

MCLEOD COOPERATIVE POWER

NEWS

MARCH 2024

CONSTRUCTION PLANS IN 2024: FOCUS ON UNDERGROUND CONVERSION CONTINUES



Chances are you don't think about how we build, repair, and maintain our power lines. You likely only think about the peace of mind that comes from having power when you need it. From repairing a down line in the middle of a storm to investing in infrastructure upgrades, we take a proactive approach to keep our system operating at an optimal level.

Every year, McLeod Co-op Power spends countless hours and considerable dollars working to maintain the grid. Reliability is a key priority for us. We strive to bring electricity to our members' homes and businesses - 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In 2024, the Co-op has a wide variety of construction activities in our work plan focusing on converting just over 13 miles of power line to underground wire.

Over the last number of years, McLeod Co-op has placed increased focus, resources, and priority on installing underground lines. It's our goal to add underground lines or convert existing overhead lines to underground when and where it makes sense to do so. In fact, the Co-op has increased the total miles of underground line by more than 200% since 2005.

This year, work will take place around the Hook Lake substation in Hutchinson and Hale townships, and the High Island substation in New Auburn township.

These conversion projects represent a \$1.2 million dollar commitment to reliable electric service. The upgrades are needed because of the age and condition of our existing lines, which are

approximately 40 years old and reaching the end of their life cycle. The new line will improve voltage issues by leveling and stabilizing voltage numbers, increasing our back-feeding capabilities, increasing capacity, and improving reliability.

By converting these lines underground, they won't be as vulnerable to damage from weather or tree issues and as susceptible to damage from vehicles or farm equipment. It is important to remember that despite these benefits, underground lines are not immune to power outages and maintenance.

A lot of this underground work will be completed with McLeod Co-op Power employees and equipment; however, an outside contractor will be brought in to help plow cable and complete directional boring.

Additionally, completing the new Bell Substation is another key construction project for 2024. The substation, located in Hassan Valley township, is 85% completed with full completion to be targeted for the middle of May. We are waiting on voltage regulators which help the substation maintain a consistent voltage. The lead time on these regulators was originally 54 weeks but the lead time has turned into almost 60 weeks. On January 5th, the main substation transformer arrived, which was a major step in completing the project. Overall, the project is coming together nicely.

Delivering quality electric service to our members can only be done with significant investment, proper planning, and system maintenance. Our 2024 work plan and these conversion projects will strengthen our ability to serve you, and provide reliable, affordable electricity.

BUILDING OR EXPANDING IN 2024

Does your spring to-do list include a project that might require new electrical service or changes to existing service? If so, let us know!

It's common for the Cooperative to receive many requests for service in the spring. However, projects requiring electric lines to be built, rebuilt or moved aren't as simple as they may seem and sometimes can be more complex than members realize.

We strongly encourage anyone thinking about projects that might require new or modified electrical service to contact the Cooperative and begin the planning process as early as possible.

We'll discuss your project and address any electrical needs that might arise. If your service needs upgrading or alterations, getting on our construction schedule is important because it helps us ensure that the necessary electrical equipment and materials are available. Longer lead times and supply chain delays make this all the more important in 2024.

For questions, please contact the McLeod Co-op Power during regular business hours at (800) 494-6272.



NEW EMPLOYEES AT MCLEOD CO-OP POWER

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INTERESTED IN BECOMING A DIRECTOR?

04

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.



MCLEOD CO-OP WELCOMES TRIO OF DYNAMIC NEW HIRES TO ITS TEAM!



Much like many cooperatives, McLeod Co-op Power has been fortunate to have had many long-term employees working for our Cooperative over the past couple decades. Longevity has been an asset as we've had employees grow with us as they've used their talents and expertise to benefit our members.

But changes are inevitable and we're navigating an exciting period of hiring new employees as a result of some planned retirements and other transitions. It's always hard to have good employees leave, especially when they've been with us for so long, but thankfully, we've been able to attract some very talented people to our ranks as new employees to McLeod Co-op.

We're exceptionally excited about three of our most recent hires, who are new in their careers and are proving to be great additions to our team. We hope our members enjoy this article as they share some of their experiences and perspectives on what it means to be part of the Co-op family.

KAYLEE, BILLING CLERK

Meet Kaylee, our new Billing Clerk who joined McLeod Co-op in January 2024. Hailing from the Brownton-Stewart area, Kaylee's passion for numbers led her to pursue a bachelor's degree in accounting at St. Cloud State University.



Motivated by a desire to be closer to family and the appeal of McLeod Co-op's familial atmosphere, Kaylee found her perfect fit. During her interview, the emphasis on the cohesive team and family-like culture resonated with her, influencing her decision to join the Co-op.

In her brief time here, Kaylee has found the cooperative's culture to be genuine. Her colleagues' kindness and willingness to assist have made her feel supported as she learns her

FEBRUARY 2024 BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of McLeod Cooperative Power Association was held on February 27, 2024, at McLeod Co-op headquarters. The nine board members, attorney, CEO Ron Meier, and department managers participated in the meeting.

Highlights of the meeting included:

- The outage report for the month of January 2024 was provided with a total of 38 outages, affecting 109 consumers.
- Operations Manager Brady reported that TreeStory is close to completion with Hutchinson Township but with the muddy conditions they had to move the work over to Acoma Township. Hutchinson Township will be completed once the conditions allow.
- A motion was carried to approve the purchase of a bucket truck for 2025.
- A motion was carried to approve MCPA's Annual Cogeneration Filing.
- Manager of Finance Jakel reviewed the January financials.
- A motion was carried to approve Resolution 2024-02-01 Employee Retention Tax Credit Revenue.
- A motion was carried to approve directors Susan Anderson, Joe Griebie, and Keith Peterson to attend CoBank ENGAGE Minnesota Customer Meeting.

UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO



We need your help making sure we have your most accurate 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.

Through SmartHub you can sign up for 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. 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.



NEW ONLINE EV ESTIMATING TOOL

Explore the financial feasibility of owning an electric vehicle using our handy EV Estimator Tool.

Use our convenient online estimating tool to determine if buying an electric vehicle makes financial sense for you. Our energy management specialists are also available to guide you through the process, ensuring you make an informed decision.

LEARN MORE

www.mcleodcoop.com/services/electric-vehicle-estimating-tool



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.



ELECTRIC SAFETY

If you encounter low-hanging or downed power lines and poles, always assume they are energized and extremely dangerous. Keep a safe distance of at least 30 feet and do not attempt to touch, move, or drive over them. Report the situation to 911 or the Cooperative immediately. Warn others to stay away, and wait for professionals to assess and address the issue. Never try to assess the severity of the damage or handle the situation on your own, as electricity can be lethal even from a seemingly harmless-looking line or pole. Your safety and the safety of others depend on prompt reporting and leaving the handling of such situations to trained personnel.

new role. “My coworkers have been wonderful in making sure I am progressing and provide me all sorts of knowledge that I can apply not only to my career, but also to my regular life,” Kaylee shared.

A standout experience so far for her was getting out in the field to see and learn about the technical aspects of delivering electricity.

Kaylee enjoys connecting with members, considering it the best part of her job. Reflecting on her role, Kaylee emphasizes the importance of reaching out to members when detecting potential issues, ensuring a positive experience. She also appreciates how McLeod Co-op prioritizes safety through various training initiatives.

Kaylee’s fresh perspective and efficiency-driven mindset contribute to the team’s success. She aspires to bring valuable insights, noting she, “really likes to try and make things more efficient whenever possible. If nothing else, I can teach everyone a few tricks in Excel.”

Overall, Kaylee’s most rewarding moments involve positively impacting members’ lives through proactive outreach. Grateful for the opportunity, she looks forward to a long and fulfilling career at McLeod Co-op, dedicated to providing exceptional service to members.

BRADY, APPRENTICE LINE-WORKER

Meet Brady, one of our new Apprentice Line-Workers who joined the Co-op in May 2023. Brady’s love for working from heights and in the outdoors drew him to the line work, and McLeod Co-op’s positive reputation brought him to the Co-op.



Brady describes his experience at the Co-op so far as “great”. He enjoys going to work each day because of camaraderie he shares with his team, whom he considers friends. Witnessing the restoration of lights after an outage stands out as a rewarding highlight of his job.

Coworkers have played a crucial role in Brady’s growth, providing ample opportunities to expand his knowledge in the trade and learn about the local area. Embracing his perspective as an ‘outsider’ Brady believes in bringing fresh ideas to the table, fostering mutual growth for everyone. “I believe anytime you have someone coming in from the outside the organization you have the ability to bring new ideas to the table.”

One of Brady’s most memorable experiences was pulling an all-nighter with another lineman, restoring power—a testament to the dedication and teamwork at McLeod Co-op. “There is nothing better or more rewarding than seeing the lights go back on after an outage. It’s a highlight of the job.”

Brady enjoys meeting members and the family-like atmosphere at the Co-op. He also takes pleasure in visiting schools in the service territory, sharing knowledge about his unique job with curious kids.

PEYTON, APPRENTICE LINE-WORKER

Meet Peyton, another new Apprentice Line-Worker, who joined McLeod Co-op Power in December 2022. After graduating high school Peyton ventured into the construction field while concurrently pursuing a business degree at Bemidji State University. Eventually, he realized that he found more satisfaction in hands-on, manual work and decided to make a career shift towards line work.



Keen on joining a cooperative after completing line school, Peyton closely monitored job openings on the Minnesota Rural Electric Association website while gaining valuable experience with a contractor. McLeod Co-op became his ideal choice, close to home.

Peyton appreciates the welcoming and supportive environment at McLeod Co-op. The daily variety and diverse challenges keep the job exciting and new each day. He also appreciates the focus on quality training and safety. “McLeod Co-op provides me with training requirements to support me through my apprenticeship and offers classes and seminars to help further my understanding of important and advanced aspects of the job,” he shared.

Bringing experience from previous roles, Peyton offers diverse perspectives on approaching tasks, contributing to the team’s efficiency. His favorite moments involve responding to storm-related outages, collaborating with coworkers to swiftly resolve issues and restore power. “During more significant storms when the whole team is working and we divide into different areas to restore power is my favorite part of the job. Teamwork during such challenging times is extremely gratifying.”

Peyton finds a lot of fulfillment in troubleshooting outages, witnessing the lights come back on after identifying and fixing problems.

Peyton also emphasizes the significance of work safety at the Co-op, highlighting the collective commitment to completing tasks safely and efficiently. Whether coordinating in the office or working in the field, everyone plays a crucial role in building, fixing, and improving the electrical system.

While we've had to say goodbye to good people with a lot of experience, McLeod Co-op Power embraces the transition of welcoming new talent. Kaylee, Brady, and Peyton represent the vibrant future of our Co-op, embodying dedication, innovation, and a commitment to serving our members with excellence.

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 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 2024, there are three districts up for election:

- District 4: Kingman, Osceola, Brookfield, Boon Lake, Preston Lake, Hector, Melville, Bird Island, Norfolk, and Palmyra Townships in Renville County and East Lake Lillian Township in Kandiyohi County.
- District 5: Lynn and Acoma Townships in McLeod County, and Ellsworth Township in Meeker County.
- District 6: New Auburn, Green Isle, Arlington, and Dryden Townships in Sibley County, and Penn Township in McLeod County.

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 4, 5, and 6; 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, 2024. 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

2024 ANNUAL MEETING

The McLeod Co-op Power Annual Meeting will take place on Tuesday, July 16, 2024.

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An automatic generator can operate your sump pump, furnace fan, lights, refrigerator, and more. McLeod Co-op Power sells and installs automatic generator systems by Briggs and Stratton. We also offer an annual maintenance program for generators.

Call (800) 494-6272 for more info!



3515 11th St. East
Glencoe, MN 55336

WWW.MCLEODCOOP.COM

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OFFICE PHONE
(320) 864-3148
(800) 494-6272

24-HOUR OUTAGE PHONE
(800) 927-5685

WEBSITE
www.mcleodcoop.com

EMAIL ADDRESS
mcpainfo@mcleodcoop.com

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Ronald Meier

EDITOR
Dan Ehrke and Fuller Creative

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
District 1:
Kirk Newman
(952) 955-3319

District 2:
Joe Griebie
(320) 779-1101

District 3:
David Resch, Vice President
(952) 449-1793

District 4:
Doug Kirtz, President
(320) 583-7673

District 5:
Allan Duesterhoeft
(320) 587-9134

District 6:
Gary Burdorf, Asst. Secretary-Treasurer
(507) 964-5815

District 7:
Randy Hlavka, GRE Representative
(320) 583-0037

District 8:
Keith Peterson
(320) 583-0997

District 9:
Susan Anderson, Secretary-Treasurer
(952) 250-3109

McLeod Cooperative Power is an equal opportunity employer and provider.