

**BAUDETTE | MINNESOTA** 

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# **Keep the lights on** during the energy transition

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### NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. MISSION STATEMENT

To improve the lives of our member-owners by providing reliable electric energy services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance and member satisfaction.





General Manager

**MANAGER'S REPORT** 

You may have noticed on your September North Star electric bill there was one noticeable change last billing cycle. Going forward, members

will now be provided with monthly demand (kW) readings. Over the past several months we've being working with NISC (National Information Solutions Cooperative) to utilize our AMI metering in an effort to provide our members with even more data and insight into their electric usage. The concept of demand (kW) or capacity, as it's also referred to, is nothing new in the electric industry, but it might be a foreign concept for members who aren't accustomed to it. Think of demand (kW) as the point in time when you use the most energy at once. This is basically your "instantaneous" use of energy. Perhaps you turn all your appliances on, along with your electric heat and so forth all at once (654-27-004-03, George Swenson). That would account for the highest usage of energy (kWh) in any given moment and therefore be your highest demand (kW). I recognize this concept can be a bit confusing but we'll continue to touch on this going forward in future Enlighteners.

Some meaningful updates from the past month include MREA (our statewide organization for electric cooperatives) hosting legislative visits with our U.S. Senators, numerous congressional members and staffers in Washington, D.C. I was in attendance and helped present issues to those legislators along with various other cooperative managers, directors, G&Ts, and stakeholders within the cooperative network. The core focus during these visits was to give feedback pertaining to the IIJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) and the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act).

We also discussed issues surrounding reliability and our concerns pertaining to the loss of firm energy resources such as coal, gas and nuclear moving forward. If we don't manage and plan for the energy transition properly, we run the risk of our electric grid becoming unreliable and we encouraged our legislators to have a well-balanced approach to stop this from occurring. The last issue we focused on were aspects surrounding Federal Hydropower. This is a very detailed issue, but the high-level concern here is that three of the largest dams in America (some of which serve western Minnesota with power) will need substantial money Goingforward, members will now be provided with monthly demand (kW) readings. Think of demand (kW) as the point in time when you use the most energy at once.

- If we don't manage and plan for the energy transition properly, we run the risk of our electric grid becoming unreliable, and we need a well-balanced approach to stay reliable.
- Although North Star's service territory is very far from St. Paul and Washington, D.C., we will continue representing our membership at these types of events.

invested into them to the tune of a few billion dollars. On this issue we advocated that those costs be properly assigned to electric customers fairly and spread out to other entities that are benefiting from these upgrades and projects as well.

Although North Star's service territory is very far from St. Paul and Washington, D.C., we will continue representing our membership at these types of events. It's one of my top priorities, and the relationships we build by taking part in these discussions will benefit the cooperative for years to come.

Until next time,

Josh



Josh Compton, North Star Electric Cooperative general manager, discusses legislative issues with Congressman Pete Stauber in Washington, D.C.



The core focus during these legislative visits was to give feedback pertaining to the IIJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) and the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act).

# **HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BOARDROOM**

These are the highlights from the July 6 and Aug. 3, 2022, regular board meetings. All board members were in attendance. In addition to routine actions, the board voted to approve the retirement of capital credits this fall in the amount of \$476,785, to accept Director Bergan's petition for nomination for the District 3 seat, to accept Director King's petition for nomination for the District 7 seat, to accept Director Spears' petition for nomination for the District 2 seat, to accept member Kevin Fish's petition for nomination for the District 3 seat, to approve the transfer of unpaid delinquent final bills from current accounts receivable to uncollectible accounts in the amount of \$3,465.89, to approve board policy 2.05 Energy Conservation, to approve board policy 2.06 Cooperative's Position on Renewable Energy, to approve board policy 3.11 Disciplinary Guide for Safety Rule Violations, to remove board policy 4.23 (3) Non-Employee Equipment Rental, to approve the updated membership application, and to approve the Oct. 7 annual meeting agenda (783-32-029-01, Gary Stenson).



Staff reports included the safety reports, the financial reports, the implementation of a new payroll and timekeeping system, the yearly financial audit, the distribution of the CoBank Sharing Success matching grant award, load control testing, voltage signal strength testing, red and yellow zone control, ripple receiver inspections and repairs, water heater sales, off-peak installations and inquiries, the Baudette and Littlefork member appreciation open houses, upcoming fairs, new services and upgrades, material shortages and availability, the painting of the Baudette office building, the upcoming annual meeting, flooding issues and FEMA recovery efforts, outages, the hiring of temporary summer employees and a permanent lineman, outages, Norris Camp, strategic planning, and federal and state energy updates.

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 co-op at least two weeks in advance to be included on the agenda.



# Keep the lights on during the energy transition

BY JIM MATHESON AND MAC MCLENNAN

ozens of states in the most powerful nation in the world may struggle to keep the lights on in the coming years.

It doesn't have to be this way. But absent a shift in policy and coordination between federal and state governments, this is the energy reality our nation will face.

Reliable electricity has been a staple in America for more than half a century. But that's no longer a certainty. Organizations across the nation have sounded the alarm: reliable electricity may be in jeopardy this season. That's inexcusable.

Minnkota Power Cooperative utilizes a diverse mix of coal, wind and hydro resources to meet the 24/7 needs of electricity consumers in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. While this power portfolio is strong, Minnkota does not operate on the electric grid alone. Utilities across the Upper Midwest and down to Louisiana are interconnected through the larger Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) grid. Challenges in other areas of this system can and do have impacts on Minnkota and its members.

MISO expects to face a high risk of reliability challenges during both "normal and extreme conditions." If demand for electricity exceeds the available supply, MISO could implement controlled power outages to avoid catastrophic damage to the power grid.

Some are quick to blame these newfound reliability threats on changing or more extreme weather patterns. That's part of the story, but there's a deeper problem that must be acknowledged.

Spurred by policy and market factors, the ongoing energy transition has prioritized premature baseload coal and nuclear plant closures without considering the collective impact on the power grid and the availability of feasible technology to fully replace them. That's proving to be a dangerous misstep.

In MISO alone, 3,200 megawatts of electric generating capacity have shut down in the past year. That's enough to keep the lights on in 2.8 million homes. And electricity demand is forecast to rise over the next decade.

To put it simply, new powergenerating projects in some of the largest electricity markets haven't caught up with plant closures jeopardizing reliability in the process.

Policymakers should recalibrate their focus on a common-sense energy transition that doesn't risk reliability or punish low-income families and our economy. Those choices don't need to be at odds.

Driven by a focus on keeping the lights on, America's electric cooperatives have demonstrated what a responsible energy transition can look like. Electric co-ops substantially lowered their carbon emissions by 23% between 2005 and 2020, the equivalent of taking nearly 9 million cars off the road. They've also invested in energy innovation technologies to help meet tomorrow's electricity needs with speed and flexibility.

In Minnkota's case, approximately 42% of its generation capacity is already derived from carbon-free resources. The cooperative is also working to advance Project Tundra – an effort to build one of the world's largest carbon capture systems at a coal-based power plant in North Dakota. If the proposed project moves ahead, it would help retain a reliable and resilient power generator, while also significantly reducing Minnkota's carbon emissions.

The energy transition must consider threats to reliability and focus on the importance of allowing adequate time, technology development and the construction of desperately needed transmission lines to move electricity within regional markets. It is overambitious to believe this can happen by the current federal target of 2035.

Today's energy policy decisions will determine whether the threat of grid reliability challenges is our new energy reality. As state and federal policymakers re-evaluate their energy transition proposals in the wake of sobering reliability challenges, they should:

 Prioritize an adequate supply of always-available power resources to balance the increasing reliance on renewable energy.

- Promote the development of new transmission lines to carry electricity from where it's generated to where it's most needed.
- Facilitate coordinated, consistent, and timely agency permitting to speed the construction and maintenance of electric transmission and other critical grid infrastructure.
- Provide electric cooperatives access to the same level of energy innovation incentives that for-profit utilities have enjoyed for years.

When you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging. Failure is not an acceptable option for the consumers and communities we serve.



Jim Matheson is CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association that represents the nation's more than 900 not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives. He previously served seven terms as a U.S. representative from Utah.



Mac McLennan is CEO of Minnkota Power Cooperative, the wholesale electricity provider for 11 member cooperatives in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota.

### 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 218-634-2642

#### 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 218-283-7000

### 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 – RIGHT OF WAY**



**Operations Manager** 

I hope your summer has been a good one. It sure seemed to fly by because of the late spring we had. This month I want to focus a little bit on our right of way and what we have to do to maintain it. The safety of our members, our linemen and the overall reliability of the distribution system is dependent on proper clearing and upkeep of this right of way. If members see any dead trees or trees that look to be in positions that could threaten the power lines, they should contact our office. This also includes potential trees outside of the right of way if it's apparent they could fall through the power line.

No one likes it when the lights go out and having clean right of ways makes the restoration much faster and safer. Looking ahead, our tree contractor is on track to start in mid-October to do some clearing in areas deemed necessary. Each year we look across the system to determine where to focus clearing and right-of-way treatments. We've determined that the Kabetogama substation area will be that focus for this fall.

Also, here's an update regarding the flooding issues a large part of the system faced this year. We've been working with FEMA and have documented all necessary repairs needed to areas of concern and are securing materials to make those repairs as soon as possible (363-08-004-52, Dennis Dahl). Most of these replacements will occur next spring and toward the end of the year prior to the winter freeze-up.

The summer construction season was very busy. If you have any plans for needed work or new services this fall, please don't wait too long to get on the list.

In the Operations Department, we have a new face in the Littlefork office. I'd like to welcome apprentice lineman Eli Rahier. He comes to us with experience working as a lineman apprentice with a contractor and will be a good addition to the crew.

That's all for now, get out and enjoy the fall. - Tim

### IS YOUR OFF-PEAK HEATING SYSTEM READY FOR THE WINTER SEASON?



It's hard to believe winter is right around the corner. Since weather conditions and future wholesale power market prices make the amount of load control hours hard to predict, all of our off-peak members are encouraged to have a reliable, automatic dual heating system in place and ready to use (such as an electric thermal storage system). To ensure your total comfort this winter, consider the following questions about your backup heating system:

1. Is the system sized to heat your entire home or business?

- 2. Does it maintain an adequate comfort level?
- 3. Is it fully automatic?

Check current fuel prices and be sure to fill your propane or fuel oil tank at the beginning of the season. Also, make sure your tank is large enough to hold an adequate supply. Remember, prices typically rise as demand increases during the heating season. Our member services department is glad to answer any off-peak questions you may have.

# **NORTH STAR STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP**

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### **ENERGY EFFICIENCY:** TIP OF THE MONTH

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If you can see daylight around a window frame or if you can rattle a window (movement means possible leaks), the window likely needs to be sealed. Most window leaks can be sealed with caulk or weatherstripping, which come in a variety of materials. – *Source: energy.gov.* 



# **HOME COOKING**

### **Taco Salad**

This taco salad with Doritos is the perfect quick and easy, veggie-packed dinner that's ready in under 30 minutes and uses common ingredients.

Prep Time	Cook Time	Total Time	Servings
10 mins	15 mins	25 mins	6 servings

### **INGREDIENTS**

- 1 package taco seasoning
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 2 cups lettuce, chopped
- 1 can tomatoes, pieces
- 2 cups shredded cheese
- 1 (10 oz.) bag of ranch Doritos, *crushed*

• 1 (8 oz.) bottle of Wishbone Sweet-n-Spicy French dressing

#### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- 1. Brown the ground beef and drain.
- 2. Add the taco seasoning and cook according to package directions.
- 3. Cool the taco meat mixture.



- Combine the taco meat mixture with the lettuce, tomatoes, cheese, Doritos and salad dressing.
- 5. Serve immediately and enjoy.

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



### **COLD WEATHER RULE / ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

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

### **COLD WEATHER RULE**

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule (216B.096), electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between Oct. 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL of the following statements apply:

- Your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by North Star Electric Cooperative or by the local energy assistance provider.
- You enter into and make reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from North Star Electric Cooperative.

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not

### completely stop winter disconnects.

Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between Oct. 1 and April 30, North Star Electric must provide:

- A 30-day notice of disconnection;
- A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
- A list of local energy assistance providers;
- Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

### ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 60% of the state median income (\$65,964 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2023.

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website, https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/ consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/, for more details and to access the application portal.
- Contact your county EAP service provider for additional information and assistance.

North Star Electric Cooperative exists because of you, and we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please contact us immediately to work out a mutually agreeable payment plan.

## UPCOMING DATES/EVENTS



North Star will hold the following monthly board meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 2, 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 | Visit our website at northstarelectric.coop

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North Star Electric's offices will be closed on Friday, Nov. 11, in observance of Veterans Day.

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

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

### Inorthstarelectric

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.