

February 2026 Vol. 10 Issue 2
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

MiNews

**Cold snap,
peak energy
alerts & MISO**

Gain peace of
mind with an electric
water heater

*Deadlines approach
for scholarships and
Youth Tour*

SPEED
LIMIT
35



January chill

The end of January brought some downright cold temperatures and dangerous wind chills to our region. Such below-zero conditions place additional stress on our electric distribution system, but I'm proud to report that our infrastructure performed exceptionally well.

Extreme cold can sometimes cause electric conductor splices and sleeves to shrink and fail due to thermal contraction. Thankfully, MiEnergy's system maintenance and ongoing investments in our electric lines once again paid off, ensuring reliable electricity for our members during those frigid conditions.

PEAK ENERGY ALERTS

The cold snap also provided an opportunity to issue peak energy alerts, which are part of our ongoing efforts to control wholesale power costs. During these alerts, members were encouraged to voluntarily conserve energy.

It's important to emphasize that a peak energy alert is not triggered by an electricity shortage in our area. It is an economic tool. It is a strategy that reduces financial costs associated with nonemergency demand. It helps reduce peak electric demand, which drives savings on wholesale power costs.

Historically, it was used on the coldest and hottest days of the year. That held true with the January cold spell. But with all regional utilities' power being managed by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) market (which includes 15 states and a Canadian province), the temps here may not necessarily be extreme to trigger a peak energy alert. An event could be triggered by high energy use farther south of our location. By reducing demand during these times, Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale power provider, avoids paying premium prices for electricity. These savings are passed on to MiEnergy, helping keep your retail rates as low as possible.

We partner with neighboring cooperatives, Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services and People's Energy Cooperative, to send public service announcements to local TV and radio stations. Working together helps amplify the message throughout our

communities, encouraging voluntary steps to save energy.

Peak energy alerts are strictly about managing energy costs - they have minimal correlation with energy shortages. The messaging has been around for decades and has been very successful at controlling wholesale power costs.

We have thousands of members who participate in our energy management programs, which automatically pause electric water heaters and interrupt heating systems (heat is automatically switched to a backup source) to reduce electricity use during high-cost windows.

MISO NOTICES

MISO notices are related to reliability. During the extreme cold, MISO issued a maximum generation notice due to high demand from unexpected power plant and transmission outages. In 2022, we moved a large amount of our water heaters and all of our generators from being controlled during a peak alert to MISO registration. Instead of using these demand response assets for financial gain, we use them for reliability purposes. Our demand response assets are then part of MISO's toolkit. As the electric grid operator, MISO is able to dispatch any registered energy management load when they feel there may be a shortfall of generation. Our energy management programs were activated on January 24 at MISO's request. In addition, members on our standby generator rate helped reduce load as their generators were activated. MISO did not require additional public action.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GROWTH

While on the topic of extreme weather conditions and energy-related notices, it's important to discuss the future and favorable growth in electric load. It is beneficial for MiEnergy to grow in the future to spread operating costs among more members. We've openly discussed a proposal for a small edge data center-type electric load in Harmony. This would generate additional kilowatt-hour sales and add margins for our cooperative and the city of Harmony. These added margins would help keep MiEnergy's rates lower.

While growth is critical, our commitment to energy efficiency and conservation programs remains a priority. Whether for residential, farm or commercial energy accounts, these programs allow MiEnergy to better manage power costs, protect reliability and meet the needs of our members.

MiEnergy and Dairyland are in a unique and beneficial situation: we have excess power generation and existing transmission capacity. We're optimistic about MiEnergy's future—balancing strategic growth opportunities with the continued success of our energy management programs to deliver affordable, reliable power.

As always, I welcome your calls, emails or visits to discuss any questions or thoughts you may have.



YOUTH TOUR CONTEST DEADLINE FEBRUARY 23

Two students, one from Minnesota and one from Iowa, will be selected from eligible candidates to attend the 2026 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. We are accepting applications until February 23. Must be a son, daughter or legal dependent of a MiEnergy Cooperative member to apply; the student must be a current sophomore or junior in high school.

IOWA YOUTH TOUR JUNE 14-20
MINNESOTA YOUTH TOUR JUNE 15-20

Students who meet the application requirements must attend an in-person interview:

MARCH 16 @ 8:30 A.M.
MN STUDENTS @ RUSHFORD

MARCH 18 @ 8:30 A.M.
IA STUDENTS @ CRESCO

Visit www.MiEnergy.coop/youthtour to apply!

BE THE WINNER OF A \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIP

COMMUNITY SERVICE SCHOLARSHIPS

MiEnergy gives scholarships to high school seniors to help them further their education. Applications are due **March 2**. Must be a son, daughter or legal dependent of a MiEnergy Cooperative member.

As a cooperative, MiEnergy has a strong commitment to youth and community. The program recognizes high school seniors who demonstrate cooperative spirit through service to others. Up to 80 \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded this year. Scholarships are funded with unclaimed capital credit funds that would otherwise be forfeited to the state.

Visit www.mienergy.coop/scholarships for details.

**APPLY ONLINE
DEADLINE
MARCH 2**

\$80,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS TO BE GIVEN AWAY IN 2026

Board room highlights | Jan. 29, 2026

- CFO Shelly Hove provided the financial report with a favorable year-end 2025.
- The board approved the 2026 operating budget.
- Management provided updates that included operations, large load opportunities and the year-end audit.
- Received the nominating committee report for District 1.
- Approved by-law revisions to present to the membership for changes.
- Advisory committee members were appointed for a three-year term.
- Compliance and Training Coordinator Brad Pecinovsky shared the goals and objectives developed by the safety committee.
- CEO Brian Krambeer provided an update on cooperative subsidiaries.

The next meeting is February 26 at the Cresco office at 9 a.m.

SHINING LIGHT ON THE 1930s

CELEBRATING NINETY YEARS
1936 2026
MIENERGY COOPERATIVE

1935 The REA (Rural Electrification Administration) was formed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt

1936 Tri-County Electric Cooperative in Rushford and Howard County Electric Cooperative in Cresco were formed

1938 The lights came on for the first time in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Erick Rogness located a half-mile southeast of Harmony (Tri-County Electric Co-op)

1939 First 13 members' farms were energized (Howard County Electric Co-op)

1939 The MN co-op subscribed to the publication Minnesota Electric Farmer for members at the rate of one and a half cents per copy

Dale Walter 1939

Larry Coates 1939

Mr. & Mrs. Erick Rogness 1938

Ed Reishus, George James and Carl Legwold

Tree Trimming 1939

Harmony Substation - March 1938

**IT'S COMING—
ELECTRICITY
FOR YOU**

You could be eligible for a FREE electric water heater

And the peace of mind it brings

Looking for a new water heater? MiEnergy Cooperative is your trusted source, with decades of experience meeting member water heating needs. In fact, 69% of our members consider MiEnergy their go-to resource for electric water heaters. Here's why you should, too:

BENEFITS OF MIENERGY'S WATER HEATER PROGRAM

- FREE Electric Water Heaters:** Members building a new home or switching from gas to electric qualify for FREE water heaters (85 or 105 gallons) by joining our energy management program.
- Significant Rebates:** Other members can save big on top-quality water heaters when enrolling in the program.
- FREE Service Calls:** Enjoy hassle-free service from our energy experts during regular business hours (Mon–Thurs, 7 a.m.– 3:30 p.m.).
- Lifetime Tank Warranty:** Register your water heater online within 90 days of installation to receive a FREE lifetime tank warranty and six-year parts coverage.

SMARTER WATER HEATING WITH EASE

Our advanced water heater technology heats your water during off-peak time when electricity is most affordable. The power-efficient design stores hot water for later, so you can enjoy uninterrupted hot showers while supporting grid stability. Plus:

- Water heaters operate like a smart appliance—no extra effort required.
- Get FREE Evergreen energy blocks upon request for sustainable heating.

WHY CHOOSE ELECTRIC?

Electric water heaters are a clean, safe and reliable choice with lower operating costs. Their larger size and enhanced insulation ensure hot water when you need it most. Plus, they last longer—10–15 years compared to 8–12 for gas models.

Be prepared—choose an electric water heater from MiEnergy and enjoy the peace of mind you deserve!

For details, call 800-432-2285 or visit www.MiEnergy.coop/water-heaters

ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS 101

It's like pushing snooze on your water heater

Energy management programs, also known as load control, help balance supply and demand. It consists of interrupting electric water heaters, electric heat systems, air conditioners, irrigation pumps, grain drying systems and whole farm operations during critical times. It reduces electricity demand during peak use hours and in turn helps keep electric rates affordable.

Dairyland Power Cooperative, MiEnergy's wholesale power supplier, operates a network of radio transmitters which send out signals to devices installed at the member's home or business to interrupt power.



Legislative session priorities for electric cooperatives

Electric cooperatives, like MiEnergy, are engaged in the political process due to the impact legislation can have on the affordability and reliability of electricity for the members and communities we serve. Here is a summary of some of the issues we are seeing in Iowa and Minnesota.

Electric cooperatives in Iowa are

focused on protecting Iowa's defined electric service territories, an important law that helps ensure every corner of the state receives consistent, cost-effective electric service.

Another legislative challenge that could resurface involves third-party or "community solar" proposals that would attempt to allow non-utility

solar developers to provide retail electric service inside an established utility's service area, in direct conflict with service territory law.

Iowa members can learn more about advocacy efforts at www.IARuralpower.org.

For decades, Minnesota has maintained a moratorium on new nuclear energy projects, limiting the state's ability to explore carbon-free and reliable power generation. As electric cooperatives work to meet growing demand and integrate more renewable energy, baseload power from advanced nuclear technologies offers immense potential.

Nuclear energy plays a key role in the clean energy transition. Unlike wind or solar, it provides constant, reliable power regardless of weather conditions or time of day. With advancing technologies like small modular reactors (SMRs), nuclear energy can complement renewables while reducing carbon emissions.

Removing the moratorium doesn't commit Minnesota to nuclear projects today, but it opens the door to important conversations about ensuring a balanced energy mix for the future.

Minnesota members can learn more about advocacy efforts at mnnuclearenergyalliance.org and www.voicesforcooperativepower.com/minnesota.



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Submit your family's favorite recipe for consideration to be printed in the April 2026 newsletter. Deadline is March 15. Send to Meagan at PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136 or email: mmoellers@MiEnergy.coop. MiRecipes will be printed quarterly in this publication. If we publish your recipe, you will receive a \$5 credit on your next electric bill. Limit one recipe published per member annually.

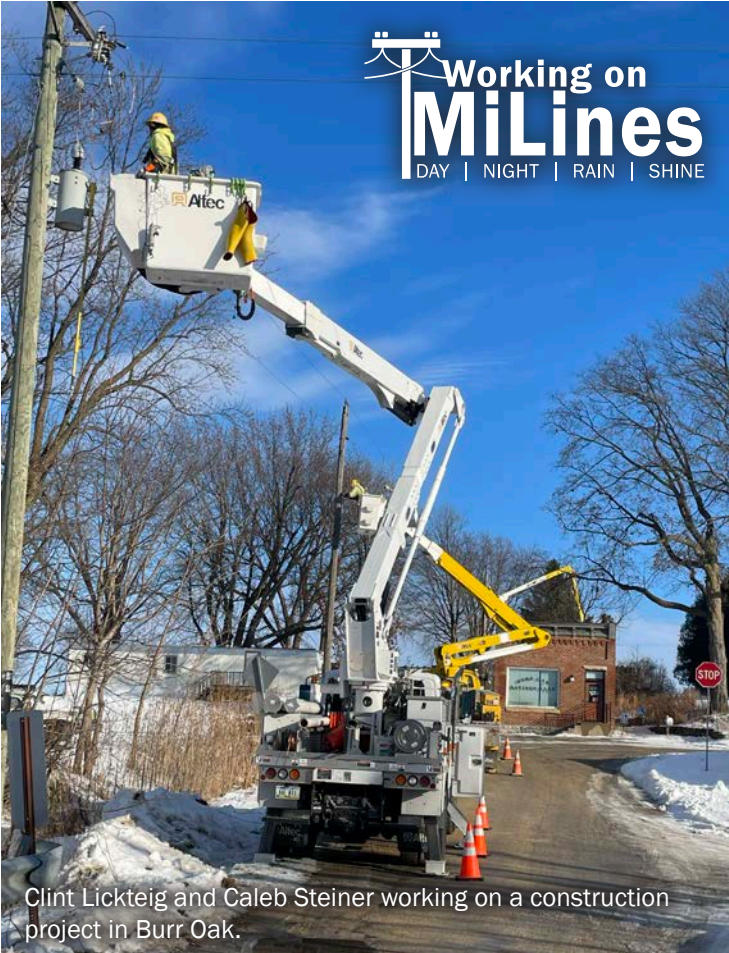
PUMPKIN CREAM CHEESE SWIRL BREAD WITH STREUSAL TOPPING | JANICE DOUGHERTY, WAUKON

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Batter: | Filling: |
| 1-1/2 c. sugar | 8 oz. cream cheese |
| 2 eggs (large) | 1/2 c. powder sugar |
| 1/2 c. oil | 1 t. vanilla |
| 1/2 c. pumpkin | 1 egg |
| 1-3/4 c. flour | |
| 2 t. pumpkin pie spice | Streusel: |
| 1 t. baking soda | 1/4 c. flour |
| 1/2 T. baking powder | 3 T. brown sugar |
| 1 t. salt | 2 T. butter |
| 1/3 c. water | 1/2 t. pumpkin pie spice |
| | Pinch of salt |

Preheat oven to 350° and grease 8 c. (9x5") loaf pan. Whisk sugar, eggs, oil and pumpkin in a large bowl. Stir flour, pumpkin spice, soda, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Stir dry ingredients into wet ingredients until barely mixed. Add 1/3 c. water. Gently stir batter, it should have lumps, do not over mix. In a separate bowl, use mixer to combine filling ingredients until smooth. Combine the streusel ingredients in a small bowl. Pinch together and make crumbs. To assemble, pour half the batter in prepared pan, top with cream cheese mixture, add the remaining batter and top with streusel. Bake until toothpick comes clean, approximately 50-60 minutes.

PLAY DOUGH | DONNA RUE, RIDGEWAY

- 1 c. flour
1 c. water
1 T. oil
1/2 c. salt
1 t. cream of tartar
Food coloring (optional)
- Mix all ingredients, except food coloring, in a pan over medium heat until mixture pulls away from sides. Knead until cool. Add food coloring. Not edible. Will be good for several months in airtight container.



Clint Lickteig and Caleb Steiner working on a construction project in Burr Oak.

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MiEnergy Board Director Kim Nelson (left) is pictured with Board Chair Dean Nierling. Nelson with recently received the Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate from the National Rural Electric Association (NRECA). An ever-changing business environment has imposed new demands on electric cooperative directors, requiring increased knowledge of changes in the electric utility business, new governance skills and a solid knowledge of the cooperative principles and business model. The program requires attendance and a demonstrated understanding of the basic competencies in five core courses: director duties and liabilities, understanding the electric business, board operations and process, strategic planning and financial decision making. Congratulations Kim!




Personnel changes at the co-op

RETIREMENTS


Brian Bauer retired from the cooperative on January 8. He began his employment on July 5, 1995, retiring as a journeyman foreman with MiEnergy. Thank you Brian for your 31 years of service.

Marlyn Ohloff retired from MiEnergy on January 9. He began his employment on July 1, 1995, retiring as the storekeeper/purchasing. Thanks for your 31 years of dedication and service to MiEnergy.


Tim McConnell retired from the cooperative on January 9. He began his employment on November 16, 2006, retiring as the custodian/general laborer with MiEnergy. Thank you Tim for your 19 years of service.



Bauer



Ohloff



McConnell



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

OFFICE INFORMATION
Open Monday-Thursday 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. Friday by appointment.
IOWA 24049 Highway 9, PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136
MINNESOTA 31110 Cooperative Way, PO Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971
This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

PHONE NUMBERS
LOCAL 563-547-3801 (Cresco); 507-864-7783 (Rushford)
TOLL-FREE & 24/7 OUTAGE REPORTING 800-432-2285
PAYMENT LINE 24/7 855-941-3631
UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING 811

ONLINE
WEBSITE www.MiEnergy.coop
SOCIAL MEDIA Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DISTRICT 1 Kim Nelson and Dennis Ptacek, secretary
DISTRICT 2 Dean Nierling, chair and Ron Stevens, vice chair
DISTRICT 3 Don Petersen, treasurer and Skip Wieser
DISTRICT 4 Kyle Holthaus and Carl Reicks
DISTRICT 5 Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer

MANAGEMENT STAFF
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SHELLY HOVE chief financial officer
JILL HUFFMAN broadband chief operating officer
STEVE OIAN vice president of electric operations
VASSIL VUTOV vice president of information technology
MIKE WALTON vice president of engineering and planning
KENT WHITCOMB vice president of member services

MINEWS STAFF
MEAGAN MOELLERS communications specialist, editor
ANNIE HOILAND communications specialist
BRENDA TESCH marketing and communications manager

2026 OFFICES CLOSED
MAR 5 Employee Development Day
APR 3 Good Friday
MAY 25 Memorial Day
JUN 4 Employee Development Day
JUL 3 Independence Day Observance
SEP 7 Labor Day
SEP 10 Employee Development Day
NOV 26-27 Thanksgiving Holiday
DEC 15 Employee Development Day
DEC 24-25 Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
DEC 31 New Year's Eve, close at 11 a.m.
JAN 1 New Year's Day

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Mid-winter is a great time to ensure you're making the most of your home heating system. Replace or clean furnace filters. Listen for strange noises and check for uneven heating indicating it needs servicing. Ensure vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or rugs as proper airflow helps your system work less and saves energy.



Online Resources

PAY YOUR BILL
VIEW ENERGY USE
SEE CURRENT OUTAGES
TIPS FOR SAVING ENERGY
WAYS TO STAY SAFE
LATEST NEWS

Discover more at www.MiEnergy.coop

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Should I upgrade my appliance?

Buying a new appliance can feel daunting. Before you hand over your hard-earned money, here's how to choose an appliance that will help you save money over time.

Keep in mind that not all new appliances are high efficiency and not all old appliances are inefficient. The less efficient your current appliance, the more you will save with an upgrade. The yellow EnergyGuide label on new appliances shows the yearly energy cost, kilowatt-hour electricity use and Energy Star logo, if certified.

Refrigerators have seen major efficiency improvements over the years. New refrigerators use up to 73% less energy than 1970s models and about a third less than 20-year-old models.

If your 80s fridge uses 2,000 kWh per year, at 11.25¢ per kWh, it costs \$225 per year to operate. New Energy Star-certified refrigerator prices start at \$500 with yearly energy costs ranging from \$31 to \$98. Payback on the upgrade happens more quickly if you are saving \$194 versus \$127 a year.

If you intend to keep your old appliance, you can maximize efficiency and keep your food safe by setting your refrigerator to 37 degrees and your freezer at 0 degrees.

New Energy Star-certified clothes washers and dryers are also more efficient than older models. Use the Energy Star Product Finder at energystar.gov to compare products. Integrated Modified Energy Factor measures the washer's energy efficiency. A higher number is better. Integrated Water Factor measures water efficiency. A lower number is better.

Energy Star-certified front loaders use about 50% less energy and water than top-load agitator washers and about 25% less energy and water than top-load impeller washers



that don't have an agitator.

The annual cost savings will depend on the style (front or top-loading and with or without an agitator) you have now and the style you upgrade to. According to one \$700 front loading washing machine's EnergyGuide, based on six loads of laundry a week and an electricity cost of 11.25¢ per kWh, the yearly energy cost is \$12 for 106 kWh. Similar non-Energy Star-certified models are \$37 per year.

If you can't justify an upgrade, you can improve your washer and dryer efficiency by washing in cold water, not over drying clothes and cleaning your lint trap between every load.

Just like the light bulbs in your home, LED televisions offer increased efficiency. Energy Star-certified televisions are 34% more efficient than conventional models. If you have a working LED television, swapping to an Energy Star model is more efficient but may not make up for the cost of a new TV. Instead, check the efficiency settings on your TV or buy a smart power strip that turns off other connected devices when not in use.

Whatever appliance you are upgrading or replacing, make an informed decision by comparing the cost of operation and shopping Energy Star models to help lower your electric bill.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.