

## Annual meeting *Highlights*

### Prize winners

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| \$ 50 – Monte Saeland  | \$100 – Eugene Mollberg  |
| \$ 50 – Bruce Reinke   | \$100 – Larry Dobbs      |
| \$ 50 – Ross Dally     | \$100 – Nicholas Gerulli |
| \$ 50 – Donald Deraad  | \$100 – Leo Brule        |
| \$ 50 – Rubelle Towne  | \$100 – David Novak      |
| \$100 – Howard Hancock | \$100 – Bruce Chapman    |
| \$100 – Shawn Ostlund  | \$250 – Soren Olesen     |
| \$100 – Walter Haack   | \$500 – Ina Nesmoe       |
| \$100 – David Bahr     |                          |

About 181 members registered at this year's meeting and about \$755,000 in capital credits were returned to the members as a credit on their September electric bill.



David Loer, Minnkota Power President & CEO, spoke about the electric industry and said goodbye to North Star members. Dave will be retiring the first of the year after 43 years at Minnkota Power.



U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson spoke on a number of topics related to the electric industry.



Holger Olesen sang the national anthem at our annual meeting.



Before the annual meeting more than 400 members enjoyed an excellent turkey dinner prepared by the Lake of the Woods School kitchen staff.

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North Star office will be closed **Thursday, Nov. 25,** and **Friday, Nov. 26,** in observance of Thanksgiving.

NOVEMBER 2010

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[www.northstarelectric.coop](http://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 the members' corner. What we would like is for members to send in questions about your electric cooperative, and we will answer them for you. Please give us your name and a phone number in case we need to clarify the question, and send them to North Star Electric, PO Box 719, Baudette, MN, 56623, Attn: Wayne.

*Highlights from the* **BOARDROOM**

These are the highlights from the Board of Directors meeting held on Sept. 1 and Oct. 6. The board acted upon usual, routine business and voted to replace the 16-year-old digger truck, to donate the old pole trailer to the M|State line workers program and to authorize payment of estate capital credits.

Staff reports were provided and included the financial report, pole attachments, capital credit payments, annual meeting plans, no challengers in the voting districts, the annual audit, Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) projects, Operation Round Up, reports from the county and district fair booths, the progress of construction of the NoVA site near the Ash River Trail, the M|State line workers program, equipment, line maintenance and safety.

A detailed review of financial ratios comparing North Star to all other electric cooperatives was provided by NRUCFC (National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation).

Significant discussion was held at both meetings regarding the pressures on wholesale rates, the resulting increases and the impact on North Star members. After more than three hours of dialogue at the October meeting, direction was provided to Minnkota delegate Arnesen to vote with the intention of preserving the off-peak program and eliminating the temporary wind energy surcharge at the most opportune time for North Star members. Board members have been in contact with legislators regarding the considerable effects of legislation and government mandates on electric rates in northwestern Minnesota.

Detailed minutes are available at the cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally held the first Wednesday of every month. If you wish to speak with the board, or have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda, please contact Manager Dan Hoskins at least one week in advance to be included on the agenda.

• • • • **Current electrical inspectors** • • • •

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

• **St. Louis and Koochiching counties:**  
Bob Orgon  
10111 Roosevelt Rd. S.E.  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
Phone: (218) 556-3829  
Fax: (218) 333-0451  
7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

• **Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties:**  
Scott Stenvik  
16409 State Hwy 1 N.W.  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701  
Phone: (218) 689-5406  
7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

*Space heaters can dramatically increase your electric bill*

Members who plug in an electric space heater to keep warm in one room for just an hour a day should not notice a big increase in their electric bill. A space heater plugged in for one hour a day would use 45 kWh per month or about \$4.40 in electricity.

On the other hand, put that same space heater out in the well house or shed and let it run 24 hours a day for the month; you would be billed for 1,080 kWh or \$104.76 in energy.

Other electric heating appliances operate the same way. A stock tank heater for cattle or horses will run much of the time when it is located out in the cold. A 1,000-watt heater will cost you 9.7 cents per hour to operate. This sounds low, but if it did not shut off, it would use 720 kWh or \$69.84 per month to

operate. If you have multiple tank heaters in use, you'll have to multiply that amount by the number of tank heaters.

Other appliances, like warm doggy's beds, dog water bowls, heated bird baths, etc., will consume energy when used in cold weather. However, most of these appliances have much smaller wattages of 12 to 250 watts each. Check individual appliance wattages to determine energy use.



**For more information call North Star Electric and ask for the member service department.**



## The law of good intentions

Mark Glaess, Manager, Minnesota Rural Electric Association

This probably wasn't a good month for Japan and by extension our country. Angry that the Japanese detained a Chinese fishing boat captain, China threatened to end the sale of "rare earth" to Japan. Rare earth elements are a key mineral in wind turbines, hybrid cars, solar panels and batteries. Since China controls a majority of the world supply of rare earth, and about 90 percent of the world's lithium used in batteries, this embargo is more severe than imposed by OPEC, which includes 12 Middle East countries – not all that hate the United States at one time. Not surprisingly, Japan sprung the trawler captain from captivity.

Think about this: One country has a monopoly on the minerals needed for

the so-called green economy. Now think about this: Minnesota has a mandate that by 2025, 25 percent of all electricity generated comes from wind. Today we are tithing at 10 percent and Minnesota trades places with California in the nation's wind production behind Iowa and Texas. Legislators support the development of home-grown energy – like wind turbines. It is the law of good intentions which ignored that Minnesota and the U.S. renewable energy efforts are captive to China. No doubt Japan can tell us what an embargo will do to the manufacture of the Prius, which uses lithium batteries, which coincidentally is sold in the United States.

China is investing heavily into

"clean" technology using their dominance of rare metals to do so. At the same time, China surpassed the United States in carbon emissions because that country has major coal reserves, the same as the United States. Electrification is the reason why China surpassed Japan as the world's second largest economy behind the United States (Erwin Frericks, 241-09-054-02). Electrification is the reason why China is intent on new generating technology.

Electric cooperatives by and large have met the state's renewable mandates. We're eager adopters. However, this co-op also receives a goodly portion of their electricity from coal. Different groups and some legislators are intent on making coal-generated electrons more expensive than that generated by renewable (but intermittent) sources. Their thinking is by driving coal out of the equation, green jobs will appear in abundance. Spain and Germany thought likewise. Those countries have since discovered for every so-called green job created, more than two manufacturing jobs disappeared. More mandates for clean energy coupled with efforts to drive up coal-generated electricity will – and you can make book on this – drive jobs out of the state and disadvantage every Minnesotan's efforts to pay their electric bill. Prosperity comes from cheap electricity – a proverb reverberating in China – but sadly, not in this state.

The law of good intentions frequently leads us on a path we are sadly acquainted with. This is the time to ask your legislator and the governor if their path of good intentions on energy will lead to higher rates.

## Electric or propane: which is the best heating value

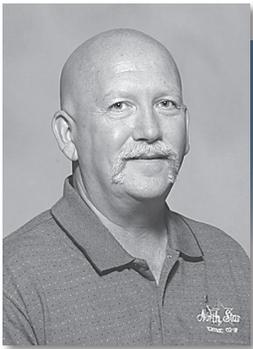
With the price of propane about 20 percent higher than last year, we are receiving several calls about which is cheaper off-peak electric or propane. The answer this year is the same as last year: off-peak electric is still the best heating value. Of course, if you have a new, super-efficient propane furnace, the costs are closer, but off-peak electric is still cheaper even with the temporary wind energy surcharge.

The efficiency of a propane furnace varies greatly depending on what type of propane furnace you have. The older style furnace with a standing pilot is only about 60 percent efficient, the mid-range furnace with electronic ignition is

about 80 percent efficient and the newer super-efficient furnace is about 90 percent efficient. The efficiency of these furnaces has been tested under ideal lab conditions and generally can't be duplicated after they have been installed in the home. The new, super-efficient furnace that has been properly installed in a home does come close to the furnaces that were tested in the lab.

So at what price would you need to buy propane to equal the price of off-peak electric? Once again it depends on what furnace you are using. Remember that you need to average the price of propane that you bought over the entire year, not just use the summer fill price and don't forget

to include the tank rental fee. If you had a furnace with a standing pilot, the price per gallon would need to be 77 cents per gallon, with a furnace with electronic ignition, the price would need to be \$1.03 per gallon and a super-efficient furnace, the price would need to be \$1.16 per gallon. The average price of propane per gallon in the North Star Electric system in October was \$1.89, so you can see that off-peak electric heat is still the best heating value for your home or business. You are a member-owner of North Star Electric Cooperative so it only makes sense for you to buy from a company that you already own.



**Dan Hoskins**  
*General Manager*

# Manager's Report

Well folks, let's cover a couple of things in this issue. First, I need to tell you of a couple things that are close to me. My wife, Sharon, and I just celebrated 35 years of marriage on Oct. 3, and "they said it wouldn't last!" Next, we just got a new son-in-law, Scott Lochner, on Oct. 2, and what a fine, God-fearing, hard-working, strapping young man he is and he fits right in. Of course, our daughter, Brittany, is a knockout to start with, but in that wedding dress; she was a beautiful lady, but I am bias.

Your annual meeting of the membership was held at the Lake of the Woods High School on Friday, Oct. 8. We started the evening off with a turkey dinner and music of the Sloughgrass Band from Birchdale, Minn. Then, we were honored with the presence of U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson giving us a visit and a 15 minute synopsis on what is going on in Washington, D.C. He did tell the group that the carbon bill is dead until probably 2013, but he also told everyone that the EPA, which has been doing a lot of damage lately, will continue to disrupt the energy market until their budget is cut and they are possibly put out to pasture. Thank you Congressman for your work and support!

Holger Olesen started the meeting off with our national anthem, and did a very

good job. We had about 181 registered members that attended the meeting and found out a few things about their cooperative. Your cooperative is in good financial shape and the physical portion of our system is in good shape, but the big news of the evening came from guest speaker David Loer, Minnkota President & CEO, and that is the possible large rate increase in March of 2011. Although it will not be as large as previously reported, we will keep you up to speed on this issue.

Directors Mike Trueman and Randy Bergan ran unopposed for their director seats. With all that is going on in our industry, it is good that these experienced directors are on board to direct and steer this cooperative through the rough waters.

If you haven't heard by now, I'm fixing to tell you. The line workers school in Lake of the Woods County is running along very well with the leadership and guidance of Mark Johnson of Baudette. Mark has 28 students that he is teaching the trade of electrical line worker and is doing a great job (Charles Dreyer, 362-21-014-10). Although the new indoor training facility building won't be complete until early 2011, the LOW High School has made room for these line students, and North Star will have indoor training in our warehouse for them once the weather turns cold. We wish Mark and the students well throughout the year.

Earlier I told you that I was bias about my daughter. Well, another thing I am bias

on is electricity! We are getting into the heating season and I think, no let's rephrase that, I know, that the only 100 percent efficient heating system that you have with a reliable, dependable and low-cost product is electricity. North Star Electric Cooperative is your cooperative and we distribute electricity to our member-owners. This is why when one of our members calls in for information on a heating system, we jump at the chance to get you into buying a heating system that uses electricity, something you are part owner of.

We are proud to distribute electricity to your home for your everyday use and to keep your home warm during that long heating season. You should also be proud and have that good feeling because you are getting 100 percent efficiency in everything that you use when using electricity. So, although our costs are going up for electricity, the benefits of efficiency, dependability and reliability still outweigh the costs and we are still your lowest cost energy supplier per use. So, thank you for choosing electricity and when you think about things, think electric!

Well that's about it for this time. On behalf of the board of directors of North Star Electric Cooperative, the North Star employees and myself; we wish you a very Happy Thanksgiving!

God Bless You and Our Troops,  
Dan

## Citi Lites now marking consumer side power lines when necessary through Gopher State One Call



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

Homeowners need to remember that every digging job first requires a call to 811 at least two business days before digging to get utility lines marked – even small projects like planting trees and shrubs.

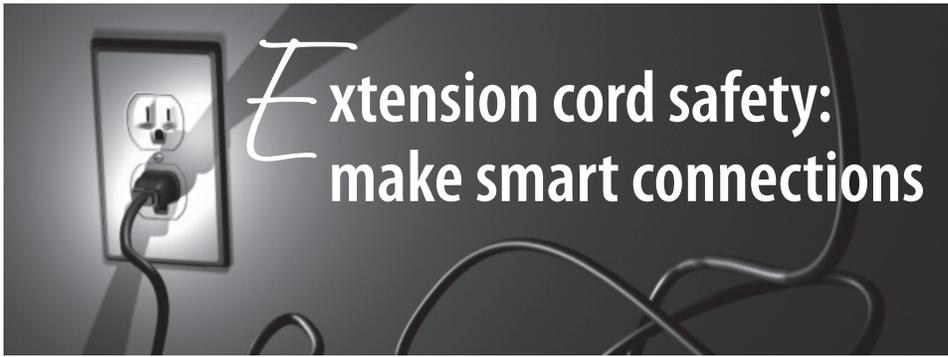
The depth of utility lines varies and there may be multiple utility lines in a common area.

Digging without calling can disrupt service, harm you and those around you and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

Calling 811 before every digging job gets underground utility power lines marked for free, up to your main meter.

Underground power lines from the main meter inward, however, are the responsibility of the member. In North Star's service territory, private lines beyond North Star's main meter (if the homeowner has them) are marked by Citi Lites for a fee. To contact Citi Lites, please call 218-568-4744. Its phone number is also listed on the locating utility flag marking North Star's underground lines.

Remember, before any digging project, large or small, you must call 811 to have utility lines marked. When you call 811, you'll be routed to the local Gopher State One Call center, where they will lead you step by step through the process and answer questions.



During the holiday season, families often string together extension cords without a second thought. Unfortunately, not all cords are created equal.

Just because an extension cord can reach an outlet across a room doesn't mean it's the right one for the task at hand (Darren Breneman, 776-02-002-01). If a tool, appliance or holiday display draws

*Listen to what your mother told you; if it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true*

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

more current than an extension cord can carry, it may cause the cord (and whatever is connected to it) to overheat and start a fire.

Cords come in many lengths and are marked with a size or gauge. The gauge is based on the American Wire Gauge (AWG) System, in which the larger the wire, the smaller the AWG number.

For example, a 12-gauge wire would be larger and power larger wattage appliances than a 14-gauge wire. A cord, based on its gauge, can power appliances of a certain wattage only at specific distances. As the cord gets longer, the current-carrying capacity of the cord drops.

Using the right cord for the job is only the first step in using extension cords safely.

## Follow these tips to ensure safe use and make smart connection decisions:

- Look for the Underwriters Laboratories "UL" symbol. The UL mark means that samples of the cord have been tested for safety hazards.
- Never use an indoor extension cord outdoors, as it could result in electric shock or trigger a fire. Extension cords that can be used outdoors will be clearly marked "Suitable for Use with Outdoor Appliances."
- Extension cords should not be placed underneath rugs or other heavy furniture, tacked in place to a wall or taped down, or used while coiled or bent. Match the length of the cord to your needs.
- Store all cords indoors when not in use. Outdoor conditions can deteriorate a cord over time.
- Unplug extension cords when not in use. The cord will continue conducting electricity until unplugged.
- On cords with more than one outlet, use the covers provided for unused openings. Children and pets face serious injury if they chew on unused outlets or stick sharp metal objects into the openings.
- Do not use extension cords that are cut or damaged. Touching even a single exposed strand of wire can result in an electric shock or burn.
- Never file or cut the plug blades or grounding pin of an extension cord or appliance to plug it into an old outlet.
- As a safety feature, extension cords and most appliances boast polarized plugs (one blade wider than the other). These special plugs are designed to prevent electric shock by properly aligning circuit conductors. If a plug does not fit, have a qualified electrician install a new outlet.



As snowmobiling becomes more popular, the number of accidents are increasing. Very few accidents occur on Minnesota's trail system. Most accidents occur along roads and ditches. Obstacles encountered along roads and other cleared rights of way can be very dangerous, especially in low visibility conditions.

North Star Electric Cooperative and the other Minnkota Power Cooperative-associated systems have poles, guy wires, metal enclosures and pedestals installed on hundreds of miles of rights

of way. When snowmobiling, be aware of these obstacles. Guy wires need special attention as they can be difficult to see.

Some snowmobilers are mistaking the private property where electric transmission lines are located for snowmobile trails. North Star Electric and the other Minnkota-associated systems have been granted easements to build and maintain lines in these cleared areas, but the land still belongs to the landowner. Be sure to check with the landowners before snowmobiling on their property.

Enjoy snowmobiling in Minnesota, but keep safety in mind. Slow down, don't drink and stay alert for obstacles.

# Future in focus

*Young 2  
enters final  
stage of  
upgrades*

As temperatures trend cooler and leaves begin to change color, the fall maintenance season at the Milton R. Young Station is in full swing.

Fall outages in four of the last five years have kept the generating plant in a constant state of transformation. This year, the end is in sight for an unprecedented number of projects needed to maintain environmental compliance and system reliability for Minnkota, our wholesale energy supplier.

Young 2 began the final stages of this upgrade in September. The plant was shut down for a planned maintenance outage that requires about 450 contracted workers – in addition to Minnkota's 176 full-time employees on site near Center, N.D.

But delays are on the way before the unit comes back on line.

Originally, the outage was scheduled to be completed by the end of October. However, additional damage was discovered when the generator rotor was sent to Charlotte, N.C., to repair shorts and complete high-speed balancing. The generator rotor's defective copper windings and visible contamination will require a complete rewind before it can be shipped back to the Young Station.

Young 2 is now expected to be back on line in mid-December.

The plant will then focus on the Young 1 outage in March, a follow-up to its major overhaul last fall.

## Major investments

It continues to be Minnkota's key objective to ensure that the Young Station is environmentally compliant. A major investment of about \$426 million is being made to accomplish this goal.

The primary upgrades are environmental controls for sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) on both units. By the end of 2011, the Young Station will remove 95 percent of SO<sub>2</sub> emissions and reduce more than 60 percent of NO<sub>x</sub> emis-

sions. The improvements to remove SO<sub>2</sub> will cost \$260 million; NO<sub>x</sub> controls will be \$30 million.

Costs will increase to run and maintain these new systems. Between 2008 and 2012, capital costs at the Young Station will increase about 80 percent and operating and maintenance (O&M) costs will increase about 63 percent.

Additional infrastructure to support the emission control equipment will require \$130 million in electrical improvements. New auxiliary transformers were installed, as well as new breakers, wiring and switchgear on Young 1 in 2009. The Young 2 electrical overhaul will be completed during the outage.

## Environmental goals

Planning for Young Station environmental upgrades spans several years to comply with federal standards and requirements. Minnkota signed a Consent Decree with the Environmental Protection Agency in 2006, which requires the application of Best Available Control Technology (BACT).

In addressing SO<sub>2</sub> removal, Minnkota will install an absorber system (scrubber) on Young 1 and upgrade the existing scrubber on Young 2.

When coal combustion gas (also called flue gas) passes through the scrubber's absorber vessel, a water and lime slurry mixture is sprayed. The flue gas reacts with the lime to produce a gypsum-like sludge that removes the SO<sub>2</sub> and prevents it from being released through the unit's chimney.

The lime slurry needed for SO<sub>2</sub> removal required the construction of two 2,700-ton silos built to receive, store, prepare and distribute the alkali reagent. The system also includes two vertical ball mill slakers and an additional slurry tank.

Young 2's upgraded scrubber will be in service following the outage, while the new Young 1 scrubber will be operational in 2011.

Connecting the ductwork from the Young 2 scrubber to its chimney is a critical project during the fall outage. When the outage is complete, Young 2 will be compliant with current federal emission control standards.

The wet, scrubbed flue gas that is released from the Young 2 scrubber also requires a much larger chimney. Construction of a 550-foot chimney began in 2008 and will be put into service in conjunction with the startup of the unit. The structure has a 140-foot diameter foundation that is 11 feet thick. During the outage, new fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP) ductwork will connect the scrubber to the Young 2 chimney.

At that point, the existing Young 2 chimney will be prepped for Young 1 to use. Significant upgrades will be made to the existing Young 2 chimney so that it will be compatible with the new Young 1 scrubber.

## Other objectives

Minnkota's other environmental upgrades focus on NO<sub>x</sub> reduction.

There are two methods to reduce NO<sub>x</sub> that are being used at the Young Station. Young 2 will have Selective Non-Catalytic Reduction (SNCR) in place following the outage. SNCR is a process where a mixture of urea and water is injected directly into the upper boiler furnace through a series of ports and nozzles. The reaction breaks down NO<sub>x</sub> to nitrogen, carbon dioxide and water. Young 1 will have the SNCR process completed in 2011.

Both units are also equipped with over-fire air (OFA) systems, which were installed in 2007 (Young 2) and 2009 (Young 1). OFA is a process where a portion of the combustion air is diverted from the cyclones to limit NO<sub>x</sub> levels in the lower furnace. The diverted air is then re-injected back into the furnace at a higher elevation to complete the staged combustion.

## Long-term power source

As is true with other outages, the focus is to help the Young Station maintain reliability long into the future.

Critical upgrades are needed on the unit's boiler and generator during the outage. Besides the generator rotor repair, the generator exciter was removed and shipped off site for a rebuild.

Young 2's boiler feed pump turbine rotor will be upgraded and its reheater (RH) outlet will be replaced. Much of the boiler lower sidewall will also be replaced due to thermal cracking. The unit's electrostatic precipitator will have new insulators and rebuilt rappers added during the outage.

The cost of system reliability projects during the outage totals about \$13.5 million. Following its last maintenance outage in 2007, Young 2 had its best year of energy production.

# Get involved in the energy debate!



Now is the time to have a candid conversation with your elected officials. Start the conversation today at [www.ourenergy.coop](http://www.ourenergy.coop).

**Our Energy, Our Future**  
A Dialogue With America

*I would like North Star Electric to e-mail my elected officials and ask them the following four questions:*



## Capacity

Experts say that our nation's growing electricity needs will soon go well beyond what renewables, conservation and efficiency can provide. What is your plan to make sure we have the electricity we'll need in the future?



## Technology

What are you doing to fully fund the research required to make emissions-free electric plants an affordable reality?



## Affordability

Balancing electricity needs and environmental goals will be difficult. How much is all this going to increase my electric bill and what will you do to make it affordable?



## Jobs

How will you keep existing jobs and attract new businesses to Minnesota if our electric rates are higher than those in neighboring states?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Account number \_\_\_\_\_

## NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE POLITICAL LEADERS

### Federal legislators

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

Senator Amy Klobuchar  
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1-888-224-9043 (Minnesota office)  
Fax: 202-228-2186

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### State of Minnesota legislators

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651-296-0170  
888-682-3205  
[rep.tom.rukavina@house.mn](mailto:rep.tom.rukavina@house.mn)



## Problems paying your electric bill?

Energy assistance may be available!

If you are receiving a low income or suffering from a temporary financial shortfall, the following agencies may be able to assist you with your electric bill. We urge you to contact them immediately to avoid disconnection if you feel you are eligible for aid.

**Lake of the Woods County  
Community Services**  
P.O. Box G-0200  
Baudette, MN 56623  
634-2642

**Northwest Community  
Action Council**  
P.O. Box 67  
Badger, MN 56714-0067  
800-568-5329

**Koochiching County  
Community Services**  
1000 5<sup>th</sup> St.  
International Falls, MN 56649  
283-7000

**Kootasca Community  
Action, Inc.**  
2232 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. E.  
P.O. Box 44  
International Falls, MN 56649  
283-9491 or 800-559-9491

**Kootasca Community  
Action, Inc.**  
1213 SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984  
800-422-0312

**Arrowhead Economic  
Opportunity Agency**  
702 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. S.  
Virginia, MN 55792-2797  
800-662-5711

Annual meeting highlights  
*continued*



Ina Nesmoe was the lucky winner of the \$500 energy credit on her electric bill.



Two young members helped North Star Electric President Steve Arnesen and General Manager Dan Hoskins draw names for the prizes.



The Sloughgrass Band entertained the membership before the annual meeting.

Operation Round Up application deadline is Nov. 30



The deadline to submit Operation Round Up grant applications is Nov. 30. Community organizations may apply for an Operation Round Up grant by completing and returning an application form, available at either North Star office or from a director of the North Star Electric Community Trust Board members. The directors are Pete Granger, Margie Sporlein, Gretchen Thompson, Shelly Kraft, Zelpha Crawford, Sandi Jo Kennedy, Julie Lepisto and Sandy Moyer.

Grants will be awarded to nonprofit or community-based organizations that demonstrate a commitment to enhancing the quality of life in our region.

We would like to say thank you to all the North Star members who are participating in the Operation Round Up program. About 80 percent of the membership is contributing to this great cause to help our local communities.



**Get the most out of energy during the holidays**

*John Bruce, NRECA*

Holidays are a festive time of year, with gifts, fun decorations, family visits and lots of laughter. But they can also ring in extra energy use for heating, decorative lights and more. So what steps can you take to make sure the holidays don't leave a surprise "gift" on your next electric bill?

One of the most popular ways to save energy without dimming holiday cheer is switching to light-emitting diode (LED) holiday lights. These long-lasting and energy efficient lights have been used for years in vehicles to let you know when you're low on gas or need an oil change. Over the past few years, prices have dropped low enough to make these bulbs cost-effective for decorative use.

On the plus side, LEDs last longer than traditional incandescent lights. They run cool and colors don't fade over time. Best of all, they use about one-tenth of the energy for the same amount of light.

The news isn't all cheery. Decorative LEDs cost much more than strands of typical lights – up to \$40 or more to outfit

a tree, according to Consumer Reports, an independent product tester. But over time, the higher investment pays off. When Consumer Reports compared LEDs and incandescent holiday lights in 2007, they found LEDs use between 1 and 3 kWh of energy, compared to between 12 to 105 kWh for traditional lights. This translates into a savings of up to \$11 every year. Because LEDs are more durable, lasting more than 4,000 hours while incandescent bulbs burn out by the 2,000 hour mark, the initial investment pays dividends over the long haul.

Whether or not you fork out extra bucks to switch to LEDs, it's a good idea to turn off your holiday lights before you go to bed. Consider installing timers to reduce the amount of time your holiday lights are on. Just 10 incandescent strands lit for 13 hours a day can easily add more than \$50 to an electric bill. Limit light displays to no more than six hours nightly.

Lights aren't the only holiday addition impacting your electric bill – family guests add to your costs, too. Because everyone

wants to stay toasty during colder holiday months, heating usually accounts for the lion's share of cold-weather energy costs. Extra guests translate into extra water to heat for showers.

Make sure to set your thermostat as low as comfort permits. Each degree above 68 degrees adds 2 to 3 percent to the amount of energy needed to heat your home. Conversely, you'll save by lowering your thermostat (and leaving it there).

You can expect extra guests to strain your electric water heater – folks often take longer showers in colder weather, increasing water-heating costs. Before guests arrive consider installing a low-flow showerhead to reduce the amount of water used, and try to keep showers to six minutes or less.

Finally, in the average home, 75 percent of the electricity used to power electronic gifts and gadgets is used while the products are off. This phantom power use can be avoided by unplugging the items or using a power strip.

To learn more about ways to cut home energy use, visit [www.togetherwesave.com](http://www.togetherwesave.com).