

MCLEOD COOPERATIVE POWER NEWS

MARCH 2023



KEY STEPS WHEN CONSIDERING SOLAR

As prices decline and technology improves, installing a residential solar system—makes sense for some consumers. However, even with these recent improvements, it's important to find out the facts before committing to a purchase. Follow these simple steps to explore whether solar is right for your situation.

GET EDUCATED Understand whether a solar photovoltaic (PV) system will work for you to offset your electric energy use. Other technologies like air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, and insulation reduce demand for fuels needed to heat your home and might be a better fit depending on your energy use or the solar resource available at your home.

DO YOU HAVE A SUNNY SITE? There are many considerations you should make before choosing solar. It's important to think about a variety of factors such as the efficiency of a building, the age and pitch of the roof, tree coverage, local weather patterns, and orientation to the sun. Typically, a good site is one that has a south-facing exposure and little to no shading. You can get a sense for the solar resource at your site using the MN Solar Suitability App (solar.maps.umn.edu/app). A solar site assessor can help you decide which technologies are the best fit for your home. Assessments will provide insight on the solar resource and potential structural or electrical issues. Most solar installers can provide you with a detailed site assessment.

PLANNING AND ZONING It's important to check in with your local city or county about ordinances that might impact your solar project. Though many ordinances consider on-site solar installations as accessory uses, some require setbacks or structural assessments, for example.

YOUR BUDGET While most solar installers will provide a bid that should give you a sense of the costs involved, make sure that you plan for all the possible financial considerations. Estimated energy savings, rebates or financial incentives, hidden costs, upfront payments and more should all be accounted for in your decision making. There are many incentives available that make solar more affordable. A federal tax credit can cover part of

the project cost for those with tax liability, and the USDA Office of Rural Development provides REAP grants and loans for farms and rural businesses. Members should do their own research to make sure any solar project fits their budget and makes financial sense to proceed based on the estimated expenditures and projected payback.

SEEK ADVICE McLeod Co-op Power can provide one-on-one assistance. If you are looking to implement solar and you want to talk it over, just give us a call or send us an email. We are ready to help you determine the best option and navigate the interconnection process.

In Minnesota, consumers cannot legally install solar until after they have applied for interconnection to the power grid, met the requirements for a safe installation, and been approved to interconnect. Contacting your co-op ahead of time can save you money and time. To begin the process visit us online at www.mcleodcoop.com/services/renewableenergy/ and then follow the link to the NOVA Power Portal to access application forms, requirements, tariffs, etc.

COMPARE BIDS FROM SEVERAL SOLAR CONTRACTORS The Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) solar directory can help you search for solar installers (cleanenergyresourceteams.org/tools-guides/directory). CERTs also provides a useful set of questions you can ask solar installers (cleanenergyresourceteams.org/questions-ask-companies).

SELECT A CONTRACTOR AND INSTALL YOUR SYSTEM It usually takes between two weeks and two months from the time you sign an agreement and make a down payment to the time the project is completed. This timeline depends on the weather, equipment and labor logistics. Your contractor will facilitate the interconnection agreement with McLeod Co-op which will allow you to track production and receive payments for excess production under a "net metering" billing arrangement.

LEARN MORE Call (800) 494-6272 for more information about going solar.

2023 TREE TRIMMING

Trees can add tremendous value to our homes and communities. However, trees growing near power lines present some real challenges. Fast-growing, tall trees (such as poplars, elms, willows and silver maples) located near or directly under primary wires can cause repeated outages. These trees have to be removed for safety and reliability purposes.

This year the Co-op is working with a new tree contractor, TreeStory. The bulk of this year's work will be happening on the west side of our service territory starting with the western side of District 4 (Kingman, Bird Island, and Norfolk townships). Work is anticipated to begin around the middle of March.



TreeStory will then work east through District 4 (East Lake Lillian, Osceola, Melville, and Palmyra townships) and on any other remaining spots in this part of the service territory. Later this year (late summer or early fall) they will move to the east side of the service territory in the Carver County area to begin trimming trees in this area. We will provide additional updates on the townships involved before work begins in this part of the service territory.

As a reminder, residents will receive a door hanger notifying them of the contractor working in their area about two weeks prior to the start of the work. The contractors vehicles and equipment will be recognizable with the company's logo decal shown below.



HAPPY RETIREMENT
KATIE IDE!

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WANT TO BE A
BOARD MEMBER?

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LINE WORKER SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE

McLeod Co-op Power is pleased to offer a \$500 scholarship for a student entering an accredited line technician program at a Minnesota vocational school, to help fulfill their ambition of becoming an electrical lineworker and having a career in the electric utility industry. Applications are due no later than 4:00 p.m. on April 15, 2023. Application forms are available online at www.mcleodcoop.com/about/youth-programs/ or by calling (800) 494-6272.



CEO MESSAGE

So, for this month’s article, I have invited a special guest writer, ChatGPT. If you are not aware, it is an “AI” system. AI stands for artificial intelligence meaning it’s a computerized software that utilizes technology to do a lot of neat things. I asked ChatGPT to write a 150-word essay on the challenges of electric vehicles, and this is what it generated.

“Electric vehicles (EVs) are becoming increasingly popular as a cleaner alternative to traditional gasoline-powered cars. However, their adoption still faces a number of challenges.

One major challenge is the limited driving range of EVs. While advances in battery technology have increased the range of some EVs, they still cannot match the range of gasoline-powered cars. This can cause range anxiety for drivers who are worried about running out of power before reaching their destination. Additionally, charging infrastructure is not yet as widespread as gas stations, making it difficult for drivers to find convenient charging locations.

Another challenge is the cost of EVs. While the price of EVs is decreasing, they are still generally more expensive than comparable gasoline-powered cars. Additionally, the cost of replacing batteries can be high, which may deter some consumers from buying an EV.

Finally, the environmental benefits of EVs can be negated if the electricity used to power them is generated from fossil fuels. To fully realize the potential of EVs, the electricity used to power them must come from renewable sources.

Overall, while electric vehicles have many advantages, they still face several challenges that must be overcome in order to increase their adoption and make them a viable alternative to traditional gasoline-powered cars.”



CEO RON MEIER

ChatGPT is only trained up to September 2021, and therefore doesn’t have the most current info available. For example, it isn’t aware that we are working on a time-of-use rate that will pair up nicely with EVs offering a much lower rate in the middle of the night for charging at home.

It also isn’t aware of the build out of the charging infrastructure since 2021, which we have a long way to go still. It also isn’t aware of the current level of tax incentives that are reducing the purchase price of EVs and the explosion of new EV models from most if not all the major car makers.

Now ChatGPT hit the nail on the head when it comes to the environmental consequences that we are still wrestling with in our society. Yes, there are challenges currently and ahead when it comes to sourcing the stuff we need to make an EV. Yes, today the electricity going into an EV still has fossil fuels being used to generate it. Yes, there is challenges on how to handle the batteries as they reach their end of life. Yes, it takes longer to charge an EV for those times when you need to travel more than 200 miles in a day.

ChatGPT isn’t aware of efforts to electrify commercial vehicles in areas such as Amazon/UPS/FedEx delivery vans. Some places EVs might make sense and some places they just won’t work, for now. I don’t see the electrification of our transportation system as a zero-sum game. In the end it is my belief we will be able to buy an EV or a traditional vehicle for the foreseeable future.

Cooperatively,

FEBRUARY 2023 BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of McLeod Cooperative Power Association was held on February 24, 2023, at McLeod Co-op headquarters. Eight board members, the attorney, CEO Ron Meier, and department managers participated in the meeting.

Highlights of the meeting included:

- The outage report for the month of January 2023 was reviewed with a total of 20 outages, affecting 35 consumers.
- A motion was carried approving Policy 3-1 Schedule of Charges with an effective date of May 1, 2023.
- Assistant Member Service Manager Thomes provided an overview of the Annual Cogen Filing prepared by STAR Energy.
- Manager of Finance Jakel reviewed the January financials and the 2023 Financial Forecast Model with the board.
- A motion was carried approving Resolution 2023-02-03 Amend Revenue Deferral Plan.
- A motion was carried approving Resolution 2023-02-01 GRE Approval & Acceptance of Offer to Amend Power Purchase Contract.
- A motion was carried approving Resolution 2023-02-04 District 1 Vacancy that will be filled as part of the normal 2023 election process.
- A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve Resolution 2023-02-02 Exception Agreement with City of Brownnton providing electric service to River’s Edge Concrete, LLC.

FIVE TIPS FOR HIRING AN ELECTRICIAN



A licensed electrician can help with a variety of home projects from lighting upgrades to full renovations. Keep the following tips in mind if you’re looking to hire an electrician.

HIRE A LICENSED, QUALIFIED ELECTRICIAN FOR THE JOB.

Look for a master electrician to manage the project. Master electricians have the most experience and will often oversee the work of a journey-level electrician or apprentice.

MAKE SURE THE ELECTRICIAN IS INSURED.

Seasoned electricians know the importance of protecting themselves in case of an accident.

READ ALL THE REVIEWS.

Hire an electrician that has several positive reviews – not just one or two. Read reviews on different sites, like Nextdoor, Yelp and HomeAdvisor, and consider asking your neighbors for recommendations.

DETERMINE YOUR BUDGET. GET TWO QUOTES.

Knowing your budget upfront helps move the process along. Prices can greatly vary, so get multiple quotes (at least two).

TALK TIMELINE.

Some electricians accidentally overbook projects. If your job is time-sensitive, convey that early on and discuss a realistic timeline with the electrician.



SEND US YOUR BEST SHOTS

The photo contest for our 2024 calendar is now open for entries. The contest is designed to spotlight the photography talents of our members, but just as importantly the scenic beauty and unique characteristics of our service territory.

Members are encouraged to submit photos representing all four seasons in our community. Photos will be accepted until August 1, 2023. **Winners will receive a \$20 credit on their electric bill.**

LEARN MORE

Review guidelines and submission details at www.mcleodcoop.com/2024-calendar-photo-contest/.

By entering this contest, you agree to give McLeod Co-op Power rights to use your photo in the Co-op’s calendar, newsletter, future contest promotions, and other publications or digital media.

NOTICE OF FEE CHANGES

An updated Schedule of Charges was approved by the McLeod Co-op Power Board of Directors at its January meeting. The increased fees will be effective May 1, 2023.

THE NEW RATES ARE LISTED BELOW:

Misc. Billing Charge:

Declined Payment for
Recurring Credit Card Transactions \$20

Lineman Service Calls: (Per Trip Charge)

Monday - Saturday	
7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.	\$335
3:30 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	\$505
Sundays and Holidays	\$670

Electrician Service Calls (Per Trip Charge) (1st Hour/Add'l Hours)

Monday - Saturday	
7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	\$130/\$95
Non-business Hours	\$195/\$145
Sundays and Holidays	\$260/\$190

ESTIMATES FOR PURPOSES OF DEPOSITS

Single Phase and Secondaries: (Working Hours/Overtime)

Fixed Charge	\$280/\$340
Plus a Per-Crossing Charge	\$280/\$340

Multi-Phase:

Fixed Charge	\$545/\$680
Plus a Per-Crossing Charge	\$545/\$680

Labor Line Work:

Regular Time Rate per Man-Hour	\$105
Overtime Rate per Man-Hour	\$155
Double-Time Rate per Man-Hour	\$200
Electrician Time per Man-Hour	\$95

Vehicle Charges:

Stand-on Trencher	\$75
Dump Truck	\$60
Vactor	\$100

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Long time McLeod Co-op Power employee, Katie Ide, officially retires March 13, 2023, closing out a successful career that has spanned nearly three decades at the Co-op. While Katie will certainly be missed by many, co-workers and friends celebrate her success and joyfully wish her well.

Katie began her career at McLeod Co-op Power in 1995 as part of the Member Service Department assisting DIRECTV customers and member tours and programs. Then in May 2013 she moved in to the Executive Assistant role, which she has held of the last 10 years.

As Executive Assistant, Katie has assisted the Board of Directors and the management team. She has been extremely valuable in these duties. Her organizational skills and work ethic are second to none. Her passion for our Cooperative also can't be denied. We're fortunate to have had her work for us for so many years.

"There have been so many great memories here, but member tours were always one of my favorite parts of the job. Over the years I chaperoned five trips to Coal Creek Station, and other trips to The Old Log Theatre, MN Landscape Arboretum, Twins Games, and a Wind Farm Tour," shared Katie. "I even ended up a matchmaker on one trip. In order to fit everyone on the Coal Creek bus, I had

to move two single passengers next to each other. By the end of the trip those two were holding hands and laughing. I later found out they got married!"

Katie has seen a lot of change during her tenure at the Co-op. One of her favorite highlights though was the construction of our new facility.

While Katie said she'll miss the people here at the Co-op most, she's looking forward to more time with her family and friends in retirement. "I love to garden and go fishing, and now I'll have plenty of time for my hobbies and to make memories with my loved ones. I'm even kicking off retirement with a 12 day trip to Maui with my family to celebrate."

"While Katie and I worked together for only a couple of years, she taught me more than I could have imagined about taking care of others. She always led with her heart while holding not just herself, but all of us to high standards. I am excited knowing that her next office is in a boat, on a lake, with a fishing rod in hand along with beverages in the cooler close by. While she will be missed at the Cooperative, her legacy will live on." – Ron Meier, CEO



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity.



We need your help making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, so we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve.

Help us serve you better.

Accurate contact information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive information about other important programs, events, and activities.

By keeping your contact information up to date, McLeod Co-op Power is able to contact you quickly regarding your account if there is a need. In addition, updating your contact information speeds up the power restoration process. At McLeod Co-op, we use the phone numbers you provide to link your service

address to our outage management system. This only works if your current phone number is linked.

Get access to your account online.

By having an e-mail address on file, you can sign up for online account access through SmartHub. There you can sign up for our alerts, bill pay reminders, access your usage information, and report power outages.

Your contact information is not shared, and is only used by McLeod Co-op Power. Please take a moment to confirm or update your contact information by calling our office at (800) 494-6272 or logging into your SmartHub account online.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A BOARD MEMBER?

The Cooperative business model depends on members like you to provide leadership and guidance.



McLeod Co-op Power Directors are members just like you who understand and listen to the community. They represent you on the Cooperative's Board, while responsibly overseeing the business of the Cooperative and determining its strategic direction. Each year an election takes place to ensure that every member has a voice in the governance of this organization and that any member in good standing may seek election for the Board of Directors. In 2023, there are three districts up for election:

- District 1: Franklin, Hollywood, Victor, Winsted, Woodland
- District 2: Hassan Valley, Rich Valley, Sumter
- District 3: Bergen, Glencoe, Helen

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- The board evaluates whether decisions and policies help the Cooperative successfully further its commitment to serving our community by providing excellent member service, and safe and reliable energy service at a competitive price.
- The board adopts and enforces policies, resolutions and actions governing ethical conduct, accountability and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- The board provides financial oversight, establishes financial targets, approves the Cooperative's budget, and reviews significant investments, loans and the rates for providing electric service to members.
- The board serves as ambassadors to our membership, community and legislative representatives. Directors are visible, active and available to members throughout their respective district.

QUALIFICATIONS

Directors must receive electric service from McLeod Co-op Power at their primary residence in the district they represent. Directors cannot be an immediate relative to an employee, employed by an enterprise that directly competes with or provides substantial services to the Cooperative, or have any other conflict of interest. A complete list of qualifications is located within the Cooperative Bylaws.

COMMITMENT

Directors serve a three-year term and must be available to attend monthly board meetings, the Annual Meeting, and additional training and/or conferences throughout their term. Board members are also expected to prepare for board meetings and serve as an ambassador for the Cooperative in the community.

APPLY NOW

Members in districts 1, 2, and 3; who meet the Bylaw qualifications and have an interest in serving as a director of McLeod Co-op Power should complete a director application at mcleodcoop.com/about/co-op-info by 4:00 p.m. on March 31, 2023. If you have additional questions, need more information, or would like to request an application by mail please call (800) 494-6272.



SAVE THE DATE

2023 ANNUAL MEETING

The McLeod Co-op Power Annual Meeting will take place on Tuesday, July 11, 2023.

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MCLEOD CO-OP EXPRESSES DEEPEST SYMPATHY



McLeod Cooperative Power Association (MCPA) Board Member Oria Brinkmeier passed away Sunday, January 29, 2023. Mr. Brinkmeier joined the MCPA Board in 2005 and represented District 1 for the past 18 years.

“Oria was a loyal and dedicated member of our Cooperative. During the past 18 years as a Board of Director, he put great emphasis on his responsibilities. He was always well-informed on the decisions at hand and was an important voice advocating for the Cooperative's membership and employees,” said Ron Meier, CEO of McLeod Cooperative Power Association.

During his tenure on the MCPA Board of Directors, Oria served as the member representative on the Great River Energy's Board of Directors. He also represented MCPA's interest as a voting delegate for many state and national committees.

Our family here at MCPA would like to express our gratitude for his dedicated service. We also extend our sympathies to his surviving family members.



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WWW.MCLEODCOOP.COM

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