

POWER PLANT TOUR



Ed Solarski, Minnkota lead operator, explains the standby diesel generators that are located at Minnkota Power in Grand Forks.



North Star Electric Cooperative members get their picture taken at the Milton R. Young Station near Center, N.D. Forty-eight members went on the three-day tour. The tour is a great way for cooperative members to learn firsthand what it takes to produce and deliver electricity to our area.



(Above) Members take turns getting their picture taken inside one of the dragline buckets.



(Above) Members are allowed inside one of the wind turbines at the Ashtabula Wind Energy Center to see the operating system of the turbine. Also inside is the ladder that workers must climb to do maintenance on the turbine. Most of the wind turbines at this location have a 1.5-megawatt generator, which is located on the top of a 260-foot tower. These turbines have three blades, which are up to 120 feet in length. Minnkota has contracted to buy electricity from 145 turbines at this location.



Members watch as the huge dragline gives a demonstration removing overburden from the coal vein at BNI Coal. The Liberty dragline has a 355-foot boom with a 77-cubic-yard bucket.



(Above) Barb Gray stands next to two pistons from the diesel generators. The smaller piston is from the generator located at Minnkota Power in Grand Forks and the larger piston is from a generator located in Harwood, N.D.

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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.*

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' July 13 meeting. In addition to routine business, the board confirmed their approval of the installation of a security system, voted to adopt an IDR (Interconnection of Distributed Resources) board policy, accepted the modifications to the mutual aid Assistance Agreement with the city of Baudette and acknowledged the reasonable distribution of members among the seven districts.

Staff reports included the financial report, plans for awarding the REDLG (Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant) loan to the LOW EDA for the Line Workers Training Facility, the phone system replacement, load control, CIP (Conservation Improvement Program) rebates,

the Center power plant tour, a solar system being interconnected to our system on the east end and a second being contemplated in the Birchdale area, director training, regulatory and legislative activity and new plans to expand upon the NOvA site near the Ash River Trail.

Detailed minutes are available at the cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally held the first Wednesday of every month (111-24-004-02, Ronald Knudson). 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.

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.



• • • • Current electrical inspectors • • • •

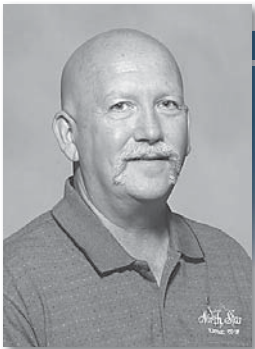
State law requires that every new electrical installation in any construction, remodeling, replacement or repair shall file a certificate for inspection with the State Board of Electricity and be inspected by a Minnesota electrical inspector.

• 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

Ladies and Gentlemen, we live in the greatest country in the world and we have so many benefits compared to others that it is sometimes unbelievable. This is the land of milk and honey,

land of opportunity, and the land of our freedom that was earned, fought for, and paid for by the sacrifice of our veterans. Sometimes things just make you wonder.

I know this may not make any sense to some of you, but being an avid sports nut or couch potato like myself, I enjoy pretty much all sports. So, when the NFL had a lockout because it didn't know how to divide up \$9.3 billion, I chuckled. \$9.3 billion! I thought; just ask me, I'll give you my ideas! Thankfully, the NFL and the players have finally come to terms on a new agreement. But now the NBA is having labor problems. We're talking billions of dollars again. Now, it takes a lot of fingers and toes to count that much!

Anyway, as of this writing, Minnesota state government is back in business, too. It had shut down on the biggest weekend in our country and a huge money weekend for our state, the Fourth of July! The state of Minnesota shuts down because the DFL and the GOP and the Gov. can't play in the same sandbox. Don't they just make you proud! I do hope they realize that it's not about whether they are a GOP or a DFL, but that they need to think of the people of Minnesota. Oh yeah, the federal government was doing the same thing with the debt limit until it agreed on a bill. It was holding out as long as it could just so either the red hats, or the blue hats, get their way!

And now, the infamous Environmental Protection Agency, better known as the EPA, a government agency, is looking to control more emissions on power plants. Now if you recall, and things like this are hard to forget, in March of this year Minnkota raised our wholesale energy rate 29.8 percent to help satisfy a \$420 million emission control upgrade to its Milton R. Young power plant. Part of the cost involved reducing nitrogen oxides

by 60 percent in order to be compliant with state standards. Now, the EPA says it needs more control because the air in North Dakota is dirty. What? Well Mr. and Mrs. EPA, excuse me, but have you ever been to North Dakota? This state takes pride in everything it does and now you say that the emission control standards that the North Dakota Department of Health has in place are not good enough?

This new round of control is what they call the Regional Haze Program, which is supposed to improve the visibility around the Theodore Roosevelt National Park and other related areas. They do this by adding another \$500-\$700 million worth of emission controls on the already almost emission-free power plants. Well, I don't have to tell you who's going to pay for that! One more thing, and it's a doozy, the EPA is not sure if this technology even works! But hey, let's do it anyway.

Plus it has a few more tricks up its sleeve that will lighten your billfold or pocketbook. There are potential EPA rules such as on coal ash disposal and the interstate transport of air pollutants, better known as the 2005 clean air interstate rule. Or better yet, the cross-state air pollution rule or whatever-the-heck-they want to call it, which would require even more emission control additions to power plants at Minnkota's cost, which, in turn, is our cost.

I'm going to quit ranting. We are able to adapt to just about anything, but when is it time to draw a line in the sand? I don't have that answer, but it's getting closer, and I can see the sand pile! Anyway, we will be seeking your assistance to have your voices and/or your comments heard on these EPA issues. The NBA can take care of itself!

On a much better note, don't forget to mark your calendars for Friday night, Oct. 7, for the 71st annual meeting of the member-owners of North Star Electric Cooperative, which will be held at the Littlefork/Big Falls High School gymnasium.

God Bless You and Our Troops,

Dan

**PLEASE,
NO SIGNS
ON
POLES**

Fastening signs, posters and other objects to utility poles can create hazards for line workers. Sharp objects like nails, tacks, staples and barbed wire all present imminent dangers for co-op line crews who climb poles all hours of the day and night and in all the worst of conditions.

If a line worker's hooks cut out while he is climbing, his injuries could be much more severe if an arm or leg catches a nail or other object tacked to the pole. Line workers' hooks can cut out due to contact with any foreign object on the pole. Sharp objects not only compound a fall but can also puncture rubber gloves and other safety equipment, making line workers vulnerable to electrocution. Also, when line workers have to remove objects from poles in order to climb during an outage, this makes power restoration that much longer.

Please think of the safety of the line crews and refrain from attaching signs or other objects to the co-op's poles.

Energy efficiency to-do list

Energy dollars can be lost through drafty doors and windows, leaky faucets and uninsulated attics and floors. Safe Electricity offers some things that should be put on your 'To Do List' today that will save you money in the upcoming winter months as well as in the years to come. As summer activities slow down, take some time to check some of these items off.

- ☒ Get a list of ways to no longer waste money on the energy bill and be more energy efficient.
- ___ Turn off lights when you leave a room.
- ___ Turn off ceiling fans when no one is in the room; fans cool off people, not the space they are in.
- ___ Match pot size to burner size when cooking, and make sure to use a lid.
- ___ Set hot water heater to no more than 120 degrees.
- ___ Replace old bulbs with Compact Fluorescent Lamp bulbs (CFLs).
- ___ Wash clothes in cold water.
- ___ Turn off electronics and unplug chargers when they are not in use.
- ___ Never wash clothes or dishes unless the loads are full.
- ___ Depending on the time of year, adjust your thermostat up or down several degrees when leaving your home or business for an extended period of time.
- ___ Install a programmable thermostat.
- ___ Replace furnace and air conditioning filters on a monthly basis.
- ___ Caulk cracks between windows/doors and walls.
- ___ Purchase an insulating blanket for the hot water heater.
- ___ Install motion sensors, dimmers and timers for indoor and outdoor lighting.
- ___ During the winter, open up window curtains during the day to let the warm sunlight in. At night, make sure to close the curtains to help keep the heat inside.
- ___ Plant trees to shelter your home from the elements.
- ___ Fix leaky faucets at your home and/or office.
- ___ Invest in low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators.
- ___ Upgrade to a high-efficiency furnace/air conditioner or heat pump.
- ___ Invest in double-pane windows with low e-coating to reflect thermal radiation.
- ___ Purchase an energy-efficient refrigerator.
- ___ Purchase a dishwasher that saves water and energy.
- ___ Insulate attic, exterior walls, basement and crawl spaces.
- ___ Select efficient home office equipment and electronics.
- ___ Visit www.energysource.org to learn more tips to be energy efficient.

"Some items on the checklist just need to become habits for all of us to do in our daily routines, but the small efficiency projects on the list cost little to no money and will pay for themselves in the long run," explains Molly Hall, executive director of the energy education council. "If you check some of the things off of your 'Energy efficiency to-do list,' you will be able to see the results on your next energy bill."

STAFF REPORT

Crews have finished annual line inspection and have been repairing problems found on the inspection. We have also been clearing right of way that seems to never slow its growth into and toward our lines.

We are preparing for a MN/DOT road construction project that is scheduled for a fall 2011 start date. This consists of working on the right-of-way clearing and maintenance east of Baudette along Highway 11. This project is located partially alongside our 2011 work plan project that will consist of line replacement to larger conductor and pole replacement from Baudette to Border for approximately 14.8 miles. Lakes States Construction has been contracted to rebuild this line with our crews helping out in the more sensitive areas.

Crews have been busy east of Baudette this summer. They are working on a section of line between Indus and Loman where we will need to relocate our underground cable in several areas along this stretch of road near culvert ends and road move areas. This is in preparation for the MN/DOT road project in this area to be started next spring. In addition, they also replaced three miles of line south of Clementson to accommodate a road construction project by Koochiching County.

We installed a three-mile line extension from the south, near the Rako road, to the MN/DOT gravel pit where MN/DOT is installing a communications tower.

We are also stepping down the

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.

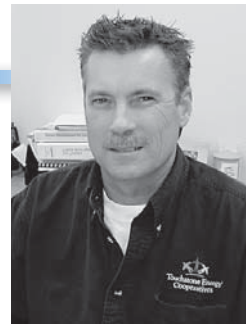
A contractor is testing poles in the Williams substation area this summer. These crews will test all of North Star's poles.

We have had Chapman Metering testing all three-phase meters on our system, and these meters will be replaced with AMR meters this fall.

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 work plans.

GSOC (Gopher State One-Call) ... If you plan to do any digging, please remember it is the law that you MUST contact GSOC before you dig. 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!



Steve Ellis
Baudette District
Operations Supervisor

REGIONAL HAZE WEBSITE ACTIVATED

A website has been activated with information about the regional haze issue. We believe the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should not take over the state of North Dakota's plan to improve visibility at the region's national parks. The state of North Dakota is fighting the EPA's effort to overtake the state's plan for regional haze, which is also known as smog.

The www.stopEPAnd.com website provides general information about the regional haze issue. Among the topics is the huge impact this issue could have on power plants such as Minnkota's Milton R. Young Station. Minnkota is our wholesale power supplier.

Beginning perhaps as early as late August, you can also go to the website and electronically fill out a form to send official comments to the EPA about the negative impacts of the federal plan. If the EPA doesn't accept the North Dakota Department of Health State Implementation Plan (SIP), and instead implements its own Federal Implementation Plan (FIP), we would face significant rate increases in the next few years.

The EPA says the North Dakota state plan isn't good enough to address nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emissions at Minnkota's Young Station and Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Leland Olds plant.

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North Dakota's plan favors Over-Fire Air (OFA)+Selective Non-Catalytic Reduction (SNCR) technology that is proven to work on North Dakota lignite coal, and will reduce more than 60 percent of the NO_x emissions. The system cost Minnkota \$40 million to install.

The EPA wants Minnkota to use technology called Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) that the agency believes

will reduce more than 85 percent of the NO_x emissions leaving the plants' chimneys. SCR, which has not been proven to work on North Dakota lignite coal, would cost Minnkota \$500 million to install.

After a couple of delays in the process, we still aren't positive when the EPA's Notice of Intent to overtake the state's plan will be published. Once the Federal Register receives the document and posts it on its

website, a 60-day public comment period will begin.

The congressional delegations of North Dakota and Minnesota are also pressuring the EPA to approve the North Dakota state plan.

So go to www.stopEPAnd.com and see what you can do to help stop the EPA takeover.

Cold weather disconnects and the law

The cold weather law does not totally forbid winter cutoffs. If you receive a disconnection notice this winter, you must act promptly.

An electric cooperative must not disconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between Oct. 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit when the following conditions are met:

(1) the customer has declared inability to pay on forms provided by the utility. For the purposes of this clause, a customer who is receiving energy assistance is deemed to have demonstrated an inability to pay;

(2) the household income of the customer is less than 50 percent of the state median income. All income documentation must be returned along with your Inability To Pay form unless you have verified income eligibility with an energy assistance provider in clause (3);

(3) verification of income may be conducted by the local energy assistance provider or the utility, unless the customer is automatically eligible for protection against disconnection as a recipient of any form of public assistance, including energy assistance that uses income eligibility in any amount at or below the income eligibility in clause (2);

(4) a customer whose account is current for the billing period immediately prior to Oct. 15 or who, at any time, enters into a payment schedule that considers the financial resources of the household is reasonably current with payments under the schedule; and

(5) the customer receives referrals to energy assistance programs, weatherization, conservation or other

programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

The cold weather law provides you with these options

The RIGHT to declare your inability to pay. If you do so and if your household income is less than 50 percent of the state median income, the service affecting your primary heat source cannot be disconnected for nonpayment of your bill. However, we have the right to accept or reject your request based on

Local energy assistance providers

Lake of the Woods County	218-634-2642
Koochiching County	218-283-7000
Northwest Community Action	800-568-5329
Kootasca Community Action	800-422-0312
Arrowhead Economic Opportunity	800-662-5711

information supplied or other supporting documentation.

The RESPONSIBILITY, if you choose to declare inability to pay. You must complete an "Inability to Pay" form and return it to us within fifteen (15) days of the notice to disconnect. You must contact us immediately to arrange a payment plan.

The RIGHT to a mutually agreeable payment schedule with us. The schedule will cover your existing arrears plus the estimated usage during the payment schedule period.

The RIGHT not to be involuntarily disconnected on a Friday or on a day before a holiday, or until at least twenty (20) days after the postmark on the notice to disconnect or until fifteen (15) days

after the notice and information has been personally delivered.

The RIGHT not to be disconnected until the utility investigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied when a customer does not respond to a disconnection notice. If the unit is found to be occupied, the utility must immediately inform the occupant of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the utility must give seven days' written notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider before making a disconnection.

The RIGHT to receive budget counseling from your local energy assistance provider or another organization of your choice.

The RIGHT to appeal the disconnection of service to the North Star Electric Cooperative board of directors. If you choose to appeal, you must deliver or mail a personal letter stating your situation and issues in dispute. Your letter must be in our hands before the date of disconnection. You will be notified when the board of directors will review your appeal and you may be present at the review. No disconnection of service will take place during the appeal process.

If you do not meet all the conditions of the cold weather law as outlined on this notice, you do not qualify for winter shutoff protection. However, you still can continue to receive electric service if you call us to set up a mutually acceptable payment arrangement. Call North Star Electric at 218-278-6658 or 888-258-2008, BEFORE the due date on your disconnection notice.

If you meet all the conditions of the cold weather law, can't pay your electric bill, and need cold weather protection from utility shutoff, call North Star Electric to have an Inability to Pay form sent to you. Complete the form and return it to North Star Electric Cooperative immediately along with your income documentation.

Rules are good unless ...

By Mac McLennan, Minnkota president & CEO



EPA regional haze proposal is as perplexing as some NCAA rules

The NCAA might be the best-known organization with regard to implementing puzzling rules.

There are more than 400 pages of the NCAA Division I compliance regulations. The list is growing – every time a coach gets a slightly new idea of how to entice a recruit to campus.

One of my favorites is a rule regarding a coach or university supplying bagels to players. Coaches are allowed to do so, but they cannot add butter or cream cheese.

For real. Apparently a University of Michigan associate athletic director verified the cream cheese rule for the *Chronicle for Higher Education* a couple of years back.

While this rule doesn't or didn't make a lot of sense (let's hope it's been changed by now), it shows how we live in a world of compliance. Most of the rules and regulations are justifiable. Once in a while, you run by one that doesn't make a lot of sense. We'll talk about one proposed plan in that category later in this article.

Despite what we think are sometimes crazy rules and regulations, I want us to all understand that we at Minnkota will be a compliant organization.

In fact, it is all of our jobs to make sure we follow laws, rules and regulations.

This doesn't mean that we won't work to change the rules or make arguments about how the rules if implemented might impact our operations. We owe it to our members to make sure that if we are going to be required to operate under rules and regulations, that those rules and regulations be reasonable, achievable and actually provide the benefits for the costs.

The latest rules we have been

working on to make sure they are reasonable surround announced plans by the EPA to take over the state of North Dakota's plan to manage visibility or regional haze.

Regional haze

In recent weeks, we have spent considerable time working to understand and trying to communicate our concerns with the latest EPA proposal on this issue. To find the latest information on the subject, look at the *Messenger* article on minnkota.com.

The short story is that the Selective Non-Catalytic Reduction and Over-Fire Air technology we just put in at the Milton R. Young Station cost \$40 million to install. If the EPA's Federal Implementation Plan (FIP) for regional haze were adopted, it would cost Minnkota more than \$500 million for Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) emission control equipment.

This additional cost would come without any perceptible improvement in visibility. It's as silly as the NCAA rule on cream cheese and butter. Some plans don't make sense.

In fact, SCR isn't even guaranteed to work long term. The catalyst in SCR would eventually become clogged.

So I'm asking for your help. We are working with Basin Electric and the state of North Dakota to see if we can find a solution prior to the EPA announcing it will take over the state's program. However, if that is not successful, I will be asking you to make your voice heard regarding this issue.

If you believe spending \$.5 billion for an imperceptible improvement is as nonsensical as the NCAA police taking cream cheese away from student-athletes, this will be your chance to say so.

More than keeping the lights on

From the beginning, electric cooperatives have had a simple goal: keep the lights on.

While that goal hasn't changed much over the years, the value of electricity continues to grow with each passing day.

Besides simply brightening up the dark, electricity warms our water, cools our food, cooks our meals and washes and dries our clothes. It powers televisions, computers, entertainment systems and other electronics.

And it's available at a relatively low price compared to other consumer goods. A single dollar can power a refrigerator for a week, an average television for 48 hours or a laptop for 72 hours (556-42-013-09, Robert Wimmer). Many of these services are provided for pennies per hour.

Electricity has also supported numerous advances in our community and provides many of the modern day conveniences that we often take for granted. Where would we be each morning without an alarm clock, a warm shower or a cup of coffee before heading out the door?

On the way to work or school, street and traffic lights often guide us along the way. Upon arrival, electricity is there powering computers, printers, pop machines and many of the heating and air conditioning units.

These businesses, in turn, provide jobs and much-needed goods and services in the community. Electric cooperatives contribute to economic development in the very areas they serve.

Electricity from your co-op comes with the added benefit of member-owned service. Your electric cooperative operates on a not-for-profit basis under the direction of a democratically elected board of directors. This means that the sole motivation is to provide quality service at the lowest possible cost. It also means that you have a voice in how these services are delivered.

Recently, much has been made of the rising cost of electricity. However, it's important to understand the value that electricity brings to our lives – each and every day. When you flip that switch, remember that your electric cooperative is working hard to keep the lights on.



North Star Electric Cooperative's Co-op Connections Card

is being revitalized

Here are a few of the businesses participating in the Co-op Card. See more online at www.nse.coop or www.connections.coop

- Log Cabin Bait, Inc.
- Red Rooster Bed & Breakfast
- Sjoberg's Cable TV
- TruStar Federal Credit Union

Watch for a new Co-op Card and discount list going out to all of our 5,400+ members. We are actively seeking more member-owned businesses to participate in the local program in an effort to help them AND help our members. Contact North Star Electric Co-op for more information.



**Co-op Connections Card
Business Spotlight**

Polkinghorne's Hardware & Rental

404 Main Street, Littlefork, Minn.

Open 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. M-S and

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday

*"You've got a lot more going for
you with Hardware Hank"*

Show your Co-op Card and save

10% exterior paints and stains

(excluding sale items)

Phone: 218-278-6611



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

309 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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www.collinpeterhouse.gov
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Fax: 202-225-1593

State of Minnesota legislators

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Farmers urged to look up during harvest season

Remember electrical safety during National Farm Safety and Health Week



Harvest season is the most satisfying time of the year on the farm, as it's the culmination of many long hours of effort in raising a crop. But long grueling hours in the field can make workers weary, and prone to forget the safety precautions that can prevent serious or fatal electrical injuries. Every year, an average of 62 farm workers are electrocuted in the United States and many more are injured, according to Labor Department statistics.

During National Farm Safety and Health Week, Safe Electricity urges farm operators, family members and employees to beware of overhead power lines, to keep farm equipment safely away and to know what to do if accidental contact is made with power lines. Safe Electricity urges all farm workers to visit www.safeelectricity.org and watch the video story of farmer Jim Flach, who was fatally injured as he climbed down from his equipment that was in contact with overhead power lines.

The increasing size of farm equipment, particularly grain tanks on combines that have become higher with extensions, allow operators to come perilously close to overhead power lines over entrances to fields. It's vital to keep equipment safely away from them, a minimum 10-foot safety radius around the electric line.

"The No. 1 cause of electrocution on the farm is an auger that hits a power line when being moved," says Bob Aherin, Extension agricultural safety specialist, University of Illinois. Portable augers being maneuvered by hand around bin sites have caused the death of many farm workers who became the path to ground for electricity when the top of the auger touched overhead

power lines. Always retract or lower augers when moving or transporting.

The most common equipment involved in power line accidents are portable grain augers, oversized wagons, large combines and other tall equipment that come into contact with the overhead lines.

"Harvest time is the most likely period for farm-related injury accidents and fatalities," Aherin says. Combines and other equipment loaded onto trailers can also hit power lines and can cause electrocutions, as can raising the bed of a truck to unload, he adds. That is exactly the reason for the tragic electrocution of a 53-year-old Michigan truck driver, who raised the bed of his semi-trailer truck while parked beneath a power line at the edge of a field. Colleagues said he was attempting to clean out the bed, and when he touched the truck bed, he became the path to ground for the electricity.

Farm operators, family members and farm employees are urged to take these measures:

- Use a spotter when moving tall loads near lines.
- Inspect farm equipment for transport height and determine clearance with any power lines under which the equipment must pass.
- Make sure everyone knows what to do if accidental contact is made with power lines. These accidents are survivable if the right actions are taken.

"It's almost always best to stay in the cab, call for help and wait until the electric utility arrives to make sure power to the line is cut off. If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path and electrocution is the result," Aherin said. "Even if a power line is 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. Jump clear, without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time and continue to shuffle or hop to safety keeping both feet together as you leave the area.

"Like the ripples in a pond or lake, the voltage diminishes the farther out it is from the source," Aherin said. "Stepping from one voltage level to another allows the body to become a path for that electricity. A large difference in voltage between both feet could kill you. Be sure that at no time you or anyone touches the equipment and the ground at the same time. Never should the operator simply step out of the vehicle — the person must jump clear."

National Farm Safety and Health Week is the perfect time for farm families and workers to discuss electrical dangers and to know how to avoid them. Learn more at www.safeelectricity.org.