter reading) metering on the rest of our system. Meters will be changed out during the annual line inspection this fall and winter; our goal is to have all meters reporting to us by the end of 2006.

The Wheeler's Point and Kabetogama substations are done with most meters being read by the AMR system. The next substations to be changed out will be Williams and Big Falls, then International Falls and Birchdale, followed by Warroad and Littlefork and last, but not least, the Pitt substation. Remember, though, that you still need to read your meter(s) and send the reading(s) into us, as usual, until you are notified.

Our crews will be coming to your door, if you are an off-peak user, to change out your off-peak meter. We appreciate your cooperation in this project, as we will need to change all meters before the system can be fully utilized. Added trips will only add to the cost of the changeover. Thank you.

New service plans, anyone? If you plan on building, or just simply need to upgrade your existing service, please contact us well in advance so that your project may be scheduled in our work plans.

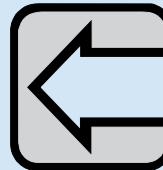
Please be careful around overhead lines as they are very dangerous when working around them. Always keep their presence in mind; if you see anything unusual or have any questions about your power lines, contact us for help.

Until next time, stay safe!



East End News

By Allan Baumgartner
Littlefork District Operations Supervisor



In the beginning of January, our crews changed out all of the meters in the Big Falls area to the new AMR meters. We still have some work to finish at the substation, along with Minnkota, to get the system up and working. We have also just started changing out meters in the International Falls area and will concentrate our efforts on this project through spring.

Our crews also have been changing out rejected poles in the Cingmars, Hwy #217 and Ray areas. Some of the pole replacements in the lower areas will have to wait for colder weather so that we can get our equipment in and out. (Evert Irwin 785-31-003-03) We will have to try and get as many of these poles changed out as soon as possible because once road limits and summer construction starts, our crews will not have the time to work on them.

Another of our crews has been snow plowing for our jobs and mowing brush along our power lines. Again, their biggest problem has been that we can't get into the lower areas yet this winter.

As of January 25, we have had only three individual outages. There was one mainline outage in the Lindford area that was caused by a tree.

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**
P.O. Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
Phone: 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

Chill out with an energy saving tip!

Chill out with an efficient fridge. Refrigerators are the most energy intensive appliances in a home, but with a few steps, you can keep your energy costs to a minimum. Check that your refrigerator isn't too cold. Recommended temperatures are 35 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit for the fresh food compartment and 5 degrees for the freezer (stick a thermometer in a glass of water and read it after 24 hours). Long-term storage freezers should be kept at 0 degrees (for the freezer, stick the thermometer between

frozen packages). Frost buildup decreases energy efficiency, so regularly defrost manual-defrost refrigerators and freezers. Replace your refrigerator door seals if they are not airtight; cover liquids and wrap foods – uncovered foods release moisture and make the condenser work harder. Finally, if you're in the market for a new refrigerator, pay attention to the Energy Guide label, which lists electricity use in kilowatt hours – the lower the better.

Courtesy of Dept. of Energy's Web site www.eere.energy.gov.

*Neither rain,
nor snow,
nor the dark*



Electric co-op line workers are trained to deal with any power emergency. But there's one thing that can't be taught – dedication.

Dedication to duty is a quality line workers are born with. That's why you'll see them in a driving storm repairing downed power lines. That's why your power is restored in the middle of the night.

That's why they decided to be line workers in the first place. And they expect no special awards or recognition.

It's reward enough for them to know your family is safe and warm – regardless of the weather.

Parents of high school seniors

Are you aware of North Star Electric's Knowledge Scholarship? To qualify, the parent/guardian must be a member of North Star Electric, and your child must take a short test about your cooperative that provides electricity to your home. North Star Electric will be awarding five scholarships, one for \$1,000 and four for \$400, plus a chance to win one of eight \$50 cash awards for scoring more than 50 percent on the test.

Most of the test answers will be included in the six pages of study material that North Star provides. A couple hours of study time could pay off with a \$1,000 scholarship. Last year, only 34 took the test.

Keep good family medical records

Not only do family medical records avoid hasty scrounging for needed facts and save time when filling out your medical history for a new doctor, they can also provide valuable information for diagnosing or preventing possible health problems. Some diseases, such as diabetes, asthma allergies, cancer, high blood pressure, depression and alcoholism, run in families. The more your doctor knows about your family history, the better he or she can treat you. Some things to include in your family medical records:

- Your own medical history, and one for each member of your immediate family, including dates and other information about immunizations, hospitalizations, surgeries, medications and treatments such as radiation therapy. Include any allergic reactions to medications.

- As much health information as you can find about your parents and siblings. If you can list anything about grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and nieces and nephews, so much the better. Include diseases or conditions they have had and their ages at the time.



Heart facts

- In one year, the average human heart circulates approximately one million gallons of blood through the body.
- The average heart beats about 100,000 times every 24 hours. In a 72-year lifetime, that's more than 2.5 billion beats.
- The heart rests between beats for a total of 40 years in a lifetime of 70 years.

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.

Highlights of the board of directors meeting

January 5, 2006

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on January 5, 2006. 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 authorize early, discounted payments of capital credits to estates applied for in 2006 and to delay the May and August board meetings by one week. They also heard a presentation describing the Plasma Gasification Project that the cooperative is helping by providing the link to the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program.

Management and operations report

Manager Hoskins reported on Minnkota meetings and the upcoming NRECA annual meeting. He echoed the success of the AMR system on the test substations. The crews will be implementing AMR next on the Williams and Big Falls substations. The retirement of Jim Levasseur was announced. Outages were fewer. Questions were answered about the planned sale of the ASV track machine. Reports from the Operations Department were also reviewed.

Office report

Finance Manager Ellis provided the financial report and reported on office activities including depreciation associated with removing the mechanical meters, the final loan advance for the

2002-2005 Construction Work Plan, short-term interest rates, the results of the sale and use tax audit, and communication to members who may be eligible for sales tax exemption on their electricity.

Compliance and member services report

Manager of Compliance and Member Services Haukaas reported that mild weather has reduced the need for as much load management as normally required for this time of year. He also reviewed a new report in the packet that compares load management hours to the previous year. Operation RoundUp and the Co-op Connections Card will be implemented this spring/early summer. He also reported on the electrical work his department is doing in the new storage building and the CIP (Conservation Improvement Program).

Board reports

Minnkota Delegate Arnesen reported on the Minnkota board meeting. Square Butte Delegate Bergan reported on their board meeting. Both reported on the proposed Young 3 coal-fired power plant.

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.



Gopher State One Call



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

Six reasons for not talking with your neighbor

One thing rural electric cooperatives are known for is their neighborliness. Each co-op is run by a board of directors made up of neighbors.

But talking with your neighbor over the backyard fence is not always the best way to compare electric bills.

Your bill may be higher than one neighbor even though your house is smaller. It may be lower than the neighbor on the other side of the road though your house is larger. You pay for what you use – no more and no less.

There are many reasons why one family may use more electricity than another even though they may have the same appliances and the same (or a fewer) number of people at home. Here are a half-dozen reasons:

- One may open a refrigerator twice as often as another. Each time the door

opens, cold air rushes out causing the refrigerator to replace it. Temperature settings also make a significant difference.

- One family may keep its freezer full while another may have very little food in the freezer. An empty freezer runs more often than a full one.

- Electric ranges use electricity according to the type and number of meals prepared. In addition, one family may cook on “high” heat most of the time while a neighbor conserves electricity by turning the burners down when they’re cooking.

- No two families have or do the same amount of washing or ironing. One may wash once a week while the other may wash daily. Every washing and ironing adds to your bill.

- The amount of hot water used varies from family to family. Cold water

clothes washing and full laundry and dishwasher loads require less hot water. One family may bathe or shower daily – or longer and more often. Another may not. One hot water heater may be turned down to 120 degrees while a neighbor’s may be set at 140 degrees. How far a water heater is from the washing machine or shower can also make a difference.

- The efficiency of heating systems varies. A two or three degree variance in the thermostat setting will make a dramatic difference in the amount of energy used.

Add these six points together and it becomes obvious that no two families live alike and, therefore, no two electric bills will be the same. The bottom line remains the same: You are only billed for what you use.

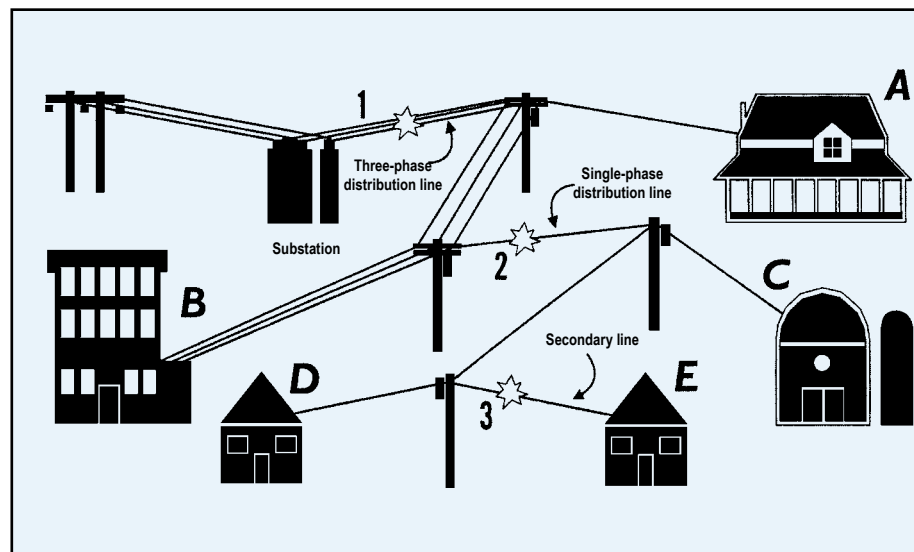
How does a co-op decide which electric lines to fix first?

When an outage occurs, restoring electrical power is often a complicated process. Damage done by wind, ice or other bad weather usually occurs at several points in the distribution system. The idea is to get the power back on for everyone in the most efficient manner.

When a widespread outage occurs, the first location the repair crew checks is the substation.

Linemen then work their way out on the main distribution line, restoring service to the main feeder lines, then lines serving groups of homes and finally individual members.

Fixing the power at an individual home first is useless if the main line is dead. No electricity would flow into the home anyway. By repairing the main line first, many more people would have their power restored.



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



The diagram at left shows that Step 1 would be repairing the main distribution line from the substation. Because there is no additional damage leading to buildings A or B, this would automatically restore their power. In Step 2, the problem with the tap line leading off the main line would be cleared up. This would restore power to buildings C and D. After the high-voltage lines are repaired, power to individual members (house E in the diagram) would be restored (Step 3). The entire system would then be in good working order.