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Official publication of



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

## Co-op helps distribute farm fatigue buckets to area farmers



Dan Ehrke of the Glencoe Chamber of Commerce, and MCPA employees Shannon Jerabek, Justin Kohls and Bob Thomes load up farm fatigue buckets to be distributed in McLeod County.

During the recent harvest, some employees of McLeod Co-op Power helped to distribute farm fatigue buckets to area farmers. The Glencoe Area Chamber of Commerce and Hutchinson Area Chamber of Commerce organize the annual event to remind farmers to work safely during the harvest season. Farmers are encouraged to take breaks, stay awake, practice safe working habits around machinery and safe driving habits during harvest. Over 74 area businesses donated items for the buckets. They were randomly distributed to area farmers the last week in September as field employees spotted farmers working in the fields or farm yards.



Several area farmers graciously accepted their buckets when delivered by our field employees and other area business representatives.



## Please give us your current telephone number

We are asking all members to please check the telephone number that appears on the top right hand section of your electric bill. If this is not your current, working number, please call us toll free at 1-800-494-6272 with the correct one.

It is very important that we have your correct number on file. With so many members now using cell phones instead of land lines, we need the current number at which we can reach you. The number we have on file in our billing system is the one that shows up when you want to report an outage. It makes the process much faster when the number on file matches the number you are calling from when reporting the outage. We also call members to notify them before scheduled outages, to return calls and answer inquiries, to remind members who have not paid bills before disconnection occurs, and sometimes to check back after an outage to make sure your power is back on. It is important that we have the right number.

We appreciate each member who takes the time to check the number on the bill and make sure it is the correct one, and to take the time to notify us if it needs to be updated. Thank you.

## Fixed charge to increase soon

The electric bills members will receive in November (for October energy use) will be the first to include the fixed charge at the new \$27.50 rate. This will affect all members on Rate 2 Farm and Residential Single Phase Service. There will be no change to the energy rate.

As reported in the past two MCPA News issues, the increase of the fixed charge from \$20.00 to \$27.50 was approved by the board of directors in July to keep the Cooperative in sound financial standing. Although 2012 summer energy sales were better, the slumping economy and higher wholesale power costs with lower energy sales for the past several years was having a negative impact on financial margins. The board initiated several cost cutting measures as well as increasing the fixed charge.



## Scenic calendars available before Thanksgiving

McLeod Cooperative Power will again be providing a scenic Minnesota calendar for members on a first come, first serve basis. Color 2013 calendars will be available in the Co-op office around Thanksgiving.

## 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. 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.

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

## 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 usage months of November through April. To qualify, members must complete an exemption form, available from the Cooperative. If you have signed an exemption previously, you do not have to sign one again. We keep it on file. Heat on the load management rate is also eligible for the exemption but only the off-peak meter will not be taxed.

Call the office if you have any questions.

## Manager's Message —

by Kris Ingenthron, General Manager  
McLeod Cooperative Power Association

## Cooperatives are an important part of our lives

The simple fact that you picked up this newsletter means you know the value of being a cooperative member. You may not vote in every cooperative election; you may not attend every annual meeting, but simply by turning on your lights when you get home, you demonstrate the importance of "membership."

2012 is the United Nations International Year of the Cooperative, and October is the annual National Cooperative Month. These events give us a chance to remind ourselves of what it means to be a cooperative, and how much cooperatives influence us throughout Minnesota.

Just take a look at some of these figures from the Cooperative Network, the Minnesota and Wisconsin trade association for cooperatives:

- 29,000 cooperatives serve more than 350 million members in the United States. 750,000 co-ops serve more than 1 billion people worldwide.
- Some large companies are cooperatives, including Land O'Lakes, Ocean Spray, Sunkist and Nationwide Insurance.
- 30 percent of farmers' products and farm supplies are marketed through more than 3,000 farmer-owned cooperatives.
- More than 840 electric distribution cooperatives and 65 generation and transmission cooperatives serve 42 million people in 47 states. Electric cooperatives serve 12 percent of the nation's population.
- Electric cooperatives employ 70,000 people in the United States.



- CHS, headquartered in Minnesota, is the country's largest cooperative, and is the 77th largest publicly held company in the United States.

Our cooperative serves 6,800 accounts, and on behalf of our employees, thank you for your membership. Without that membership, we'd simply be a company. We wouldn't be a cooperative.

Cooperatively yours,

*Kris Ingenthron*

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## McLEOD COOPERATIVE POWER NEWS

and focuses on our members, programs and events.  
All member story ideas and comments are welcome.  
Send to Sue Pawelk at the address above.

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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**

Gopher State One Call 1-800-252-1166



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.

Help us update our Critical Load list

Electricity is a lifeline for members with medical equipment. Please notify the Cooperative office if you rely on medical equipment such as:

- Respirators, •Oxygen concentrators, •Home dialysis
- Other equipment supporting life-threatening medical conditions

The Cooperative maintains a Critical Load list. In the event of a prolonged outage, we try to contact these members and alert them that they may need to move to a place with power if their battery back-up is insufficient. It does not mean that we can restore power to their location first.

The Cooperative also tries to contact Critical Load members in advance of a planned power outage. The notification allows members to make alternative arrangements before the outage, if necessary.

If you or someone in your home relies on life support equipment, and you have not yet notified the Cooperative, please complete the coupon and return with your next payment, or you can call the Co-op with the information. Please notify the Co-op if the person with the medical condition moves off the system, no longer needs life support or passes away, so that we can keep our list current.

REA Critical Load List

\_\_\_\_ Yes, medical life-support equipment is in use

Type of medical equipment or medical condition \_\_\_\_\_

Battery Backup? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, how long will the batteries last? \_\_\_\_\_

Acct # \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: McLeod Co-op Power  
P.O. Box 70  
Glencoe MN 55336

New Sumter Substation energized



In the beginning of September, the new Sumter Substation went into service. It was built this summer along Highway 15 northwest of Brownton, near the United Grain Systems facility (bottom photo). Construction of the substation was completed the end of August by Highline Construction of Paynesville.



Construction & Maintenance Report  
September 2012

	August	YTD	2011	2010
New services built	.....3	.....14	.....12	.....13
Service rebuilds	.....10	.....49	.....28	.....39
Service removals	.....0	.....14	.....25	.....14
Arlington work orders	....2	.....5	.....3	.....6



# R & R Auto and Metal Salvage has a shiny, secure future



Metal salvage might not seem exciting to you, but just spend an hour with Chris Bickmann of R & R Auto and Metal Salvage east of Litchfield and you'll leave as excited about the business as he is.

"We're young, energetic, aggressive, and we want to grow," Chris said sitting in his office with windows that overlook the brisk activity on the salvage yard.

Chris and co-owner Marvin Karels purchased the business in 2006. The "mom and pop" business had existed from the 1950's and sat on five acres. Since then, R & R (for Recycling and Recovery) has purchased an additional 10 acres with plans to grow by adding more services, infrastructure and personnel.

"We plan to become a full-service recycling location handling everything from pop cans and cars to industrial, commercial and agricultural metal salvage and adding a processing facility as well," Chris explained. "That facility will take recyclable materials, sort, clean, separate and get them ready for the refining process." R & R already has another location in Green Isle, but can foresee the number of locations to grow as well.

The added growth and the huge inventory that cycles through R & R requires an efficient, customer-oriented system.

"All of our parts are bar-coded and organized so we know real-time what we have on hand and where it is," Chris said.



Bar-coded inventory (above) is now protected from would-be thieves by Heartland Security. Before Heartland, thieves destroyed a door gaining access into a warehouse.

With all the investment cataloged on-site and at the Green Isle location, the right kind of security system is crucial.

"We always intended to purchase a security system down the road," Chris said. "What expedited it for us was when we got broken into." During April 2010, thieves broke into R & R, making off with cash and stamps and leaving behind damage to door frames and the cash register.

"It cost us about \$6,000, plus our time and materials to repair the damage which is still ongoing," Chris said. "We had bars and locks for security up to that point, but knew we needed something better."

Chris contacted the Co-op and was referred to Heartland Security, which is owned by the Co-op



Josh Carlson of Heartland (left) goes over layouts with owners Chris Bickmann and Marvin Karels.



Chris shows how he keeps tabs on the yard with Heartland Security cameras. He can also see images from their Green Isle location. The security system, phones and computers are all networked.

and 13 other rural electric cooperatives. Heartland General Manager Guy Adams talked with Chris, did a site evaluation and discussed all the security options and prices with Chris. Chris then worked closely with Security Technician Josh Carlson to fine-tune and install the system to meet their specific needs.

"The whole process was such a good experience, from meeting with the Co-op, to going over easy-to-understand data with Guy and collaborating with Josh," Chris said.

Josh enjoys working with people and representing Heartland Security.

"What I really like about Heartland Security is their professionalism, and that there are specific prices for each component that are the same for everyone; there isn't one price for residential and another price for commercial applications," said Josh. "You know exactly what you're getting and there are no surprises. Heartland's partnership with GE® means they stand behind our system components if there is ever a problem."

Because of the plans for growing the business, the sprawling nature of the site itself and the second location in Green Isle, there were a number of factors to consider when designing the security system to meet both current and future needs.

"We have a network that links all of our computers, phones and security between the Litchfield and Green Isle sites," said Chris. "Several security cameras at both locations allow us to see

what's going on in both places all the time." Motion sensors are installed in the office and other site buildings to prevent break-ins. Even if someone tries to dismantle the security system by cutting wires, the alarm will go off.

"At the time of installation, we also anticipated future growth and have put extra wiring into place so that the entire system doesn't have to be redone later to add more buildings to the system," Josh said. "That makes expansion a lot easier and saves the customer money."

While Chris admits that installing a security system is an expense that a lot of businesses don't want to undertake, he believes it's worth it.

"It would have been much better for us to have had the system installed before rather than wait for the violating and expensive experience of a break-in. The Heartland Security system has already prevented one attempted break-in that we know of."

Heartland Security offers total security for homes, businesses, medical and agricultural needs. Their interactive program allows you to program and view what's happening at any location any time through the internet, iPad or smart phone. You can protect yourself against theft, water, fire, frozen pipes and much more.

If you're interested in security for your home, business, agricultural application, or to protect a loved one with medical issues, call Heartland Security at 888-264-6380 for more information or for a free, no-obligation quote.

### Protect What Matters Most

**PROTECT YOUR HOME AGAINST:**

**INTRUSION**  
Keep intruders away with motion detectors, glass break sensors, and live video feed.

**FURNACE FAILURE**  
Prevent frozen pipes during cold winter months with a system that notifies you if your heat goes out.

**FIRE**  
We call the fire department if your fire alarm sounds and you're not home.

**1-888-264-6380**

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# Window fixes that won't break the bank

By James Dulley

**Dear Jim:** Our house has its original single-pane windows, and we always feel chilly near them. I got quotes on having them replaced, but I can't afford it now. What can I do in the meantime to improve the efficiency of the old windows?—

Pete N.

**Dear Pete:** I'm not surprised to hear you feel chilly near old single-pane windows on a cold day—they typically have huge heat loss and cold-air gain because of poor caulking and weather stripping (if there is any to begin with).

The most significant heat loss and chilly feeling occurs on a clear winter night. The R-value—a higher-the-better number that shows the ability of insulation to resist the transfer of heat—of a single pane of glass is only R-1, as compared to an insulated wall at R-20.

There are many things you can do on a limited budget to improve the year-round efficiency of your windows. Before you attempt to make any improvements though, first check the caulking and weatherstripping on the windows and ensure the framing is not deteriorated. If you find subpar conditions, fix them before you attempt any improvements, or your hard work won't be worth much.

Adding storm windows, either interior or exterior, can more than double the energy efficiency of your existing windows. Custom-made, multi-track storm windows can often cost almost as much as totally new windows, so make your own using clear acrylic sheets. Another advantage of using acrylic instead of glass is that acrylic blocks most of the sun's fading ultraviolet rays.

Exterior storm windows can be made with 1-by-2-inch lumber, acrylic sheet, and foam weather stripping. If you size them to fit inside the wall opening and paint them to match your existing window frames, they will look like part of your windows. The compressible foam weather stripping should hold them in place in the opening. Push them in as far as possible to minimize the air gap.

To install interior storm windows, use a kit with magnetic seals. The magnetic section of the seal attaches to the acrylic sheet with an adhesive backing, and the steel strip attaches to the window frame. This allows you to easily remove them during summer for ventilation, but if you use air conditioning most of the summer, just leave them up year-round.



**Insulated window quilt shades increase the R-value of windows and reduce air leakage.** Source: James Dulley

Another option is to install insulating window shades or curtains to increase the overall insulation level of the window opening and to block the radiant heat loss from your skin through the window. Something as simple as a pull-down pleated shade can help quite a bit. Even closing Venetian

blinds blocks your skin's exposure to the cold outdoors.

Some of the most efficient window shades can add R-6 insulation to your windows. These are multilayer roll-up shades with a heat reflecting airproof inner film layer to greatly reduce radiant heat loss (or gain during summer). I also close mine on a hot summer day. These shades are particularly effective because the side edges slide in channel tracks, which reduces the amount of air that circulates against the cold glass.



**Energy-saving window film is installed on clean wet glass using a squeegee to eliminate bubbles.** Source: CP Films

The newest energy-saving permanent window films are also effective for reducing wintertime heat loss. These films have just a very slight tint so they can't be detected and use the same type of microscopically thin low-emissivity metallic coating as expensive replacement windows. Simple vinyl static-cling film will also help a bit. But before installing anything on double-pane windows, check the window manufacturer's warranty regarding film application.

Do-it-yourself energy-saving film installation kits are available at most home improvement stores. Depending on your climate, you may want to select a darker tint if summertime heat gain is your most significant concern. Because the sun is higher in the sky during summer, installing window awnings for shade and a lighter film on south-facing windows will allow for some passive solar heating from the lower wintertime sun.

James Dulley writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

## INDUSTRY News

### Watching the skies over wind farms

**M**ore wind turbines are turning at wind farms in the Upper Midwest, but if certain creatures fly near some facilities, two words uttered by contract biologists could bring turbines in their path to a full stop: whooping cranes.

Basin Electric has agreed to monitor whooping cranes during their annual migrations at the wind farms operated by the Bismarck-based G&T. The huge white birds are the largest native to North America. Near extinction a century ago, and on the endangered species list since its creation in 1967, they are making a comeback. More than 400 of them now live in the wild.

"If we see a whooping crane, we'll start shutting down the towers as fast as we can," said Daryl Hill, Basin Electric Power Cooperative's supervisor of media relations and communications. "But we've never had a sighting at our Minot project."

The Bismarck, N.D.-based G&T agreed to a three-year whooping crane monitoring program for each of the wind farms it has developed and operates. Since the birds are migratory, monitoring near the 82 turbines at Basin Electric's Minot Wind Project in North Dakota and the 108 turbines at the G&T's Crow Lake project in South Dakota occurs in spring and fall.

At least one biologist has scanned the skies daily at the 30,000-acre Minot location and two have been on site in South Dakota, said Hill. They watch for the distinctive white bodies and black-tipped wings that sometime appear in small groups, in the company of sandhill cranes.

Migrating cranes typically cover 25 to 50 miles a day. North Dakota sightings trigger shutdowns of turbines within a mile radius of the bird's path. A sighting in South Dakota will trigger a two-mile shutdown.

A population of 100 whooping cranes reintroduced in Wisconsin has learned to migrate to Florida. A larger, natural flock of 300 birds uses the central flyway between the Arkansas marshes on the Texas Gulf Coast and Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta, Canada. The route carries them through parts of six states, including the Dakotas.

The G&T alerts wind farm staffers to be on the lookout for the birds from April 1-May 10 and Sept. 10-Oct. 31, when the birds are most likely to fly through the Dakotas.

~Electric Co-op Today



**To install do-it-yourself storm windows, attach foam weatherstripping around the frame to seal against the window opening and to hold it in place.** Source: James Dulley

## 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) 484-4330  
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  
1-800-363-2533  
(320) 523-1161 Emergency  
24 hr phone

### Sibley County area

Sibley County Public Health & Human Services  
111 8th Street  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
(507) 237-4000

MN Valley Action Council  
110 6th Street, P.O. Box 87  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
(507) 237-2981  
464 Raintree Road  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 345-2433  
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  
(320) 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 if the customer has met the requirements under Item 1. 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** An electric cooperative must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a home between October 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

- 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.
- You have contacted MCPA and have set up a payment arrangement.

If all of these items are not satisfied the electricity may be shut off due to non-payment.

**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 options 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.

Our members are important to McLeod Cooperative Power. We would rather work with you to set up a plan to pay your bill than disconnect your service.

**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. Names and contact numbers for energy assistance providers are listed on this page.

## 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.



# 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 \$453 a year. It is like lowering your bill by almost \$38 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 PM to 7 AM heating your family's daily supply of hot water. The elements then remain off for the next 16 hours until they begin recharging overnight 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 or converting a gas water heater to electric storage 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.

## Watch for Big Screen Savings



The days of large console televisions, with their wood grain exteriors and antenna wires or rabbit ears, are long gone—no more using needle nose pliers to change channels after the knob breaks or fiddling endlessly to adjust the horizontal and vertical holds. Today's televisions offer larger, thinner screens and, thanks to digital cable or satellite connections provide a virtually unlimited number of channels.

However, some models require a tremendous amount of energy to operate—almost as much as a refrigerator. And the average American household owns 2.93 TVs, according to a 2010 Nielsen report. Televisions use more than 46 billion kWh per year, or about 4 percent of residential electricity use.

TV manufacturers are designing sets that use less energy without sacrificing screen size or resolution. These tips will help you tune in to big screen energy savings.

### High-Definition = High Energy Use

Although a high-definition TV (HDTV) transforms the latest blockbuster movie into a theater-like living room experience, these sets generally use more power because of better picture clarity. Also, energy consumption often relates to screen size.

Four types of TVs are currently available: plasma, liquid-crystal display (LCD), rear projection, and cathode ray tube (CRT). CRT televisions are the most difficult to find because they employ old technology and screen sizes rarely top 40 inches.

Plasma screens often are cited as the largest energy user mainly because their large 42-inch to 65-inch screens typically draw between 240 watts to 400 watts. Most

consume electricity even when turned off.

LCD TVs don't need much power to operate 111 watts on average. Most LCD screens range in size from 21 inches to 49 inches. These TVs fall into two categories: those with cold-cathode fluorescent lamps to illuminate the screen; and backlit models employing a light-emitting diode (LED). LED units offer several benefits, notably better picture quality and thinner and lighter screens. They also use slightly less energy, at 101 watts.

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.

Shopping for an energy-efficient television can be difficult. Television manufacturers rarely advertise energy consumption, and it almost never appears on in-store labels, though new ENERGY STAR® requirements may change that in 2012.

Faced with these difficulties, consumers need to conduct their own energy use research through unbiased online sources such as CNET.com, an online journal for the technology industry. Look for specific model numbers, which you can take to the store.

## Cooperatives Have a Big Impact on Minnesota's Economy

According to a study by the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, 3.4 million cooperative members in the Gopher State depend on approximately 1,000 co-ops to market and supply agricultural products as well as to provide credit, financing, electricity, transportation, health care, food, housing, insurance, and many other products and services. Minnesota co-ops annually record about \$34 billion in revenue and they employ approximately 46,000 Minnesota residents.

Minnesota became one of the first states to enact a law authorizing cooperatives, and has the largest number of cooperatives in the nation. Types of cooperatives include:

• **Grain, farm supply, and fuel:** Approximately 175 retail farm supply cooperatives provide crop inputs, animal feed, grain marketing, and petroleum products,

along with other services to farmers and residents across the state. These cooperatives and their regional wholesale cooperative suppliers CHS Inc. and Land O' Lakes are responsible for \$5.5 billion of annual retail sales in Minnesota. CHS Inc. and Land O'Lakes also rank as two of the largest employers headquartered in Minnesota with combined revenues of nearly \$36 billion annually.

• **Dairy:** Minnesota dairy cooperatives market over 85 percent of the milk produced in the state. Minnesota dairy cooperative members include: CROPP Organic Valley, Dairy Farmers of America Inc., Foremost Farms USA, Land O' Lakes, Bongards' Creameries, and Swiss Valley Farms.

• **Electric:** Electric cooperatives play a vital role in their rural communities, providing reliable electricity and so much more. Minnesota has 45 electric co-ops that distribute electricity across the state and several co-ops that

generate and transmit power including Great River Energy and East River Electric, among others

• **Housing:** Minnesota is a leader in housing cooperatives, particularly in senior housing. The state is home to more than 80 senior housing co-ops, which is more than double all the other states combined.

• **Farm Credit Services:** Together, the following federally chartered farm credit cooperatives finance Minnesota farm families and agribusinesses with \$4.1 billion in loans: AgStar Financial Services, Farm Credit Services of Minnesota Valley, AgCountry Farm Credit Services, and AgriBank. AgriBank, headquartered in St. Paul, is the largest farm credit bank in the U.S. with more than \$62 billion in annual loan volume. CoBank also serves agricultural co-ops, utility co-ops, and other needs in rural Minnesota.

• **Credit unions:** Credit unions are not-for-profit financial cooperatives owned and governed by members via volunteer boards of directors. Credit union earnings are returned to owner/members in the form of lower loan rates, higher interest on deposits, and lower fees. Like all cooperatives, credit unions are committed to their communities, working

with other cooperatives to support economic development and worthwhile social causes in their greater areas. There are approximately 130 credit unions in Minnesota.

• **Health care:** Minnesota's health care cooperatives are a diverse lot. HealthPartners HMO is a non-profit which follows cooperative principles, and a new health care cooperative for farmers is currently being developed.

• **Ethanol:** One of the fastest growing Minnesota cooperative sectors is involved with the ethanol industry. These member-owned bio-based facilities are breathing renewed life into the Minnesota countryside.

• **Food:** The Twin Cities metro area has the highest concentration of food co-ops of any metro area in the U.S.

• **Telecommunications:** Minnesota is home to local telephone co-ops that offer advanced telecommunications services and help rural Minnesota compete in a world economy.

• **Sugar:** 100 percent of sugar production in Minnesota occurs at co-op facilities.

• **Other types of cooperatives:** Several consumer cooperatives exist in Minnesota, as well as several worker-owned cooperatives.



## Convenient payment options can help you reduce unwanted costs

**M**cLeod Cooperative Power buys its power from Great River Energy (GRE). The size of our power bill from GRE is usually \$700,000 to \$1,300,000 a month, depending upon how much electricity our members use. By the time our members receive their bills for the electricity we supply them, our wholesale power bill has already been paid. That is why McLeod Co-op Power pays so much attention to getting bills out on time and collecting for electricity used on a timely basis.

By the time our members pay their bills, they have used up to 15 days of electricity towards the next bill. This is a unique circumstance. What other products do we use before we pay for it? The only ones I can think of are electricity and natural gas. By letting members use electricity first and then pay for it, we put the Cooperative at risk. Not all members pay their bills on time, yet the Cooperative has already paid for that electricity. When bills go unpaid, the cost of that electricity must be included in the cost to serve our other members.

We also have the additional costs of the collection process: extra printing costs, bookkeeping, collection notices, phone calls, and trips to disconnect and reconnect power. These costs are not incurred by every member, so the member who causes them should be held responsible for the added cost. That is why McLeod Co-op Power has a late payment penalty, a collection fee, and a reconnect fee. Each of these fees is charged to those members who cause it.

Once a member is disconnected for non-payment, that member must pay the reconnect fee to have the power turned back on. We know this is a hardship for some and

empathize with their financial troubles, but it is our duty to keep the Cooperative whole and to provide reliable cost-based electricity to all of our members.

One thing that some people have done when they are disconnected is to attempt to turn their power back on themselves. According to the law, this is considered theft of electricity and punishable by fines and reimbursement for expenses and costs. The bigger issue with trying to reconnect the electricity is concern for safety. Electricity is unforgiving; it seeks the shortest path to ground, even if it is through your body. Working around your electric meter or transformer could be fatal.

The Cooperative offers many ways for members to pay their bills: in person, by mail, by automatic bankdraft, by credit card, and we have a 24 hour drop box at our office where members can leave a payment. We know there are times when a member cannot pay the entire bill. If this is the case, call our office and let us know. The Billing & Collection staff will help you set up a payment arrangement so you can get caught up. Keep in mind that a payment arrangement cannot go on forever, the bill must be brought current sometime in the near future. And members who are not current on their bill can save themselves the added collection notice and reconnect fees if they make a payment arrangement and follow through with what they have agreed to pay.

Our goal is to keep the power flowing to you, our members. Please do not ignore that bill that is due or late. Instead, contact our office and give us a chance to help you if you are having difficulty paying your bill.

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## Summer heat leads to record power production

**W**hen some of the hottest weather in recent memory drove up demand for electricity, Great River Energy's employees and facilities kept the power flowing. In fact, Great River Energy's generation and transmission resources both experienced record-setting summers.

"Our plants ran with minimal interruption, and when problems came up we fixed them quickly," said Generation Vice President Rick Lancaster.

Hot and humid temperatures throughout the region, combined with low natural gas prices, spurred MISO (the region's electric grid operator) to call peaking plants into service often. Peaking plants only operate during periods of heightened demand for electricity, often during hot summer days.

Peaking generation records were set in May, June and July. July also marked a one-month energy production record for Great River Energy's peaking plants. Additionally, many fuel-oil-powered units were called into service to provide voltage stability to the transmission system.

"All of our baseload units performed consistently well, and

our peaking plants responded to market signals to produce power exactly when it was needed," said Lancaster. "Such a successful summer is a testament to the men and women who operate and maintain our generation and transmission facilities. They work hard all year long so our system can perform well during challenging times, such as heat waves."

The network of transmission lines and substations that moves all that power also performed admirably during prolonged stretches of increased power consumption. On July 2, the Great River Energy transmission system transmitted more electricity than at any time in its history when more than 2,700 megawatts (MW) of power was passing through its lines. The previous high was approximately 2,560 MW in July 2006.

"Weather is a major driver of demand for electricity, and even with a slow growing economy, extreme heat puts a lot of strain on transmission infrastructure. However, our facilities were able to reliably move the power to the market," said Transmission Vice President Will Kaul. "We emphasize the importance of building and maintaining transmission infrastructure to ensure that we deliver reliable power even when the grid is under stress."

## MISO region sets market peak demand record

**T**he Midwest region's grid operator, MISO, witnessed a new all-time record for energy use in the region on Monday, July 23. MISO, which manages the flow of energy across high-voltage lines in 11 states, saw the demand for energy use reach 98,576 MW at 2:54 p.m.

"MISO's real-time operations teams in Carmel, Ind., and St. Paul, Minn., are instrumental in anticipating and effectively managing high demand for energy. MISO works closely with local balancing authorities and generation owners to confirm operating needs and capabilities in order to maintain grid reliability," said Vice President of Operations Richard Doying.