

## Filling a need



Students maneuver up and down poles outside the line worker school building.

*In its seventh year, Baudette line worker school still thriving*

A member of the first class to go through the Minnesota State Community and Technical College line worker training site in Baudette in 2010-11, Joey Hanson remembers a chaotic first couple of months in fall 2010.

Because there was a waiting list to enter the line worker program at M State's Wadena campus, organizers wanted to get Baudette's facility up and running quickly.

"We were finding materials and learning the first couple of months. Our classroom was in the high school and our shop was in back of North Star Electric's storage building," said Hanson, a Minnkota line worker. "From where it started and looking at the school now, there's a big difference."

What hasn't changed is demand for a line worker program in northern Minnesota. Eighteen to 20 students are enrolling in the program at Baudette each year. Between the schools at Baudette and Wadena, the line worker program fills an average of about 92 percent of 130 available spots annually.

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## MANAGER'S REPORT

Ann Ellis General Manager

### Does it really take a couple of hundred thousand dollars to resolve a complaint over a \$2.20 fee?

We don't think it should. You and your elected board can do a much more effective job of complaint resolution without the St. Paul overregulation and the associated high expense. Member-owners democratically elect their board to do this effectively, among other things, without government intervention or control.

In the late 1970s, the Minnesota Supreme Court made it clear that locally elected rural electric cooperative boards of directors were tasked with rate setting, and Public Utilities

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### North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc. **Mission Statement**

To improve the lives of our member-owners and community by responsibly providing clean, affordable, electric energy and other beneficial services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance and member satisfaction.

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

**DIGGING SOON?**



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.**

## Highlights from the **BOARDROOM**

These are the highlights from the board of directors' Dec. 7, 2016, meeting. All board members were in attendance. In addition to routine motions, the board voted to approve out-of-state travel for Manager Ellis to MREA and NRECA Legislative Days in Washington, D.C., to approve moving the February board meeting to Feb. 3 and to approve moving the March board meeting to Feb. 24.

Staff reports included the financial report, property tax increases in 2017, Conservation Improvement Plan (CIP) rebates, load management, line inspection, contracted right-of-way clearing and widening in the Birchdale area, pole testing, annual truck inspections, a safety committee meeting, legislative meetings, North Star's Certificate

of Recognition from NRECA for achievement of the Co-ops Vote 5-Star Program status, the upcoming Young Member Engagement meeting in Littlefork, safety training and a review of North Star's 2017 budget.

Board reports included updates from the Minnkota board meeting, the MREA Legislative Summit and the NRECA Cooperative Credentialed Director Training.

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 Ann Ellis at least two weeks in advance to be included on the agenda.



Are you aware of North Star Electric Co-op's Knowledge Scholarship? To qualify, the parent/guardian must be an active member of North Star Electric Co-op, and your student must take a test about your cooperative that provides electricity to your home. North Star Electric Co-op will award five scholarships, one \$1,000 and four \$400, plus a chance to win one of eight \$100 cash awards for scoring more than 60 percent on the test. Most of the answers will be in the 6 pages of study material that North Star provides. A couple hours of study time could pay off with a \$1,000 scholarship. Last year only 25 students took the test. The information meeting and the test will be given in mid-April. For more information about the scholarships, please call Wayne at North Star Electric Co-op or check with the guidance counselor at your school.



**LIKE US ON FACEBOOK TO STAY UP-TO-DATE!**

Like your cooperative at [www.facebook.com/NorthStarElectric](https://www.facebook.com/NorthStarElectric) for outage updates during winter storms and other useful information.



**Ann Ellis**  
General Manager

# MANAGER'S REPORT

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Commission (PUC) review or approval was not required. Since then we have had almost no involvement with the PUC, until now.

Suddenly there are very costly complaints popping up at the

Minnesota PUC from wind and solar developer groups. They are challenging electric cooperatives for recovering some of our fixed costs when it comes to distributed generation (solar/wind). If a member generates enough electricity on their own to offset the electricity they use from the grid that month, the co-op's Basic Service Fee is the only charge the member paid to use the grid, either 1) while their wind or solar unit was not generating electricity; or 2) to sell you their excess at the retail rate. Now that the Minnesota state Legislature has authorized a new Net Cost Recovery Fee (in our case it is \$2.20/month/kW and is capped at a maximum of \$24/month\*), we find ourselves defending it at the PUC.

When the PUC decides to review co-op regulation, the administrative time clock starts ticking (\$\$\$), and our members are on the hook to pick up the whole tab – anywhere from tens of thousands of dollars to hundreds of thousands. That's just kinda crazy when we already have seven elected

representatives sitting around our board table responsible for regulating our cooperative and resolving disputes. Each of them represents about 800 members. The governor-appointed PUC represents over 5 million Minnesotans. Do you think they understand your business better than your local board?

This duplicative regulation cuts at the bedrock of our cooperative foundation. We cannot let big special interest groups needle their way into your business by threatening our cooperative with expensive overregulation. That is why we are asking for special legislation that makes local democratic control even more clear, and eliminates burdensome, unnecessary, and very costly, St. Paul oversight.

*\* To help the small residential member wanting to install solar or wind, there is no additional fee for the first 3.5 kW. If a member installs a 5-kW array, like the bedroom-sized one in the co-op's front yard, the additional fee would be \$3.30/month. This fee is also not charged to members who already had wind and solar interconnected with the grid.*

## Electric vehicles

We have been talking about the great strides being made by all-electric vehicle manufacturers. As you know, electricity must be used at the moment it is generated, so having a load

that uses electricity in the middle of the night when demand is low, and without having to increase the capacity of your electric service, has us really interested. On top of that, plugged-in car batteries could help better integrate intermittent renewable generation in the future. Like our demonstration solar array in the cooperative's front yard, we are considering ways to help members see a new technology in use in our climate. Stay tuned for more on this!

At your service we remain, Ann

## LED lighting rebate form

ENERGY STAR® bulbs highly recommended

**(Rebates will not exceed 75 percent of purchase price)**

Complete this form, attach a copy of your purchase receipt and mail to: North Star Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 719, Baudette, MN 56623 Attn: Wayne

**(Rebates will be in the form of a credit on your electric account)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Other Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

North Star Electric account number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of retailer: \_\_\_\_\_

Replacing 40-60W bulb: (\$4/bulb rebate)

Number of bulbs: \_\_\_\_\_

Replacing 75-100W bulb: (\$8/bulb rebate)

Number of bulbs: \_\_\_\_\_



 **Drawing**

Sign up for our MyMeter drawings to be held **Feb. 28, 2017**. All current and new MyMeter users will be entered into a \$100 bill credit drawing. As a bonus, we will have another drawing for a \$100 VISA gift card, sponsored by the creators of MyMeter. Don't forget to sign up and see what MyMeter can do for you!

# EMPOWER YOURSELF

## *when the lights go off during a storm*

**W**ith colder temperatures, preparation is important in being able to stay safe and warm should the electricity go out. Safe Electricity shares tips to help you prepare for winter power outages.

If power lines go down because of a winter storm, you may be in for a prolonged power outage as utility crews work to get the lights back on. Have an emergency kit prepared to help you and your family weather the storm and the outage safely and comfortably. Some of the items this kit should include are bottled water, nonperishable food, flashlights, a weather radio and extra batteries.

Before a storm ever begins, tune into your local weather service for the forecast. It is important to know the differences among various watches and warnings.

- **Winter storm watches** signify that a winter storm event, including heavy snow, heavy sleet or ice storm, are likely within the next few days. You should be alert, as this means adverse conditions could begin within the next 24 to 72 hours.
- **Winter storm warnings** call for a winter storm event to begin within the next 12 to 36 hours. Those in the range of the warning should be mindful of the impending conditions and consider canceling plans to travel outside of the home.

If bad weather is headed your way, it is a good idea to keep your cell phones and other electronic devices charged and ready for use.

When power is lost, notify your utility of the outage. Unplug all sensitive electronics

to avoid a surge when electricity is restored. Leave one light switched on as a quick reminder that the power is restored.

Stay inside. Dress in warm, dry layers and wear a hat, which can help keep in heat. Be aware of the temperature in your home (122-03-005-06, Michael Trott). Cover windows at night, close off unneeded rooms and place draft blocks at the bottom of doors to minimize cold air entering the house.

If you are using an alternative heating source during an outage, know how to use it safely and have all supplies for it gathered. Never heat your home with stoves or grills.

During an outage, only venture outside if absolutely necessary. Be on the lookout for downed electrical equipment. Snow can obscure such an electrical hazard, so take caution when driving. Never drive over a downed line because that could pull down the pole and other equipment, causing additional hazards. If you see a downed line, do not get out of your car. The safest place is inside the vehicle. Contact the utility immediately.

For more winter electrical safety tips, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).



## Current electrical inspectors

*State law requires that every new electrical installation in any construction, remodeling, replacement or repair shall file a certificate for inspection and be inspected by a Minnesota electrical inspector. For more information go to Minnesota Department of Labor and Industries website ([dli.mn.gov](http://dli.mn.gov)) and go to the electrical page.*

- **Lake of the Woods, St. Louis and Koochiching counties:**

Curt Collier ([cgcollier67@gmail.com](mailto:cgcollier67@gmail.com))  
Phone: (218) 966-5070  
Call to set up an appointment between  
7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

- **Roseau county:**

Scott Stenvik  
Phone: (218) 689-5406  
Call to set up an appointment between  
7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)





# Holes for Poles

Sixth Annual Baudette Line Worker Scholarship Fundraiser

*Everyone is welcome!*

**Saturday, Feb. 18**

**Fish Fry: 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.**

American Legion, Baudette. Tickets are \$10 and available at the door.

**Raffle Drawing - 7:30 p.m.**

\$10 per raffle ticket, only 1,000 tickets available

Tickets are available at the event or may be purchased prior to the event at Outdoors Again, ELW Baudette School and North Star Electric Cooperative or by contacting the Wadena Area College Foundation

## **Top prizes are:**

**FIRST PRIZE:** Open water fishing package from Cyrus Resort (\$1,675 value)

**SECOND PRIZE:** Two-day South Dakota pheasant hunt - includes hunting, lodging and meals (\$750)

**THIRD PRIZE:** ION 8-inch electric ice auger (\$500 value)

**ADDITIONAL PRIZES INCLUDE:** Four Minnesota Twins tickets with Legends Club seating, electric stainless steel smoker and many more prizes



## **For more information call:**

Denise Laymon, Wadena Area College Foundation, at (218) 846-3720



Proceeds support scholarships for Minnesota State Community and Technical College Electrical Line Worker students in Baudette. Co-sponsored by Wadena Area College Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, and ELW Baudette Advisory Committee.

## Notice to cogenerators

In compliance with Minnesota Adopted Rules Relating to Cogeneration and small Power Production, chapter 7835, North Star Electric Cooperative is required to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers that satisfy the conditions of a Qualifying Facility.

North Star Electric has available and will provide free information to all interested members regarding rates and interconnection requirements. An application for interconnection is required for a Qualifying Facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the cooperative.

Any disputes over interconnections, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. For more information, please call Wayne Haukaas at 218-634-2202.

## State law for active duty military personnel

State law offers active military personnel additional payment options for their electric bills. The law covers disconnection, payment arrangements, appeal and annual notice to cooperative members. Similar to the state's Cold Weather Rule, an application must be completed and income guidelines exist. It's available for active duty military personnel, deployed or a permanent duty station change.

# Filling a need

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**The training field is right outside the school building side door.**

The training site is the brainchild of former North Star General Manager Dan Hoskins. He saw a need for a line worker school in northern Minnesota after he heard Wadena had a two-year waiting list. The need has been met through a unique relationship involving the school, economic development officials and the electric utility business, led by North Star Electric.

"We're so fortunate that our industry partners have donated so much to this whole program," said Monty Johnson, academic dean at M State in Wadena. "North Star donates the ground for the outside instruction, the line field. The trucks are donated, a lot of the connectors, the wire. It really helps to keep a high-dollar program in the black."

The line worker site is located across the road from North Star's offices. The school leases the building, which houses classrooms and a shop area, from Lake of the Woods County. The training field belongs to North Star, but the land was donated to the county for the project.

Placement is better than 90 percent after graduation – with one caveat.

"They have to be willing to travel and get away from home," said Grant Walton, instructor at the Baudette site. "If they are willing to do that, they're pretty much guaranteed to get a job with a construction company."

In other words, don't expect to work for the hometown co-op right out of school.

"That's sometimes hard for some young men and sometimes maybe parents – that Junior is going to have to go work out of town for a couple of years and work for a construction crew, before they come back," Johnson said.

Students prepare for their first job by going to school Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. in Baudette. It's similar to a workday, with time off for lunch (673-36-029-01, Kalan Wagner). The course is nine months and rolls through a number of different subjects.

In addition to a theory portion of the course, students learn how to build structures and power lines and how to climb and operate equipment and more. They also receive instruction about underground transmission lines.

A two-year degree is available for those who maybe want to get into management some day. The first year of

the two-year course is operated out of Wadena and consists of mostly soft skills. A second year would be at either Wadena or Baudette.

Students, who come mostly from Wisconsin and northern Minnesota, live in private housing in the community.

"It obviously brings in a lot of money to the area, employees also," Walton said. "They're always hurting for help around here so these guys have plenty of jobs available for them."

When they aren't at school or working, the students can often be found in the woods or on Lake of the Woods or Rainy River. If there is one stereotype about line workers besides having a love for helping others, it's maybe the love of outdoors.

"You have the Rainy River right there and also Lake of the Woods," Hanson said. "You have the state forest for grouse hunting and lots of state land to deer hunt."

Johnson said that's a good thing for the community.

"They come here and make friends from the outdoor community, either the resorts or guides or people they just met at the boat landing," Johnson said. "They're out there fishing or hunting every day. They will be coming back."

"That's why the economic development folks said yeah, this is a good thing for us, not only immediate with the student dollars coming and for staying and groceries and gas and stuff, but the other part is they'll be coming back. They're going to be making decent wages and will be able to start affording vacations early on."



**Students work on structures in the shop (bottom) and outside.**

# Staff Report

When I started writing this report near the end of December, my focus changed from giving you some information on what the line crews have been working on to the potential storm heading our way on Christmas Day. Rain, ice and then large amounts of snow were all predicted to hit our service territory. Not a good recipe for overhead power lines! Fortunately, all we ended up seeing was sleet and snow – we dodged Mother Nature's bullet once again. Still, it is a good reminder to everyone to make sure their generators and winter survival kits are in good shape. Most of the cooperatives in Minnesota faired quite well, considering the threat (362-17-037-01, Monte Burnham). South Dakota, however, didn't get so lucky, with high winds and ice causing broken poles and downed power lines over a good portion of the state. In true cooperative spirit, crews from surrounding co-ops were there to help restore power.

This winter's workload has line crews on the west end of the system working on converting a single-phase line to three-phase on the north end of County Road 17 north of Roosevelt. West-end crews will also be working on line maintenance and right-of-way mowing.

East-end crews will work on changing out rejected poles found during pole testing this fall out of the Kabetogama substation. Like the west-end crews, east-end crews will also be working on line maintenance and right-of-way mowing.

I hope the weather this winter allows everyone the opportunity to get out and catch some fish and get some miles on those snowmobiles or any other activities you enjoy. Until next time, stay warm and stay safe!



**Marty Mollberg**  
*Manager of Operations*



## 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 Social Services

206 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE, Suite 200  
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.

Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984  
Toll free 877-687-1163  
Direct 218-999-0800  
Fax 218-999-0220

### Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency

702 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. S.  
Virginia, MN 55792-2797  
800-662-5711

## NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE POLITICAL LEADERS

### Federal legislators

#### President Donald Trump

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500  
www.whitehouse.gov  
president@whitehouse.gov  
202-456-1111

#### 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  
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202-224-3244  
1-888-224-9043 (Minnesota office)  
Fax: 202-228-2186

#### Congressman Rick Nolan

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### State of Minnesota legislators

#### Governor Mark Dayton

Capitol Building, Room 130  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin  
Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
800-657-3717  
mark.dayton@state.mn.us

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# Save money and energy in 2017

## Sample 2017 Residential Electric Rebates for Members (Incentive shall not exceed 75 percent of project costs)



*with energy  
efficiency rebates!*

**Please see the chart  
for a sample of  
residential incentives.**

All incentives, criteria and  
guidelines for resident and business  
members can be found at

**www.northstarelectric.  
coop**

or by calling

**888-634-2202**

**All criteria are listed  
on the rebate form.**

Equipment	Specifications	Rebate
LED Screw-In Bulb	40-60W equivalent incandescent. ENERGY STAR® recommended.	\$4/bulb
LED Screw-In Bulb	65W or greater equivalent incandescent. ENERGY STAR recommended.	\$8/bulb
LED Fixture	Complete fixture or replacement kit. ENERGY STAR recommended.	\$8/install
LED Outdoor Fixture	LED Outdoor Fixture Wattage of <40 Watts. Dusk to dawn operation required. DesignLights™ Consortium or ENERGY STAR recommended.	\$20/fixture
LED Outdoor Fixture	LED Outdoor Fixture Wattage of >40 Watts. Dusk to dawn operation required. DesignLights™ Consortium or ENERGY STAR recommended.	\$40/fixture
Clothes Washer	Must be ENERGY STAR approved.	\$50/unit
Clothes Dryer	Must be ENERGY STAR approved.	\$50/unit
Refrigerator or Freezer	Must be ENERGY STAR approved.	\$25/unit
Electric Water Heater	Minimum 80-gallon total capacity, EF ≥0.91. Must be controlled under the utility's load management, also known as demand response, program.	\$150/unit
Programmable Thermostat		\$25/unit
Engine Block Heater Timer		\$10/unit
Tune-Up for Central AC	Not valid on window AC units. Checklist on form must be completed with application.	\$25/unit
Tune-Up for Air-Source Heat Pump or Mini-Split Ductless Air-Source Heat Pump	Checklist on form must be completed with application.	\$25/unit
Supplemental Heating Source Air-Source Heat Pump	Must modulate to allow ENERGY STAR-rated Air-Source Heat Pump to operate down to 5° F and be on load control.	\$500/unit
Air-Source Heat Pump	14 SEER, 8.2 HSPF	\$400/unit
Air-Source Heat Pump	15 SEER, 8.5 HSPF	\$500/unit
Furnace (Air Handler) with ECM Blower	Furnace with an ECM Blower	\$100/unit
Mini-Split/Ductless Air-Source Heat Pump	15 SEER	\$500/unit
Ground-Source Heat Pump Open Loop <135,000 BTUH @ 59° F	16.2 EER/3.6 COP Maximum incentive \$2,500/home	\$200/ton
Ground-Source Heat Pump Closed Loop <135,000 BTUH @ 77° F	14.1 EER/3.3 COP Maximum incentive \$5,000/home	\$400/ton