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## **OPERATION ROUND UP® HELPS LOCAL PROGRAMS**

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ON PAGE 2)**



### **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.



# OPERATION ROUND UP® CONTINUES TO HELP LOCAL PROGRAMS

The North Star Electric Cooperative Community Trust Board met in January to review the Operation Round Up® applications, which it received requesting funding for various programs. The board awarded \$10,704, so it was not an easy task selecting which groups would get funding and what

amount they would receive. Many local programs and organizations benefit from Operation Round Up, a voluntary, member-driven fundraising program of North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc., that is designed to provide financial assistance for worthwhile projects and charities in the area. Donations are given

to organizations to help make the area a more pleasant and safe place to live. All funds for Operation Round Up are contributed by the member-owners of North Star, and the money is placed into a trust fund that is separate from electric accounts. The trust is administered by its own board of directors comprised of people from across the area.

Operation Round Up directors are appointed by North Star's board members and must be members of the cooperative (556-42-090-04, Lorna Gustafson). The cooperative's general manager is a nonvoting member of the board.

Organizations from the area may apply for a donation from the Operation Round Up Trust. The applicant must be charitable in nature and be working to meet a need in our area. The Operation Round Up board meets twice a year and decides if an application meets the guidelines of the trust and if funds are available.

If a member chooses to be part of Operation Round Up, their bill is "rounded up" to the next highest dollar. For example, if a bill is \$96.47, the computer will round up the bill to \$97. The additional 53 cents will be placed in the trust and distributed to local charitable and community-based programs.

*At the January meeting, \$10,704 in Operation Round Up funds was distributed to various qualifying programs and organizations throughout the area, including:*

- Paws and Claws Kooch Emergency Rescue** ..... Spay or neuter costs
- Big Falls American Legion Auxillary**..... Keep-up costs of cemetery
- LSS Meals on Wheels Baudette** .....Providing meals to seniors
- Borderland Alano Club** ..... Monthly bills
- Littlefork Lutheran Quilters** ..... Materials for quilts
- Big Falls Food Shelf** ..... Food and personal hygiene items
- United Way of NE Minnesota** ..... Buddy backpacks
- Big Falls Fire/EMS** ..... 12/120-volt DC autopump compressor
- City of Littlefork** ..... Benches for Community Center
- Salvation Army of International Falls** .....Emergency Social Services support
- Northern Options for Women** .....Earn While You Learn classes
- Falls Hunger Coalititon**..... Hams for Easter
- Citizens for Backus/Community Center** .....Ruby's Pantry food distribution
- Lake of the Woods Food Shelf** ..... Purchase foods
- Johnson/Olson American Legion Post 494**..... Cemetery maintenance
- Servants of Shelter of Koochiching Co** ..... Cost to cover official IDs
- Lake of the Woods School** ..... Hands on Brain growth

# Small change makes a BIG DIFFERENCE!



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BOARDROOM



These are the highlights from the Dec. 2, 2020, regular board meeting. All board members were in attendance (251-25-076-01, Steve Sweet). In addition to routine actions, the board voted to approve the transfer of final unpaid delinquent bills from current accounts receivable to the reserve for uncollectible, and to approve the Wholesale-Cost-Plus Industrial and Large Power rate changes to match the changes being made in Minnkota's wholesale power rate effective April 1, 2021.



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Clothes dryers make up a large portion of your appliance energy consumption. Clean the lint filter after each cycle, and scrub the filter with a toothbrush once a month to remove film and increase circulation.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

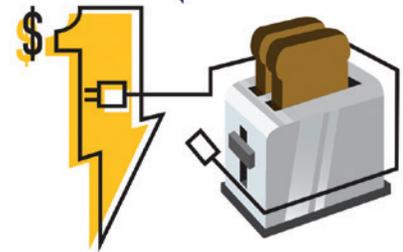
Staff reports included the safety report, the financial report, the 2021 budget presentation, delinquent accounts, rebates, ripple receiver inspections and repairs, load control testing, building maintenance, new services, upgrades, pole changeouts, right-of-way clearing, bucket and digger truck inspections, plow truck replacement and outages.

Joining the meeting via teleconference was Kim Christiansen, NRECA executive search consultant, to discuss the ongoing general manager search process.

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

## What can you get for \$1?



8 hours of toasting bread

Your electricity is a bargain. Did you know you can use your toaster for eight hours for just \$1 of kilowatt power? That's about 320 slices of bread, or 160 full sandwiches! With that inexpensive meal prep, you can spend more on gourmet mustard, mayo and jam.

## DIRECTORS

**President**  
Steve Arnesen

**Vice President**  
Michael Hanson

**Secretary-Treasurer**  
Lorraine Nygaard

**Directors**  
Shelley Spears  
Randy Bergan  
Tom Smith  
Bruce Sampson

## 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 BEFORE YOU DIG.  
VISIT [WWW.CALL811.COM](http://WWW.CALL811.COM) FOR MORE INFORMATION.



## LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

Past issues of the Enlightener are on our website at

[www.northstarelectric.coop](http://www.northstarelectric.coop)



# Winter energy-saving tips

**K**eeep the cold out and the warm in this winter with the following energy- and money-saving tips from North Star Electric Cooperative.

**Seal air leaks** – Air leaks are among the greatest source of energy loss in a home. According to the Department of Energy, caulking, sealing and weatherstripping where appropriate can save 10-20% on heating and cooling.

Look for air leaks in walls, ceilings, windows, doors, lighting and plumbing fixtures, switches and electrical outlets. One way to check for this is to hold a lit incense stick on a windy day next to the items mentioned above and other places where air may leak. If the smoke stream travels horizontally, you have located an air leak.

After finding the leaks, consider the following:

- Weatherstrip doors and windows.
- Caulk and seal air leaks where plumbing, ducting or electrical wiring comes through walls.
- Install foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on exterior walls.
- Use foam sealant on larger gaps around window trims, baseboards and other places.
- Check to ensure the fireplace damper is closed and fits properly when not in use.

Item to note: When adding insulation or air sealing, be sure to

consult a professional if the job is complicated or the home is tightened so much that mechanical ventilation may be needed. There are professional services that offer a complete energy audit with blower door and thermal camera imaging for a fee.

**Furnace filter** – Replace your furnace filter as necessary or recommended. There's a reason this is one of the most common tips mentioned. A dirty filter causes a furnace to work harder.

**Put a timer on your block engine heater** – If you have cars, trucks or tractors plugged in, a timer can help you save energy.

**Change lights to LED** – Save up to 80% on lighting by going to LED over incandescent. Just look on the box to ensure the lumen output is equal to the ones you are replacing.

Many more tips are available at [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov).

## Estimating energy usage and cost

When it comes to energy use, every home is unique. Home construction, the number of appliances, how they are used and the length of time they are used all factor into your monthly electric statement. If you want to get a better handle on where your energy dollars are going, use the following information to begin estimating how much electricity your appliances use.



**Step 1**– Since the wattage of an appliance or electrical equipment determines the electrical usage per hour, the first step is to determine the wattage. The wattage of an appliance is found on the serial plate. It is possible that electrical equipment may be expressed in volts and amperes rather than watts. If so, multiply volts and amperes together to determine the wattage.

**Example: 120 volts x 12.1 amps = 1,452 watts**

**Step 2** – Use the formula to estimate usage and cost. The formula is (watts x hours of operation)/1,000 watts = kilowatt-hours. To find the cost, multiply the kWh by the rate. Keep in mind that you are billed in kWh and that 1,000 watts equals 1 kilowatt.

Example: A light uses 100 watts and is left on 15 hours. How many kWh are used and what does it cost you?

**kWh use = (100 watts x 15 hrs)/1,000 watts = 1.5 kWh**  
**Your cost = 1.5 kWh x \$.126 = \$.189**



**W**e all enjoy the vision of a blanket of white after a winter storm – but clearing your driveway and sidewalks can be downright aggravating. Whatever angers you most about snow removal, an electric snow blower is likely just the fix for your frustration.

#### IT'S TOO LOUD!

Do you find yourself waiting to clear your driveway in the morning because you're scared to wake the neighbors? Since electric snow blowers don't have rumbling machinery, your a.m. chore won't upset the family next door.

#### I HATE THE SMELL!

The scent of exhaust can linger on your coat, scarf and gloves for longer than you'd like, especially if you have somewhere to be right after snow blowing. Electric snow blowers don't emit exhaust or fumes, which is good for you and good for the environment.

#### THE GAS IS A PAIN TO STORE!

You not only have to worry about where and how to store your gas-powered snow blower's fuel and oil, but you also have to worry about what is sitting unused in the tank. With electric, you simply need an outlet to plug in or charge up.

#### IT'S TOO BULKY!

A lightweight electric blower or snow shovel is a perfect tool for clearing the narrow corners of your deck and even the delicate heights of your roof. Try that with your standard gas-powered machine.

#### I CAN'T START THE THING!

If you've never been a fan of unpredictable pull-cord ignition, an electric snow blower offers a super simple push button start that everyone in the family can use – and it works every time.

Check out your local hardware store to see all of the latest corded and battery-powered options. Models become more powerful every year, with some able to throw snow more than 35 feet or at 500 pounds per minute!

## Electric snow tool types

### Corded



- Best for large areas
- Pack the most power

### Cordless



- Highly mobile
- Great for small driveways & sidewalks

### Shovel



- Simplest and most lightweight
- Handy for decks and roofs

*\* Images courtesy of Lowe's*

# PROBLEMS PAYING YOUR ELECTRIC BILL?

## ENERGY ASSISTANCE MAY BE AVAILABLE!

If you recently lost your job or had your hours cut, the following agencies may be able to help you with your electric bill. You may have never needed help before, but maybe today you do.

### LAKE OF THE WOODS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES

206 8th Ave SE, Suite 200  
Baudette, MN 56623-2895  
634-2642

### NORTHWEST COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

PO Box 67  
Badger, MN 56714-0067  
800-568-5329

### KOOCHICHING COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES

1000 5th St  
International Falls, MN 56649-2243  
283-7000

### 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

703 3rd Ave S  
Virginia, MN 55792  
800-662-5711



# STAFF REPORT – WORK PLAN PROJECTS



**Marty Mollberg**  
*Operations Manager*

Greetings, all. I'm pretty sure I'm not alone when I say good riddance to 2020 and bring on 2021. By no means are we out of the woods yet, but with vaccinations becoming more available, I look forward to when we get closer to herd immunity in the country and get back to a sense of somewhat normalcy.

Whatever the new normal will be has to be better than what we have been through over the past year. On a positive note, the limited options of going out has allowed me to take care of some much-needed shop cleaning and tackle home improvement projects.

Our east-end crews have been working on clearing right of ways for this summer's work plan projects. With the pole changeouts found during last fall's pole inspection, they have around 100 poles to replace and are better than halfway through those changeouts so far.

The west-end crews are rebuilding 3 miles of overhead line on County Road 14 near Williams (241-09-035-05, Joseph Olsonawski). This is a work plan project and involves replacing all of the poles and replacing existing #8 copper conductor with 1/0 ACSR aluminum. This work plan project is due to aging infrastructure and will improve voltage sag.

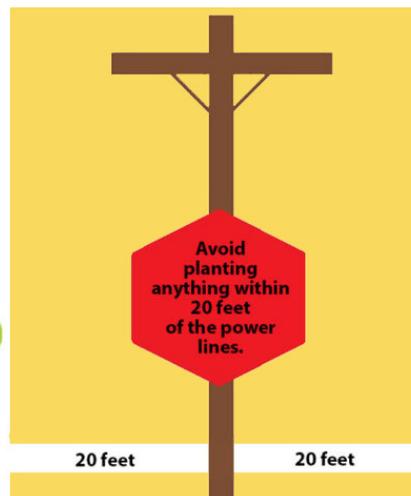
It looks to be a busy summer ahead of us with three additional work plan projects in the works. We have three separate overhead line projects totaling around 20 miles slated for upgrade due to aging.

New services were up in 2020, maybe due in part to COVID-19. Let's hope 2021 is just as busy, but without COVID-19 around.

I hope the new year finds you in good health and you and your families have also overcome the challenges of the past year.

Until next time, stay safe!

**Avoid planting  
trees in our  
right-of-way.**



# NORTH STAR ELECTRIC POLITICAL LEADERS

## FEDERAL LEGISLATORS

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

Senator Tina Smith  
720 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
www.smith.senate.gov  
202-224-5641

Senator Amy Klobuchar  
425 Dirksen Senate Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
www.klobuchar.senate.gov  
202-224-3244  
1-888-224-9043 (Minnesota office)  
Fax: 202-228-2186

Congressman Pete Stauber  
126 Cannon House Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
www.stauber.house.gov  
202-225-6211

Congresswoman Michelle Fischbach  
1237 Longworth House Office Bldg.

Washington, D.C. 20515  
www.fischbach.house.gov  
202-225-2165  
Fax: 202-225-1593

## STATE OF MINNESOTA LEGISLATORS

Governor Tim Walz  
Capitol Bldg., Room 130  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
800-657-3717  
www.mn.gov/governor

Senator Tom Bakk  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.; Capitol, Room 328  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-8881  
www.senate.mn/members

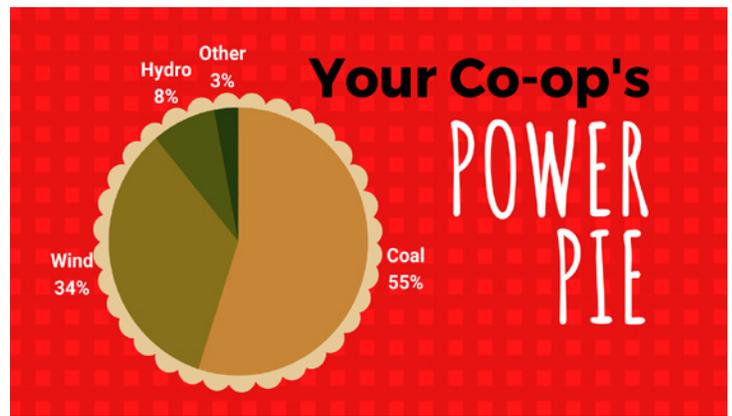
Senator Paul Utke  
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651-296-9651  
sen.paul.utke@senate.mn  
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Senator Mark Johnson  
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www.house.leg.state.mn.us/members

Representative John Burkel  
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rep.john.burkel@house.mn  
www.house.leg.state.mn.us/members

Representative Rob Ecklund  
409 State Office Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-2190  
rep.rob.ecklund@house.mn  
www.house.leg.state.mn.us/members



## HOME COOKING

### CREAMY CHILE CHICKEN

A quick and easy recipe with minimal ingredients! A creamy, rich, green chile sauce coats juicy, flavorful chicken. Serve it over rice, greens or tortillas.

Prep Time	Cook Time	Total Time	Servings
10 mins	30 mins	40 mins	6 servings

#### INGREDIENTS

- About 1 1/2 lbs. chicken breasts
- Garlic powder to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 8 oz. cream cheese (suggest using Neufchatel)
- 2 cans diced green chiles

- 1 can green chile enchilada sauce (divided)
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Cook chicken in skillet with butter, garlic, salt and pepper.
3. When chicken is cooked

through, deglaze pan and stir in green chiles, cream cheese and half of enchilada sauce.

4. Stir until blended, top with cheese and bake until cheese is melted.
5. Heat remaining enchilada sauce if you want to add extra kick.

*From the kitchen of Ann Ellis.*



Receive a \$20 energy credit if you submit a recipe and it is selected to run in a future issue of the Enlightener newsletter.

## COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

*North Star Electric Co-op donates unclaimed capital credits to local charitable organizations*



Mike Hanson, North Star board member (*right*), presents an unclaimed capital credit check to Christine Hultman, representing the Birchdale Community Center.



Mike Hanson, North Star board member (*right*), presents an unclaimed capital credit check to Lindsay Marshall, representing the Lake of the Woods Museum.

## UPCOMING DATES/EVENTS

15  
FEB.

North Star's offices will be closed on Monday, Feb. 15, in observance of Presidents Day.

03  
MAR.

North Star will hold its next monthly board meeting on Wednesday, Mar. 3, if you wish to speak to the board.

### OFFICE HOURS | 7:30 A.M. - 4 P.M. | MONDAY - FRIDAY

**Baudette** 218-634-2202 or 888-634-2202 | **Littlefork** 218-278-6658 or 888-258-2008  
For credit card payment 855-874-5354 | Online billing info available via SmartHub app  
Electrical after-hours emergencies 1-888-6OUTAGE (1-888-668-8243)  
Email us at [nsec@wiktel.com](mailto:nsec@wiktel.com) | Visit our website at [northstarelectric.coop](http://northstarelectric.coop)

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### 'LIKE' US ON FACEBOOK TO STAY UP TO DATE

Like your cooperative for outage updates during the winter season and other useful information.

 /northstarelectric

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