

State energy policies must reflect market realities

By Mark Glaess, General Manager, Minnesota Rural Electric Association



In 2007, the Minnesota Legislature passed a measure requiring every electric utility, including your electric cooperative, to buy more and more renewable energy. This year, cooperatives are required to produce 10 percent of the energy sold to you from renewable sources. Most of that will come from wind turbines. By 2025, every fourth kilowatt-hour (kWh) sold to you will have to come from a renewable source. Again, most of that will be generated by the wind.

The idea behind one of the nation's most ambitious clean energy mandates was to tap into Minnesota's ample wind resources and provide additional revenues and tax receipts to particularly gusty rural areas of the state. One of the key selling points was that this would create a load of green jobs. All-in-all, it was hard to argue with the intentions.

In 2009, Minnesota utilities produced 3,441,000,000 kWh by capturing the wind. On average, utilities paid 4.5 cents for each kWh. This cost would be much higher if not for major federal tax subsidies for wind energy. Since the wind tends to blow somewhat more at night when it's not all that useful, the market only paid

an average of 2.7 cents for each kWh produced by wind. Sometimes there was absolutely no market for the wind and the utility had to pay another utility to take those renewable kWh off their hands.

The loss of 1.8 cents per kWh spread over 3.4 billion kWh cost Minnesotans some \$62 million in 2009.

Minnkota Power, which provides electricity to the relatively depressed northwest corner of the state, was forced to increase rates by one-half cent for every kWh sold.

The biggest driver for those losses is the shrinking demand for electricity across the U.S. The economy – post 2007 – has cratered. Utilities have seen double digit decreases in electric consumption.

When legislators and the Pawlenty Administration were putting together the 2007 Renewable Energy Standard, they didn't factor in a depressed economy. They expected the market to easily absorb all of the new, greener electricity. They understood that utilities would be paying more for these new energy resources, but believed that increasing demand from a growing economy would help offset those increased costs.

That hasn't happened. Instead, utilities are paying a premium for new wind resources and selling it at a dramatic loss. In 2010, that market imbalance is on track to cost Minnesotans more than \$100 million. It's also making it harder for utilities to pay for new emission control technology for existing plants.

At a time when we need to focus on creating jobs and expanding business opportunities, the unanticipated extra cost of new renewable energy sources is acting as a drag on the economy. Right now, the state's unemployment rate is 7.1 percent. The green jobs heralded by the 2007 renewable mandate? They haven't materialized; at least not at the level champions of the legislation said they'd reach.

Meanwhile, the increase in electric rates for additional energy we don't need and can't sell is adding to the cost of hard-pressed manufacturing plants and taking a bigger and bigger share of the family budget.

The point of all of this isn't to bash wind energy or shirk efforts to encourage cleaner, more efficient sources of electricity. The point is to remind the state's policymakers that energy policy can't be based on good intentions alone. Good energy policy must also be grounded in market reality and sound economics.

Minnesota's electric cooperatives are committed to increasing the use of clean, renewable energy, particularly if it benefits hard-pressed rural areas of the state. However, we're also committed to keeping electricity both affordable and reliable. We need state energy policymakers to be a partner in all three goals, providing us with the flexibility and tools to accomplish the challenges we face in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible.

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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.*

Members' corner

We added a section called 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' March 2 meeting. In addition to routine business, the board voted to move the April board meeting to March 31 to coincide with the Minnkota annual meeting, to accept the annual report regarding the Identity Theft Prevention program, and to reappoint Steve Arnesen and Randy Bergan as North Star's delegates to the Minnkota and Square Butte Electric Cooperative's boards of directors. The annual disclosure forms for conflicts of interest were completed. Final decisions were made for disbursement of unclaimed capital credits to local charitable organizations.

Staff reports included the financial report, letters being sent to the seasonal accounts regarding the rate increase, the upcoming change to print and mail bills from our software vendor in St. Louis, progress of revitalizing the Co-op Connection Card program, financing for the four-year distribution line construction work plan, CIP (Conservation Improvement Program) contracts with Northwest Community Action and Kootasca, high use concerns, distributed generation, load control, the power plant tour for members and scholarship testing in April. Reports also included

setting May 11 and 12 for Member Appreciation Days in Littlefork and Baudette, setting the evening of May 11 at Lake of the Woods School at 6 p.m. for an area meeting to answer member questions and hear from Minnkota President & CEO Mac McLennan, discussing budgeted board expenses, tentatively planning for a strategic planning session in July, new services with two of them totaling nearly 13 miles of new line to state of Minnesota DOT radio towers, a pending service agreement with the city of Baudette, the recent safety committee meeting, line maintenance, equipment and renewing safety accreditation.

Reports were given by board members attending meetings, including MREA (Minnesota Rural Electric Association), Minnkota and the legislative visit.

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.



Happy Easter

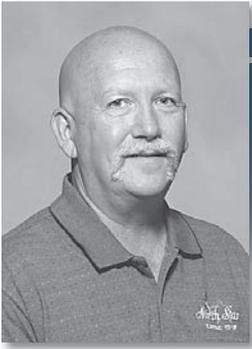
**Our office will be closed
Good Friday, April 22**

•••• 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.)



Dan Hoskins
General Manager

Manager's Report

Hi folks. Let's visit about a couple of issues or items of interest. The first one would be to invite you all to our Member Appreciation Days. The schedule this year will be as follows:

Wednesday, May 11, 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. at our Littlefork office; and Thursday, May 12, 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. at our Baudette office. One twist we have added is that Minnkota Power Cooperative President & CEO Robert "Mac" McLennan will be on hand to introduce himself and visit with you folks.

On Wednesday (May 11) at 6 p.m., at Lake of the Woods High School, North Star Electric Cooperative and the city of Baudette have called a meeting of the people to give an explanation for the huge wholesale power rate increase handed down by the Minnkota Power Cooperative board of directors this past March. Mr. McLennan will be in attendance for this discussion.

Power outages cost you and I a lot of money and they are caused by numerous things: weather, trees, critters, equipment failure, human error, vandalism, age and deterioration and accidental occurrences (715-33-012-03, David Miller). The total cost for outages on our system for 2010 was \$137,883.95.

But, with the continuing efforts of our line crews and your willingness and understanding, we are able to prevent a lot of these outages before they even happen. Take tree trimming for instance. Tree trimming is a vital effort in the unending task by our crews to provide you with reliable, dependable, low-cost energy. If those trees would get their way, they would knock the power out every chance they got. We all like trees here, but not the ones that are near our power lines that create problems.

Our line workers are professionals and are trained to trim, cut and/or remove trees and other foliage when too close to our power lines and we have three options that we use to handle trees on our right of ways, and they are:

1. The landowner pays for trimming and will be held liable for any charges stemming from property damage, injuries or any outage costs caused by the trees if they do not allow the cooperative to clear out the vegetation to the cooperative's satisfaction.

2. The landowner allows the cooperative to cut the right of way back and clear trees and shrubs under the line to the cooperative's satisfaction. In the event of the total clearing of trees, the cooperative may work with the resident/landowner to possibly plant a tree or shrub elsewhere in their yard in a location away from the line.

3. The power line is moved or buried at a cost paid by the landowner and/or a shared cost based on the situation and at the discretion of the cooperative.

Trees are also a tremendous safety hazard to you, the general public, our crews or anyone else that gets close to a problem tree. If a hazard that involves any type of vegetation within the right of

way is determined by the cooperative, then cooperative personnel shall remove any and all vegetation to clear that hazard. And this includes tree branches entering the right of way extending from trees that are based out of the right of way. They too shall be trimmed back to the edges of the right of way, but if a cost is involved that would include the landowner, then the cost of trimming shall be negotiated based on the situation.

The crews have a minimum clearance guideline they have to follow that is stated in their cooperative safety manual and they also have a Rural Utilities Service specifications booklet to follow when trimming trees or the clearing or maintaining of the right of way.

I will say that when the crews are maintaining right of way in a member's yard, they make every effort to notify the member prior to any trimming, removing or cutting trees, bushes, shrubs or any other vegetation that interferes with the right of way on the member's property. If they cannot contact you, our crews will document the situation on a service order or outage ticket and a door hanger will be left explaining the work that was done, by whom and the situation. In case of emergency work, cutting or trimming, the cooperative shall not be held accountable for damages caused by the member-owners' trees.

One more thing, folks, our power lines are lined up straight by a professional with a transit and these power lines are usually straight as a string. Sometimes landowners use them to plant tree rows by and then they get too close and, well, trees planted in the right of way that have the potential of growing to the height of the power line shall be removed as soon as possible. But, if you think you may want to plant close to our line, you should call our office with questions concerning this and our operations people will meet you at the site that you are proposing to plant on.

On a final note, all of us here at North Star Electric Cooperative would like to wish all of you a Blessed and Happy Easter. And to all of you wonderful mothers out there, (and mothers to be) Happy Mothers Day!

God Bless You
and Our Troops,
Dan

On Wednesday (May 11) at 6 p.m., at Lake of the Woods High School, North Star Electric Cooperative and the city of Baudette have called a meeting of the people to give an explanation for the huge wholesale power rate increase handed down by the Minnkota Power Cooperative board of directors this past March. Mr. McLennan will be in attendance for this discussion.



Farmers returning to the field urged to look up for power lines

Keep large equipment and irrigation pipe away; learn safety precautions

The tragic electrocution death of two teens, one of them a high school class president, is drawing national attention to the need for safety precautions when working with long and tall equipment near overhead power lines. The young men were working on a southern Illinois farm attempting to free a raccoon, which had crawled inside an aluminum pipe used for irrigation. As the teens hoisted the 31-foot pipe into the air, it made contact with the power line. They became the path to ground for the electricity and both were fatally injured from the deadly voltage.

“The death of these two young men is a tug on everyone,” says Molly Hall, Safe Electricity Executive Director. “We urge farm operators to store aluminum irrigation pipe away from power lines and make sure everyone knows not to raise them in windy conditions when working near lines.”

As many farmers prepare for the spring planting season, Hall reminds the agricultural community about the tragic death of Illinois farmer Jim Flach, who suffered fatal electric burns when his crop sprayer touched an overhead power line. Flach and his surviving family members are the focus of the 2011 Safe Electricity “Teach Learn Care TLC” campaign.

Jim’s widow, Marilyn, and sons are sharing their tragic experience in hopes that people will learn how to stay safe, and to share that information with those they care about. This campaign is aimed at raising operator awareness on avoiding equipment contact with overhead power lines, and knowing the proper actions to survive if accidental contact is made. The video of the story can be seen at www.safeelectricity.org.

The increasing size of farm

equipment raises the risk of contact at field entries and along end rows, where overhead electric wires may be present. The taller equipment may not always allow the recommended 10-foot separation when passing beneath or near the power lines. In agricultural areas the vertical clearance required is less than the clearance over roadways and streets. Never assume that because the machinery passed under the lines in one area means it will adequately clear another area.

“We urge farmers and all operators of large equipment to use a spotter or someone with a broader view when moving equipment near power lines,” says Robert Aherin, University of Illinois Farm Safety Expert. “It can be difficult to accurately gauge distance from the cab of equipment, especially when moving on uneven ground.”

Jim Flach had parked his sprayer at the end of a field and contacted an overhead power line as the equipment folded upward. Any part of an implement that can touch a power line offers a potential path to the ground for the electric current. Farm equipment operators who are working on the ground with the equipment can become the path for the deadly current flow. Such equipment not only includes large tillage equipment, but antennas, grain augers, auger wagons and truck beds with hydraulic lifts.

“It’s also important for operators of farm equipment or vehicles to know what to do if the vehicle comes in contact with a power line,” Hall says. “It’s almost always best to stay in the cab and call for help. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until the electric utility arrives to cut off the power.”

“If the power line is energized and

you step outside, your body becomes the path and electrocution is the result,” Aherin adds. “Even if a power line has landed on the ground, there is still the potential for the area nearby to be energized. Stay inside the vehicle unless there’s fire or imminent risk of fire.”

In that case, the proper action is to jump – not step – with both feet hitting the ground at the same time. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Continue to shuffle or hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area. A large difference in voltage between both feet could kill you. Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Many electrocutions occur when the operator dismounts and, realizing nothing has happened, tries to get back on the equipment.

Before spring fieldwork begins, inspect entry points at fields. If wires are low, do not attempt to tighten them or temporarily raise them; instead, contact your local utility. Electric distribution lines along rural roads can carry thousands of volts and only professional utility line workers are qualified to make any adjustments.

Any deep tilling operation outside of normal field boundaries can become perilous if a ripping knife hooks onto a buried power line. Before enlarging a field, installing a foundation for a new building or digging in an area served by a power line, alert your local utility to have buried cables marked.

The Flach family encourages all farmers to use caution for a safe spring planting season and to avoid equipment contact with power lines. See their story at www.safeelectricity.org.

Staff Report

Steve Ellis
Baudette District
Operations Supervisor



We will be beginning our annual line inspection now that spring road restrictions are on, so if you see one of our trucks in your yard, this is probably what they are doing. On this inspection we look for anything that may cause us problems, now or in the future, and we will also be checking meters.

Crews have been busy this winter working on right-of-way clearing and maintenance east of Baudette along U.S. Highway 11, preparing for a MnDOT road construction project that is scheduled for fall 2011. This project is located partially alongside our 2011 workplan project that will consist of line replacement to a larger conductor and pole replacement from Baudette to Border for approximately 14.8 miles.

Crews will also be replacing 3 miles of line south of Clementson to accommodate a road construction project near Koochiching County.

Right of way has been cleared this winter 15 miles south of Baudette for installation of a 3-mile line extension from the south to the MnDOT gravel pit where MnDOT is installing a communications tower.

We will also be stepping down voltage on an underground line from the Williams range line to Norris Camp. This will mitigate outage problems caused by the old underground cable located in this remote area.

We have had Chapman Metering testing all 3-phase meters on our system, so these meters can be replaced with AMR meters.

If you plan to do any burning this spring, be sure to protect poles and power equipment from the fire.

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 your project may be scheduled in our workplans.

GSOC (Gopher State One-Call)
... If you plan to do any digging, please remember it is the law that you **MUST** contact GSOC beforehand. The ground is crawling with more than worms; it is full of wires and cables of all kinds! To save yourself, and most likely many others, and the inconvenience and cost of a dig in, please plan your project well in advance, and notify GSOC first! ...
1-800-252-1166 or 811.
Until next time, stay safe!



What's that sound and smell?

Check for CFL burnout



Most people know that a pop and flash before an incandescent bulb goes dark means it has burned out. But you might not be familiar with the slightly more dramatic burnout of a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL).

CFLs not only operate differently from incandescent bulbs, using about 75 percent less energy, they also burn out differently.

As a CFL approaches the end of its life, expect the light to dim. When it does burn out, you may hear a more dramatic pop than with an incandescent bulb, and you could smell a distinct odor. The bulb might

even produce smoke, while the base of the bulb might turn black. None of these things should cause concern. In fact, popping and smoke means the bulb's end-of-life mechanism is working correctly.

To ensure you're using CFLs safely, take some precautions. You should always buy CFLs from a manufacturer you know, make sure that it is UL listed and is Energy Star rated (121-42-051-11, Kristi Gislason). If it has the Underwriters Laboratories label, it means the bulbs have been tested repeatedly for safety hazards.

Also, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests placing the burned out or broken bulb in a plastic bag, which should be sealed before bringing it to the recycling center. Never send a CFL or other mercury-containing product in the trash or incinerator.

North Star Electric rate schedule summary

Service Type (Rate class)	Previous Rates 2010	Effective March 20, 2011 Dec. 20, 2010 for fixed charges & security lights
General Single-Phase Fixed charge Cost per kWh Wind energy surcharge	\$35 per month \$0.092 \$0.005 per kWh	\$36 per month \$0.113 \$0.005 per kWh
Seasonal Fixed charge Cost per kWh Wind energy surcharge	\$420 per year \$0.092 \$0.005 per kWh	\$432 per year \$0.113 \$0.005 per kWh
Three-Phase Fixed charge Cost per kWh Wind energy surcharge	\$72 per month \$0.092 \$0.005 per kWh	\$74 per month \$0.113 \$0.005 per kWh
Off-Peak <= 50 KVA <= 50 KVA short term > 50 KVA Wind energy surcharge ECC credits > 500 kWh ECC credits > 1,000 kWh	\$0.048 per kWh (year round) \$0.074 per kWh (year round) \$0.045 per kWh (year round) \$0.005 per kWh (\$4) per month (\$6) per month	\$0.059 per kWh (year round) \$0.091 per kWh (year round) \$0.055 per kWh (year round) \$0.005 per kWh (\$4) per month (\$6) per month
Rental Security Lights (includes tax on energy component only) HPS MV MV & Transformer HPS & Transformer 150-watt MV Request	\$ 9.40 per month \$11.82 per month \$17.62 per month \$15.20 per month \$15.02 per month \$13.26 per month	\$10.34 per month \$13.00 per month \$19.38 per month \$16.72 per month \$16.52 per month \$14.59 per month
Metered Street Lights Energy charge Wind energy surcharge	\$0.120 per kWh \$0.005 per kWh	\$0.141 per kWh \$0.005 per kWh
Large Power Fixed charge Demand charge Energy charge First 100 kWh/KW Excess Controlled Sawmill (guaranteed max) Wind energy surcharge	\$79 per month \$10.54 per KW \$0.069 per kWh \$0.094 per kWh \$0.005 per kWh	\$82 per month \$12.96 per KW \$0.085 per kWh \$0.116 per kWh \$0.005 per kWh
Interruptible Large Power Fixed charge Energy Demand Demand penalty Wind energy surcharge	\$1.23 per KVA \$0.051 per kWh \$2.20 per KW \$93.01 per KW \$0.005 per kWh	\$1.27 per KVA \$0.063 per kWh \$2.71 per KW \$122.28 per KW \$0.005 per kWh

A half-cent Temporary Wind Energy Surcharge has been in effect since Oct. 20, 2009. It is anticipated when the economy improves and the market price for excess wind energy improves and is sold at rates near the generation price, this surcharge should no longer be needed.

North Star Electric Cooperative's
**Co-op
 Connection Card**
is being revitalized

We are actively seeking more businesses to participate in the local Co-op Connection Card program in an effort to help them AND help our members.

Contact North Star Electric for more information.

Contacted businesses, don't forget to mail in your participation form before the end of the month to be included on the mass mailing going out this summer.



Co-op Connections Card
 Business Spotlight
JC's Restaurant

314 Main Street, Littlefork
Serving Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner
Full Cocktail Service, AEOA Senior
 Meals 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 Open: M-W 6 a.m.-8 p.m., TH-F 6-9,
 Sat 8-9, Sun 8-1:30 p.m.

"Borderlands BEST Homemade Pizza"

Show your Co-op Card and save
10% off Dinner menu items
 (not valid with other specials)



**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

NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE POLITICAL LEADERS

Federal legislators

Senator Al Franken
 320 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510
www.franken.senate.gov
 202-224-5641
 Fax: 202-224-0044

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 Chip Cravaack
 508 Cannon House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515
www.cravaack.house.gov/
 202-225-6211
 Fax: 202-225-0699

Congressman Collin Peterson
 2211 Rayburn House Office Building
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 202-225-2165
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HELP KEEP YOUR LIGHTS ON

Careless ditch burning can destroy utility poles and junction boxes, leading to unnecessary power outages. Pole damage ranges from surface charring to destruction, and may cost landowners anywhere from \$2,000 on up, depending on the location of the pole and the severity of the damage.

Please use extreme caution when burning around our electrical equipment, and always tend to a fire once it is lit. Let's all do our part to keep the lights on and costs down.



ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked AND helps protect you from injury and expense. Safe digging is no accident: always call 811 before you dig. Visit call811.com for more information.



Member Appreciation Days

On Wednesday, May 11, please join us at the Littlefork office from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., and on Thursday, May 12, at the Baudette office from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. There will be refreshments with brats, chips and popcorn. Register for prizes as there will be drawings for both adults and children. Pick up balloons for the kids and watch an electrical safety demonstration.

Laundry Energy-Saving Tips

Did you know that Energy Star® clothes washers use about 30 percent less electricity and more than 50 percent less water than a regular clothes washer? Many Energy Star® washers also have a greater capacity than conventional models, which means fewer loads of laundry. A 10-year-old top load washer normally will use more than twice the detergent as today's Energy Star® front load washers. Using more detergent in the top load models doesn't harm the washer because of the large amount of water it uses. That is not the case with the Energy Star® models made today. Follow the operating instructions in the owner's manual and you will use much less detergent and you will not damage your new washer. In most cases, washing all your clothes in today's cold water detergent will clean your clothes as well as either warm or hot water. With the average American family washing almost 400 loads of laundry each year, that's a lot of hot water. The Energy Star® website says that over the life of your new Energy Star® washer, you'll save enough money in operating costs to pay for the matching dryer.

North Star Electric does have a \$50 rebate on qualifying Energy Star® washers (121-19-007-02, Marvin Holter). The application form is on our website at www.northstarelectric.coop or give us a call at 634-2202 or 888-634-2202 and we will send the rebate form to you.

