McLeod Cooperative Power

NEWS

November 2010

Inside this issue...

Official publication of

McLeod COOPERATIVE POWER

www.mcleodcoop.com

Holiday Treats December 15 & 16

Plan to visit the Co-op office at 1231 Ford Avenue in Glencoe on Wednesday, Dec. 15 or Thursday, Dec. 16 if you want to partake of holiday cookies, cider and coffee. Holiday treats will be available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. each of these days. Members may also want to pick up their 2011 scenic calendar.

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

Energy efficiency tax credits to end December 31

The energy efficiency tax credits offered by the federal government for home improvement projects won't be around for long. When 2010 ends, so will the tax credits for the purchase and installation of energy-saving equipment.

Authorized under the federal stimulus bill, tax credits are available for a variety of projects, including replacing windows, doors and roofs with materials that reduce a home's heat loss or gain; adding insulation; replacing inefficient air conditioners with ENERGY STAR models; and installing high-efficiency air source heat pumps and heat pump water heaters.

Through the tax credits, consumers can recover 30 percent of the costs associated with buying and installing the products or equipment — up to a $1,500 maximum. Learn more about tax credits for energy efficiency projects at www.energystar.gov.

New director appointed in District 4

The MCPA Board of Directors selected Doug Kirtz of Hector to fill the board seat being vacated by Curtis Rossow in District 4. Kirtz will serve out the remaining term until the District 4 seat is up for re-election in the spring of 2012. Kirtz resides in District 4. Kirtz had previous experience serving on the board from 2001 until spring of 2010 and he served as the board president from 2005-2009. We thank Curtis Rossow for serving on the board of the Cooperative for more than 22 years. He is to be commended for his many years of dedicated service.

See Manager's Message on page 2

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.

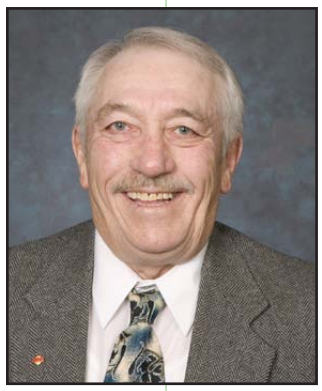
2011 calendars will be available in the Cooperative office beginning around Thanksgiving and continuing while the supply lasts. Stop in and pick up your copy in late November or December.

Manager's Message —

by Kris Ingenthron, General Manager McLeod Cooperative Power Association

Thank you Curt for 22 years of dedicated service

All good things must come to an end. Indeed they do.



During McLeod Cooperative Power Association's Board of Directors Meeting on October 26, Curtis Rossow, District 4 Director, tendered his resignation after 22 years of service on the Board. Although we anticipated this change, it was bittersweet shaking Curt's hand and wishing him farewell. I had the distinct pleasure of working with Curt over the past three years. Curt is a humble and caring individual who always put the best interest of the Cooperative first. Whether it was a decision directly affecting the employees, members, or the overall operation of the Cooperative, Curt would always look at the situation with an open mind and base his decision on what he felt was best for the entire organization. He may not have always agreed with the final decision, but at the end of the day he would support the Board's decision and carryout the strategy set forth. I felt I had the support of Curt and appreciated his advice and suggestions.

As Curt, Elaine, and their family adjust to this change in their lives, I would like to personally wish them all the best both now and in the future. Once again, on behalf of the entire staff here at McLeod Cooperative Power Association and our members, thank you Curt for the 22 years of dedicated service. Stay safe, stay healthy, and have a happy Thanksgiving in your new home.

Kris Ingenthron

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 that was in your October newsletter.
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.

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

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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.

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Gopher State One Call 1-800-252-1166

Compare the Cost

Of Newer vs. Older Refrigerators

The appliance savings calculator at www.energystar.gov provides the following calculations for replacing an outdated refrigerator with a new ENERGY STAR model. The charts reflect two common sizes of refrigerators: 19.0 to 21.4 cubic feet and 24.5 cubic feet or larger. The assumptions were modeled for a common refrigerator/freezer configuration with the freezer on top.

(Note: MCPA's current rate of 10.65 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) was used for the calculations).

*** 5 year savings is if you replace your old model with a new Energy Star model of the same size.**

COST OF RUNNING A 19.0-21.4 CUBIC FOOT REFRIGERATOR

Year	Annual cost to operate	kWh used/year	Five-year savings
Pre-1980	$236	2215	$965
1980-1989	182	1709	685
1990-1992	137	1285	470
1993-2000	91	857	240
2001-2008	57	537	70

A brand new ENERGY STAR model of this size will cost $43 a year to operate.

COST OF RUNNING A 24.5+ CUBIC FOOT REFRIGERATOR

Year	Annual cost to operate	kWh used/year	Five-year savings
Pre-1980	$285	2675	$1,170
1980-1989	217	2042	830
1990-1992	163	1535	560
1993-2000	108	1016	285
2001-2008	67	626	80

A brand new ENERGY STAR model of this size will cost $51 a year to operate.

COST OF RUNNING A Pre-1980 REFRIGERATOR AS A SPARE

Size	Annual cost to operate	kWh used/year	Five-year cost
16.5-18.9 cu ft	$219	2060	$1,095
19.0-21.4 cu ft	236	2215	1,180
21.4-24.4 cu ft	250	2347	1,250
24.5+ cu ft	281	2647	1,405

Moving an old refrigerator to the basement or garage will not save you money. (See your additional cost over 5 years).

The average home spends about $2,200 on energy bills every year. Change to appliances that have earned the ENERGY STAR label and you can save in energy costs. ENERGY Star qualified appliances incorporate advanced technologies that use 10 percent to 50 percent less energy and water than standard models. Look for the ENERGY STAR label on the appliance.

The employees and directors of McLeod Cooperative Power wish all of our members and their families a blessed Thanksgiving. Take this time to be grateful for the many blessings we each enjoy.

The MCPA office will be closed Thursday and Friday Nov. 25 & 26. Please use the 24-hour outage number to reach the Cooperative for outages, emergencies or other messages: 1-800-927-5685.

Payments will be due in the office Monday the 29th. Members may use the drop box at the front of the office to deliver payments to us over the holiday weekend.

How to Have an Efficient Holiday Season

BY BRIAN SLOBODA, COOPERATIVE RESEARCH NETWORK

The holidays are a time for family, friends and celebrations. Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and Christmas are times of happiness and joy. However, they are often followed by large utility bills. An expensive January electric bill does not have to be the last gift of Christmas. You can still celebrate and save money at the same time.

Everyone knows the house with the large light display. It is the one that you take the kids to, the one that you talk to neighbors about and the one that produces enough light that small airplanes attempt to land. It is also the house with the very large January electric bill. Traditional mini lights use 36 watts of power compared to only 5 watts for a string of LED lights.

In addition to the energy savings LED lights are generally made of plastic and will not break. Many LED lights are also brighter than the traditional mini lights. But, a string of LED lights can cost two to three times more than traditional string lights but last up to ten times longer. However, many homeowners have had mixed results with LED holiday lights. Unlike traditional incandescent lights, LEDs use computer chips to create the light. Depending on the quality of the manufacturing process the brightness and life may not be what the homeowner expects. As with many things in life cheaper is not always better. Cheap LED lamps may appear dim compared to more expensive LEDs or traditional lighting. When looking for LEDs it is a good idea view the lights plugged in at the store or make sure that you can return the lights if they do not meet your expectations.

All holiday lights, whether LED or incandescent, should be placed on a timer. Simple timers cost $20 and can be set to turn on at sunset and turn off the lights after a set number of hours. A good rule of thumb is to have lights on from sunset until bedtime. There is simply no reason to have lights on much later than that because there is no one awake to look at them. Of course exceptions can and should be made. Leaving lights on all night on Christmas Eve will help Santa Claus find the homes of good boys and girls.

The holiday season generally conjures up images of elves and a jolly toy maker from the North Pole. What many people do not realize that beneath the Christmas tree lurks a vampire…an energy vampire. Many of the Christmas gifts that are given are energy vampires that use electricity 24 hours a day. Even when they are supposedly turned off. Examples of energy vampires are cell phone chargers, computers, and video game consoles and any electronic that comes with a large plug. On average home entertainment products such as TVs, stereos and video game consoles and account for 7% of a home's annual electric bill. Computers and their related equipment account for another 5% of the yearly electric bill. These devices are always on and always consuming electricity. However, these vampires do not have to ruin your holiday and drive up your energy bill year round. When possible unplug devices when they are not being used or place them on a smart power strip.

The Seversons say "Heartland Security is better than a dog."

Arnold and Myrt Severson of rural Hutchinson used to own a golden Lab. Now, anyone who has owned a Lab can tell you that they can't always be counted on to protect a home's assets.

"We used to put a 'Beware of Dog' sign at the end of our driveway as a warning to potential burglars," Arnie said. "But we knew that our dog was too sweet to hurt anyone."

That could be a problem since the Seversons enjoy traveling and worried about leaving their home unprotected when they were gone. A rental home and machine shed are also on their property and when unoccupied, could be broken into as well.

"Twelve years ago we installed a Heartland Security system in our home, machine shed and rental home so we could travel without worrying about what was going on at home," Arnie said.

Customizable full protection

Because Heartland Security offers full customizable protection for home, business and agricultural applications, a homeowner, farmer or business owner can pick and choose what level of protection they want to meet their needs.

The Seversons chose to protect their home and assets from fire and smoke, burst pipes and burglary. Since the system was installed into existing buildings, the Seversons purchased a battery-operated system that didn't require hard-wiring. Today, existing homes can be fitted with both hard-wired or wireless systems to fit any application.

A Heartland Security system provides monitoring by trained security personnel 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In case of trouble, a loud alarm will go off first. This accomplishes two things: it alerts anyone who may be in the home; and it tells would-be thieves that authorities are on the way. When the alarm sounds, a signal also is sent to the monitoring station. If security personnel can't reach the customer by phone, they will automatically dispatch the police or fire fighters.

"Our Heartland Security system gives us assurance that when we get home no one is in the house, and the pipes aren't broken and flooding everything," Myrt said.

That assurance proved itself one summer when they were vacationing in Duluth and someone tried to burglarize their home.

"We got a call that someone had tried to break into our garage," Arnie said. "When we returned home, one of our neighbors said they had seen four vehicles parked in the driveway and several men had gotten out and walked toward the house. But the security alarm must have scared them off because there was nothing missing."

Easy to use

An easy-to-use control pad is installed to program the system when leaving and to turn the system off when returning home. A hand-held option or key fob also is available for added ease of use and peace of mind. The Seversons prefer to use the hand-held "Simon" to set and turn off their system right from their car. It speaks to them to let them know the status of the security system, so they know when it is set and when it is off.

Myrt and Arnie Severson can control their Heartland Security system quickly and easily from their car with this hand-held key pad. Small, barely noticeable motion sensors (right) alert security personnel in case a burglar tries to gain access to the home.

From a name you can trust

The Seversons have recommended their Heartland system to many of their neighbors and friends. They appreciate the fact that Heartland is owned by rural electric cooperatives, including their own Cooperative; they know who they are dealing with and trust them. Heartland is backed by nationally respected Security Pro and recently earned the distinction of "Best Security Dealer of the Year for the Western United States."

"We talked with someone who installed another system awhile ago," Arnie said. "Their home was broken into by the guy who installed their system! So now they have Heartland Security."

If they had it to do over again, the Seversons would choose Heartland to protect their home and other buildings.

"We don't have to have the 'Beware of Dog' sign at the end of the driveway anymore," Arnie said."Now we put a Heartland Security sign there. And what we save on the price of dog food about pays for our monthly monitoring fee."

Buyer beware: *False energy saving claims could cost you much more!*

Rural electric cooperative members in Minnesota have been receiving postcards offering a free dinner in exchange for sitting through a presentation of a product that will save up to 45% on homeowners' utility bills. There are two products now being sold in this way:

One is a device claiming to correct the lag in the electrical current that happens when a power motor, such as the refrigerator, starts up. These "power factor" units claim to cut monthly power usage by 10,000 to 20,000 watt hours, which sounds like a significant savings. However, energy use is billed in kilowatt hours, not watt hours, so the savings amounts to just a couple dollars per year at most. These units sell anywhere from $200 to several thousand dollars. At a savings of $2 or so per year, you can see how long the payback would be.

Another product is a reflective sheet that sellers claim will save significant dollars on energy bills when installed in the attic space. The idea is to reflect heat that would come through the roofing, through the insulation and into your home, requiring additional air conditioning costs.

According to Bruce Nelson, senior engineer for the State Energy Office, reflective sheets may slightly reduce cooling load in the summer, but it's benefits for reducing heat losses in the winter are negligible.

During the sales pitch, the salesman will show a heat lamp shining on insulation with and without the reflective shield.

"We know that Minnesota attics do not contain sunlamps or have sunlight shining down on the insulation," Nelson said. "Rather, the roof stops solar radiation, and while some energy is re-radiated from the underside of the roof, it is at a dramatically lower energy level."

The reflective material installation could also run thousands of dollars, with very little reduction in energy bills.

Scams like these combine little-understood technology with marketing savvy to confuse people, often the elderly. If you have questions about a product and claims being made about any product, call your Cooperative, the Office of Energy Security, or the Better Business Bureau.

Protect your septic system from freezing

All it takes is one cold snap and a lack of snow cover to put the freeze on your drainfield or mound septic system. A frozen septic system is not only inconvenient and problematic, it can be expensive.

If you suspect your system is having problems (slow drains, liquid surfacing in the yard), you should take immediate action with the help of a septic system professional to remedy the problem before winter sets in. If your system is currently working fine, now is the time to take steps to reduce your chances of a frozen system.

Fall is a good time to prepare your septic system for winter cold. Following these steps can go a long way to preventing a real headache when the winter winds howl:

1. Add a layer of mulch (straw, leaves, hay or other loose material) 8-12 inches deep over the pipes, tank and soil treatment system for extra insulation. This is especially important during a milder winter when snowfall may be less. Added insulation is particularly important if you've had a new system installed and vegetative cover hasn't been established. Letting grass grow longer in the late fall also helps add insulation and hold snow in place.

2. Keep off the snow. Snow serves as an insulating blanket over the septic tank and soil treatment area by reducing the loss of heat from the sewage and the geo-thermal heat from the soil. However, compacted snow doesn't insulate as well. Automobile, snowmobile, ATV, livestock and human foot traffic over the sewer pipes, tank and drainfield should be avoided. This type of traffic not only compacts the snow but also sends the frost deeper into the ground.

3. Keep the lid on. Open and uncapped riser or inspection pipes and manholes allow cold air into the system. All risers, inspection pipes and manholes should have covers, and possibly additional rigid foam insulation.

4. Check for proper alignment. Pipes that don't have proper fall (change of elevation) or pipes that settle or sag after installation can cause sewage to collect and freeze in low spots. Make sure all sewage drains out of the pipes.

5. Plan for extended leaves. When homes or cabins are unoccupied for long periods of time, sewage isn't entering the system in sufficient amounts to maintain temperature above freezing. Perhaps someone could visit occasionally and use sufficient quantities of water to keep the system operating. Better yet, pump out your tank before leaving.

Remember, preventing freeze-up is easier and less expensive than thawing out or repairing a frozen septic system.

INDUSTRY News

New form of uranium has been created

Scientists say a newly-created form of uranium could lead to nuclear power plants small enough to power the family automobile. Researchers at the Los Alamos National Laboratory have created a configuration of uranium nitride that one day could provide cheaper and safer nuclear fuel, ABC News reported Monday.

In the new molecule, the nitrogen atom is bonded to only one uranium atom, versus prior forms where the nitrogen atom has always been bonded to two or more uranium atoms. Smaller, cheaper and even portable nuclear power plants could come out of the discovery, researchers say, using this form of uranium nitride as a next generation nuclear fuel.

While uranium's radiation can be deadly, the new molecule contains only depleted uranium. This makes it relatively harmless from a radiological standpoint and means it could be used in chemical and industrial applications, scientists say.

-United Press International

Feds to boost spending on ethanol production

The U.S. Agriculture Department will commit hundreds of millions more dollars to boost biofuels production, including ethanol. The announcement could mean big investments in Minnesota, which ranks fourth in ethanol production. USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack says in the next couple of months he'll announce plans for his department to help pay for construction of five new biofuel plants across the country.

The USDA will also help install 10,000 ethanol blend pumps at gas stations over the next five years. Vilsack says he wants his department to help develop biofuels for jet airplane engines. He says the efforts will help build the nation's renewable energy industry.

"There needs to be a significant statement of commitment," said Vilsack. "That's what we're trying to convey today, this administration is committed." Vilsack says the USDA is also encouraging farmers to grow crops and trees that can provide raw material for the production of cellulosic ethanol. Congress has mandated that national biofuels production increase to 36 billion gallons in 12 years, triple the current numbers.

-Minnesota Public Radio News

Be wary of claims from companies trying to sell energy saving products!

Do your homework and check out their claims.

Did you get a free dinner in exchange for letting a salesman come to your house and sell you energy saving products and devices? If you did, we encourage you to check out those products with the Minnesota Office of Energy Security (State of MN Energy Information Center) at 1-800-657-3710 before you pay them money or make a purchase. It is always important to do your homework and make sure the energy savings/payback you are promised is reasonable.

Experts at the Minnesota Office of Energy Security have the ability to help consumers separate scams and devices with questionable energy savings from legitimate products with real energy saving benefits.McLeod Cooperative Power is not associated with and does not endorse any companies trying to sell special insulation or unproven devices that claim to save electricity.

Holiday light recycling program

Announcing a holiday light recycling program that will give local residents a place to get rid of their holiday light strings, where their components will be recycled. And best of all the recycling service is providing jobs to local disabled persons via Adult Training and Habilitation Center (ATHC), located in Winsted and Hutchinson. Co-op members and the general public may drop their light strings into recycling boxes located at McLeod Co-op Power, ACE Hardware stores in Glencoe and Hutchinson, Home Solutions in Norwood Young America and a variety of other locations where ATHC have set up collection boxes. There is no charge to drop off light strings. Old electrical, appliance and telephone cords are also accepted. Only battery chargers and adapters are not accepted.

All the old holiday light strings brought in by members when they participate in the $3 rebate for new LED holiday light strings, will be recycled through this program.

Give safety for Christmas —

the perfect gift for the elderly parent who has everything else

As winter settles in and the holidays approach, have you thought about your parents living at home by themselves during the long winter season? How about the neighbors or other family members who have a hard time getting around or have some medical problems and need someone to check on them often?

McLeod Cooperative Power can help. One of the many services we have to offer you is the MainStreet Messenger. The MainStreet Messenger is a 24-hour emergency response system which offers assistance by simply pushing a button.

Whenever the alert key on a special telephone or the button on a cordless pendant is pressed, the phone automatically dials a preprogrammed help number at the monitoring center.

Once the connection is made, the speaker phone is automatically activated to allow hands-free, two-way voice communication. The monitoring center then contacts pre-determined numbers, such as a family member, neighbor, or 911, to let them know that help is needed while still staying on the line with the individual who needs help.

The cordless emergency response pendant is ideal for those who live alone and for people with mobility problems. In a crisis or any situation requiring immediate action, pressing the button on the pendant will initiate the emergency help sequence. In addition, incoming calls can be answered from across the room by the cordless pendant.

For a low monthly cost, you may have this easy-to-use security telephone system in your home or that of a family member. Call 1-800-494-6272 for more information.

MCPA Director Candidate Application

The undersigned, a member of McLeod Cooperative Power Association, hereby applies as a nominee for director of McLeod Cooperative Power Association from District _____ and requests that my name be considered by the Nominating Committee to be placed on the ballot for the next election for director from said district to be held at the next Annual Meeting, April 12, 2011.

I certify that my account is current and I am a member in good standing with McLeod Cooperative Power Association from District _____.

I certify that I am a resident of District _____ and am receiving electric energy from McLeod Cooperative Power Association.

I certify that I am not in a competing business with McLeod Cooperative Power Association.

If elected director, I agree to attend as many meetings of the Board of Directors as possible and to abide by the Articles of Incorporation and By-laws and Policies of McLeod Cooperative Power Association.

Date:_____

Signature:_____

Volunteers needed for nominating committee

To elect directors in Districts 1, 2, and 3 at the 2011 Annual meeting, we need members from those districts to serve on the Nominating Committee. Nominating Committee members participate in the election process by selecting director candidates and submitting their names to the Board for approval. They also assist with collecting and counting ballots at the Annual Meeting. Volunteers are needed from the following townships:

District 1 includes: Winsted, Bergen, and Helen Townships in McLeod County, and Victor Township in Wright County.

District 2 includes: Hassen Valley, Sumter, and Penn Townships in McLeod County.

District 3 includes: Acoma and Hutchinson Townships in McLeod County and Ellsworth and Collinwood Townships in Meeker County.

Call McLeod Cooperative Power before January 4, 2011, to let us know if you are willing to serve on your district's nominating committee. Nominating Committee Meetings are set for February 3rd and 17th. The Annual Meeting is planned for April 12, 2011.

What makes a good director?

At McLeod Cooperative Power we believe that our Board of Directors comprises a pillar connection with our membership and the community at large. Besides meeting the legal requirements for Director nomination, we are seeking individuals who hold some important personal characteristics. We've summarized these attributes below.

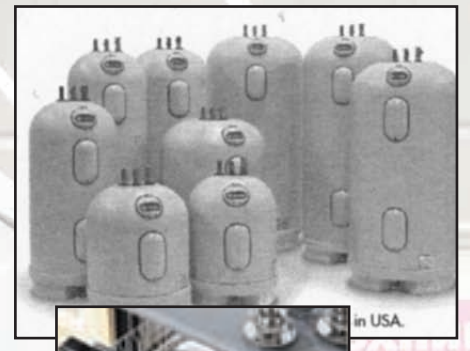
Possess a sincere interest in preserving the strength of the Cooperative's operations and maintaining a productive relationship with its consumer-members. McLeod Cooperative Power has assets of about $25 million, employs 33 people and is responsible for providing quality electric service to more than 6,000 sites, as well as a variety of ancillary services. Our electric distribution system serves a diverse membership consisting of residences, farms, businesses and industries. While representing all members of the district, **Directors must work with each other to ensure equitable treatment to all members across the entire distribution system.**

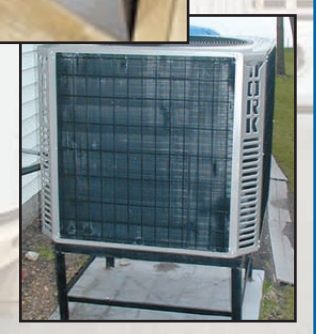
Be willing and available to fully participate in the business activities of the Cooperative. Attendance is expected at all scheduled Board of Directors meetings. In addition, from time to time, Directors will be called upon to represent the Cooperative at other meetings and events where their presence is deemed to be beneficial to the Cooperative.

Remain accessible to the members whom they represent. Since the Directors are elected from and by the Cooperative's membership, it is important that they work to **maintain open lines of communication with their constituents. They should also strive to be knowledgeable about trends and circumstances that may impact the people and communities of central Minnesota.**

Be enthusiastic. During these times of accelerated change, we look for proactive, resourceful and inspired leadership.

ENERGY STAR® appliance rebates to end in December





If you are purchasing an ENERGY STAR clothes washer, dehumidifier, dishwasher, freezer, refrigerator, heat pump or air conditioner before the end of the year, you must have your rebate form and receipt submitted to the Cooperative before December 31, 2010. The sooner you complete your paperwork the better.

Rebate forms may be downloaded from the Co-op web site at www.mcleodcoop.com or if you call the office we can mail you a form.

Winners of $100 credits

Member **Curt Bussler of Glencoe** was the winner of a **$100 electric bill credit in the Fill Your Fridge contest**, sponsored by our power supplier Great River Energy.

Members **Matt and Shauna Gruber of Glencoe** were winners in the **CFL sweepstakes and also received a $100 electric bill credit**.

For both campaigns, members had to go to www.mnbrighterideas.com to read about energy conservation info and register for the contest.

Get the facts before buying into wind power

By Bob Gibson

More and more people are attracted to the idea of generating their own electric power through the use of "backyard" renewable energy systems. Small wind turbines are one of the most popular choices, but careful study and assistance from your Co-op can make sure you know the facts before buying one of these systems.

The spinning fan of a windmill pumping water from a well was once a common sight across rural America. When electric co-ops began lighting up the countryside in the late 1930s, farmers and rural residents began replacing the mechanical energy of the windmill with electricity from power lines.

The wind turbines seen today are distant cousins to those windmills. The essential difference is that today's wind systems — generally a three-blade rotor connected to a generator and tail and mounted on a tower — converts wind energy into electricity, rather than simply turning gears to lift water. The most popular residential-scale wind turbines can generate between around 2 kilowatts of power — about one-third to one-half of what a typical home needs — to 10 kilowatts. In recent years, small wind turbines have become more reliable and, to a degree, prices have come down as more are built. More dealers are offering a better choice of products and more experienced installers are available to erect the units.

So is installing a wind turbine at your home a good idea?
That depends on two basic factors: your motivation and your location. If your motivation is to save money — (to spend less on electricity than you do today) — or to make money — expecting the small wind turbine will earn you a profit by selling power back to your local electric co-op — proceed with care! Even though federal tax credits and utility incentives and rebates have helped lower the cost for some, in most parts of the country it remains difficult to generate electricity at a price equal to or lower than what you'll obtain from your electric co-op. While wind that blows through your property may be free, the equipment needed to capture that wind is not, and wind doesn't blow all the time.

Electric utilities are required by law to buy your excess power. But in many areas they are only required to pay the same price they pay any other power generator — what in utility jargon is called "avoided cost." But even where your bill might be credited for wind power at retail rates, called net metering, the sale of those kilowatts won't make you rich. Paying back the cost of installing a wind turbine, which runs from several thousand dollars to $50,000, can take several years to several decades.

You also need to consider your location. In more densely settled areas, local zoning laws may prohibit the construction of a wind turbine. But in any location, you must know just how much wind you have, day after day. In these calculations, average wind speed becomes critical.

While the federal government has mapped out average wind speeds across the country (www.nrel.gov/wind), each specific site is unique, affected by factors such as elevation and obstruction from buildings and trees. Better wind speeds are found higher off the ground, and there can be a huge difference between wind speeds at the 300-foot heights that large-scale wind turbines have and the 80- to 100-feet height of a small wind turbine.

Before getting too far down the road at installing a small wind turbine, do your homework. That includes checking with your local electric co-op well in advance of making a purchase. Being aware of your co-op's policies and procedures associated with interconnecting a wind system to the grid will avoid headaches, disappointments, and unexpected costs.

The grid is a complex, interrelated machine and some costs may need to be incurred for studies or upgrades to preserve safety, reliability, or quality of power. Your co-op may be able to help you estimate what those costs might be in advance and help you find additional opportunities for energy efficiency that could further reduce your electric bills.

To find out what incentives may be available in your state, go to the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency at www.dsireusa.org.

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Interested in buying a wind turbine?
Make sure to ask these questions first.

1. How reliable is the rated energy output? How did you calculate the output? What wind speeds did you use?

Experts advise ignoring peak output and power curves provided by vendors. Rather, look for the monthly or annual energy output — in kilowatt-hours — for the turbine, estimated for the average wind speed that you expect or have measured at your site. Talk to wind experts to make sure the production kWh is correct at your site's wind speed. A certified site assessor should be used to verify the wind speeds at your site before you buy. Find an assessor at www.mreacsa.org.

2. Is the inverter UL listed?

If the inverter (required to convert direct current power from the turbine to alternating current power of the grid) is not Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL), listed, find another vendor. Most electric co-ops require that an inverter carry a UL 1741 certification for interconnection with the grid.

3. What is the estimated total installed cost? What does the turbine cost? What does the tower cost? How much is installation estimated to cost? How much will interconnection cost? How much maintenance will be required and what will it cost?

Budget for labor expenses as well as the cost of equipment rental, concrete and rebar, electrical components, shipping, and sales tax. It adds up fast.

4. How long is the warranty? What does it cover — parts? Labor? Can it be extended? If so, what will it cost?

Warranties range from one to five years. The longer the warranty, the better. Make sure the warranty covers labor as well as parts. Ask owners of wind systems purchased from the same vendor about performance and reliability before making a decision on an extended warranty, if available.

If you live in an area prone to lightning strikes, you should strongly consider the option of lightning protection.

5. How long has the vendor been in business? How many turbines have they sold? Have their turbines been certified? Can they perform maintenance, or is there another licensed repair technician in the area?

Look for vendors that have been in business for at least five years or have acquired the product line of another vendor. In addition, ask the vendor for the names of at least two people who have installed a similar model wind turbine. Check with the references to ensure they are happy. Ask them if there was anything they wish they had known before investing in a turbine.

The Small Wind Certification Council has been conducting a small wind certification process in the U.S. (www.smallwindcertification.org). Small wind turbines can be certified using the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) standard, IEC 61400-2, for testing wind turbine power performance. This standard is increasingly used by U.S. manufacturers. Is the turbine you are considering on the SWCC certified list?

6. What are your electric co-op's interconnection policies? What will the co-op pay for any excess energy you may produce?

Electric cooperatives must provide all of their members with safe, reliable, affordable electric service. Most co-ops have interconnection policies designed to permit interested members to own their own generation without impacting the quality or cost of service received by other members.

Knowing what those policies are before purchasing a wind turbine will help you better evaluate the full costs and benefits of the investment.

7. What local zoning laws, electrical codes, homeowners' association requirements or other local laws and standards apply to wind turbines?

Some local zoning ordinances and homeowners' association policies restrict the height of wind turbines or require that they be set back a specified distance from the property line. Those restrictions may prevent you from taking advantage of the best wind resources or may require extra time to pursue a waiver or exception. Local electrical or building codes may also impose additional time or expense.