

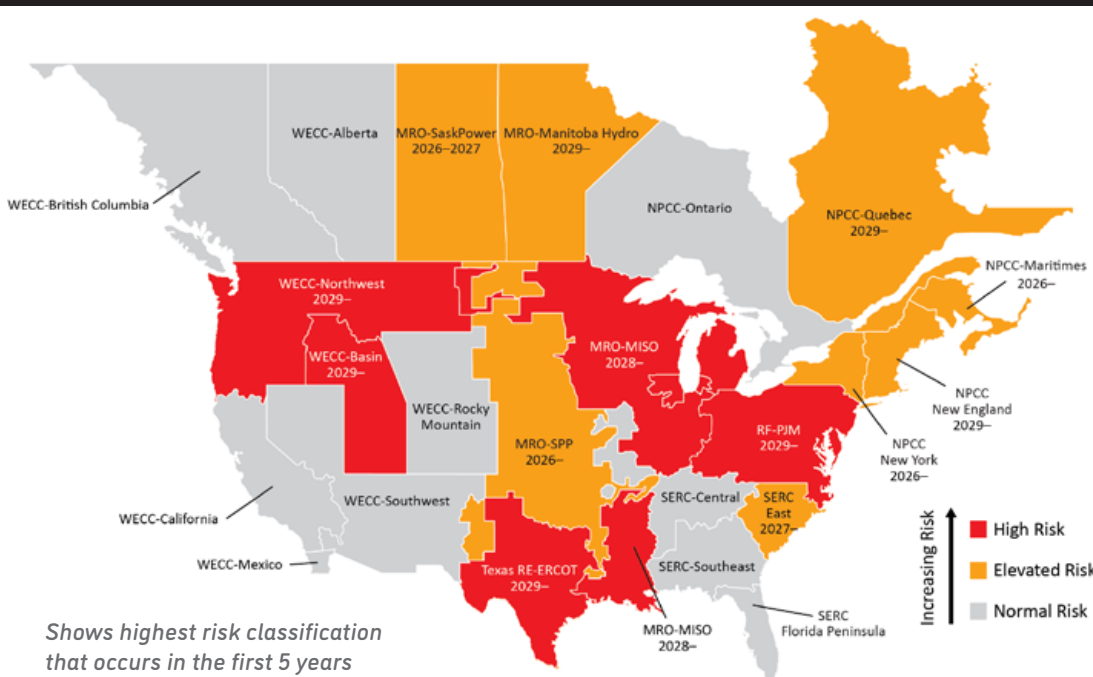
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THE DATA DOESN'T LIE. WE NEED REAL POWER

NOW



There's one clear takeaway from the newest Long-Term Reliability Assessment released by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC): The Midwest electric grid that includes Minnkota Power Cooperative, North Star Electric Cooperative's wholesale power provider, and its members needs additional power sources.

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THE DATA DOESN'T LIE.

WE NEED REAL POWER

NOW

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Released this January, the NERC report lists the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) – Minnkota's regional grid operator – as High Risk for energy shortfalls over the next five years. The assessment explains that additional energy resources planned for the region do not keep pace with expected rising electricity demand and the retirement of dispatchable power plants (375-03-003-09, Evan Wilmer). Although MISO is at Low Risk for energy shortfalls in 2026, the risk elevates in 2027, hitting High Risk in the years 2028-2030.

Summer heat has always been a concern for the grid, as demand can peak quickly as the entire region powers its cooling systems. However, the 2025 assessment highlights increasing winter reliability risks. As demand rises for heating, some energy resources, especially solar and wind, are unable to produce at the same levels as they can in the summer. Because Minnkota employs weather-tested, coal-based power in addition to wind and hydro power, it can navigate cold weather events that may put strain on other utilities.

Potential energy shortfalls across the MISO footprint are not something that Minnkota can correct on its own. Reliable regional electricity takes the planning and collaboration of multiple utility providers from Canada all the way down to Louisiana. Even though Minnkota has enough generation to meet the needs



of its own members, it may be called upon to assist with shortfalls in other areas of MISO. It's crucial that state and federal policy allows utilities to make long-term planning decisions that not only support reliability and affordability for local consumers but also align with the greater reliability needs of the national grid.

Minnkota continues to evaluate its long-term power supply plan with the help of its member cooperatives and neighboring utilities. We understand that reliability is a top priority and we will always advocate for **REAL POWER NOW.**

**LEARN MORE AT
REALPOWERNOW.COM.**



Scan here to see the full
**NERC LONG-TERM
RELIABILITY
ASSESSMENT**

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BOARDROOM

These are the highlights from the Jan. 7, 2026, regular board meeting. All board members were in attendance. In addition to approving routine actions, the board voted to approve revisions to Policy 5.37 - Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave Policy, to approve the 2026 budget, to approve the early but discounted retirement of capital credits to estates and to reschedule the March board meeting to Feb. 25, 2026.

Staff reports included the safety report, the proposed 2026 budget, the monthly financial report, the CoBank Sharing Success grant opportunity, new services, service upgrades, idle service retirements, the completion of the work plan rebuild project near Roosevelt, contracted right-of-way clearing, outages, updates and corrections to the mapping system, winter load control, ripple receiver inspections and repairs, off-peak installations, the metering system,

solar installations and rebates, and GenerLink and generator sales (140-06-030-02, Karen Whipheimer).

Detailed minutes are available at the cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally held on 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.

PARENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS: SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

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 four \$50 cash prizes. The odds are good based on the number of students who typically compete.



TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Scammers and cyber criminals look for weak points to exploit before software companies can fix them. Update software programs on your computer, tablet and mobile phone as soon as possible when a newer version becomes available. Software updates often contain critical patches and protections against security threats. Turn on automatic updates to automatically update your security software, internet browser, operating system and mobile apps.

Source: consumer.ftc.org



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

A COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY NETWORK

Being an electric cooperative means more than just delivering safe and reliable electricity. We are a part of the community. The folks we wave to, the friends we get coffee with and the family we love are all part our membership.

We are more than electric utility. We are a connected cooperative dedicated to our members and the community we serve.



Member engagement and transparency

Every year, North Star Electric Cooperative hosts an annual meeting. This is a time for members to learn about what their co-op has experienced over the past year, from challenges to opportunities. This is also a space for members to ask questions and learn what it takes to deliver safe, reliable and sustainable power. Be on the lookout for an invite to the next annual meeting in the fall.



Member-owned and governed

As a member-owned electric cooperative, every decision made is made for the benefit of the communities we serve! We are owned and governed by our members. Our board is made up of elected members from the entire territory served. They vote on all major decisions for the cooperative and elect a representative to sit on the board for our generation cooperative, Minnkota Power Cooperative.



Supporting community

Operation Round Up is an easy way for North Star and its members to give back to the community. This voluntary program allows members to round up their electric bill to the nearest dollar. A volunteer board meets to decide where to distribute those extra funds – often to charities, volunteer services like fire departments, and individuals in need.



Youth programs

North Star Electric Cooperative offers scholarship opportunities every spring for graduating seniors who are heading off to college. For those not quite to that stage, we offer youth programs like classroom electric safety presentations, and we participate in other community events like National Night Out. Check out our website for more information!

We operate by putting our members first. Want to learn more about **North Star Electric Cooperative**? Visit us at northstarelectric.coop or give us a call at **218-634-2202**.

PREPARE FOR OUTAGES

Power outages can happen any time of the year, but winter is especially challenging for your co-op. Storms with ice and wind can snap trees or cause vehicles to hit the ditch, both of which can damage power poles and lines and leave many without electricity. It's important to be prepared for the next time the lights go out.



Learn more about power line safety at WatchtheWires.com.

1

HAVE AN EMERGENCY KIT AT HOME THAT INCLUDES:



Flashlights or battery-powered lanterns



Extra batteries



Portable chargers and phone banks



A first-aid kit



Blankets and warm clothing



Non-perishable food items for up to three days



One gallon of water for each person in your home

2

KNOW HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HOME IN THE COLD.



Keep your faucets dripping during outages to keep pipes from freezing.



Make sure windows and curtains are closed to avoid warm air escaping.



Test fireplaces or wood stoves early to make sure they are working properly.

3

IF A DOWNED POWER POLE OR LINE IS NEAR YOUR HOME, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:



Stay far away, and be sure others stay away as well (including pets).



Call North Star Electric Cooperative to report the damage at **218-634-2202**.

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 – CAPITAL CREDITS/2026 RATES



Robyn Sonstegard
Finance Manager

Capital credit allocation

Because North Star Electric Cooperative operates at cost, any excess revenues (margins) are allocated to members as capital credits. In February, your board of directors approved the allocation of 2025 operating margins of \$956,426 to our members' capital credit accounts. Your own portion is based on how much electricity you purchased during the year. You can see your allocation amount printed in the *Additional Information* section of your bill this month.

When the financial condition of the cooperative allows, your board of directors approves the retirement (or payment) of capital credits, which usually happens in early fall. At that time, you will see a credit on your bill for your share of the retirement (654-27-007-03, Rodney Milender). How much money you get back depends on how much electricity you have used in the past. Capital credits are just one of the benefits of membership that set co-ops apart from other types of utilities!

2026 rates

As you may have read in last month's issue, we will have an increase to the monthly basic service fee on all accounts, beginning on April 1. This rate change is required to offset an increase in our wholesale power cost, which will also take place effective April 1. For general single-phase accounts, this will mean a \$5 increase per month in the basic service fee. The kWh rate for your electric usage will not be changing, so this fixed cost is the only increase you will see.

Knowledge Scholarship

Our Knowledge Scholarship competition is right around the corner! If you are a parent or guardian of a high school senior, encourage them to participate this spring. This scholarship competition is a great way for North Star to support the youth throughout our service area, all while helping them learn a little bit about our electric cooperative. North Star Electric Cooperative 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 four \$50 cash prizes.

Please contact Clayton Gubbels, member service manager, with any questions.

ENERGY SAVING TIP

As spring arrives, take advantage of milder temperatures to save energy at home. Open windows on pleasant days to bring in fresh air instead of running your HVAC system.





USING A GENERATOR?

8 DANGEROUS MISTAKES PEOPLE MAKE



1 IN ENCLOSED SPACES

Always use it in a well-ventilated area.



2 NEAR WINDOWS OR DOORS

Place it at least 20 feet away from windows and doors.



3 IN A GARAGE

Even if the door is up, never use a generator in a garage.



4 IN THE ELEMENTS

Run it on a dry surface under a canopy-like structure (but not in a carport).



5 PLUGGED INTO A WALL OUTLET

This can be deadly to you, family members, neighbors or utility workers.



6 WITH THE WRONG EXTENSION CORD

Use a properly rated cord to plug appliances into a generator.



7 WITHOUT CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) TESTERS

CO detectors should be on every level of your home (test them monthly).



8 IN DISREPAIR

Make sure your generator is well-maintained and in good working order.



LEARN MORE AT:

Safe Electricity.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 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

Fried Rice

Learn how to make fried rice with this classic recipe. It is quick to make, easy to customize with your favorite add-ins, and so flavorful and delicious.

Prep Time
5 mins

Cook Time
10 mins

Total Time
15 mins

Servings
4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 3 Tbsp butter, *divided*
- 2 large eggs, *whisked*
- 2 medium carrots, *peeled and diced*
- 1 small white onion, *diced*
- ½ cup frozen peas
- 3 cloves garlic, *minced*
- Salt and black pepper
- 4 cups cooked and chilled rice
- 2 green onions, *thinly sliced*
- 3-4 Tbsp soy sauce, *or more*
- 2 tsp oyster sauce (*optional*)
- ½ tsp toasted sesame oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat ½ Tbsp of butter in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat until melted. Add egg and cook until scrambled, stirring occasionally. Remove egg and transfer to a separate plate.
2. Add an additional 1 Tbsp butter to the pan and heat until melted. Add carrots, onion, peas and garlic, and season with salt and pepper. Sauté for about 5 minutes or until the vegetables are soft.
3. Increase heat to high, add in the remaining 1½ Tbsp of butter and stir



until melted. Immediately add the rice, green onions, soy sauce and oyster sauce (*if using*) and stir until combined. Continue sautéing for 3 more minutes to fry the rice, stirring occasionally.

4. Add in the eggs and stir to combine. Remove from heat and stir in the sesame oil until combined. Taste and season with extra soy sauce, if needed.

From the kitchen of Orpha Holen.

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 Cooperative board director (right), presents an unclaimed capital credit check to Penny Labore with the Lake of the Woods Food Shelf.

"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

25
MAR

North Star Electric Cooperative will hold its next monthly board meeting on Wednesday, March 25, in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Please contact us ahead of time if you would like to be added to the agenda.

03
APR

North Star's Baudette and Littlefork offices will be closed on Friday, April 3, in observance of Good Friday and the Easter holiday.

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 1-888-6OUTAGE (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.