

The Enlightener



North Star
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



VOLUME 50 NUMBER 8

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

AUGUST 2005

ABCs of dorm room safety

If your child's home-away-from-home is a college dorm room this semester, there are a few things you should know. The National Fire Protection Association estimates that nearly 1,600 fires a year occur in U.S. dorm rooms and fraternity and sorority houses. Older wiring, ill-suited to handle the electrical load from laptops, refrigerators, microwaves, TVs, audio equipment and other appliances students use may well be part of the problem.

The Leviton Institute offers some advice to help parents and college-bound kids engage in safe electrical practices while away at school. Even better if you're planning a visit to the campus, make sure your child is educated on the safe use of electricity in the dorm.

**North Star
Electric offices
will be closed
Monday, Sept. 5,
for Labor Day.**



Start by conducting a visual inspection of the dorm room or suite, making sure to check the following areas:

Dont overload circuits

Next to candles and cigarettes, overloaded circuits are the second leading cause of campus fires. If an appliance cord or outlet feels hot, the appliance should be disconnected immediately. Let your child know to report any outlets that are damaged, or that no longer grip plugs properly, to the campus housing staff immediately.

Power strips and adapters

Most college dorms are equipped with an insufficient number of outlets. To compensate for this, students frequently use power strips or adapters to add more connections. These ramp up the load requirement and can overload the electrical system. Only power strips with an over-current protector (circuit breaker), which automatically shuts off if too much current is being drawn, should be used. To protect electronics like computers, printers and audio



equipment from damaging spikes and surges, these devices should be plugged into a surge strip.

Extension cords

Use only extension cords with the UL label. These have undergone rigorous safety testing and can be purchased with confidence. Keep in mind that extension cords are designed for temporary use only and should never be used for permanent connections or to provide power to other extension cords.

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



June 2005

Operating Report

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Revenue (includes annual seasonal billing)..... | \$ 585,595 |
| Cost of Power | \$ 299,715 |
| Operation, Maintenance, Administration | \$ 195,606 |
| Depreciation and Interest | \$ 128,831 |
| Margin on Operations | \$ (38,557) |
| Average use per Residential..... | 889 |
| Total kWhs Sold | 6,346,391 |

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 700 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.



By Dan Hoskins
General Manager

Round-up for a cause

I would like to visit with all of you for a little bit concerning a topic or program that is out there that could benefit others. This program has benefited many other organizations throughout the territories of individual cooperatives that have started their own version of Operation Round-up. The program, Operation Round-up, starts with you, the member, and ends up with some organization or program that is in need of assistance.

Operation Round-up was started some years ago by a cooperative in South Carolina and has blossomed into a nationwide way of aiding support. In Minnesota alone, there are 28 cooperatives that have added the round-up program to their cooperative function, and many needy programs have benefited.

Just think, for a few cents a month, you, we, me, us, North Star could assist some meaningful programs that have been affected monetary-wise by either the economics of the area or budget cuts

by the county or state, and this donation would stay in our service territory and benefit the programs that our members associate with or are in need of.

So, here is how it would work. Beginning the first of the year, we would have all of our members in the program, unless, of course, you would notify us that you don't care to do this, and at that point, we would take you off of the list. So, let's use an example;

Your North Star power bill is \$133.37; North Star's billing department, by way of a computer, would round up your bill to \$134.00. This would make your monthly donation 63 cents.

So, now, not only does that donation mean a lot when we add it to the other donations of the members, but you can easily balance your checkbook, 'cause if you are like me, I round my extra cents up for balancing purposes. Plus, if we do this each month, the most it would cost you for the whole year is \$11.88, and that's if your bill happens to land on 1 cent each month.

I mentioned that 28 cooperatives in Minnesota are doing the Round-up program. Well, they

have helped out their communities to the tune of over \$4,800,000 since the program began. Now, that's what I call cooperative, and they did it by having each member donate a few cents per month. Just think, if we have 5,000 members and each member's bill is rounded up by an average of 50 cents, that's \$2,500.00 that we can help an ambulance squad, fire department, Meals on Wheels program or anything like that; services that we will all need sooner or later, so let's make sure they are here when we need them.

This Round-up program would be its own entity and have a separate Board of Directors that would be made up of you, our members, by having one person from each district of the North Star area, and its own set of bylaws, rules and policies. This Board would oversee the whole operation of the program, from the funds that are available to the rules and regulations, and decide which needy programs would receive the assistance. So, just think, for a few pennies a month, you could possibly be helping your neighbor, a good friend or even a family member; it doesn't cost that much, and we do all the work here at the office.

So, in your bill this month, you will find a short survey concerning the Operation Round-up program. Please fill it out, send it back with your bill, and let us know what you think of this program. We are a cooperative, and this is your Cooperative, so we would like your input in this venture.

Thanks for your time; 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.

- *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

"If the shoe fits, you're not allowing for growth."

~Robert N. Coons

Nomination process for board candidacy

The members in Districts 6 and 7 will be electing their board representatives at the Annual Meeting in Littlefork on Oct. 14. This process starts with a Nominating Committee who will search for candidates for the ballot.

District 6 is currently represented by Allan Nygaard. That Nominating Committee is Kenneth Warner, Shirley Davis, Rose Larsen and Michael Gates.

District 7 is currently represented by Bruce Polkinghorne. The Nominating Committee for this area is Keith Barstad, Wendy Boorman, Lorna Gustafson and Larry V. Keep.

If you are unsure which district you reside in, your number is printed on your monthly billing statement just below the bar code for your mailing address. I had an error in last month's Office Notes that indicated Allan Nygaard was in District 8, but he represents District 6 – my apologies.

If you reside in District 6 or 7 and are interested in running for the board position, you should contact a member of your Nominating Committee before Aug. 30. You may also get on the ballot by presenting a petition, signed by at least 20 members from your district, to the cooperative before Sept. 18. The candidates' names that we are aware of by Sept. 1. will be published in the September *Enlightener*. Each district will have its own election at the Annual Meeting which will be held at the Littlefork/Big Falls School.

Also on the agenda will be bylaw amendments; one will give members more time to express interest of candidacy to the Nominating Committees.

Meal bidders wanted

We will be accepting bids from area organizations to prepare and serve the 5:00 – 7:00 dinner at the Annual Meeting. If you are interested, please call me by September 6th.

Capital credit retirement

As this publication goes to press, the board will be considering this fall's capital credit retirement. We have budgeted to return \$400,000 to the members in September, and this would mean a nice bill credit for many of you. If you prefer to receive a check instead, please call Norma at our Baudette office or send her an e-mail at normansec@wiktel.com. Either way, this payment to you is not taxable unless you deducted electricity as an expense on your income tax return in the year when these capital credits were earned. You've got questions? We've got answers.

At your service we remain. . .

Cold weather disconnects

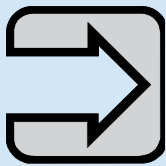
Section 216B.097 was added to the Public Utilities Act effective Aug. 1, 1991. The law provides that cooperatives and municipal utilities cannot disconnect a residential consumer between Oct. 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heating source, provided that certain conditions are met.

The conditions include that the member must declare, on forms provided by the cooperative, an inability to pay, and the household income of the customer is less than 50 percent of the state median income. Another major change this winter is that any member who is receiving energy assistance is eligible. In addition, the customer's account must be current for the billing period immediately prior to Oct. 15, or in the alternative, the customer has entered into and is reasonably current on a mutually acceptable payment schedule. Several agencies provide financial assistance to qualifying households. We urge you to check with them for details on available programs.

To avoid electric disconnection, arrangements for bill payment need to be made before the line crew is sent to collect. Do not disregard your bill. It is your responsibility. If you have financial difficulties, please contact our office to discuss payment arrangements.

Have you filled your tank yet?





West End News

By Steve Ellis
Baudette District Operations Supervisor



We have been keeping busy with new services, road jobs and the Work Plan job in the Pitt area. We've also been working on a line upgrade in the Oak Harbor area; with the new 9-hole addition to the golf course and the platting of 70-plus lots in that area, as well as the age of our lines around there, we will be upgrading approximately one mile of v-phase to underground 3-phase. This upgrade will improve service in that area for now and will cover any new development in the future.

AMR (Automated Meter Reading) — we have been working on the Wheelers Point and Kabetogama substations. Meter readings are coming into us, but we have about 1 percent that aren't, for one reason or another; these reasons are being investigated and corrected. If all goes well, we will be switching these meters over to AMR, which means you, the member, need to no longer read your meter. North Star will contact you as to when you may stop reading your meter, but for now, please continue to send them in every month.

We will be doing some right-of-way spraying from the Williams to Baudette areas again this year; this is to finish up planned spraying that was not completed last year. We contract this work out, but if you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

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.

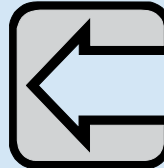
Please be careful around overhead lines, as they are very dangerous when working around them. Always keep their presence in mind; if you see or have any questions about your power lines, contact us for help.

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! To save yourself, and most likely many others, the inconvenience and cost, please plan your project well in advance, and notify GSOC first! Call 1-800-252-1166.



East End News

By Allan Baumgartner
Littlefork District Operations Supervisor



Our crews have been building new services, along with upgrades and service reroutes because of new home construction. This year has been especially busy because of all the outages caused by storms and the aftermath of maintenance work on our system that follows major storms.

Our crews have completed all of our work to get ready for our Work Plan jobs. The underground wire will be installed next by a contractor following up with our crews terminating and energizing our new power lines late this summer or early fall. We are in our last year of a four-year Work Plan that involved many jobs to improve our system for the future.

We had 10 individual and nine main line outages in July. Most of the main line outages were caused by lightning and windstorms.

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



From page 1

Also, they should never be run under rugs or furniture.

Appliances

Toasters, microwaves, hot plates, coffee makers and electric irons should never be situated near bedding, books, draperies or clothing. These items can get hot enough to ignite clothing or paper. Keep appliances away from bathtubs and sinks. (Paul/Marcia Turenne 783-29-025-05) Water and electricity should never come in contact. Appliances not in use should be switched off. Do not use any appliance with a damaged or frayed cord. Adherence to the college's rules and guidelines on approved equipment is critical. If the college prohibits the use of certain appliances, it's because they pose a serious hazard. So make sure your child understands these rules.

Halogen lamps

Halogen lamps can reach temperatures hot enough to ignite blankets or curtains and have been banned from most college campuses because they're unsafe. If they are permitted on your child's campus, they should be used with extreme caution. Make sure the lamp has a mesh guard that isolates the bulb and is also equipped with an automatic tip-over switch.

Evacuation

Encourage your child to take on-campus fire drills seriously. Ask him or her about where the nearest exits are and whether or not they know evacuation procedures and escape plans. You won't always be there to watch out for your child, so send along a fire extinguisher and a smoke detector if these devices are not available and you can add to your peace of mind.

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proactively planning to meet the future firm power requirements of the 11 member systems and is currently studying the possibility of a third baseload, coal-fired power plant at the existing Young Station site.

"We will continue watching our member load levels very closely," Tscheppen said. "At this time, we have options on Young 2 beginning in 2006, which will bring an additional 90 megawatts of low-cost, baseload power into the Minnkota system by 2010. And we are planning for Young 3 to be online by the

year 2015 to meet firm load requirements."

Load management has been an important part of Minnkota's energy supply plan for more than 25 years and will continue for many years to come. (Lee Spencer 121-25-003-02) The ability to control certain loads during peak times allows Minnkota to offer some of the lowest rates of all generation and transmission cooperatives in the nation. Even with an increase in control hours, off-peak electricity is still the best energy value in this region.

Trees and power lines: A dangerous duo

Trees can provide shade, beauty and fresh air around your home, but they can also be dangerous if planted too close to electrical power lines.

The experts at the Electrical Safety Foundations International (ESFI) and the American Public Power Association (APPA) say power outages can occur and dangerous electric shock hazards can develop if tree limbs touch electric wires or if branches fall on the utility lines. "Trees can also hinder utility repair work and recognition of a hazard," warned ESFI executive director Michael G. Clendenin. For that reason, ESFI and APPA recommend that only low-growing trees

should be planted near overhead utility wires.

To prevent trees from interfering with power lines, ESFI recommends that homeowners call their electric utility or a tree trimming professional to prune even questionable tree limbs. Trimming trees near power lines can, itself, be very dangerous, and should be handled only by trained professionals. Also, tell your children not to climb trees that are close to power lines.

"It takes only 10 to 40 milliamps for serious injury and even death to occur. Utility power lines carry thousands of volts, nearly ensuring death to the victim," added Clendenin.

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

July 6, 2005

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on July 6, 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 General 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 require that members requesting a new service pay the County recording fee for easement(s). The consensus of the board was to pursue study of the participation expectations, costs, and operational issues associated with Operation Round-Up. They also heard a report from Touchstone Energy regarding the brand, awareness, and budget, in addition to the broad range of programs that Touchstone Energy membership provides.

Management and operations report

Manager Hoskins reported on the progress of the Emergency Response Plan, meetings, the AMR (automated meter reading) project progress, the Energy Bill passed by the legislature, and maintenance and line construction contracts. He also reported on Operations Department activities including new services, outages, and safety & training.

Office report

Finance Manager Ellis provided the financial report and reported on office activities including locking in long-term debt at a very fa-

vorable interest rate, the ease of importing meter readings from the AMR system, sales tax refunds, and information from their District I Financial Managers' meeting.

Compliance and member services report

Manager of Compliance and Member Services Haukaas reported on load management activity, continuation of moving controlled water heaters from the off-peak meter, CIP (Conservation Improvement Plan) rebates and energy efficient light bulb giveaways, the upcoming Safety Camp in Baudette, safety presentations in the schools, the success of the Center power plant bus tour, and the successful launch of WildBlue satellite high-speed Internet service, which will be sold in our area by partner Northland Connect (1-866-567-1919).

Board reports

Minnkota Delegate Arnesen reported on their monthly meeting, which included discussion regarding considering construction of a new, coal-fired power plant. Square Butte Delegate Bergan reported on their quarterly meeting. Director Hanson reported on the North Itasca annual meeting.

NORTHERN MINNESOTA DISTRICT FAIR PRIZE WINNERS

Grand Prize Winner

Deluxe Cart Grill
with Rotisserie & Cover
Harry Geving

2nd Prize Winner

Lock-N-Go Grill
Duane Burmeister

Kids Drawing

\$25.00 Gift Certificate
Paige DeLack

Nightly Drawing

Surge Protector
Shelly Williams
Don Porter
Gerry Houglum

Gopher State One Call



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

Summer load management update

Additional control hours experienced system-wide

By Mike Nisbet

Senior Publications Editor,

Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.

Sizzling summer temperatures are lingering throughout the Upper Midwest, in some places exceeding 100 degrees. Across the Minnkota Power Cooperative service region in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota, temperatures were above average throughout the month of July, leading to increased use of summer load control measures.

“On those hot days, staying cool becomes a priority,” said Wayne Haukaas, member services manager for North Star Electric Cooperative. “Air conditioners are everyone’s best friend, and the electricity needed to power them is in high demand.”

Loads across the Minnkota system have been strong this summer, as forecasted. Minnkota has the plants and capacity to serve the firm load requirements of the associated systems’ members. Commercial and industrial members who voluntarily chose to enroll in the off-peak program, however, have been subject to more frequent control times.

“So far this summer, Minnkota has controlled the interruptible loads for more hours than last summer,” said Jim Burley, system operations manager, noting that long-range forecasters are predicting hot and dry weather throughout the remainder of the summer.

Volatile MISO marketplace

When peaking conditions occur, Minnkota has two options: Purchase additional electricity from the wholesale energy market when it is affordably priced, or initiate control of the interruptible loads.

During “yellow zone” control times, off-peak members partici-

pating in the Incremental Pricing Plan (IPP) have the option to pay a supplemental charge of generally 7 cents per kWh for energy used during the control period. (Gerald Balitewicz 365-20-003-02) This alternative allows them to essentially “buy through” times when they would otherwise have been controlled or required to run diesel backup generation.

During “red zone” control times, system demand is at its greatest and the price of wholesale power is above Minnkota’s target level of 10 cents per kWh. Within a brief time period, a special code called a ripple signal is sent out over the transmission lines requiring off-peak members to interrupt or pay a demand charge penalty.

Minnkota’s energy marketers purchase power to serve the off-peak loads year-round, but daily on-peak prices in the Midwest Independent System Operator (MISO) marketplace have been quite volatile and often times unpredictable.

“We’ve repeatedly seen power

priced in excess of 10 cents per kilowatt-hour on warm days,” Burley explained. “Unfortunately, the new MISO energy market has not yet demonstrated any real value to our members, as low-cost surplus power has not been available for us to buy.”

Future predictions

Given the forecast for continued warm days this summer, off-peak members will likely experience more load control in August, and possibly into September, when agricultural-related activities such as grain conditioning commence.

“Power pool prices in MISO will likely remain high because of \$8 per Mcf natural gas, \$60 per barrel crude oil and the lack of new coal-fired power plants in the Upper Midwest region,” said Al Tschepen, Minnkota vice president of Planning and System Operations.

The demand for electricity in the Minnkota system has been increasing at a modest rate of about 2.2 percent each year. Minnkota is

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What is summertime load management?

The cost-saving load management program enables North Star Electric Cooperative to control certain loads during peak demand times. Warm weather produces these peak use periods, but load control is also influenced by the price of electricity in the wholesale marketplace, as well as the ability to transmit that power into the Minnkota system without restriction.

The ripple control signal is initiated from the energy control center of our wholesale power supplier, Minnkota Power Cooperative of Grand Forks, N.D.

Load management is a cost-saving program, but also a voluntary one. If control times are too disruptive, North Star Electric Co-op urges our members to call their member services department at 634-2202 to discuss other options that are available.