McLeod Cooperative Power

NEWS

September 2011

Inside this issue...

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McLeod COOPERATIVE POWER

www.mcleodcoop.com

House moves through Carver County

Back on July 27, a large house was moved from west of New Germany to Hydes Lake (between Young America and Waconia). The house move took most of the day. Cooperative members living in Camden Township in Carver County were most impacted as the house moved through the township. Affected members lost power for a time as electrical lines had to be taken down for the house to pass and then reconnected after the house passed numerous intersections. Due to the height of the house, even transmission lines had to be disconnected. This move required the coordinated efforts of line crews from McLeod Cooperative Power, Great River Energy and Xcel Energy before the house reached its destination.

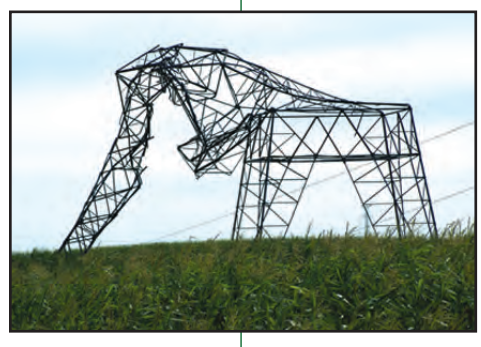
Moving large buildings through our service area usually means some Co-op members will be out of power for a few minutes to a few hours. Anything that interrupts the reliable flow of electricity to our members is avoided whenever possible. However, we are required to work with parties when we are notified of a house move through our area. The Co-op then plans a route that will affect the fewest number of Co-op members. The Co-op does collect from the mover 100% of the labor and material costs related to the house move.

House makes the corner from Yale Avenue onto County Road 30, southwest of New Germany. This house was moved on July 27, 2011.

Crews from McLeod Co-op Power and Great River Energy reconnected lines as soon as the house moved through, trying to get our members' lights back on as quickly as possible.

Storm damages vital transmission line

After severe weather swept through west central Minnesota on Aug. 1, one of Great River Energy's most important assets was left out of commission. The storm damaged three transmission line towers and cut off Great River Energy's largest power plant from providing electricity to cooperative members in Minnesota. The 400-kilovolt direct current transmission line spans more than 1,600 towers and 435 miles from Great River Energy's Coal Creek Station power plant near Underwood, N.D., to the Dickinson Converter Station, located near Buffalo, Minn. The line delivers 1,100 megawatts of electricity from Great River Energy's largest power plant — and has operated reliably since it was energized in 1978.



The line was built to withstand extreme conditions. This is only the second tower failure in 33 years. "The line is essentially an extension cord between our members in Minnesota and Coal Creek Station," said Great River Energy Transmission Vice President Will Kaul. "It's an absolutely vital resource for us to provide reliable and affordable power." A portion of Coal Creek Station's output was redirected to the North Dakota electric grid while the line was down. The line was re-energized the evening of Aug. 5 using 18 temporary wooden structures to replace the metal structures that were damaged.

Tremendous teamwork made it possible to reach this goal. At times, up to 50 people were working at the construction site. Local residents were very accommodating to repair crews. Two landowners allowed Great River Energy crews to use their farmyard to stage materials and equipment, and a restaurant out of Lowry, Minn., catered most of the meals to the job site.

Engineering for a permanent repair plan has begun. Great River Energy has three spare towers in inventory that can be used to replace the damaged structures. The foundations of the towers were also damaged and will have to be replaced.

Coats *for* Kids

Bring your new or gently used coats for school-age kids to McLeod Cooperative Power September 1 through October 1. We are helping collect coats for children and youth in need. The drop box located in our lobby is available Monday through Fridays 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Coats will be distributed to local youth Thursday, October 20 (MEA school holiday) at the Pla-Mor Ballroom in Glencoe. If you are in need of a coat, you may request an application form by calling Common Cup Ministry at 320-587-2213 or 320-864-5511. All coats not distributed in October will be given to needy families in rural Minnesota.

Coats for Kids is sponsored by Common Cup Ministry, McLeod County Social Services, Heartland Community Action and the Glencoe and Hutchinson Rotarians.

It takes a lot of energy to watch TV

When it comes to televisions, high definition equals high energy use, and big screens equal big electricity bills.

If you're shopping for a new TV, it's important to factor energy costs into your purchase. Decisions you make in the store can affect your electricity bill for years afterward.

For instance, if you opt for a plasma screen over an LCD, you can expect to spend at least an additional $10 on electricity each month. Screen size makes a big difference as well; the electricity consumption of a 40-inch LCD television is roughly four times that of an otherwise identical 22-inch model.

However, it can be tricky to find information about a television's energy needs. Manufacturers rarely advertise energy consumption, and it almost never appears on in-store labels. That's why it's important that consumers do their own research, often through online sources.

Most televisions fall into one of four categories – plasma, LCD, rear projection and cathode ray tube (CRT) – and each has its own electricity needs. The following guide will provide the basic information you need before you buy your next big screen.

Plasma

Plasma screens often are cited as the largest energy users, mainly because their 42- to 65-inch screens typically draw 240-400 watts. Plus, most consume electricity even when they're turned off.

LCD

LCD TVs don't need much power to operate (111 watts on average) and their screens are illuminated through either cold-cathode fluorescent lamps or LEDs. LED units offer several benefits, notably better picture quality and thinner and lighter screens. They also use slightly less energy (101 watts on average).

Rear projection

Rear projection televisions tend to be the most energy efficient and boast the largest screen sizes. However, due to their overall weight, rear projection sets are not as readily available as plasma and LCD models.

Cathode ray tube (CRT)

CRT televisions are what most consumers know as the "traditional television set." These are becoming more difficult to find because they employ old technology and screen sizes rarely top 40 inches.

Manager's Message —

by Kris Ingenthron, General Manager
McLeod Cooperative Power Association

Home is where our heart is

Although it has been 60 days since our July 1, 2011 storm, it is still fresh in our minds here at McLeod Cooperative Power Association. In fact, we are still in the process of identifying additional damage, clean up and restoration, pole replacements and straightening of leaning poles. Internally we are gathering data, time sheets, invoices etc. to get a final cost of the damage we incurred. As of the closing of financials in July, we had incurred more than $500,000.00 in damages with more costs to be seen in the month of August.

Fortunately, Governor Dayton and President Obama included McLeod and Renville counties in their Disaster Declaration. McLeod Cooperative Power staff has met with local Emergency Management directors, as well as FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) officials to aid us in applying for State/Federal Disaster Recovery reimbursements. At this time, it appears MCPA is eligible for reimbursement up to 75% of our total damage assessment. Our next step will be to schedule a meeting with FEMA officials to review all the expenditures we incurred in restoring power to our membership. They, in turn, will decide what expenses will be eligible for reimbursement.

This process will ultimately take several months, if not longer. We feel that by aggressively pursuing available federal funds, MCPA should be able to keep rates stable going into 2012. As this process progresses I will keep you updated along the way.

In closing, I not only want to thank the entire staff at MCPA for a "job well done" during the restoration process, but also to you our members. We received many thank you cards, kind words, and messages from members, even those who were out of power for up to seven days. Your patience and understanding makes our job so much easier.

Many of our seasoned employees stated; "This was the worst storm damage we have had in over 30 years." Let's hope for another 30!

Look up, work safe, and best wishes for a plentiful harvest.

Cooperatively yours,

Kris Ingenthron

Going south for the winter?

Please 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.

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

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.

McLeod Cooperative Power News

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Gopher State One Call 1-800-252-1166

Programmable thermostats bring lower temps and smaller bills

Keeping your home hot or cold accounts for a big chunk of your annual budget. In fact, the average U.S. homeowner spends $2,500 a year on home energy with 56 percent, or $1,400, going toward heating and cooling costs.

Not surprisingly, savings can add up in a hurry when heating and cooling systems are tweaked for maximum efficiency. You can easily trim your summer energy bills by installing a programmable thermostat.

A programmable thermostat takes the thought out of saving energy. Your heating and cooling system will ramp up or switch off according to a preset time of day or week. Most models let you manually override the schedule without affecting the rest of the daily or weekly program.

Homeowners can save about $180 a year by properly setting their programmable thermostats and maintaining those settings.

DIRECTV payments must now be mailed directly to processing center

Payments for DIRECTV programming services cannot be accepted or processed by the Cooperative any longer. Your DIRECTV bill will list a new payment address. Payments must be made payable to DIRECTV — not McLeod Co-op Power. Payments must be mailed to DIRECTV in the envelope provided with your bill. Your programming service will be unaffected, as long as you send your payment to DIRECTV.

If you currently use an online bill pay service, be sure to change the payee from McLeod Cooperative Power to DIRECTV. If an address is required, please use the remittance address at the bottom right of your DIRECTV statement. Customers who pay by recurring credit/debit card or EFT do not need to make any changes.

Please contact DIRECTV at 1-800-531-5000 or visit them at www.directv.com for all you future DIRECTV billing needs.

Members may sign up for Wellspring Wind Energy

Have you ever thought about supporting renewable energy? The Cooperative is now able to offer participation in the Wellspring Renewable Energy Program to our members at a cost of only 51 cents per 100 kWh block.

We are currently allowing members who want to support renewable energy to sign up for blocks of wind energy on the Wellspring renewable program. Participation in Wellspring is voluntary. It gives members who want to support green power the opportunity to do so with a small monthly premium. It gives members who want to see more renewable resources used to generate electricity the opportunity to partner with the Cooperative to realize that goal. Wind is not a cheaper way to generate electricity than using coal, especially considering the high cost of wind turbine construction and the inability of wind to blow constantly. However, during the life of a turbine, wind energy will provide affordable electricity on days when the wind does blow and will reduce the consumption of non-renewable resources such as coal, oil and natural gas. Technology improvements in turbine design have allowed for more efficient production of electricity and a lower cost per kWh produced.

Members may now sign up to purchase wind energy in blocks of 100 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per month. The cost to members is a $.51 /block premium per month, which is in addition to their regular electric energy charges. A member with two blocks pays an additional $1.02 per month. A member with 10 blocks pays an additional $5.10 per month. Members may sign up for Wellspring energy equal to or less than the number of kWh they purchase from the Cooperative each month.

Members may sign up by completing the form below and returning it to the Cooperative. You commit to participate in the program for a minimum of 12 months. Members are signed up on a first-come, first serve basis.

I want to purchase Wellspring Renewable Energy. Please sign me up for _____blocks of 100 kWh. I understand that I will be billed $.51 per 100 kWh block each month. I agree to participate for at least one year.

Name _____

Signature _____

Address _____

_____ Phone _____

Acct. # _____

Return the form to: McLeod Cooperative Power, P.O. Box 70, Glencoe, MN 55336.

You may return it with your electric bill also or fax it to 320-864-4850.

Autopay saves you and the Co-op money every month

This is an especially good time for members to sign up for the Direct Payment Plan. You no longer need to read your meter. **You also can get away from writing a check, putting on a stamp, and mailing your payment to the Cooperative.** It is so simple to sign up. Once on the program, MCPA will automatically take care of the bank draft from your account. **You save time and money each month and so does the Cooperative.**

Here is how it works:

- You will receive your normal monthly bill around the 15th of each month, giving you 13 days to review the charges.
- Your bank account will not be charged until the 28th of the month (or the next business day if it falls on a weekend).

To get on the Direct Payment Plan, just fill out the Authorization for Direct Payment Form and return it to the Cooperative along with a voided check. In 3-4 weeks you will be on the program.

Call 1-800-494-6272 today if you need assistance signing up.

AUTHORIZATION FOR DIRECT PAYMENT

I authorize McLeod Cooperative Power Association and the financial institution named below to initiate entries to my checking/savings account. This authority will remain in effect until I notify you in writing to cancel it in such time to afford the financial institution a reasonable opportunity to act on it. I can stop payment of any entry by notifying my financial institution three business days before my account is charged.

Name of Financial Institution _____

Branch _____

City _____ State ___ Zip Code _____

Signature of Member _____

Date _____

Name (Please Print) _____

Telephone # _____

Address (Please Print) _____

_____

Bank Acct. #_____ Checking ____ Savings _____

PLEASE ATTACH A BLANK, VOIDED CHECK FROM YOUR DESIGNATED ACCOUNT FOR VERIFICATION.

Electric Acct. # _____

Location # _____

It's time to make sure your dual fuel back-up system is adequate and ready to go

If you participate in the Cooperative's dual fuel (off-peak) program, you know that your electric heating can be "controlled" or turned off during periods of high (peak) electricity use, high wholesale power prices and/or system emergencies. During those times, it's crucial that you have a back-up system that can be used to keep your home warm until the electric heat is restored. If you have no back-up source, or have an inadequate back-up source such as wood, you will be in for some cold temps. The same could be said for an improperly maintained back-up system that may work inefficiently, costing you more than it should yet giving you less heat.

Now is the perfect time to consider your options or perform routine maintenance so you're prepared for what old man winter will bring.

To properly function under the Co-op's dual fuel program, an automatic back-up heating system is required. An automatic back-up system will turn on even when you're not home. Chances are good that high market prices will mean increases in the number of

control hours this winter and next. A good automatic back-up system will save you worry and effort, while keeping you plenty warm all winter long.

Tips of the trade

1. If your back-up system is an oil or propane furnace, be sure to check fuel levels in your tank. Control can total up to 400 hours per year and you don't want to run out during a control period.

2. Test the dual fuel system to make sure the back-up furnace turns on when the thermostat calls for heat. If it doesn't, call your local HVAC contractor to inspect the system.

3. Clean or replace furnace filters and have an HVAC contractor tune up the system if needed, to make sure it runs efficiently. The cost of the maintenance may well be repaid in lower heating bills.

Now is the time to act, before it gets cold. If you'd like information on back-up systems, call the Cooperative and our energy management technicians will go over all your options with you. Then you can relax knowing you've done all you can to stay warm this winter.

Safety training is a regular part of a lineman's profession

Lineman Jerry Estensen prepares to "rescue" a life-size dummy who is "unconscious" as part of the Co-op's ongoing safety training. Safety is the first priority at your Cooperative. Crews are trained to handle every aspect of their jobs with safety in mind. Meeker Co-op and McLeod Co-op Power have an ongoing safety program that encourages and trains all employees in the field and the office to not only do their jobs safely, but to know what to do in an emergency situation should an accident, injury or serious illness happen. Your Co-op's safety program addresses possible safety hazards and develops policies to keep potential hazards from occurring.

Working safely protects our most valuable resource...our employees. It also protects you, our members, while we work to bring you electricity.

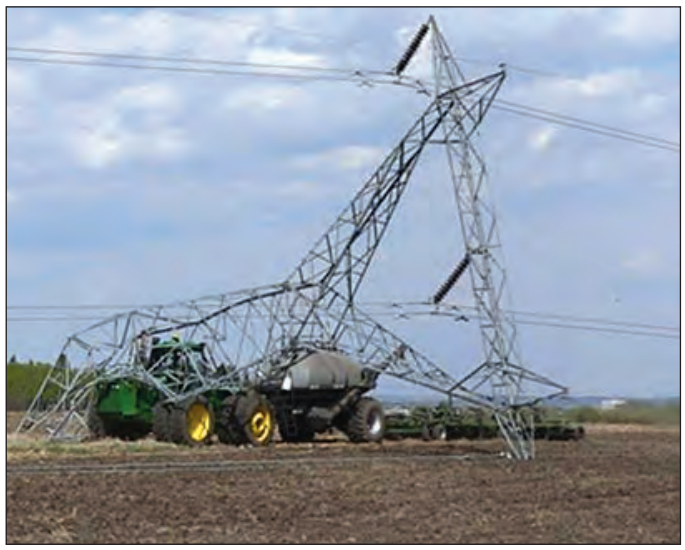
Electrocution is always a farm risk ... especially during harvest

Electrocution is quick and deadly, and may be one of the most overlooked hazards on the farm.

Every year, 62 farm workers in the United States are killed by electrocution. Portable grain augers, oversized wagons, large combines and other tall or cumbersome equipment easily can contact overhead power lines. The result is electrocution of anyone on the equipment.

To eliminate your hazards of electrocution:

- Always lower a portable grain auger before you move it, even if only a few feet.
- Keep all objects at least 10 feet away from overhead lines. Know where all overhead power lines are located on your property and inform all workers about them.
- Plan your route between fields, to bins and elevators, and on public roads so that you avoid low-hanging power lines. If someone else transports large equipment, always specify a safe route and explain why certain routes must be taken.
- Be sure you and everyone else in your operation know what to do in an emergency.
- If equipment gets hung up on a power line, the



operator should NOT get off the machinery unless in immediate danger. If the operator touches the ground and the equipment at the same time, he or she will become a channel for electricity.

- If you must leave the equipment, jump as far away from the machinery as possible and move shuffling your feet. Never get back on machinery that touches a power line until the utility company disconnects the line.
- Investigate the possibility of burying power lines in heavily-used areas on the farm, such as around grain bins.

Routine maintenance cuts energy bills

It's been a hot summer! Your central air conditioning system has been working overtime to keep you cooler and dryer. Likely your HVAC filter has been doing its job to filter out impurities from the air passing through it.

Did you know that you can save energy and money by replacing your air filter every month? A dirty filter causes your cooling and heating system to work harder and less efficiently, wasting energy and money. A dirty filter doesn't do the job to keep your air free from dust and dirt, and can actually harm your HVAC system by allowing impurities to build up inside your equipment. This can lead to costly repairs down the road.

If you have been operating your air conditioning system on the same filter, now is the time to replace it to get ready for the upcoming heating season.

Replacing your filter is easy to do. Experts suggest you turn off your system first. Make sure the arrow on the filter is pointing toward the blower motor. After you've replaced your air filter, turn the system back on.

At TogetherWeSave.com, a website made available to you by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, you'll discover easy ways to save money. By changing your filters monthly, you can save as much as $82 a year.

Visit TogetherWeSave.com often to learn more ways to make small steps to save big on your energy bill. Or contact your Cooperative and speak with an Energy Management Technician.

INDUSTRY News

Letter: Coal is essential source of power in future energy mix

In the United States, coal-based power plants account for 45 percent of all the electricity generated on a yearly basis. In the Upper Midwest region the percentage of coal-based electricity is even higher – roughly two-thirds.

Since the passage of the Clean Air Act in 1970, the amount of coal-based electricity generated in the U.S. has increased by 180 percent. When taking into consideration the coal-based electricity sector's emissions reductions, combined with increased output, there has been about an 83 percent reduction in criteria pollutants over the past 40 years. This reduction has been made through the investment in several technologies to reduce emissions, including electrostatic precipitators, scrubbers and baghouses.

Coal-based electricity is more affordable than power generated from natural gas or oil. It is more reliable than some renewable sources, such as wind and solar. It also doesn't have the long-term waste storage issues associated with nuclear power.

Currently, we have both a clean environment and an expanding energy supply to power our growing, fast-paced economy. However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency can markedly change the economic situation by increasing the price of electricity and decreasing its reliability to the detriment of home-owners and businesses alike. Americans can help this economy continue to grow and produce jobs by keeping coal-based electricity a part of tomorrow's energy mix.

Signed: Steve Van Dyke, Vice President, Communications, Lignite Energy Council, Bismarck, N.D.
~The Bemidji Pioneer

Helicopter to help string wire along Interstate 94

Crews began using a helicopter August 16 to string wires on poles along a high-voltage transmission line underway between Monticello and St. Cloud. Crews will start working on the first 12 structures closest to the Monticello nuclear plant and then move west.

Motorists along Interstate Highway 94 may notice a helicopter hovering near the 150-foot towers and workers perched on the towers. They also might see sparks or smoke and hear a loud boom as crews splice the wires using an implosive connector. The sound is about 110 decibels, similar to a 12-gauge shotgun. The implosive connections will be done mid-air only at the towers where the transmission line ends or changes direction — about 25 of the 155 total towers.

Originally, stringing the wires was expected to begin in July. The project has been delayed somewhat by weather, the state government shutdown and recent storms in southwest Minnesota.

~St. Cloud Times

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

The 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 Number of days after notification before disconnection. 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 my 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 households 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.

Does someone you love live alone?

Family members are often concerned about the personal safety of their loved ones, especially those who live alone. This uneasiness is compounded if the loved one is elderly, has medical concerns or lives a distance away from other family members. Yet we recognize that it is also important for our loved ones to maintain their sense of independence. McLeod Cooperative Power offers a solution to this delicate situation. It is the First Alert Personal Emergency and Monitoring System.

Easy to Operate

System installation is easy. The equipment is simple to operate and the monthly monitoring fee is inexpensive. The system features a high-quality advanced telephone with a speakerphone and emergency response pendant or wristband. In case of an emergency, help is summoned through a simple touch of the pendant/wristband that is worn at all times. The speakerphone is immediately activated and contact is made with a 24-hour response center.

Professional Response

Professional dispatchers staff the response center. Since the automated computer system has already been programmed with the necessary subscriber information such as address, family contacts and medical history, the dispatcher will be able to immediately contact the appropriate authorities.

Preserves Mobility

A particularly nice feature is that this sophisticated speakerphone and pendant/wristband alert allows mobility throughout the home and the nearby yard. The speaker-phone is so powerful that it even allows conversation from across the room.

A Quality Phone, plus more!

The speakerphone is a quality device that can be used for everyday conversation, just as a normal telephone. The number keys are especially large and are backlit, making dialing easy for arthritic hands or someone with reduced vision.

Peace of Mind is Affordable

Contact McLeod Cooperative Power to have a personal emergency response system installed anywhere within McLeod, Sibley, Carver or Renville Counties. Subscribers do not need to receive electric service from the Cooperative in order to participate in this program. Installation of the rental phone monitoring system is $49 and the monthly monitoring fee is $30.00.

Water Storage Program is the best way to save money and have plenty of hot water too!

When a family joins the Hot Water Storage Program, they begin to save money immediately, as they are paying 5 cents per kWh instead of 10-11 cents per kWh. For an average family of four persons that use 600 kWh for water heating each month, this means a savings of $387 a year. It is like lowering your bill by $32 a month! And if you have central air conditioning, that can also be controlled and added to your off-peak meter, for a 55% savings on all your summer cooling, just for letting the Co-op cycle your air conditioner on peak days.

When a family joins the Water Storage Program the Co-op helps them size the water heater to make sure they will have sufficient hot water to meet their daily needs. A family of 2-3 people can usually join the program with an 85 gallon hot water heater. A family of 4-6 persons will require a 105 gallon water heater or you could just add an 80 gallon alongside your existing 50 gallon to accomplish the same storage capacity. The Co-op provides a mixing valve at no charge. This device will give you another 30-40 gallons of hot water a day from your tank.

The water heater operates from approximately 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. heating your family's daily supply of hot water. The elements then remain off for the next 16 hours until they begin recharging over-night again. By heating water only at night when electricity is cheapest, you can save yourself some significant dollars each month. And you have plenty of hot water for laundry, baths and showers since the system is sized to meet your family's needs. Only if you have an over-sized or sunken bath tub may some extra storage capability have to be added.

If your current water heater is electric and not on a control program, the Co-op will pay you a $200 rebate to join the Storage Water Heating Program using a high-efficiency water heater such as a Marathon. If you are building a new home using a high-efficiency electric model, you will receive a $100 rebate. Call McLeod Co-op for prices on Marathon water heaters or details on how you can get on the Storage Water Heating Program and reduce your bill each month.

Keep safe during harvest season

The harvest season is just around the corner. With harvesting comes long hours in the field, and an increased risk of accidents, especially from large equipment coming in contact with overhead power lines. Probably the biggest risk is with grain augers coming in contact with power lines. Today the augers are just huge.

According to the National Safety Council, the simple movement of a portable grain auger from one bin to another can have tragic results if the individuals involved are not extremely careful. Tractors with large cabs and antennas and oversized grain wagons can also result in preventable electrocution accidents. Farmers need to look up when working near end rows where power lines may be nearby.

Most farmsteads could use a very careful overhead visual inspection of electric lines. The service may no longer meet the proper height codes because of age and/or damage to poles and guy wires. The sag may have increased over the years, while the height of the machinery being used today may be much higher. You always need to maintain a ten foot separation from above, below or to the side of a power line. Also make sure your hired workers understand the risks and minimum clearances that they must adhere to.

Four recommendations for preventing accidents are:

- Remove the hazard and if you cannot remove it, then guard the hazard.
- Educate the workers — have them learn about hazards, safe practices and develop safe habits.
- Protect the workers by having them wear personal protective equipment, when appropriate.
- Do not be fooled by the birds perching on the overhead lines, or the thought that insulation on the lines could protect you. Black insulation protects the wires from weather, not people from electrocution. Always assume that the lines have no insulation and that they may not be as high as they look.

Coal Creek Tour 2011 highlights

2011 tour participants gathered for a group photo at Knife River Indian Villages.

Garrison Dam still has maximum water flow over the dam due to heavy rains this spring and summer.

A group of 39 members, employees and directors participated in the 2011 Coal Creek Tour to North Dakota. Tour attendees visited Coal Creek Generating Station, dc converter station, Falkirk Coal Mine, Knife River Indian Villages, Garrison Dam, the North Dakota Heritage Center and other tourist points of interest August 22-24.

Members tour the Coal Creek Generating Station. Tour guides explain to participants what goes on in the plant, how electricity is produced, and how it is sent to us in Minnesota.

Great River Energy energizes teachers

Inside a conference room at Great River Energy in Maple Grove, small groups of teachers worked their way through energy-related questions to earn X's and O's for a large tic-tac-toe board taped to the ground. The fun and games made teachers become the students. Twenty-one teachers from around the state learned about all things energy on August 2 & 3. The group convened for a two-day graduate course from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point that was arranged by Great River Energy. Participants in the course included several area teachers: Melissa Miller of New Germany, Dean & Sheila Scheele of Hamburg, and Deborah Tobias of Hutchinson.

Spokesperson Lori Buffington said Great River Energy provides scholarships for the teachers so that they might improve energy education at their schools. "The teachers rave about it," Buffington said. "They absolutely love it. They walk away with just a ton of tools and information that they can use to easily integrate energy education into their curriculum."

That chance to try out examples — like the energy tic-tac-toe game — is exactly what attracted teachers to the course. "I really want to find some new ideas, like the game we're playing," said third and fourth-grade teacher, Sheila Scheele of Hamburg, "that I could bring into my classroom so that the kids could learn, but in a fun way."

Sheila Scheele and another teacher work on an experiment that they can use in the classroom during their summer graduate course at GRE.

The program has been so successful. This is the third summer Great River Energy offered the course to teachers. It not only gives them new ideas, but also helps them stay on the frontline of the ever-evolving subject of energy. "Anytime you can get away from a textbook and make it real life," said middle school teacher Paul Keeney. "That's what makes it fun for the kids and they're going to remember that more than something they read or a movie they watched."

Energy efficient ways to wash and dry your clothes

Purchasing an ENERGY STAR qualified washing machine is one way to improve energy efficiency. Machines that meet the ENERGY STAR standards can save up to 7,000 gallons of water a year and $550 in operating costs over the lifetime of the machine. The reduced gallons of water used will also save energy use from your well pump, your hot water heater, and from your septic pump or sewage ejector pump, if you have one. So there is additional savings available when you use an ENERGY STAR clothes washer.

Clothes washers that meet ENERGY STAR criteria use next-generation

technology to cut energy and water consumption by more than 40 percent compared to conventional washers. There are front loaders that tumble clothes through a small amount of water, redesigned top loaders that flip or spin clothes through a reduced stream of water, and high speed spin cycles that extract more water so clothes need less time in the dryer.

The average household does about 400 loads of laundry each year, consuming 13,500 gallons of water. Choosing an ENERGY STAR qualified washer is a great way to cut water use in half and reduce your annual utility bill by an average of $50. Since clothes dryers all use about the same amount of energy, ENERGY STAR does not label them. However, still the best and most energy efficient way to reduce energy use drying clothes is to hang them outside on the clothes line. Letting the wind dry the clothes is both free and renewable.