


The Enlightener



North Star
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

VOLUME 50 NUMBER 5

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

MAY 2005

Good turnout for Member Appreciation Days



Carolyn Mastin, from our Littlefork office did face painting at both the Baudette and Littlefork open houses. Above is Macey Marcotte and on the right is Cody Pfeiffer. It's just hard to tell who is having the most fun, Carolyn or the kids.

We were very pleased with the turnout of our third annual Member Appreciation Days. We had 253 members register at Littlefork and 268 in Baudette for a total of 521. The winners of the electric cart grill were David Trappe at Littlefork and Sharon Bitter at Baudette. The Lock-N-Go grill winners were Cordie Davis at Littlefork and Jill Cook at Baudette. The Kid's drawing winners were Emma Morgan at Littlefork and Isaac Stephani at Baudette.



On the far left is Jill Cook from Williams, the lucky winner of the electric Lock-N-Go grill in Baudette. On the right is Sharon Bitter from Baudette, the lucky winner of the electric cart grill in Baudette.



Matt Brown, from our Littlefork line crew, was busy making cotton candy for members at our open house at Littlefork.

We will be closed
Monday, May 30,
in
observance
of
Memorial
Day.



The Enlightener

May 2005

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**Electrical
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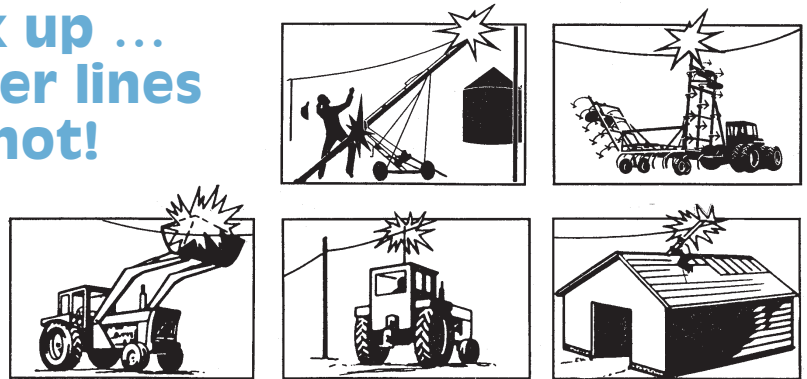


March 2005 Operating Report

Revenue (includes annual seasonal billing)	\$ 796,203
Cost of Power	\$ 416,347
Operation, Maintenance, Administration	\$ 218,419
Depreciation and Interest	\$ 117,106
Margin on Operations	\$ 44,331
Average use per Residential	1,912
Total kWhs Sold	11,474,605

Work safely around power lines!

**Look up ...
power lines
are hot!**



Electricity is important to everyone, but it presents a more potential hazard for outdoor workers than indoor workers. Every year, serious electrical accidents occur outdoors just because people don't look up. The sad part is that most of these accidents could have been prevented with a few simple steps.

First, make sure that you, your family and co-workers know the location of overhead power lines, and map out ways to avoid them when moving equipment. Make sure that everyone understands that any contact with these lines creates a path to the ground for electricity and carries the potential for a serious, even fatal, accident.

You should know the height of all your equipment and how high the power lines are to prevent accidental contact. A good rule of thumb is to stay at least 10 feet away from power lines.

Electrical accidents happen fast! LOOK UP! Be extra careful when moving large farming or logging equipment; the equipment today is a lot larger than it used to be. The combination of large equipment and power lines can be deadly.

Avoid moving large equipment by yourself. Have someone watch for you as you drive equipment to ensure that you stay clear of the power lines.

These rules also apply to guy wires which support power line poles. Damaging guy wires can bring live power lines down to unsafe clearances over the ground, buildings or roads and can create extremely hazardous situations.

If you have any questions about the clearance of power lines, please give our office a call.

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.



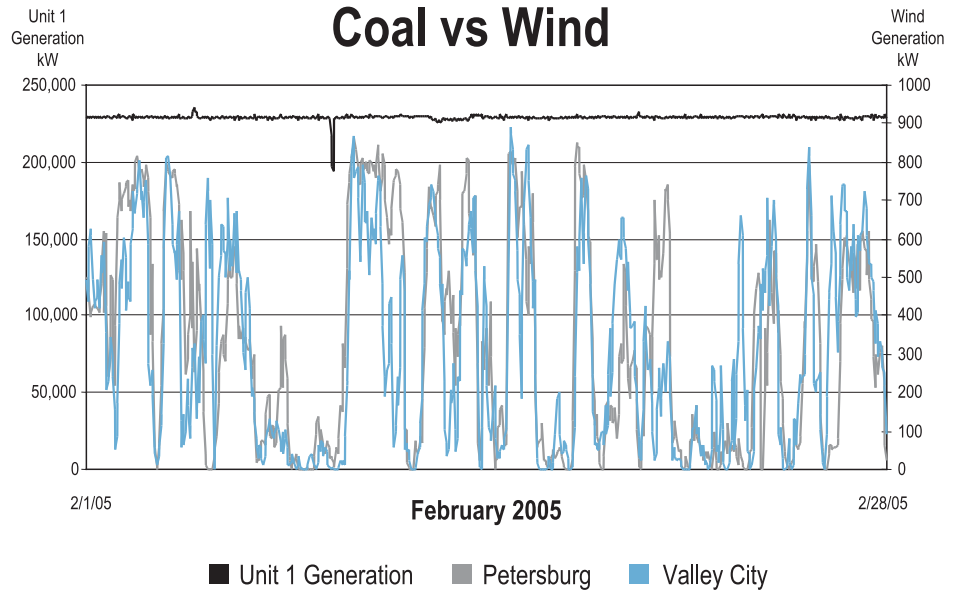
By Dan Hoskins
General Manager

Is it in the wind ?

Last month, my wife and I took a week of vacation and, during this week, we decided to drive cross-country. We did cover quite a few states and miles, but what I thought was interesting, was the amount of wind towers that are in the different locations.

There are quite a few in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota, as well as many other states. The interstate we traveled on passed by a large farm of wind generators in Illinois, and I am sure that most of you are aware of the wind generators that stretch for miles in California. Well, I am not opposed to wind generation, and I think an alternate energy source is a good thing. (795-08-026-03 Gary D/Joanne Whipple) I also believe that there are some good sources of distributed generation that, if affordable, could assist our members, but back to my question. Is it in the wind?

I know, for a fact, that our power supplier, Minnkota Power Cooperative, has two of these large wind generators (\$1,000,000 each) that are capable of generating 2.8 million kWh per turbine per year and that it costs about 5.1 cents per kWh to generate electricity with these turbines. I also know that this is not a reliable energy



source because of its dependence on wind, and yes, I know that we all think that the wind blows all of the time, but if you look at the attached chart, you will see the very sporadic levels of energy output. Also, you should know that for every kWh of wind power that you have, you should also have a reliable backup energy source because of the unreliability of wind energy.

Our legislators would like to see more and more wind energy. I would think that if you talked with Minnkota Power Cooperative or any other Generation and Transmission Cooperative, they would all tell you the same thing, that if we could make it a reliable, useable energy source, they would be happy to build the wind

generators and market the energy.

So, maybe before we invest in too many more wind generators, we should utilize the ones that we have and find a way to make the energy that is already being generated by the wind to be more reliable! In other words, make it a useable energy that we can depend on. Minnkota's coal-fired generators are among the lowest generators of electricity in the nation, and for our firm load, it is the most stable source of energy as you can see on the attached chart.

So, I think we should stay with the partner that we came to the dance with; they are dependable, reliable and affordable and can still rock and roll with that one ingredient, lignite coal!

On another note, I would like to thank all of you that attended our open houses in Littlefork and Baudette. Your visits, discussions and interest in your Cooperative are what make North Star Electric Cooperative a success. We entertained over 250 members at each location and look forward to seeing all of you again on October 14 at our annual meeting in the Littlefork/Big Falls High School Gym.

God Bless you and our Troops,

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.

■ Koochiching and St. Louis counties:

Lee Herseth

10078 Gappa Road

Ray, MN 56669

Phone: (218) 875-3028

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

■ Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties:

Laurence Otto

60426 County Road 12

Warroad, MN 56763

Phone: (218) 386-2299

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)



Office notes

From Ann Ellis, Manager of Finance and Administration

“Learn from the mistakes of others. You can’t live long enough to make them all yourself.”

author unknown

AMR

If you have a new electronic meter, please keep reading it. We will let you know when the project is ready to start reading your meter for you. In the meantime, the line department is doing field testing, and we’re seeing good results. Meter data is being imported, and interfaces with the billing program are being tested. There are still a few off-peak meters on the Wheelers substation that need to be changed out so we can continue to bill them at the reduced off-peak rate.

Obviously, the meter reading fee that some members pay will be eliminated, as will the hassle of having to read meters yourself. I know it hasn’t been something I personally look forward to at home every month.

With the AMR system able to detect usage on an off-peak meter during control times, it will give us a double bonus. First, it will eliminate unnecessary visits to installations that are working properly, and second, it will direct us immediately to an installation that needs attention, thus reducing our wholesale demand charges.

Open Houses

Thank you to all of you who stopped by the Littlefork and Baudette offices for our Open Houses in April. We were so pleased that over 500 of you took the time out of your busy schedules to visit with us and, especially, to those who brought their children. We had special areas dedicated to educating our youngsters about electrical safety, as well as the fun areas with the face painting, cotton candy and shiny, new Minnesota quarters. Bringing you all in gives us a chance to answer any questions you have, tell you about what’s happening at your co-op, and say thank you for your support of the utility you own.

At your service, we remain. . .

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 high-test standards of performance.

Steve Anderson Retires from North Star

Long-time employee, Steve Anderson, will retire from North Star Electric on May 31, 2005. Steve started his long career at North Star on December 11, 1969. He was hired as a Draftsman for the line department drawing, by hand, all the maps that North Star needed. A few years later he was promoted to Draftsman/Purchasing Agent. With his new duties, he was in charge of purchasing all of the material that was needed for construction and maintenance of our electrical system along with tracking inventory. In the mid-1990s, Steve went through a major computer conversion on the mapping system. At that time, he had to convert all of his hand-drawn maps to an electronic version so that all of the updates would be done electronically.



In retirement, Steve plans on four-wheeling during the summer and snowmobiling during the winter. It will also give him time to work on his family farm in Carp and get in some hunting and fishing.

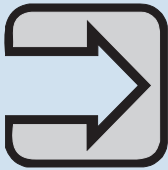
We all wish Steve a happy and healthy retirement. I know we will all miss him at North Star.

Brad Dolinski Joins Line Department

North Star Electric has hired Brad Dolinski as our new Arc Mapping/Purchasing Agent. Brad is a native of Baudette and a graduate of Lake of the Woods High School. After graduating from high school, he worked for North Star with Steve Anderson on upgrading the mapping system. That fall, he attended Bemidji State University studying Industrial Technology with an emphasis on Construction Management. After graduation, he worked for a construction company in Rochester, Minn., as an estimator.



We welcome Brad to our North Star team.



West End News

By Steve Ellis

Baudette District Operations Supervisor



We have been busy with the new AMR metering system installation in the Wheelers Point and Kabetogama substations as well as the summer work plans. New services still seem to be at the same pace as in recent years. There have been a lot of new services and service upgrades that we have been working on.

The contract for our summer work plans has been awarded, and work will begin on these projects in late June or early July. These three jobs are located west of Baudette upgrading the feeder serving power to the west and south of Pitt. The other projects will be in the Pelland Junction and International Falls areas; all of these projects will replace aging underground cable, with the exception of Pelland, where this is being done to better feed the area and ties to the west. Upgrading the power system is an ongoing process that needs to be done to keep up with new growth and aging facilities.

Summer storms will be upon us soon; remember to never touch a downed power line as it may still be energized. Please notify North Star Electric of any downed wires or out of the ordinary things that you may notice on or near our lines.

PLEASE! Continue to read and send your meter readings in to us, as usual, until we have notified you to do otherwise.

New service plans, anyone? If you do 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.

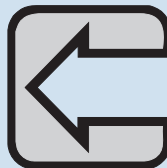
GSOC (Gopher State One Call) If you plan to do any digging, please remember that it is a law that you MUST contact GSOC before you do any digging. The ground is crawling with more than worms; it's full of wires and cables of all kinds! (362-28-026-01 Clarence W. Bergsma) To save yourself, and most likely many others, the inconvenience and cost, do plan your project well in advance, and notify GSOC first!....1-800-252-1166.



East End News

By Allan Baumgartner

Littlefork District Operations Supervisor



The crews are finishing up our annual Line Inspection/Meter Reading Program in the Kabetogama area. They are also installing new AMR meters on the main service and any off-peak meters they can get access to in the Kabetogama area. We will be making appointments to go back and get the others when people are at home. At the end of April, we traveled to Baudette to visit the Wheelers Point substation to see the equipment that needs to be installed and energized to make our first AMR system work. Later, we will do the same at the Kabetogama substation.

Our crews have been working on line maintenance items that were found during line inspection along with a few service upgrades that have come in.

We have several new services in the making, but in most cases, the road restrictions will have to be lifted this spring before we can start on them. We will be finishing our 4-year work plan this summer; some of the material needed is starting to come in.

We would like to congratulate Steve Anderson on his 36 years of service to the Co-op and his retirement this spring. We would also like to welcome his replacement, Brad Dolinski, to North Star Electric.

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.



Meth: An American gothic horror

How to recognize meth labs and meth cookers in your community

Methamphetamine is a highly toxic and addictive drug made in make-shift labs using mostly common household chemicals. Meth labs may be set up at homes, campgrounds, rest areas, rental properties ... just about anywhere a “cooker” thinks he can get away with the smell in solitude for a couple of hours.

Though most users are unemployed or blue-collar rural white men aged 25-40, use among rural high school and even junior high students is growing. State police say meth makers they’ve arrested include a grandmother in her late 60s, a suburbanite in a \$300,000 home and one pharmaceutical researcher pulling in a six-figure salary.

You can help police stop illegal meth labs by learning the signs and reporting them to the police.

How can you recognize a meth lab? Alone, any of these activities or signs may not mean meth manufacturing is occurring. However, a combination of them may indicate a problem:

- Strong odors of solvents or ammonia coming from the house, garage or detached buildings.
- Windows blacked out or curtains always drawn.
- Exhaust fans running constantly; windows open in all weather.
- Excessive trash with numerous empty bottles and containers, coffee filters with red stains and lithium batteries that have been broken open.
- Visitors and activity at all hours.
- Person doesn’t work, yet seems to have money, pays bills with cash.
- Presence of weapons, especially sawed-off shotguns, handguns.
- Extensive security in place, or odd “No Trespassing” signs posted or

boldly painted on buildings.

- Presence of precursors used to make meth — multiple packages of cold tablets containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, cans of engine starter fluid, camping fuel, antifreeze, drain cleaner, salt, acids, jugs, jars and bottles, funnels and tubing, propane or pressurized tanks (often stained with blue-green corrosion and fitted with make-shift valves).

How can you tell if someone is using meth? Symptoms may include:

- Inability to sleep or eat.
- Nervous physical activity, like scratching, rocking, wringing of hands.
- Irritability, dizziness or confusion.
- Severe weight loss.
- Flushed or tense appearance.
- Chemical odors on breath or clothes.
- Excessive sweating, body odor.
- Rapid speech; rambling conversation.
- Rotting teeth, poor hygiene.
- Scars, acne and open sores.
- Paranoia, depression.

Warnings: If you think you’ve found remnants of a meth lab on your property or along a roadside, get away from it. Discarded meth labs are toxic hazards that can include anhydrous ammonia and/or hydrochloric acid in unsuitable containers. Their contents can explode or be released if moved or even jarred slightly. (556-43-093-08 Cole Stainke) Call your sheriff’s department or the nearest state police post.

If you observe trespassers or suspect people are on your property making meth, do not confront them. If they are meth makers, they may be armed. Be safe: call your local police immediately to have them investigate.

Source: Electric Consumer



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**
312 N. Main St.
P.O. Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
Phone: 218-528-3258
or 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
or 218-749-2912

Gopher State One Call



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Minnesota Statewide One Call
Notification Center

1-800-252-1166

Highlights of the board of directors meeting

April 18, 2005

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on April 18, 2005. 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 except Director Trueman. They acted upon usual, routine business. In addition, they voted to change the medical insurance plan, to select Directors Anderson and Polkinghorne as the alternates for the Square Butte and Minnkota Board Members and to approve Bylaw changes to recommend to the membership for consideration at the October 14 Annual Meeting. The changes, in general, will provide for two methods for members to be placed on the ballot, will expand on director qualifications, will add another method for removal of board members, would require a reasonable effort by the Nominating Committees to find two candidates each, would widen the window of the nomination process to give the Nominating Committee and members more time to act, and would require an affirmative vote of the majority of the entire membership if more than 25% of the property of the Cooperative is to be sold.

Management and operations report

Manager Hoskins reported on the progress of the AMR (automated meter reading) project, including that the existing radio system, with minor modifications, will be suitable for communicating the AMR data, that most of the meters fed by the Wheelers Point substation have been changed, that meters fed by the Kabetogama substation are being

changed to AMR during line inspection, and that the balance of the meters should be changed during line inspection next winter. Manager Hoskins also reported that the WildBlue participation fee could not be returned, but could be used jointly with another WildBlue member. He also reported on the office hours change to 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. year-round. With 36-year employee Steve Anderson retiring, he reported that Brad Dolinski has been hired to replace him. He also reported that more emphasis will be placed on public safety awareness, specifically electrical safety, now that there is time to address it. He will also be taking several employees to Nodak Electric Cooperative to look at a materials buying alliance.

Office report

Finance Manager Ellis provided the financial report and concern with the below-budget sales. She also shared a story that indicated brand-awareness of the Touchstone Energy logo with elementary children. Also discussed was the proposed health insurance change.

Compliance and member services report

Manager of Compliance and Member Services Haukaas reported on load management activity, progress with moving water heaters from the off-peak meters to ECC credits, the success of the CIP-qualifying program to give away compact fluorescent light bulbs, IPP billing data to Minnkota, the Co-op Connection Card, the upcoming Member Appreciation Days and the upcoming scholarship competition.

Board reports

Volunteers to present North Star scholarships were selected. Directors were given checks to present to their area charitable business that had been selected to receive a portion of the unclaimed capital credits. President Arnesen reported favorably on the trip

that North Star sponsored to take students from Lake of the Woods High School to Center, North Dakota, where our electricity is generated. Warroad students attended this last year, and Littlefork/Big Falls and Indus students will be invited next year.

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.

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 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 our member services department.
11. Outstanding loan balance at termination of service is due in full.

Join us in June for a power plant tour

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

The tour is scheduled for Monday through Wednesday, June 6-8. On Monday morning, we will tour Minnkota's control center, diesel generator plant and print shop in Grand Forks. In the afternoon, we will see the *Infinity Wind Energy* generator by Valley City and end up at the beautiful Seven Seas Motel in Mandan, N.D.

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

On the third day, we will be able to have a relaxing trip and be home by mid-afternoon. In the past, when we did this trip in just two days, we had some members boarding the bus at 4:30 a.m. the first day and not returning home the second day until after midnight.

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

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?

North Star 2005 Knowledge Scholarship Winners

First place	\$1,000	Percent score
Corinne Anderson	School Lake of the Woods	93 %
Second Place	\$400 each	
Jordon Amundsen	School Indus	91 %
Samantha Palm	International Falls	91 %
Sarah Gubbels (tie \$267)	Lake of the Woods	89 %
Brett Bahr (tie \$267)	International Falls	89 %
Orie House (tie \$267)	International Falls	89 %



Congratulations to this year's winners!