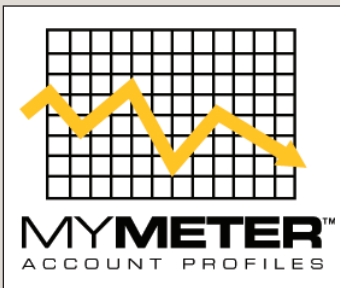


# NEWS

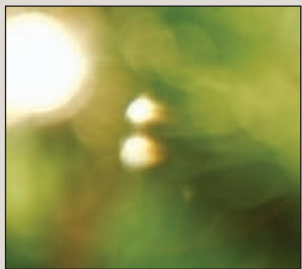
October 2010

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Official publication of



[www.mcleodcoop.com](http://www.mcleodcoop.com)

## Board vacancy in District 4 to be filled

**B**efore the end of the year, District 4 Director Curtis Rossow will be moving to town and he will have to relinquish his seat on the Co-op board of directors. Per the organization's By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation, this seat shall be filled for the remainder of his term by a person appointed by the MCPA board of directors. The next election for the District 4 seat will be at the annual meeting in 2012.

The board of directors will accept applications from members residing in District 4 who are interested in being appointed to fill this vacancy through October 18,

2010. District 4 includes Boon Lake, Preston Lake, Brookfield, Hector, Osceola, and a portion of Kingman Township, all in Renville County, and a portion of East Lake Lillian Township in Kandiyohi County, served by McLeod Cooperative Power. All members in this district were mailed a letter outlining requirements for a director and an application form for those interested in being considered.

Presorted Standard  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT #60  
HUTCHINSON, MN  
55350

## Road rebuild affects reading of some meters in September

**M**other Nature's extra rainfall in September delayed completion of a road rebuild project on 180th Street in Lynn Township near Hutchinson. The Cooperative had to remove a series of poles so the road could be straightened and moved. For several weeks customers served by that line had to be back-fed power from a different substation. Until those poles can be put back in and power fed again from the normal substation, those member's Turtle automated meter reading units cannot send us current readings. During back-feeding, communication is also lost to Turtle units with the same frequencies on the substation powering the load. Once the water recedes and the contractor is able to finish his road job for Lynn Township, we will be able to replace the poles and resume feeding power from the normal substation. At that time the Turtle units will again send us data and current readings.

This interruption has resulted in the Cooperative having to estimate some member's bills for September use. Accounts with subtractive meters for load management had to be read by Co-op employees. Over 300 members who reside in townships located west of Hutchinson (Lynn, Acoma, Boon Lake) could be affected. We want members in these areas to understand that if they saw Co-op personnel reading their meter the last week in September, or if they receive an estimated bill for September use, they would have some explanation of why that happened. If members have additional questions, we encourage them to call the office at 1-800-494-6272.

## Brookfield Substation outage

**O**n Friday, September 24, all members served by the Brookfield Substation north of Hector were out of power for 82 minutes. Power was restored to members by back-feeding power from other area substations over the weekend. Equipment repairs were made by Great River Energy to their equipment in the substation on September 27, and loads were switched back to the Brookfield Sub on Tuesday, September 28. This outage affected 297 meters.

## 2011 Electric Cooperative Calendar

### Local photo calendar returns!

At the request of many of our members, the Cooperative's 2011 scenic calendars will again be filled with Minnesota photos taken by Cooperative employees. For many years we published a calendar of local scenic photos. Our members loved it. The past few years of conservation calendars and generic calendars have not always been something members wanted to hang on the kitchen wall. So for 2011, we are publishing a Minnesota scenic calendar with local


photos. Over 400 photos from employees of McLeod Co-op Power and Kandiyohi Power Cooperative were submitted. We had to narrow it down to 13 favorite scenes that we felt our members would truly enjoy looking at all year long.

2011 calendars will be available in the Cooperative office beginning around Thanksgiving and continuing while the supply lasts. Stop in and pick up your copy in late November or December.

# Did you try to call us?

*Phone service to Co-op  
interrupted September 28*

**N**early all day on Tuesday, August 28, (the day electric bills were due) the incoming telephone lines at MCPA were out of service. Century Link, the local phone service provider, corrected the situation and restored service later that day. We regret any inconvenience this posed to members who were unable to call us that day.



## Going south for the winter?

**P**lease notify the Cooperative if you are heading south for the winter. Although the Turtle will send us your meter reading, we still need to know what payment arrangements you prefer.

Options are:

- You can pay in advance.
- Have the post office forward your mail.
- You can sign up for auto pay and have the payment automatically deducted from your checking or savings account.
- You can call us with a credit card payment.

Just be sure to make arrangements before you leave by calling 1-800-494-6272.

## Manager's Message —

by Kris Ingenthron, General Manager  
McLeod Cooperative Power Association



## The Power of Membership

**N**ow, as always, it's a good time to be a member of an electric cooperative.

Not only are cooperatives locally owned and controlled by their members, they also are locally run to serve the members' needs.

While many Minnesota electricity consumers pay power bills to companies that answer to far-away stockholders who demand a healthy profit every quarter, local members call the shots at electric co-ops like ours. Co-ops aren't under pressure to keep rates high enough to generate big profits. Instead, co-ops try to keep your bill as low as possible while providing high-quality service.

At McLeod Cooperative Power Association, we invest money in excess of operating costs back into the business locally or return the excess (known as margins) to you in the form of capital credits. And unlike the boards of directors of investor-owned utilities who keep an eye on generating profits for people living far away, your Co-op's directors (fellow members, by the way) have only one thing in mind: keeping lights on safely, reliably, and keeping costs affordable in our local community. That's why you elected them. And that's what's so great about co-ops. If you don't like the direction your Co-op is taking, you have the power to change the leadership through democratic means.

You may know the history of the electric cooperative movement, how seven decades ago rural residents banded together to bring the conveniences of electricity to their communities when investor-owned utilities would not extend service. The associations they formed and the seven principles upon which co-ops

were founded – voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, and members' economic participation, among others – are as meaningful today as they were when electric co-ops began in the 1930s.

But co-ops are not just products of a proud past. These days, Americans from all walks of life have come to recognize the co-op approach – members working together to achieve price and service benefits – can work for other needs just as effectively as it delivered affordable power to rural Americans.

Leadership at McLeod Cooperative Power Association shares the same concerns as you, our members. We are accessible. You can give us a call or send us an e-mail and know someone here is listening. And at our annual meeting on April 12, 2011, visit with us in person and share insights on how you want your business operated.

In these days of economic turmoil, folks who receive electricity from co-ops are lucky. As locally owned and operated businesses, electric co-ops understand the people they serve. Directors and employees at your co-op share the same values and have the same pride of place as you do because it is our community, too. We act like neighbors because we are neighbors.

That's the cooperative difference.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1 Oria Brinkmeier, <i>Lester Prairie</i>	District 6 Lester Ranzau, Vice President <i>Glencoe</i>
District 2 Dale Peters, Secretary-Treasurer <i>Brownton</i>	District 7 Bill Polchow, Asst. Secretary-Treasurer <i>Silver Lake</i>
District 3 Roger Karstens, <i>Hutchinson</i>	District 8 Keith Peterson, <i>Hector</i>
District 4 Curtis Rossow, <i>Buffalo Lake</i>	District 9 Gerald Roepke, President <i>New Germany</i>
District 5 Allan Duesterhoeft, <i>Hutchinson</i>	

### MCLEOD COOPERATIVE POWER ASSOCIATION NEWS

The McLeod Cooperative Power Association News is published monthly by  
McLeod Cooperative Power Association  
PO Box 70  
1231 Ford Ave.  
Glencoe, MN 55336  
General Manager: Kris Ingenthron  
Editor: Sue Pawelk

*The McLeod Cooperative Power Association News is the official member publication of McLeod Cooperative Power Association and focuses on our members, programs and events. All member story ideas and comments are welcome. Send to Sue Pawelk, editor, at the above address.*

#### Office Hours:

Monday - Friday  
7:45 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**Phone: 320-864-3148**  
**1-800-494-6272**

**24-hour outage: 1-800-927-5685**  
**Fax: 320-864-4850**

**Web site: [www.mcleodcoop.com](http://www.mcleodcoop.com)**

Gopher State One Call 1-800-252-1166



Join the hundreds of other members using MyMeter™ to get a handle on their energy consumption

Many MCPA members have signed up and logged into their MyMeter account. They are looking at their usage and taking steps to reduce their monthly kWh use.



This web application is available to MCPA electric members who log onto the Co-op's web site [www.mcleodcoop.com](http://www.mcleodcoop.com) and register to use MyMeter™. Click on the MyMeter™ icon on our homepage. The program is designed to help members take control of their energy use and it

can help you reduce your energy bills. MyMeter™ is a free web-based service that allows you to track and chart your daily energy use. Members can compare what they used this month to the same month last year. Families who participate in off-peak programs will see their off-peak usage separate from their general service usage.

You can place a marker on the date you make an energy change, like getting rid of an old refrigerator, and track how much energy that action is saving you. Members can compare their monthly or daily usage to the MCPA customer average. They can also set goals for their family to conserve.

You only log in once even if you have multiple electric accounts. Registering just takes a minute or two. It is fastest to have your electric bill in hand; you will need your name as it appears on your bill, your account #, and home phone number (or phone number showing on your bill). To register you do also need to have an e-mail address.

## WildBlue high speed internet offering FREE installation through October 31

Normally, consumers signing up for WildBlue high speed internet service pay a \$100 installation fee. WildBlue is waiving the installation fee for new customers now through October 31, 2010.

This is a great time to sign up if you live in an area where DSL is not available and you need something faster than dial-up service. WildBlue provides high speed internet service via a satellite dish. Service levels range from \$49.95 to \$79.95 per month and a two-year service commitment is required.

Call McLeod Co-op Power at 1-800-494-6272 to get signed up for WildBlue today.



## Special ENERGY STAR rebate for refrigerators and clothes washers to end Oct. 31



The special \$125 rebate on ENERGY STAR refrigerators and \$75 rebate on ENERGY STAR clothes washers ends October 31.

If you have purchased a qualifying unit, please get your rebate form submitted to the Co-op right away. If you purchased at Sears with the instant-off coupon, then you have already received your rebate. Call the Co-op office if you have questions 1-800-494-6272.

## LED Christmas light strings eligible for \$3 rebate

Turn in your old lights and get up to \$15 off new LED light strings instantly

To get members to decorate their homes — both indoors and outdoors — with the very efficient LED (Light Emitting Diode) lights, the Cooperative is offering a rebate of \$3 per string of lights.

The three participating hardware stores in our service area are: ACE Hardware stores in Glencoe and Hutchinson, and Home Solutions in Norwood Young America.

The rebate offer is available only to McLeod Cooperative Power members November 1 through December 24, 2010, or while light supplies last. Each member may use the coupon (located at right) to get the \$3 per string rebate on up to five strings of LED holiday lights, for a maximum rebate of \$15 per member. Save this coupon because reproductions will not be accepted!

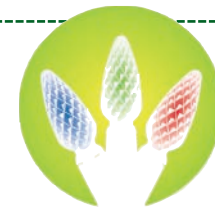
LED Christmas lights come in mini-light sizes, icicle lights, larger C6 lights (sized like the larger outdoor lamps used 20 years ago), LED rope light and many other varieties. They can be used indoor or outdoor. LED strings use 90% less energy than a string of mini-bulbs. They last 50,000 to 100,000 hours. They are safer and are

cool to the touch. If one bulb goes out, the rest stay lit. They also are sturdier and are difficult to damage. Many even come with a lifetime or many-year warranty. LED light strings are the best and most efficient way to decorate for Christmas or any holiday.

### YOU MUST FOLLOW THESE STEPS CAREFULLY TO GET YOUR REBATE:

1. Cut out the coupon on this page.
2. Take the coupon and up to 5 old strings of holiday lights to the ACE Hardware store in either Glencoe or Hutchinson, or Home Solutions in Norwood Young America.
3. Purchase one to five strings of LED Christmas lights that have at least 50 bulbs per string.
4. Present your completed coupon at the checkout with your old strings to get \$3 off each string you are purchasing, up to a maximum rebate of \$15 per member.

If members purchase ENERGY STAR LED holiday light strings from a different retailer than these three participating stores, and want to receive the rebate, they must get a rebate form from McLeod Cooperative Power, bring us five old strings of lights, and give us a sales receipt for their light purchase along with the completed rebate form. These alternate rebates will be accepted through December 27, 2010.



a brighter idea

**LED Holiday Lighting Promotion**  
Nov. 1 - Dec. 24, 2010

Or while supplies last

**\$3 instant rebate per strand of LED Holiday Lights**

purchased at these participating stores:

- Hite Ace Hardware in Glencoe
- Ace Hardware in Hutchinson
- Home Solutions in Norwood Young America

Any LED brand of 50 or more bulb strands eligible for rebate.

Customer name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

# of strands purchased (Max. 5): \_\_\_\_\_



1231 Ford Ave. & Hwy. 22  
Glencoe, MN  
1-800-494-MCPA

Only members of McLeod Co-op Power are eligible for rebate. One coupon from MCPA Newsletter for up to five light strands for a maximum total rebate of \$15 per customer. Reproductions of coupon are not allowed. One strand of non-LED holiday lights should be turned in for each LED strand purchased (up to five).



# Heat pump water heater could save on heating bills

**W**ater heater technology hasn't really changed in decades, but that could change with the availability of the "heat pump water heater (HPWH)." The same energy-efficient heat pump technology that makes heating and cooling homes so inexpensive has now been adapted to cut the cost of heating water potentially in half, manufacturers say.

While the technology is still fairly new, Great River Energy, one of your Co-op's energy suppliers, is in the process of doing a pilot test in many pre-selected homes to gauge how effective the technology actually is in practice in our area and climate. The hope is that there will be significant savings in energy use and will offer members a way to cut their electric water heating bills.

## How does it work?

To understand how a heat pump works, think about a refrigerator working in reverse. While a refrigerator removes heat from an enclosed box and blows it into the surrounding air, a HPWH takes heat from the surrounding air and transfers it to water in an enclosed tank.

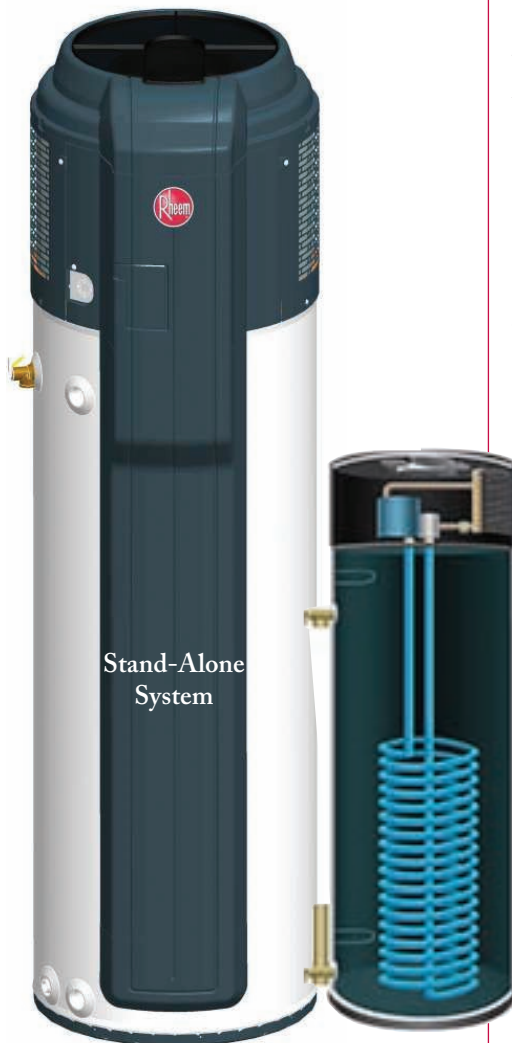
A low-pressure liquid refrigerant is vaporized in the heat pump's evaporator and passed into the compressor, where it is compressed. The compression increases the temperature of the refrigerant, which is then passed through a condenser coil, where it delivers its heat to the surrounding water.

Heat pump technology transfers heat; it doesn't use energy to create heat. As a result, a heat pump system can be two or three times more efficient than traditional systems.

## What does a HPWH system look like and will it work in my home?

There are two types of HPWH systems that are potentially available:

- **Stand-alone hybrid system**  
This unit looks much like a standard



water heater. The heat pump is integrated into the design for a sleek, unified look. These units are able to use the heat pump technology as the primary heat source, but also contain a back-up electric heating element for times of increased demand.

This type of unit is currently available from Rheem Water Heaters ([www.rheem.com](http://www.rheem.com)), General Electric ([www.geappliances.com/heat-pump-hot-water-heater](http://www.geappliances.com/heat-pump-hot-water-heater)), and AO Smith ([www.hotwater.com/newproducts/](http://www.hotwater.com/newproducts/)).

While the up-front cost is higher than a standard water heater, the potential energy savings would pay back the increased investment. The more water a household uses, the quicker the pay-back.

- **An Add-On System**

This allows a heat pump unit to be added onto an existing electric water heater. When the tank needs to be heated, a small pump circulates water through piping installed between the existing storage water heater and the heat pump. The heat pump unit can either sit on top of the water heater or be installed on an adjacent wall.

Although the up-front cost of an add-on is much less, the yearly recommended maintenance could end up being more expensive in the long run. Also, these units are not readily available in all areas.

Both integrated and add-on units kick out cool air, which helps to cool and dehumidify the surrounding

space during summer, but could require additional space heating during the winter months, reducing the savings somewhat. Venting these units to the outside could eliminate this effect. Check with the manufacturer to make sure this is possible.

Units should be installed in spaces that allow sufficient air circulation (approximately 1,000 cubic feet is



recommended). If you own an older home where the basement is poorly insulated or not heated, there will be less heat for the HPWH to operate and satisfy the demand. Therefore standard electric heating elements may be used more

often to meet your hot water needs. Still, a Consumer Reports test on the Rheem HP50RH, the A.O. Smith PHPT-80 and the GE GEH50DNSRSA in a 65-degree basement which simulates a cold northeastern climate, showed savings in excess of 55%.

While this technology is relatively new, it has the potential to cut a significant energy load. We'll keep you posted on the results of the Great River Energy pilot. This may be a new technology you will want to check out when it's time to replace your existing water heater, or in you're building a home.

Sources: Energy Star; Natl. Assoc. of Home Builders; Rheem; GE; Washington State Univ.; Consumer Reports, October 2010.

## Heartland Security Services

The power to protect when no one else is there...



Note to self:  
Always be home in case of fire...

You can't always be home. That's why Heartland Security systems call the fire department for you...

### Packages available:

- Fire and furnace monitoring
- Flooding
- Burglary
- Medical Alerts
- Livestock monitoring
- Carbon monoxide
- And more...

Sign up for a Heartland System by October 31 and receive a free smoke sensor! (Note: this offer cannot be combined with other specials.)

Visit [www.heartlandss.com](http://www.heartlandss.com)

**Heartland Security**  
1-888-264-6380

ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG



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**

Know what's below. Always call 811 before you dig. Visit [call811.com](http://call811.com) for more information.





# Stay safe when decorating for the holidays

**D**uring the holiday season, families often string together extension cords without a second thought. Unfortunately, not all cords are created equal.

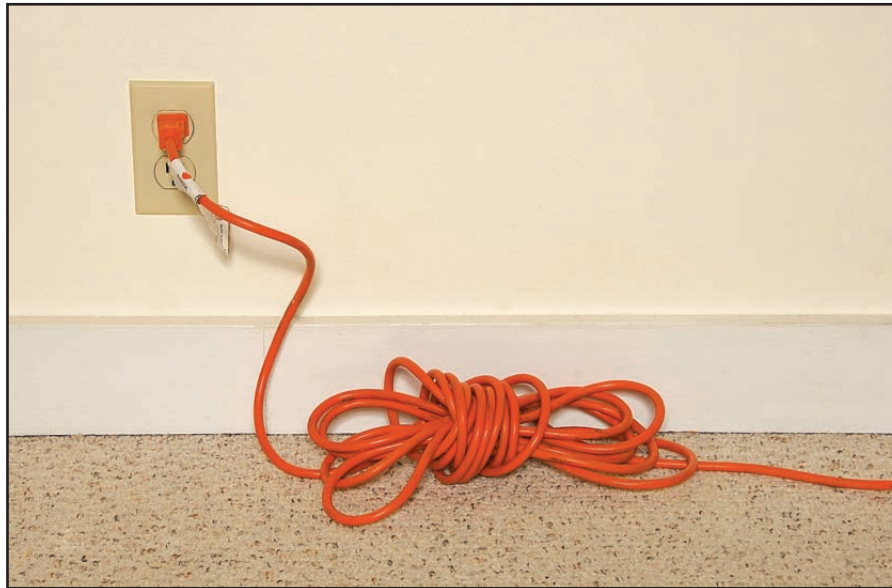
Just because an extension cord can reach an outlet across a room doesn't mean it's the right one for the task at hand. If a tool, appliance, or holiday display draws more current than an extension cord can carry, it may cause the cord (and whatever is connected to it) to overheat and start a fire.

Cords come in many lengths and are marked with a size or gauge. The gauge is based on the American Wire Gauge (AWG) System, in which the larger the wire, the smaller the AWG number.

For example, a 12-gauge wire would be larger and power larger wattage appliances than a 14-gauge wire. A cord, based on its gauge, can power appliances of a certain wattage only at specific distances. As the cord gets longer, the current-carrying capacity of the cord drops.

Using the right cord for the job is only the first step in using extension cords safely. Follow these tips to ensure safe use and make smart connection decisions:

- Look for the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) symbol. The UL mark means that samples of the cord have been tested for safety hazards.



- Never use an indoor extension cord outdoors, as it could result in electric shock or trigger a fire. Extension cords that can be used outdoors will be clearly marked "Suitable for Use with Outdoor Appliances."
- Extension cords should not be placed underneath rugs or other heavy furniture; tacked in place to a wall or taped down; or used while coiled or bent. Match the length of the cord to your needs.
- Store all cords indoors when not in use. Outdoor conditions can deteriorate a cord over time.
- Unplug extension cords when not in use. The cord will continue conducting electricity until unplugged.
- On cords with more than one outlet, use the covers provided for unused openings. Children and pets face serious injury if they chew on unused outlets or stick sharp metal objects into the openings.
- Do not use extension cords that are cut or damaged. Touching even a single exposed strand of wire can result in an electric shock or burn.
- Never file or cut the plug blades or grounding pin of an extension cord or appliance to plug it into an old outlet.
- As a safety feature, extension cords and most appliances boast polarized plugs (one blade wider than the other). These special plugs are designed to prevent electric shock by properly aligning circuit conductors. If a plug does not fit, have a qualified electrician install a new outlet.

Source: Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.

## INDUSTRY News

### Green and slimy could be golden

**T**here's a strange green brew percolating next to the Dale Station, a power plant owned by a Kentucky generation and transmission (G&T) provider. A mixture of algae and flue gas, the green brew is the focus of research by engineers at East Kentucky Power Co-op, Winchester, and an animal bioscience company. They are studying whether algae, infused with flue gas, can capture the carbon dioxide that is produced when coal is burned to make electricity.

In the experiment, the flue gas released by the power plant supplies the required carbon and nitrogen algae need to grow. The gas is piped into reactor tubes that contain the algae culture. The algae sequester the gases and grow, resulting in a product rich in oil, protein and carbohydrates. For its part, Alltech, the Nicholasville company working with the G&T, plans to use the algae to develop byproducts including animal feedstock and biofuels for vehicles.

"Seventy percent of the world's oxygen comes from algae," said T.P. Lyons, Alltech's CEO, in a statement. "It is the world's single-most important microorganism. We're excited about harnessing this incredible raw material, while working with the co-ops to capture carbon dioxide."

-Electric Co-op Today

### English: Uncertainty ahead on carbon

**W**arning of what he called "a great deal of uncertainty" ahead on carbon regulation, NRECA CEO Glenn English vowed that the association will work tirelessly to keep electricity affordable for its consumer-members. "It's highly unlikely that we're going to see any carbon regulating legislation that will pass in this Congress. It will likely be put off until next year," English said. "So we're left with the fact that in January, according to the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, we can expect to see rules and regulations that will begin the regulation of carbon" under the Clean Air Act.

"We expect it will be a slow tightening of regulations on carbon," said English. And that, in turn, will cost money, he said. "Each and every year we anticipate it will make the generation of electric power by coal—or even by natural gas, since it emits carbon, or any other carbon-emitting fuel—more expensive than it would be otherwise." English said. "How expensive we simply don't know today."

-Electric Co-op Today

**ELECTRICITY IS A BARGAIN** And a dollar still goes a long way when it comes to powering your home. You can always depend on it, even after all these years. We'll keep it up, so you can keep on going.

## Energy assistance providers

### Kandiyohi, McLeod & Meeker County areas

Heartland Community Action Agency

PO Box 1359, 200 4th St. SW  
Willmar, MN 56201  
Toll free: 1-800-992-1710  
McLeod: 320-587-5244

### McLeod County area

McLeod County Social Service Center

1805 Ford Avenue North  
Glencoe, MN 55336  
(320) 864-3144  
(320) 587-9533  
1-800-247-1756 (Toll Free)

### Renville County area

Renville County Energy Assistance Program

105 S. 5th Street, Suite 203H,  
Olivia, MN 56277  
320-523-2202  
(320) 523-1161 Emergency  
24 hr phone

### Sibley County area

Sibley County Social Services

111 8th Street  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
(507) 237-4000

### MN Valley Action Council

110 6th Street  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
(507) 237-2981

464 Raintree Road  
Mankato, MN 56001

(507) 345-6822  
1-800-767-7139 (Toll Free)

### Carver County area

Scott-Carver-Dakota

Community Action Agency  
712 Canterbury Road South  
Shakopee, MN 55379  
(952) 960-9700

### Wright County area

Wright County Community Action

130 West Division Street  
Maple Lake, MN 55358  
(763) 963-6500

# Cold Weather Rule helps Co-op members with utility bills during winter months

**T**he Cold Weather Rule, which is part of the Public Utilities Act, prohibits utilities from disconnecting a residential customer for nonpayment during the coldest months of the year. Your Cooperative strictly adheres to that law and offers sources of help for those unable to pay their bill. The law reads as follows:

**1** From Oct. 15 through April 15, a Cooperative cannot disconnect a customer if it would affect that person's primary heat source and if:

- You declare an inability to pay.
- Your total household income is less than 50 percent of the State Median Income.
- Your account is current for the billing period immediately prior to Oct. 15, or if you have entered into a payment schedule and are reasonably current with your scheduled payments.

**2** Before disconnecting service to a residential customer during the cold weather month, the Cooperative will provide the following information to the customer:

- Notice of the proposed disconnection.

- A statement of the customer's rights and responsibilities.

- A list of local energy assistance providers.

- A statement explaining available time payment plans and other opportunities to secure continued utility service.

**3** Any residential customer whose service is disconnected on Oct. 15 may be reconnected if:

- The outstanding balance is paid.
- A mutually acceptable payment schedule is arranged.
- A re-connection plan is requested by an income eligible customer who agrees to pay the current bill and arrearages over the cold weather months by agreeable payment arrangements.

**4** The Cooperative will not disconnect service to a residential customer who has not responded to a disconnection notice without first investigating whether the dwelling is actually unoccupied. This investigation shall include a personal visit to the dwelling. If the unit is found to be occupied, the Cooperative will immediately inform the occupant of his or her rights under this policy.

**5** If an involuntary disconnection is to occur between Oct. 15 and April 15, then the disconnection will not occur on a Friday or on the day before a holiday.

**6** Any disputes over a residential customer's inability to pay for service, income eligibility, reasonableness of payment schedule or any other issue which a customer could raise under the Cold Weather Rule shall be referred for hearing, after reasonable notice, to the Cooperative's Board of Directors. The Cooperative and the customer shall have the right to present evidence and be heard in person at that hearing. The Cooperative's Board of Directors shall issue a written decision within 10 days after the hearing. No disconnection shall occur while a dispute is pending.

**7** The Cooperative will notify all members, prior to Oct. 15, of its Cold Weather Rule and provide the names and addresses of human service agencies and local energy assistance providers that may be of assistance in paying electric bills.

## Military Service Personnel Assistance

### Utility Payment Arrangements for Military Service Personnel

When a household member has been ordered into active duty, for deployment, or for a change of duty station, some customers may find it hard to pay their utility bills. Minnesota law protects these military personnel from shut-off if they cannot pay their utility bills in full.

### How to Apply

Contact McLeod Co-op Power at 1-800-494-6272 to obtain an application and make a payment plan, which you must keep to qualify for protection.

### Payment Plans

- If your household income is below the state

median household income, pay ten percent of your household's gross monthly income toward gas/electric bill; or

- If you receive energy assistance, pay ten percent of your household's gross monthly income toward your gas/electric bill; or
- If your household income is above the state median income, make and keep a payment plan.

### Right to Appeal

If you and McLeod Co-op Power cannot agree on a payment plan, you have the right to appeal to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. McLeod Co-op Power will not disconnect your service during the appeal process.



# Construction & Maintenance Report

September 2010

The report below gives members an idea how construction work in 2010 compares to previous years and details what the line crew was completing in August. Since building new homes has slowed down, crews are able to use this time to complete road jobs and upgrade projects in the work plan.

## The Big Green Box



They're big. They're often green. They generally sit on a concrete or fiberglass base.

These electrical boxes are pad-mount transformers. They do the same job of stepping down voltage like a transformer hanging atop a pole, except they do it for underground services. Developers often put in underground power lines to improve the aesthetics of new neighborhoods. This eliminates utility poles and overhead wires, however it requires the installation of pad-mount transformers in people's yards.

It is common for members to try to hide transformer boxes with bushes, fences, flower beds or landscaping. But we ask that you stay clear, as even small additions around pad-mount transformers create hazards. By trying to screen these boxes from view, an unsafe situation is created for all concerned including line workers.

At least ten feet of clear space in front of a pad-mount transformer is recommended. Linemen repair units while they are energized so homeowners don't experience an interruption in service. To ensure safety, they use an eight-foot fiberglass hot stick that requires about ten feet of elbow room in front of the access panel.

While leaving space in front of the transformer is important, this vital piece of equipment needs breathing room on the other three sides as well. Pad-mounted transformers

surrounded by vegetation or a structure may overheat and cause service interruptions when the air circulation around them is compromised. Additionally, plant roots can interfere with its operation.

Please do not allow children to play on or around transformers. If the transformer is damaged or the lock on it is broken, call the cooperative immediately so we can make repairs. And if you plan on doing any digging in your yard, call 811 for a Gopher State One Call locate ticket. Underground wires are buried in your yard if you have a pad-mount transformer. Make sure they are located and marked before any digging takes place.

### LEAVE TRANSFORMERS ALONE

- NEVER let anything grow closer than 10 feet from a pad-mount transformer.
- NEVER enclose a pad-mount transformer with fencing, shrubs, or anything else with less than a 10 foot wide gate or opening.
- NEVER allow children to play near pad-mount transformers.
- NEVER pour waste oils, chemicals or other liquids on or near a pad-mount transformer. These liquids can seep into the ground and damage underground cables.

	August	YTD	2009	2008
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New services built	3	13	21	13
Service rebuilds	7	39	52	54
Service removals	1	14	9	11
Arlington work orders	3	6	9	5

There were 11 work orders with pole changes completed in August.

The line crew completed three RUS work plan projects. These projects are in Hector Township sections 15 & 22. They installed one mile of new three-phase tie line, converted a 1/2 mile of single-phase line to three-phase line and installed a 1/2 mile of new single-phase line.

MCPA's line crew & M&P underground contractors are working on a project where Bell substation circuit one is being rerouted. It is the recommendation to install 4.6 miles of new three-phase 4/0 underground line. This project is in McLeod County Lynn Township sections 15, 22, 23 & 24.

MCPA's line crew is working on another project to replace two miles of existing single-phase #8A copper with new single-phase 1/0 ACSR. This project is in McLeod County, Hale Township section 30 and Hutchinson Township section 25.

Highline Construction Inc, a powerline contracting firm, has started work on projects to replace nine miles of #2 & #4 ACSR with new three-phase 4/0 ACSR. These projects will be in Sibley County, Grafton Township sections 14, 15, 16, 17 & 18 and Renville County, Martinsburg Township sections 13, 14 & 15.

MCPA crews have also been working on new services and service rebuilds.

Carr's Tree Service has been working throughout our service territory taking care of numerous requests for tree removal and trimming.

Arlington is still providing us with projects to work on.

## Electric Heating Sales Tax Exemption

Electricity sold for residential space heating, when used as the primary source of heat, is exempt from Minnesota sales tax for the billing months of November through April. To qualify, members must complete a State of Minnesota Certificate of Exemption available from the Cooperative.



## Farmfest drawing winners

**MCPA** members who registered at Farmfest and each won a water conservation kit were:

Calvin Marwede of Bird Island,  
John Sauck of Buffalo Lake, and  
Rick Schulte of Bird Island.

Congratulations members.



## CFL instant rebate available through November 30

If you want to purchase energy saving compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) that use less energy, you can purchase them for up to \$2 off per bulb with an instant rebate at the time of purchase. The bulbs and instant rebate at the checkout will be available at several local stores Sept. 13 through November 30 or while supplies last.

**This Energy Star® CFL promotion will be offered locally by:**

Hite Ace Hardware – Glencoe  
Hutchinson Ace Hardware – Hutchinson  
Runnings Fleet & Farm – Hutchinson

*There is a limit of 12 bulbs per customer. Check the in-store display for exact bulbs available and pricing. Consumer completes one rebate form in the store to get instant rebate.*

## Where can the Co-op reduce costs? Tree trimming

The Cooperative is continually looking at ways it can reduce costs. Tree trimming is one expense that has a potential for savings, if we can get our members working with us to minimize the number of places we need to trim trees and how often they need to be trimmed.

Trimming trees to keep them out of power lines costs the Co-op and its members approximately \$250,000 a year. Tree trimming is one of the Co-op's largest maintenance items, accounting for about 30% of the maintenance budget annually. It is an even bigger expense than maintaining our electric lines and facilities. This is money spent on trees that the Cooperative does not own or benefit from. This money is used for trimming or cutting consumer's trees that were planted under or near existing power lines.

### Why do we trim trees?

1. Trimming trees is something that the Co-op must do when trees are a potential hazard to our lines. When trees get into lines they interrupt power when they make contact with a line, making your lights blink. Or they take the power out completely if they fall on the lines.
2. Trees that grow into our lines can conduct energy into the ground. This is called "line loss". The Co-op and its members pay for this lost power even though it never gets to your meter and we get no usable work from the energy. It is energy that we have purchased from Great River Energy but do not get any benefit from.
3. We also trim trees to protect the safety of the general public, our member's and our employees.

McLeod Cooperative Power hires a tree trimming contractor to do the majority of tree cutting and trimming. We hire contractors because our own crews cannot keep up with the requests from consumers to trim and cut their trees. It also costs less and is more efficient to have experienced tree trimmers cut trees than have electric linemen who are trained to build and repair high voltage lines do chainsaw work. We are able to send contract



tree crews to work in one township at a time, staying at the job until that area's wires are clear. When the tree crews have time, they can respond to specific member requests for trimming in other parts of our service area.

We ask members to remember that we are there to get good clearance for our electrical lines and to help keep the power on when we have ice or wind storms. We are not there to spend hours trimming a tree so that it looks symmetrical when we are done. We leave you the wood to do with as you choose. It is the member's responsibility to dispose of the wood. Our tree contractor will chip the brush and leave the wood. If we paid our contractor to remove the trees our tree maintenance budget would go up instead of down.

In some cases, burying wires underground may be a good solution to avoid having to trim or cut trees. However, conversion to underground conductor is often too expensive to be feasible. The installed cost of underground electrical services is about one-third more expensive than overhead conductor. And if there is an outage, the time to locate and repair an underground fault takes longer.



### How can members help reduce the Co-op's tree trimming expense?

1. Don't plant new trees under or near power lines. Always look up before you plant a tree and stay far away from any overhead lines.
2. When we come to trim your trees please allow us to either cut them down or allow us to take a minimum of 15 feet clearance on either side of the power line. This would allow us several years before we would have to trim them again.
3. Volunteer to clean up brush on your property if you can.