

*North Star
donates
proceeds
from
CFL sales
to area food
shelves*



Wayne Haukaas, North Star Electric manager of member services and compliance, holds a compact fluorescent lamp in the reception area at the co-op's office in Baudette, Minn. All money raised from sales of the bulbs goes to help two area food shelves.

A brighter holiday season

North Star Electric Cooperative makes things a little brighter in December each year – and in late spring, too – by sending all of the money it collects from the sale of energy-saving compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) to the two food shelves in its service territory.

North Star Electric keeps no part of the \$1.50 it charges members for these

bulbs. The co-op does get credit, however, through Minnesota's Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) for money it spends on conservation by putting more of the energy-saving bulbs into use.

In Baudette, the \$500 check given to the Lake of the Woods Food Shelf was used to purchase Thanksgiving turkeys for the households it regularly serves. Bernice Merschman, volunteer director, noted it was the second such payment from North Star last year.

In International Falls, Nancy Anderson, executive director of the Falls Hunger Coalition Food Shelf, used some of the last \$500 passed on to that organization to pay for turkey vouchers. The vouchers are distributed to families during the holiday season. The rest of the money will be used to purchase protein

products, including canned meat, peanut butter, as well as canned fruits, nuts, etc., which, Anderson said, are the most difficult foods to keep on the shelves. While these foods are expensive, she said they are important to a well-rounded diet.

"The money always goes toward the purchase of food and not for anything else," Anderson explained. The same goes for Lake of the Woods Food Shelf.

CIP requirement

The CIP legislation passed by the Minnesota Legislature several years ago included a requirement that utilities must spend an amount equal to 1.5 percent of gross annual sales on projects that conserve energy.

In the 2007 Legislative session, the
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OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President Steve Arnesen
Vice President Bruce Polkinghorne
Secretary-Treasurer Michael Hanson
Directors L.J. Anderson,
Julian Brzoznowski, Randy Bergan,
Lorraine Nygaard, Mike Trueman

General Manager Dan Hoskins
Editor Wayne Haukaas

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Baudette 218-634-2202 or 888-634-2202
Littlefork 218-278-6658 or 888-258-2008

Electrical after-hours emergencies

1-888-6OUTAGE (1-888-668-8243)
or 634-2603

e-mail us at nsec@wiktel.com

Visit our Website 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

Highlights from the **BOARDROOM**

These are the highlights from the Board of Directors meeting held on Jan. 7, 2009. The board acted upon usual, routine business and voted to hire a full-time office person in preparation for an upcoming retirement, to approve the purchase of a pole trailer for \$12,842, to replicate the Minnesota Department of Commerce's change in the interest rate to be paid on security deposits, to approve the 2009 Budget, to support the MRCC (Minnesota Rural Counties Caucus), to authorize travel for the board president and manager to attend the Washington, D.C., legislative conference, and to move the March board meeting to March 11, 2009.

Staff reports included the financial report, ENERGY STAR® rebate program, CIP (Conservation Improvement Program), high December electric bills due to the month being 7 degrees cooler than normal and 67 percent less load control, the higher cost of renewable wholesale power, the state mandate which will require 25 percent of the electricity sold in Minnesota to come from renewable sources such as wind/solar/biomass, status of the AMR (automated meter reading) meters, arc-flash testing in substations to identify the level of safety equipment required when working within them, operations department items, equipment, material management, and working with North-

ern Excellence seed plant on a rate for their biomass generation of electricity.

Board members reported on meetings attended and shared G&T (generation and transmission) supply issues and the addition of renewable energy to their mix, a good presentation on the code of ethics, a proposed wind turbine project in our service territory, safety and cost sharing options available when hazards are identified, retail electric rates around the state, considering displaying a separate line item on retail bills so members can see what portion of their bill is to cover new environmental mandates, the all-power-requirements clause of the wholesale power agreement, and the proposed government neutrino research facility to be built near the Ash River Trail. They also discussed upcoming meeting attendance and closely reviewed their budget, looking for areas where they could conserve.

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.)

Members' corner

We are adding 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.



Dan Hoskins, General Manager

“... the power plants are staying on line, the Schedule L energy that Minnkota buys in the winter to help offset load control is not as expensive as it has been in years, and wind energy is helping to offset the load control hours.”

Ready to meet the challenges

Happy New Year to all of you! Did you make any New Year resolutions? If you did, I hope that you are able to fulfill them. I always have trouble keeping my New Year resolutions, so I figured the best thing for me to do is not make any. Although I do hope and pray for a lot of things, including peace, health, happiness, success and, of course, for all of you.

2009 has already been a year for the history books, and if you are interested in that sort of thing, then I am sure you watched as Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th President of our United States. We pray that this man does a good job leading our nation and getting our people back to work. (424-27-002-02 Leslie R. Bragg) I don't believe that this economy bust was an overnight deal, so repairing it won't happen overnight either, but the American people have always persevered, and I believe we will again.

Well, as you are all aware, we have been advertising a rate increase for the past four or five months. We have also been telling you for the past year and a half that the rates are going to go up practically every year. I believe that in the last *Enlightener*, Minnkota gave some very good explanations as to why the wholesale rates were climbing. With Minnkota raising the wholesale rate 13 percent in March of this year, that means North Star Electric Cooperative will have a 7 percent increase in your electric rates beginning March 20 of this year.

On a little bit better note though, as of this writing, the load control hours are down significantly, even though Mother Nature has not been cooperating. The second week of January was bitter cold, and it has been below normal cold temperatures since the first week in December. But anyway, the good news is that the power plants are staying on line (*please,*

knock on wood), the Schedule L energy that Minnkota buys in the winter to help offset load control is not as expensive as it has been in years, and (*gulp, swallow hard*) the wind energy is helping to offset the load control hours. Yes, load control hours are down, but we still have a lot of winter left. However, as of right now, we are doing very well.

On the political scene, it is hard to tell what is going to happen. I'm thinking (*and hoping*) that our political leaders see the economy as we see it, and slow down their thought process on a lot of the energy issues that have been brought before them. I hope they concentrate on getting our folks back to work and stabilizing this economy. I believe that in good time, the energy issues will take center stage again, but right now is not the time for a carbon tax, or a rate feed-in tariff, or anything else that would affect our energy rates.

Our political leaders went into session on the 6th of January. Just to keep our leaders reminded that we are out here, we would like for you to keep contacting your legislators. To do so, the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA),

which we are a member of, has started the Our Energy/Our Future campaign that a lot of you are familiar with, but this has a nice little twist to it. The MREA version also targets our statewide legislators. So all you need to do is either go to [www. OurEnergyMN.coop](http://www.OurEnergyMN.coop) and fill in the form, or fill out the form in this *Enlightener* and send it to us, and we will put it in for you. Now, I'm not saying all these energy bills in the Legislature are going away because of the economy, I'm just hoping our political leaders take the economy into consideration. So continue to ask your legislators those important questions that are listed on the form.

Well, as we look ahead to the upcoming year, I can tell you that your cooperative is in very good shape, and we are ready to meet all challenges that will come before us. Although we are tightening our belts, we do plan on some necessary line reconstruction this summer and some much needed line maintenance, and we look forward to working with any and/or all of you.

Have a great 2009. God Bless you and our Troops,

Dan

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 Service.

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.

North Star donates proceeds from CFL sales to area food shelves

(continued from page 1)



Jean Houska, a volunteer with the Falls Hunger Coalition Food Shelf, packages food for a client in International Falls, Minn.

program was overhauled. The new requirements, which become effective Jan. 1, 2010, transition utilities in Minnesota away from a spending requirement and mandate a reduction in weather-normalized retail energy sales by 1.5 percent each year.

“Complying with the new law will become more challenging,” said Wayne Haukaas, North Star’s manager of member services and compliance. “We are actively working on new programs that will help our members reduce their energy consumption, and at the same time help North Star meet this upcoming requirement. CFLs are a great place to start.”

Haukaas noted that a 23-watt CFL replaces a 100-watt incandescent light bulb.

“These bulbs are 70 percent more efficient than standard incandescents. North Star buys the bulbs and splits all of the money from the sales between the two food shelves in our service territory.”

The CFL program has been quite successful.

“We generally send checks to the two food shelves twice a year. Depending on how many CFLs we sell, they each get about \$1,000 annually. So the food shelves benefit. (373-08-003-11 Tom Nicol) Our members get a break on the price of the bulbs. And North Star gets credit from the state as part of our conservation efforts. It’s truly a win-win-win.”

At first, North Star members were asked to bring in canned goods in exchange for a CFL, according to Dan Hoskins, general manager. When that approach didn’t work very well, the \$1.50 charge per bulb was initiated. The money, rather than cans of food, is now donated to the food shelves.

Hoskins volunteers at the Lake of the Woods Food Shelf when time permits

“That food goes a long way and any money we get for operations is certainly welcome and appreciated. North Star Electric Cooperative has been very generous to us.”

— BERNICE MERSCHMAN, *LOW Food Shelf*

“I’m a carry-out boy,” he joked. “It’s very rewarding for me. When my wife and I were first married in Illinois, there were a couple months when we had to rely on the food shelf at our church. Maybe down the road the people who we help now will be better off and they will be able to help someone else.”

Other support, too

In addition to the CFL sales program, North Star directs a large portion of its unclaimed capital credits to the two food shelf organizations.

“The food shelves are always in need of money,” Haukaas said. “We participate in the Operation Round Up program as well, and give them some of those funds.”

In the Operation Round Up program, North Star members can agree to have their monthly bills “rounded up” to the nearest dollar. The difference between the actual bill and the rounded-up amount is then put into a fund that is given to charity.

Operation Round Up funds are managed and dispersed by an independent, eight-member board of directors – the North Star Electric Community Trust Fund – that takes applications from local charities.

“I can’t begin to tell you how much it is appreciated,” Anderson said of the sup-



A client talks with volunteer Jan Turban at the Falls Hunger Coalition Food Shelf. The organization is a busy place, especially around the holidays.

port that comes from North Star Electric. “It is such a gift. Incredibly helpful. A bonus for us because we never consider it in our annual budgeting.”

Need is up, donations are down

With the country’s economy in a downturn and general belt-tightening under way by many people, Anderson said food donations to Falls Hunger Coalition are down significantly.

“Our donations are down, but our needs are increasing, especially during the holiday season” Anderson said.

The Falls Hunger Coalition serves

about 200 households each month through its operations. Counting the households reached with the coalition's income-based Senior Select voucher program, regardless of whether they use the food shelf or not, another 130 households are served.

"In October," Anderson said, "we touched 322 households."

The coalition, which is community supported and seeks grants to supplement its operations, is co-located with Koochiching Community Services and Public Health in the Forestland Annex Building. Anderson, who is one of two part-time employees of the coalition, regularly works with about 30 to 35 volunteers.

The spring 2009 payment to Lake of the Woods Food Shelf, according to Merschman, will be used to buy food.

"It costs us from \$1,000 to \$1,200 a month to buy food for the 100 to 105 households we serve," she explained. "We buy food from the North Country Food Bank in Crookston, Minn., which also supplies us with U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities. The commodities are actually free, but we pay about 6 cents a pound for delivery."

Volunteer assistance

"That food goes a long way and any money we get for operations is certainly welcome and appreciated," Merschman said. "North Star Electric Cooperative has

been very generous to us. We are an all-volunteer organization. The only thing we pay for is our liability insurance and the \$1,000 a year that we pay for rent."

Hoskins.

"At North Star, it makes us feel really good to help them out," he said.



Bernice Merschman, volunteer director of the Lake of the Woods Food Shelf, restocks the supplies. Lake of the Woods Food Shelf is located in Baudette, Minn.



Volunteer Sheila Carlson helps a client make food choices at the Falls Hunger Coalition Food Shelf.

Besides the space it occupies in the basement of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, the rent payment includes electricity used for lighting and for operating the refrigerators and freezers.

"Ninety-nine percent of our money goes for food," she explained. "We usually have about 15 volunteers who show up to help every day we are open. They put out the food, help people bag their selections, haul it to their vehicles, unload the delivery trucks and do whatever they can to help out."

Lake of the Woods Food Shelf, Merschman said, will soon be moving to quarters in the community's former high school building.

"The old school is owned by a Baudette couple. They have a lot of space and will provide a large room for our needs," she said. "The new location will be more accessible for people who have a hard time walking. We have a ramp at the church, but it is still difficult for some people to get up and down. The new location will be all on one level and will be easily accessible for everyone."

Committed to the communities it serves, North Star has contributed almost \$6,000 to the area food shelves, according to

ENERGY TIP

Low-flow showerheads

Leaving you clean with more \$ in your pocket

A low-flow showerhead is an easy and inexpensive way to conserve water, energy and your money.

Here are the approximate yearly **savings** according to the U.S. Department of Energy based on a couple taking 10 minute showers installing a 1.5-gallon-per-minute showerhead compared to a standard 2.5-gallon-per-minute showerhead:

- Water – 7,300 gallons
- Electricity (electric water heater) – 949 kilowatt-hours
- Water – \$29
- Electricity – \$63.58



State law requires a carbon monoxide detector near every bedroom of your home

Each year, more than 200 Americans die and several thousand individuals are treated in emergency rooms for CO poisoning. The risk of CO poisoning increases during the winter, as more people run furnaces, gas space heaters and use fireplaces.

Remember – Minnesota law requires CO detectors within 10 feet of every sleeping room in all existing single-family homes. If you haven't installed a detector yet, please don't wait. Lives may depend on it.

For more information go to; www.dps.state.mn.us/fmarshal/PublicEducation or call the State Fire Marshal's office at 1-651-201-7200.



North Star Electric ENERGY STAR® Rebate Program ends March 31, 2009

Because of changes in the Conservation Improvement Program (CIP), which is mandated by the state of Minnesota, North Star Electric will be ending its ENERGY STAR Appliance Rebate Program on March 31, 2009. The past CIP program was a spending requirement and starting in 2010 it is a kWh saving requirement. As a result, we will phase out the appliance rebates. All appliance receipts must be dated before April 1 and rebate forms must be postmarked before May 1 to qualify for the existing program.

Staff Report



Steve Ellis
Baudette District
Operations Supervisor

The crews have been working on our annual line inspection. This is done to identify and prevent dangerous situations before they become a hazard or an outage. So if you see one of our trucks in your yard, this is likely what they are doing.

AMR (automatic meter reading) is still being worked on. We are identifying meters that have not been reporting properly. We have fixed a lot of the problems with these meters, and we will continue to work on those not reporting properly. We will also have a contractor changing out the bulk of our meters this summer.

Work plans for the summer of 2009 have been staked and will be put out on bids this spring. These plans include rebuilding the 3-phase line from the Birchdale substation to the Frontier landing. This line runs on the south side of Highway 11. We will also be replacing the 2-phase line running from Swift to the east, along the north side of Highway 11, for approximately four miles. This line is being upgraded to 3-phase, to better serve the Swift and Roosevelt areas.

Have you added any large electrical equipment or electric heat at your home or business? If yes, service upgrades may be needed, so please contact us to re-evaluate your power needs. Planning ahead and giving us the heads-up on this type of change will save all of us the inconveniences and cost of an unwanted outage.

GSOC (Gopher State One Call) needs to be called at 1-800-252-1166, before any mechanical digging is done on your property. This is the law. Once you have called in for your project location, GSOC notifies all of the utilities in your area. They are given 48 hours to respond. (674-08-020-01 Albert J. Long) This protects both the utilities and the members from possible injury or costly repair expenses.

Overhead power lines also need to be treated with extreme caution. These lines carry very high voltages and may cause injury or death if touched. Always maintain a clear distance from them, and notify North Star Electric of any downed lines or damaged equipment. Also, beware while working around these lines. If you have any clearance issues with a line, please notify us immediately!

If you'd like to see a short demonstration of live electric lines in situations you may encounter, you can view it at <http://www.tri-countyrec.com/trico/newsHot-LineSafety.asp>.

Remember! Please be careful around all power 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, so there is a next time, Stay Safe!

Listen to what your mother told you:

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true!

You have probably heard radio ads or have seen ads in newspapers and magazines that claim they can cut your heating bill by up to 50 percent by just buying their electric space heater. With the high price of heating in northern Minnesota, who wouldn't like to do that? I know I would, but the key wording in these ads is up to. There is a lot of difference between 50 percent and up to 50 percent. The ad that I read explaining the way you could do this was to turn the heat down in your house to as low as 50 degrees and move the space heater into the room that was occupied. The savings are not in the heater; it is the fact that you turned the heat in your house down to 50 degrees. They claim the space heater will not reduce humidity or oxygen, which is true, but it is also true that the electric space heater you buy at the local hardware store doesn't either. There are 3,413 Btus for each kilowatt-hour, and the only way to get more is with heat pump technology. I haven't seen nor heard of anything like that with portable electric heaters. In northern Minnesota, during the winter, one plug-in space heater is not going to heat a 1,000-square-foot home. My advice is that if you have a cold spot in your house and \$500 burning a hole in your pocket, go to your local hardware store, buy a space heater for \$50, and use the other \$450 to reinsulate your home or give it to your favorite charity. — Wayne Haukaas

The economy.
Saving energy.
Climate change.

These are issues everyone is talking about. When it comes to finding solutions, we must keep costs down and electricity available. America needs a plan. Immediately.

Now is the time to have a candid conversation with your elected officials. Start the conversation today at www.ourenergy.coop.

Get involved in the energy debate.

I would like North Star Electric to e-mail my elected officials and ask them these three questions:



- ?** What is your plan to make sure we have the electricity we'll need in the future?
- ?** What are you doing to fully fund the research required to make emissions-free electric plants an affordable reality?
- ?** Balancing electricity needs and environmental goals will be difficult. How much is all this going to increase my electric bill and what will you do to make it affordable?

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Account number _____

NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE POLITICAL LEADERS

Federal legislators

Senator Amy Klobuchar
 302 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510
www.klobuchar.senate.gov
 202-224-3244
 1-888-224-9043 (Minnesota office)
 Fax: 202-228-2186

Congressman James Oberstar
 2365 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515
www.jamesoberstar.house.gov
 202-225-6211
 Fax: 202-225-0699

Congressman Collin Peterson
 2211 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515
www.collinpetererson.house.gov
 202-225-2165
 Fax: 202-225-1593

State of Minnesota legislators

Senator Tom Bakk
 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 Capitol Building, Room 226
 St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
 651-296-8881
sen.tom.bakk@senate.mn

Senator Tom Saxhaug
 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 Capitol Building, Room 124
 St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
 651-296-4136
sen.tom.saxhaug@senate.mn

Senator LeRoy Stumpf
 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 Capitol Building, Room 208
 St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
 651-296-8660
sen.leroy.stumpf@senate.mn

Representative Tom Anzenc
 417 State Office Building
 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 St. Paul, MN 55155
 651-296-4936
rep.tom.anzenc@house.mn

Representative David Dill
 571 State Office Building
 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 St. Paul, MN 55155
 651-296-2190
 800-339-0466
rep.david.dill@house.mn

Representative Dave Olin
 593 State Office Building
 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 St. Paul, MN 55155
 651-296-9635
rep.dave.olin@house.mn

Representative Tom Rukavina
 477 State Office Building
 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 St. Paul, MN 55155
 651-296-0170
 888-682-3205
rep.tom.rukavina@house.mn



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



Our Energy, Our Future
 A Dialogue With America



Join us in June for a

We are offering all North Star Electric members an exceptional summer opportunity that's fun for all ages.

The tour is scheduled for Monday through Wednesday, June 8-10. 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 machines strip the coal and reclaim the land so it can once again be used for agriculture. This is where we will see the huge electric dragline, Liberty, with its 355 foot boom and its 77-cubic-yard bucket. 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 Gladstone Inn & Suites in Jamestown, N.D.

Power plant tour

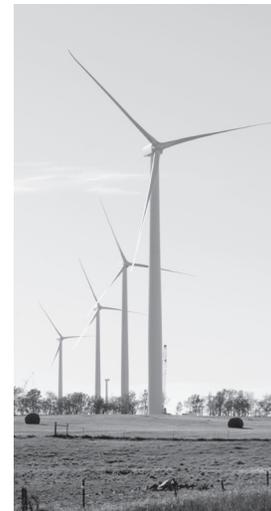
For further details, contact Wayne Haukaas at 634-2202 or 1-888-634-2202.

June 8, 9 and 10

On the third day, we will visit the Ashtabula Wind Energy Center by Lake Ashtabula where some of our wind energy is generated. The wind towers are 250 feet tall with 120 foot blades. Then off to Grand Forks to tour

Minnkota's control center, diesel plant and the print shop. We will be back to Baudette by Wednesday afternoon.

The cost of the tour is still just \$75 per person or \$125 per couple. Members who have not been on this tour in the past are encouraged to go.



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? _____



Attention: Parents of high school seniors

Are you aware of North Star Electric's Knowledge Scholarships? To qualify, the parent/guardian must be a member of North Star Electric, and your child must take a test about your cooperative that provides electricity to your home. North Star Electric will be awarding five scholarships, one \$1,000 and four \$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 in the study material that North Star provides. A couple hours of study time could pay off with a \$1,000 scholarship. Last year only 36 students took the test. The information meeting and test will be given in mid-April. For more information about the scholarships, please call Wayne at North Star Electric or check with the guidance counselor at your school.