

**SMART WAYS TO SAVE AND
STAY WARM THIS WINTER**

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**HOW IS POWER RESTORED
AFTER STORM DAMAGE?**

PAGE 5

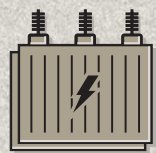
**LOADED BACON
CHEESEBURGER PASTA RECIPE**

PAGE 7

WHY ARE ELECTRIC RATES RISING?

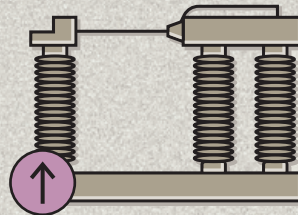
North Star Electric Cooperative is committed to maintaining the reliability, safety and service our members have come to expect and communicating our rate plans with our members.

MATERIAL COST INCREASES SINCE 2020



TRANSFORMERS

88%



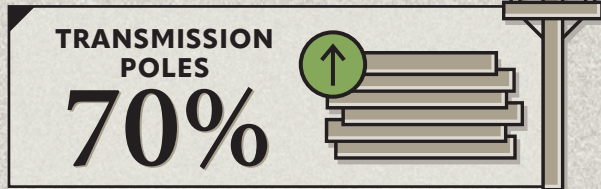
SWITCHES

56%



LIGHTNING ARRESTORS

68%



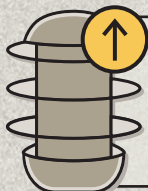
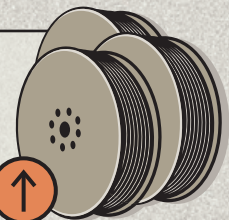
TRANSMISSION
POLES

70%



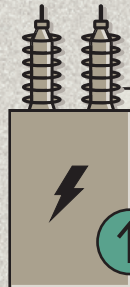
CONDUCTOR

53%



INSULATORS

70%



CAPACITORS

43%

**LEARN MORE
ON PAGE 2**

NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. MISSION STATEMENT

Providing safe, reliable electric services to improve the quality of life in communities we serve.

WHY ARE ELECTRIC RATES RISING?

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit organizations. When rates increase, it's because they must, in order to maintain the reliability, safety and service our members have come to expect. In April 2026, our wholesale power provider, Minnkota Power Cooperative, will increase its rate for member co-ops (including North Star Electric Cooperative) by 4.1%. Under this new rate, North Star will also need to consider a rate increase for our members.

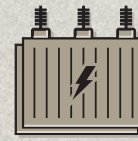
Raising rates is never an easy decision. Minnkota worked with its board of directors and membership on a rate adjustment that would allow them to financially counter **substantial supply chain and inflationary pressures that continue to build year after year**. The cost of maintaining transmission infrastructure has rapidly increased since 2020, with items like transformers costing 88% more today than five years ago.

After nearly eight years of consistently flat rates, these growing costs prompted the need for an increase in 2025 and 2026. However, if these increases were averaged over the last 10 years, the annual increase to your co-op has only been 1.3% – well under the rate of inflation.

Minnkota is also working to integrate data center loads in a manner that helps recover a larger share of its fixed costs through increased energy sales, thereby helping to moderate the need for future rate adjustments. These large-load members would not only fund 100% of the electric infrastructure necessary to serve their facilities, but would also provide significant additional revenue to support system operations. This reduces the financial burden on all other members. While some level of rate increase may still be necessary over time, the presence of these large consumers helps significantly flatten the trajectory of those adjustments.

We're committed to communicating our rate plans with our members as we evaluate our budget with our staff and board of directors. In the meantime, we thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigate our next steps. We appreciate your membership!

MATERIAL COST INCREASES SINCE 2020



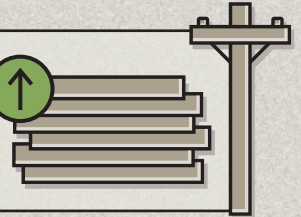
TRANSFORMERS

88%



TRANSMISSION
POLES

70%

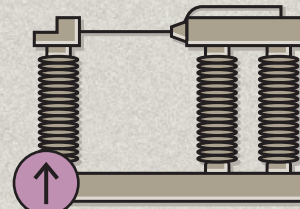


INSULATORS

70%

LIGHTNING ARRESTORS

68%

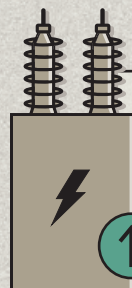
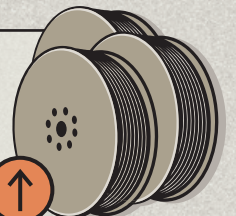


SWITCHES

56%

CONDUCTOR

53%



CAPACITORS

43%



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BOARDROOM

These are the highlights from the Nov. 5, 2025, regular board meeting. All current board members were in attendance. In addition to approving routine actions, the board voted to approve changes to the 2026 dependent care flexible spending plan, to approve delegates and committee appointments for 2026, to approve participation in CoBank's Sharing Success program in the 2026 budget, to accept the audit report for the year ended July 31, 2025, and to approve rescheduling the December board meeting to Dec. 10, 2025.

Staff reports included the safety report, the monthly financial report, the 2026 board of

directors budget, workers' compensation, new services, upgrades, pole changeouts, construction work plan updates, right-of-way cutting and mowing in the Roosevelt and Williams areas, substation reclosure testing, work order inspections, annual truck inspections, outages, winter load control, ripple receiver inspections and repairs, solar applications, AMI metering training, water heater and GenerLink sales, rebates, Littlefork building updates, and the recent annual meeting.

Auditor Luke Greden from the firm CliftonLarsonAllen LLP was also a video conference guest at the meeting. He

presented the favorable audit report for the year ending July 31, 2025.

Detailed minutes are available at the cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally held on the first Wednesday of every month (140-21-037-05, Efrem Novacek). 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.

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 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. For more information, please call Kevin Holen at **(218) 634-2202**.

MN 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 completing a permanent duty station change.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President
Steve Arnesen

Vice President
Michael Hanson

Secretary-Treasurer
Shelley Spears

Directors
Randy Bergan
Richard Ferguson
Douglas King
Tim Mathews

General Manager
Kevin Holen

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: 811 or 800-252-1166.
VISIT WWW.CALL811.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

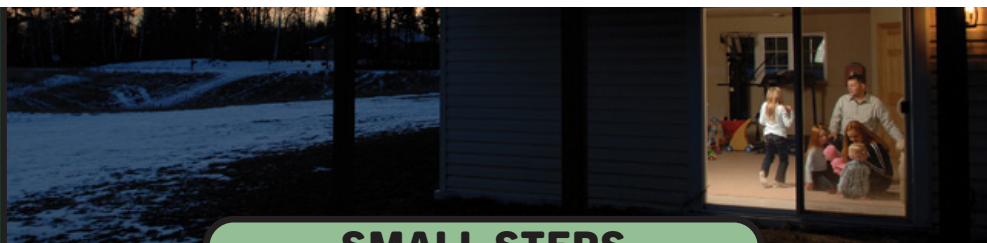
Past issues of the Enlightener are on our website at

www.northstarelectric.coop





SMART WAYS TO **SAVE** AND **STAY WARM** THIS WINTER

When the temperature drops, the urge to crank the heat jumps. If your home isn't outfitted with energy efficiency solutions, you could really see a spike in your energy bill. The good news? A few steps – big and small – can make all the difference when it comes to saving AND staying warm all winter long.

Looking for more ways to save? Visit **ValueofElectricity.com** and see all the ways electric technology can help you save on your energy bill!



SMALL STEPS

-  Move any rugs, furniture or curtains that may be blocking your vents.
-  On bright days, keep curtains open to let the natural light heat your space. Just remember to close them in the evening!
-  Replace your furnace filter every one to three months to keep your system running more efficiently.
-  Make sure to seal any pesky drafts around windows and doors with weatherstripping or simple draft stoppers.

BIGGER STEPS

Schedule a tuneup for your HVAC

Having your HVAC system serviced can significantly reduce your energy bill. A technician will clean out the parts to restore efficiency, while also detecting any issues (like loose electrical connections) that can force your system to run more often or inefficiently.

Invest in smart thermostats

A smart thermostat learns your routine and adjusts temperatures automatically, lowering the heat when you're asleep or away and warming things up before you get home. Many models are controlled using a simple phone app!

Add or upgrade an off-peak electric heating system

Stay warm and save money all winter long with off-peak electric heating. If you already heat with propane or natural gas, you can boost your comfort and efficiency by adding an electric plenum heater. You can also choose from standard or ductless air-source heat pumps, which are both excellent options for year-round comfort and lower energy costs. Whatever your space or budget, there's an electric heating solution designed to fit your home or business.

**ADDED
BONUS!**

If you install a qualifying off-peak electric heating system in your home or business, you can take advantage of North Star's off-peak electric rate (around HALF the standard rate)! You are also eligible for great rebates following installation!

HOW IS POWER RESTORED AFTER STORM DAMAGE?



As much as your co-op tries to prevent outages, sometimes they are out of our hands – especially in this case of major winter storms. Ice and wind create perfect conditions for power poles to break, or for trees to snap and fall into the lines. If this happens in our system, North Star Electric Cooperative crews need to take special steps to ensure damage sites are safe before restoring power to your home or business. You can help when you watch the wires.

IF YOU SEE A DOWNED POWER LINE, OR STORM DEBRIS IN A POWER LINE:

STAY FAR AWAY FOR YOUR SAFETY AND OTHERS.



Whether you're in a car or on foot, electricity can reach you through the ground if the line is still energized. Don't attempt to move or drive over downed lines. Also tell others to stay away and keep pets close to you.

BE SURE TO REPORT IT TO US AT (218) 634-2202.



We may already have a North Star crew responding, but knowing who lost power helps us know the extent of the outage and where to begin our work.

WHAT'S HAPPENING BEHIND THE SCENES:



When an outage occurs, our team's first step is to ensure the damage sites are safe for lineworkers and electricians to begin repairs.

Using control center data, line observations and outage reports from members, crews begin work on the damage sites that will restore power to the greatest number of members the fastest. In the case of widespread storms, it may take longer to reenergize our most rural members (thanks for your patience).



Damage is assessed first on Minnkota Power Cooperative's **LARGE TRANSMISSION LINES**, which deliver power to our substations.



If all transmission lines and substations are powered, then North Star's crews can begin repairs on our own **DISTRIBUTION LINES**, which carry power from substations to farms and communities.



Finally, crews will inspect and repair **TAP LINES**, which carry power to the transformers you may find in your front yard or down the block.



Visit WatchtheWires.com

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 – REJECTED POLE CHANGEOUT PROGRAM



Tim Pelach
Operations Manager

Greetings, everyone. I hope you all had a happy holiday season. It seemed like ours had something going on every weekend somewhere, and the weather didn't help with the traveling any. Things should settle down now and give us a chance to enjoy a little bit of winter activities.

The winter months have the crews working on our rejected pole changeout program and working on right-of-way clearing, as conditions have been very accommodating for these types of work (375-04-002-02, Anthony Arhart). And when it gets a little cold, there are plenty of shop projects to get done.

As some of you may have seen with the work along County Road 8, it sure looks different driving along there now. The crews were finishing up there before freeze-up, and we will have some cleanup work to do along that area next spring when things thaw out.

In the last article I mentioned the bucket trucks we were letting go in the auction. Both found new homes and may never see snow again. It seemed like that was a very efficient way to get the trucks to new owners at a very low cost to the cooperative.

And let's all remember to be aware of what's around us while we are plowing snow this winter. No one wants to hit a pole or transformer covered with snow.

We are also taking part in a campaign, along with Minnkota and its co-ops, called Watch the Wires. This initiative promotes safety around overhead power lines to help the public be aware of the hazards associated with them. We have a variety of informational items and reminders for people to put in cabs or windows to help with watching out for those wires. If you're interested, you can stop by one of the offices and check things out. Remember to be safe out there. That's all for now, Tim



ENERGY EFFICIENCY: TIP OF THE MONTH

Winter weather can cause your home heating system to work overtime. Check for air leaks and drafts around doors and windows, then seal them with weatherstripping or caulk. Close fireplace dampers when not in use, and consider installing insulating curtains to help keep warm air inside. You can also save energy by lowering your thermostat a few degrees.

PARENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

If you are a current member and a parent or guardian of a high school senior, remember that along with encouraging your student to enjoy their last moments of high school, also encourage them to participate in our Cooperative Knowledge Scholarship competition this spring. This scholarship competition is funded with unclaimed capital credits and is a great way for North Star to support the youth throughout our service area. North Star will award one \$1,000 scholarship and four \$500 scholarships to the students who score highest on the test. Students scoring 60% or better on the test will be entered into a drawing for eight \$100 cash prizes. The odds are good based on the number of students who typically compete.



NORTH STAR ELECTRIC POLITICAL LEADERS

FEDERAL LEGISLATORS

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

Senator Amy Klobuchar
425 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.klobuchar.senate.gov
202-224-3244;
Fax: 202-228-2186

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

Congresswoman Michelle
Fischbach, U.S. House (7th
District)
1004 Longworth House Office
Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
fischbach.house.gov
202-225-2165;
Fax: 202-225-1593

Congressman Pete Stauber,
U.S. House (8th District)
145 Cannon House Office
Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
stauber.house.gov
202-225-6211

STATE OF MINNESOTA LEGISLATORS

Governor Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King,
Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-201-3400

Minority Leader
Senator Mark Johnson (01, R)
2401 Minnesota Senate
Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5782
sen.mark.johnson@senate.mn

Senator Steve Green (02, R)
2319 Minnesota Senate
Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-297-8063
sen.steve.green@senate.mn

Senator Grant Hauschild
(03, DFL)
3111 Minnesota Senate
Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-1789
sen.grant.hauschild@senate.
mn

Representative Bidal Duran, Jr.
(02A, R)
Centennial Office Building
(Second Floor)
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-4265
rep.bidal.duran@house.mn

Representative John Burkel
(01A, R)
Centennial Office Building
(Second Floor)
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-9635
rep.john.burkel@house.mn

Representative Roger Skraba
(03A, R)
221 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-2190

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 (654-29-024-02, Jade Wegner). For more information, go to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industries website (dli.mn.gov) and go to the electrical page.

ST. LOUIS and KOOCHICHING COUNTIES

Brian Johnson
612.757.9458

Call to set up an appointment
7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m., Monday - Friday

LAKE OF THE WOODS and ROSEAU COUNTIES

Ronald Ditsch
651.368.2195

Call to set up an appointment
7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m., Monday - Friday

HOME COOKING

Loaded Bacon Cheeseburger Pasta

If you love pasta and you love a good old-fashioned bacon cheeseburger, then just wait until you try this ultimate comfort food crossover.

Prep Time	Cook Time	Total Time	Servings
15 mins	30 mins	45 mins	6

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces pasta (*elbow macaroni or your favorite shape*)
- 1 lb ground beef
- 4 slices bacon, *chopped*
- 1 small onion, *diced*
- 2 cloves garlic, *minced*
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- ½ cup ketchup
- 1 Tbsp mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste

- *Optional toppings: diced tomatoes, pickles, lettuce, extra cheese*

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Boil pasta in salted water according to package instructions. Drain and set aside.
2. In a large skillet, cook chopped bacon over medium heat until crispy. Remove and drain on paper towels. Leave bacon grease in the skillet.
3. In the same skillet, add ground beef, diced onion and garlic. Cook until beef is browned and onion is



translucent. Drain excess fat if needed.

4. Stir in beef broth, heavy cream, ketchup and mustard. Mix well and let it simmer for 5 minutes.
5. Toss in the cooked pasta and mix to coat. Remove from heat and stir in cheddar cheese until melted. Top with crispy bacon and optional toppings like diced tomatoes, pickles or shredded lettuce.

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 Cooperative donates unclaimed capital credits to local charitable programs and organizations



Randy Bergan, North Star Electric board director (*left*), presents an unclaimed capital credit check to Hal Bitzer with the Williams Senior Citizens Center in Williams, Minnesota.

"Commitment to community is a driving force behind your cooperative as we support programs that improve the lives of those who live in the communities we serve."

UPCOMING DATES/EVENTS

04
FEB

North Star will hold its next monthly board meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 4. Please contact us ahead of time if you would like to be added to the agenda.

25
FEB

North Star will hold the following monthly board meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 25. Please contact us ahead of time if you would like to be added to the agenda.

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 855-938-3492 | **Online billing** info available via SmartHub app
Electrical after-hours emergencies 1-888-60OUTAGE (1-888-668-8243)
Email us at nsec@wiktel.com | **Visit our website at** 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.