

MiNews

March 2022 Vol. 6 Issue 3
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

Plan before you plant

Plant trees in the right place to
keep yourself and the co-op happy

**CHECK OUT
THE FUTURE
OF ENERGY
STORAGE**

Annual meeting is
charging forward

**Achieve greater energy efficiency
by getting your ducts in a row**

Josh Mitchell, MiEnergy's system forester, urges members to plant with caution. A tree properly planted today can avoid problems tomorrow.



Legislative season begins

The legislative sessions in both Iowa and Minnesota are proceeding, and I'm grateful that all our elected officials have been receptive and supportive of electric cooperative issues this session. Our focus for 2022 is on broadband expansion, electric vehicle charging and an array of new state regulatory requirements in operating our electric distribution system. I'm appreciative that phone calls and emails are always well received by our area legislators, and they are responsive to our input, direction and recommendations.

BROADBAND FUNDING

Broadband funding is a top legislative issue in both Iowa and Minnesota. In Minnesota, during 2021, the legislature approved \$70 million for the state's Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program. Funding for this program was from the federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars. Because of the federal requirements and delays requiring approval, no rounds for funding were allowed in 2021. The current plan is to appropriate an additional \$110 million from the state's unallocated capital projects to get the grant rounds underway, and we expect two rounds of broadband funding this year. The Walz administration is also proposing an additional \$170 million from the state's surplus for the Border-to-Border program.

In Iowa, Governor Reynolds has already completed several rounds of broadband grant funding through the Office of the Chief Information Officer. MiEnergy's broadband partner, Harmony Telephone Company, has recently been awarded funds of over \$8 million for four projects that include eastern Winneshiek County and the rural areas of Alta Vista, Cresco and Schley. More information on these broadband grant awards will be forthcoming after official state acceptance.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

For electric vehicle charging, we advocate that a significant majority of state and/or federal funding target rural Minnesota and rural Iowa to alleviate range anxiety, which is a barrier to electric vehicle growth.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

As with any legislative session, unanticipated regulatory requirements can impact the operation of our electric cooperative. This year is no different.

Solar setback legislation in Iowa that would limit utility-scale solar projects to soil type would dramatically limit renewable energy expansion. Extension of the solar tax credit backlog, along with the elimination of the geothermal tax credits, are also issues we are watching in the tax bills in the House and Senate.

In Minnesota and Iowa, we are watching the cable association for pole attachment legislation. In other states, legislation has been proposed requiring utility distribution upgrades – at the utility's cost – to accommodate a pole attachment at a fixed rate. MiEnergy uses a cost-of-service formula from the Federal Communications Commission to calculate our pole attachment rates, much like we establish our retail electric rates. Cable companies have not expanded broadband in rural areas because of low density and lack of profitability. Pole attachment fees, if utilized, are not the barrier to expansion.

In Minnesota, we are introducing legislation to fix a regulatory overreach that currently requires utilities to pay a state electric permit fee for each load control receiver replaced. MiEnergy has over 13,000 load control receivers in our members' homes, primarily as part of our water heater energy management program. The electric permit fee would cost the cooperative \$500,000. The requirement of a state electric permit would also overwhelm the state inspectors if they are required to inspect the receivers.

Another regulatory overreach in Minnesota involves the Department of Revenue re-interpreting a 1939 law that grants electric cooperatives an exemption from personal property tax for attachments and appurtenances outside incorporated areas, such as streetlights and meters. We believe this is contrary to the law and are introducing legislation to further clarify the 1939 law that has been followed for over 80 years.

In addition to our electric issues, we continue to advocate for greater Minnesota and rural Iowa as both states evaluate infrastructure spending with budget surpluses.

As always, I welcome your calls, emails or personal visits.



POWER OUT? BLAME A SQUIRREL.

While severe weather causes most outages, if it's nice out and your electricity goes off, it could be caused by a squirrel.

We all know to play it safe around electricity, but squirrels don't. They scamper and chew around transformers, substations and utility poles where they can disrupt high-voltage equipment, shutting down power for you and me.

But it's not just squirrels. Snakes, birds and other critters can find their way into dangerous places. There's no official recordkeeping of wildlife-caused power outages, but estimates run as high as 20%.

Electric utilities are constantly devising new ways to keep wildlife away from dangerous electrical equipment—the resulting power disruptions are inconvenient for energy consumers, and always fatal for the squirrel.

INTERESTING ELECTRICITY



Electricity turns dark into light, makes hot foods cold and cold foods hot, washes the dishes and searches the internet. It is essential to our everyday lives, so much so, that we rarely think about it. But behind the scenes, interesting things are happening.

Here are three interesting facts about electricity that cause even some experts to scratch and shake their heads.

ELECTRICITY MUST BE USED OR STORED AFTER IT'S GENERATED.

A rechargeable battery stores electricity—more on that later. But the kind of electricity you use in your home needs to be used after it's generated.

It's true. Electricity produced from power plants, solar panels, wind turbines and hydro dams in the U.S. needs to be perfectly timed for when you decide to cook dinner, wash clothes or watch TV. The national grid of power generators, wires and substations are an incredibly complex network that makes electricity

flow smoothly.

A vast and intricate system of devices controls that power flow in a precisely balanced way. It's one reason utility operators must be strategic when adding renewable energy to the nation's fuel mix—a coal or natural gas plant can ramp generation up or down fairly quickly to meet changing energy demand. But solar energy and wind power depend more on the whims of Mother Nature, which adds an extra degree of difficulty to power management. However, technology advances could be a gamechanger.

Large-scale battery storage technology is rapidly improving, allowing big batteries to offer another way for electric utilities to better balance the flow and timing of electricity. Wider use of large utility-scale batteries could also make it much easier to add more solar and wind energy to our grid—by storing energy when it's breezy and sunny, then using it at night and during calm weather.

HIGHWAYS COULD CHARGE ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN THE FUTURE.

If researchers have their way, electric vehicles wouldn't need to plug in—they could charge while they're being driven.

"Wireless dynamic charging" projects are underway around the world. The idea is similar to wireless chargers you can buy for your home electronics, the kind you can set near a charger rather than actually plugging in the smart phone or other device.

Charging cars while they're driving along the freeway is of course a lot more ambitious. But some developers predict that within five years, in addition to today's special high-occupancy-vehicle lanes for rush-hour traffic in large cities, there could be stretches of vehicle-charging lanes.

Futurists expect electric trucks would be the most likely users of wireless charging lanes. Most electric cars, after all, can charge overnight in a residential garage. Wireless dynamic truck charging could keep the deliveries rolling rather than having drivers sitting and drinking coffee for the several hours it could take a conventional plug-in to get trucks back to full power.

Electricity is such a basic part of our everyday life; it's easy to forget about it. But every now and then it's good to think about all its benefits and mysteries.

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

Board room highlights | February 24, 2022

- CFO Hove presented a favorable financial report.
- Received a clean audit report.
- Approved contracts for 2022 overhead and underground line construction.
- Reviewed and approved the agenda for the annual meeting.
- Selected Mike Tuohy as a trustee to serve on the Operation Round Up board.

Special Board Meeting, February 25, 2022

- Reviewed bids for the Preston outpost with Wieser Brothers and architect Linda Powers. Discussed Rural Utilities Service financing. Accepted the bids and timeline for the project.

The next board meeting will be held at the Rushford office on March 31 at 9 a.m.



GET YOUR DUCTS IN A ROW

For most people, the inner workings of their home's heating and cooling system are out of sight, out of mind. It is ignored until something goes wrong.

Understanding the basics of how a heating and cooling system works can help you create a more efficient, comfortable living space.

If you have a forced-air system, you have ducts. A forced-air system consists of the equipment that heats or cools the air and the ductwork that moves it around the home. Your furnace, or air handler, has a fan inside that pushes the heated or cooled air through the supply ducts into the rooms. The return ducts bring air back to the furnace to be heated or cooled again and sent back through the home.

This continuous loop of supply and return is susceptible to inefficient practices and leakage. Here are some steps you can take to keep your system running efficiently and maintain a comfortable living space.

CHECK YOUR VENT DAMPERS

Make sure the air you paid to heat or cool is freely moving through the home. Closing registers does not save energy. It can cause your system to work harder, shortening its lifespan and increasing duct leakage. If you don't do anything else after you read this, do check that your supply register dampers are open and not blocked by furniture or rugs throughout your home. This is easy to do and costs nothing.

SEAL YOUR DUCTS

If your ductwork travels through an attic, crawl space or other unconditioned—not heated or cooled—space, it could have holes, cracks or gaps that cause duct leakage. This wastes energy and money by heating or cooling spaces you don't use.

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates 20% to 30% of the air moved through duct systems is lost due to duct leakage. You could have the most efficient heating or cooling unit available, but if your ducts leak, you are wasting energy.

In addition to wasted energy, leaky ducts can cause air-quality issues. Leaks in the return ducts can pull air into

the ducts from surrounding spaces, through the furnace and then deliver it into the home. This can introduce dust, dirt, insulation particles and other gross stuff that is in your attic, crawl space or walls.

Sealing ducts can be difficult because they are hidden behind the walls, floors and/or ceilings. Attics and crawl spaces can be hard places to work. You can hire a professional to test your duct system for leakage with specialized equipment and seal your ducts.

If you seal ducts yourself, do not use duct tape. Duct tape dries out quickly and loses its adhesion. Seal with metal tape or duct mastic specifically designed for the job.

One relatively easy place to seal is where the duct meets the floor, wall or ceiling. Remove the registers and look for cracks or gaps around the edges. Remember to wear gloves to protect your hands.

CHANGE YOUR FILTER

The filter is on the return side of the duct system. It could be in the return registers or in the furnace. Checking your system's filter regularly and replacing it when dirty can help you improve your heating and cooling efficiency.

When it comes to filters, my philosophy is buy cheap and replace often. I don't know about you, but I have a much more difficult time throwing away a \$20 filter than a \$5 filter. Save by buying filters in bulk or set up auto ship for every three months.

In most cases, filters are designed to protect the furnace, not improve air quality. If you are worried about your home's air quality, getting the ducts cleaned and sealed can help. Add an air purifier if you need additional air filtration. Look for Energy Star-rated models.

Now that you know the inner workings of your HVAC system and what it needs to run efficiently, you can improve and maintain the comfort in your home year-round.

Miranda Boutelle is the director of operations and customer engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company.



MEMBERS helping members

RECare Consumer Contribution Fund

Local families received an average amount of \$173 last year. Now is your chance to help out your neighbors. Consider a contribution today!

RECare is a consumer contribution fund in which members like you assist other members who need help in paying utility bills. Consider a one-time contribution or enroll to provide monthly contributions. Whether it is \$1, \$5 or \$10 a month or a single donation of an amount of your choice, when combined with those of other generous members, your assistance can go a long way in helping others. MiEnergy Cooperative appreciates your generosity and the pledges given by members to help our members in need. What a great way to show you care about your community and know that you can make a difference! Complete the form below or visit www.MiEnergy.coop to do it online.

MINNESOTA MEMBERS:

To apply for RECare funds, please contact the MiEnergy office at 800-432-2285.

IOWA MEMBERS:

To apply for RECare funds, please contact Northeast Iowa Community Action offices in Chickasaw, Howard and Winneshiek counties.

Consumer Authorization Form



YES! I would like to be part of Members Helping Members & contribute to RECare.

Monthly Pledge: \$1 \$2 \$5 Other _____

I understand the amount above will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill.

One-time Contribution: \$ _____ Make check out to RECare, c/o MiEnergy Cooperative.

Name: _____

Address: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Account Number: _____

Date: _____

Mail to: MiEnergy Cooperative, PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136



TODAY'S seedling becomes TOMORROW'S mature tree

Plant the right tree in the right place for your safety and its longevity



Planning on doing some spring planting? Where you place the tree matters. Planting taller trees away from overhead utility lines and your house will help reduce the likelihood of them taking down power lines or damaging your home during a storm.

MiEnergy and its contractors work hard to clear the system's rights-of-way, but the best way to avoid trees damaging power lines is to think before you plant.

As you plan any planting this year, always consider the mature height of the tree and make sure to stay away from overhead power lines.

Keep areas around electric meters and transformers free of vegetation that could limit service access. It is also important to consider the location of underground lines. Keep all plants and shrubs away from pad-mounted transformers (green boxes) as well. Roots can interfere with underground utilities, wires and future repairs can damage the tree.

Remember to call 811 to have buried utilities

marked so you can safely dig around them.

Trees provide many benefits, from cleaning the air to cooling your home. Thoughtful planting of trees away from power lines will keep our community beautiful and our power reliable. MiEnergy cares about your safety.

ONE LINE YOU SHOULD NEVER CROSS

Plant the right tree in the right place – trees and power lines can coexist.

MiEnergy cuts and trims trees along the power lines to ensure reliability of power to its members. If you have any questions or concerns regarding tree cutting or trimming near the cooperative's power lines, call MiEnergy. Did you know that if given advanced notice the co-op can de-energize a power line for free? Stay safe and give the co-op a call.

Right of Way policy. Trees are the leading cause of power outages, especially when the wind blows. MiEnergy performs routine maintenance of trees and other vegetation on over 2,000



miles of overhead rights-of-way. These routine vegetation management activities are essential to maintaining reliable electric service to members and to provide for the safety of your family and general public.

Vegetation management. Vegetation management is the key to providing safe,

reliable electricity to our members. Check out a short video on MiEnergy's YouTube channel to see how electric co-ops clear rights-of-way to keep power flowing safely to members' homes.

BE SAFE AROUND TREES AND POWER LINES

MiEnergy and Safe Electricity have tips for homeowners to ensure others are safe around trees near power lines.

Kids love to climb trees. Be sure that your children know to not climb a tree near power lines. Water, sap and chemicals in trees make them able to conduct electricity. If branches are touching the wires, the tree could be energized. Even branches not touching power lines could become energized once the child's weight is added to the limb.

Severe weather can cause tree limbs to fall onto overhead power lines. Proper pruning is an important and necessary step in helping prevent this situation. Trimming trees near power lines is a dangerous job and best left to professionals.

In order to help maintain safety and electrical service reliability, your utility may either prune trees that are too close to power lines or contact a tree trimming service to do it. While simply pruning or trimming a tree is usually enough, some trees that are at risk of damaging power lines during severe weather—like dead or dying trees or those with a shallow root system—may need to be removed completely.

LANDSCAPE PLANNING

A well-planned landscape can enhance the beauty of your home and boost energy efficiency for years to come. Your landscaping decisions should depend on the climate where you live—whether it is typically warm, cool or varies greatly with both high and low temperatures.

Follow these tips from the Energy Education Council to develop a landscape that will save you money for years.

The biggest consideration in landscaping to increase winter efficiency is creating windbreaks to stop wind chills from having as much of an effect on the temperature around your home.

Planting tips for windbreaks:

- Dense trees, such as evergreens and shrubs make the best windbreaks.
- Do not plant trees too close to the south of your home if you plan on using sunshine to help heat your home. A good rule is to plant your trees at a distance of 2 to 5 times the tree's mature height.
- If snow drifts are a problem, plant shrubs on the windward side of your windbreak to help trap snow.

The biggest consideration in summer landscaping is shading your home from the heat.

Planting tips for reducing your cooling costs:

- To the south of your home, plant tall trees to provide shade. If you plant these trees far enough away (2 to 5 times the length of a grown tree), it will still allow sunshine to warm your home in the winter.
- To the west of your home, shorter trees and shrubs will protect it from the afternoon rays

Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

For more tips on smart tree planting in your community, contact your local electric cooperative or visit www.ArborDay.org.

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard... especially to power lines.

LARGE TREES	MEDIUM TREES	SMALL TREES
<p>Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maple • Oak • Spruce • Pine • Birch • Sweetgum • Linden 	<p>Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington hawthorn • Goldenrain tree • Eastern redbud • American arborvitae • Dogwoods 	<p>Height/spread of no more than 25 feet such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Star magnolia • Crabapple • Lilac
<p>Be safe! Always call 811 before you dig to locate any buried utility lines.</p> <p><small>Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association</small></p>		

Q&A with Josh Mitchell, MiEnergy's system forester



I never thought the tree would get that tall or survive at all.

It's hard to think about 10, 20, 30-plus years after planting what the tree could potentially become, but it's critical to do so in the early stages of planning. It's important to also think about the crown (top) of the tree and how it will spread out. So, height isn't the only thing to consider when planting.

When reading the label attached on the plant or tree, are there other things to consider?

A common comment is that the label said it would only get this tall. The label may say that, but it really is best to do your own research in addition to looking at the labels when purchasing from a box store or garden center. Your planting site and care will most often determine the potential of the tree. We live in an area that can have very fertile soil, where trees reach their labeled potential, plus some.

Does the plant species matter?

If it's necessary to plant by or near a power line for wind breaks, privacy, dust blocks, etc., the species you plant is very important. Some trees can tolerate repetitive trimming better than others, along with looking more pleasing to the eye after the trimming process.

New tech alert: Iron-air batteries

As the electric grid continues to evolve, new technologies are being developed to help advance the grid of the future. One of these technologies is a new form of battery storage technology called the iron-air battery, which could potentially provide long-duration energy storage for hundreds of hours.

Current battery technologies can only offer storage for tens of hours, meaning the innovative iron-air battery could provide energy for roughly 10 times longer than existing grid-scale batteries. This new technology could help ensure grid reliability even with extreme weather, such as hurricanes or powerful thunderstorms. Long-duration energy storage will also be crucial for adding more solar and wind energy to the grid since renewable energy is dependent on the weather and may not always be available when we need it. New iron-air batteries could provide the missing link by storing excess energy to be used when the sun isn't shining or the wind isn't blowing.

The battery technology itself is made up of thousands of small iron pellets that develop rust when exposed to oxygen. This process discharges the battery. When the oxygen is removed, the pellets revert back to iron, which then charges the battery. According to Form Energy, the startup company developing this new technology, this process is known as the principle of "reversible rusting". Since the battery technology mainly uses the abundant and cheap resources of water, air and iron, the technology is relatively low-cost. These resources also make the technology relatively safe since there are no heavy metals, and also make the batteries simpler to recycle.

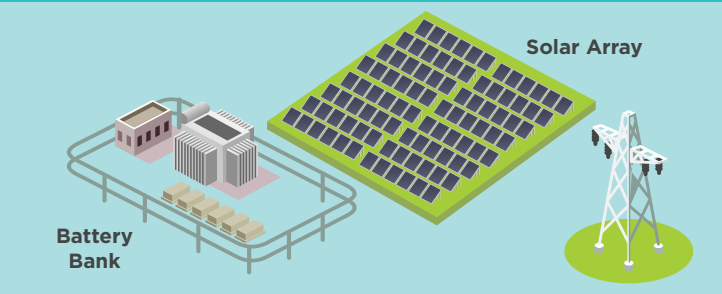
A key feature of these batteries is their low cost, with Form Energy promising a price of less than \$20 per kWh. That price is about one-tenth the cost of lithium-ion battery technology, which is currently the cheapest battery technology on the market.

Individual iron-air batteries are about the size of a washing machine, making it easy to group many batteries together into a larger, scalable system. The size of the battery module group can vary, depending on the storage needed at a specific site. This means the batteries can be placed in a variety of areas, from rural to urban, to meet energy needs.

While this technology may be a solution for long-duration energy storage, the battery is not yet ready at the commercial level-- although it is close. Form Energy estimates the battery should be

THE FUTURE OF ENERGY STORAGE

A new form of battery storage technology, known as the iron-air battery, could potentially provide long-duration energy storage for hundred of hours. Long-duration energy storage will be crucial for adding more solar and wind energy to the electric grid since renewable energy is dependent on the weather and may not always be available when needed.



ready for mass production by 2025. As a pilot project to test this groundbreaking technology, Form Energy is working with Great River Energy, a generation and transmission cooperative located in Minnesota. The 1 MW/150MWh project is anticipated to go live in 2023.

Given the importance of long-duration energy storage for future of the grid, other start-ups are also looking to develop long-duration battery storage technology.

Time will tell if the iron-air battery, or any other long-duration battery, becomes successful as a new emerging technology. In the meantime, electric utilities can start to understand where this technology may potentially fit within their own systems to make the grid more resilient and reliable. Whether this technology becomes mainstream or not, utilities will continue finding ways to provide affordable, long-duration storage as the electric grid continues to change.

Maria Kanevsky writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

Are portable space heaters efficient for your home?



Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. But unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home, which can really take a toll on your energy bills. The truth is, whether you should use space heaters really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home. If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weather stripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot. Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

Perhaps your home is energy efficient but you're cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months. Only use a space heater in small spaces that you're occupying and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space; most heaters include a general sizing table.

A word about safety: the U.S.

Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths. If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating, and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you

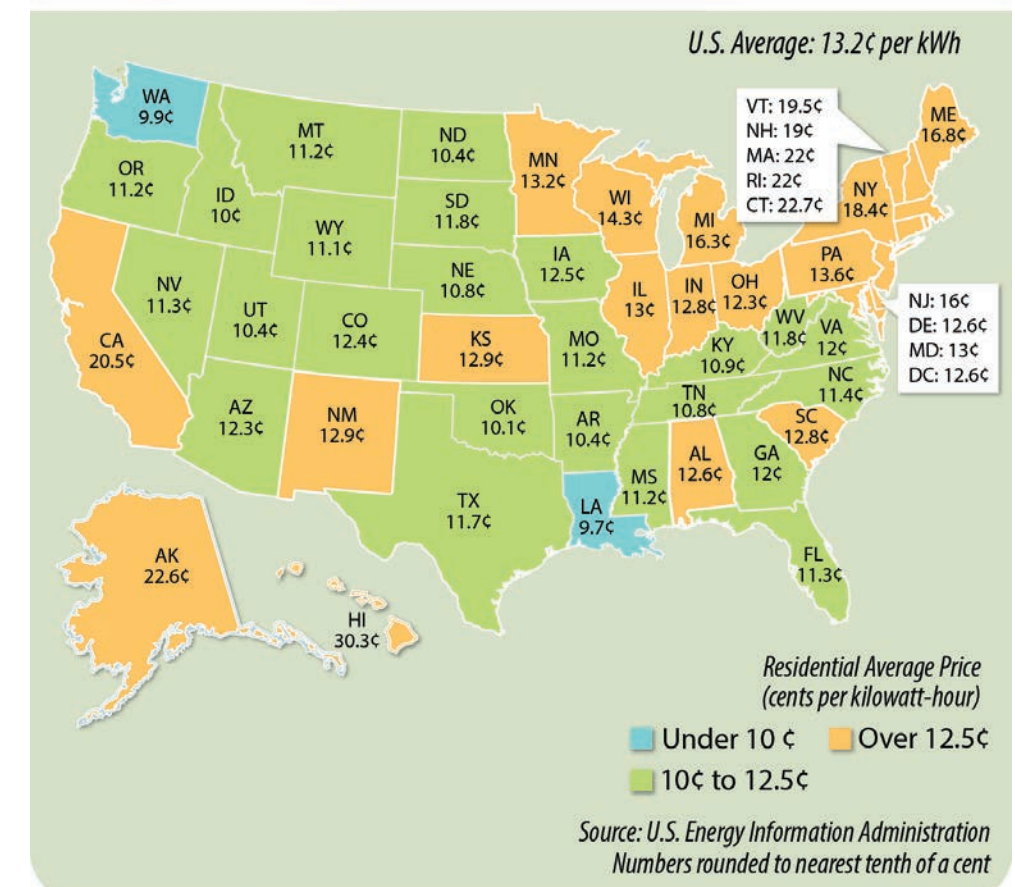
have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation and maintain warmth.

For more information on how to be energy efficient contact MiEnergy or visit www.MiEnergy.coop for resources.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2020 figures, in cents per kWh



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SURGE PROTECTION 101

A power surge is an unexpected increase in voltage, and it can occur from a variety of sources. Regardless of the cause, power surges can majorly damage electronic devices and equipment in your home.

One of the most common causes of a power surge is lightning. Most of us have experienced this during a severe thunderstorm. When lightning strikes an electrical system, the excess current must be channeled somewhere—unfortunately in many cases, it's sent through a home. Your best bet is to unplug all unused devices and electronics during severe thunderstorms.

Another common cause of power surges is electrical overload. This happens when devices or appliances are plugged into an outlet that can't handle the required amount of voltage, or if multiple devices are plugged into

one outlet through an extension cord. If you're experiencing power surges due to electrical overload, it's time to call a qualified electrician to evaluate your home's circuits and electrical needs.

Faulty wiring in a home can also cause power surges. Damaged or exposed wires can cause spikes in voltage, creating a potentially dangerous situation. If you notice signs of faulty wiring, like visible burns on outlets, buzzing sounds from outlets or frequently tripped circuit breakers, your home may be due for electrical wiring repairs and updates.

Surges can also occur after a power outage. Sometimes, when electricity is being restored and reconnected, it's common to experience a quick surge in current. Similar to advice for a surge caused by lightning, it's best to unplug sensitive electronics during the outage—then wait to plug them back

in after power is fully restored.

Aside from unplugging devices when you suspect a power surge, there are two ways you can take additional precautions to protect electronics in your home.

Point-of-use surge protection devices, like power strips, can protect electronics during most surges. But remember, not all power strips include surge protection, so read the packaging label carefully before you buy, and don't overload the power strip with too many devices. You can also install specialized electrical outlets that offer additional surge protection. Talk to a trusted electrician to learn more.

Another option is a whole-home surge protector, which can help protect your home from larger, more powerful surges. In most cases, whole-home suppressors are connected to your home's service panel and include features like thermal fuses and notification capabilities that indicate when a device has been impacted by a surge. Whole-home surge protection prices vary based on the size of the home and suppressor. Whole-home suppressors should always be connected by a licensed electrician, so consider the cost of installation as well.

Occasional power surges are inevitable, but by unplugging devices when you think a surge may occur and using additional levels of protection like power strips or whole-home suppressors, you can better safeguard your sensitive electronics and devices.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



GIRL SCOUT COOKIE DRIVE

Girl Scout Lydia Dahl (center) is pictured with her dad, MiEnergy employee Ryan, and her sister, Cora, delivering Girl Scout Cookies to employees who purchased cookies. MiEnergy donated additional boxes of cookies to deliver to local healthcare workers.



CAREER EVENT—RUSHFORD, MINN.

MiEnergy employees Steve Oian (left) and Davin Thompson (right) represented MiEnergy at Rushford-Peterson Schools "Dream Job Event" on February 18. The school had over 25 people from the area speak to high school students about their careers.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filling_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; fax: (202) 690-7442; or email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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MIKE WALTON vice president of operations - Iowa
KENT WHITCOMB vice president of member services

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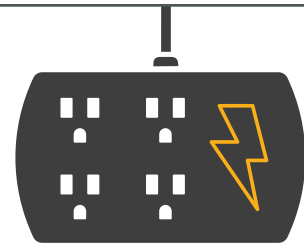
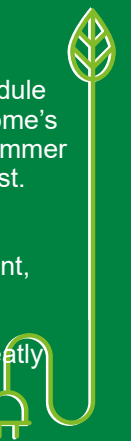
2022 OFFICES CLOSED

MAR 23 Employee Development Day
APR 15 Good Friday
MAY 30 Memorial Day
JUN 9 Employee Development Day
JUL 4 Independence Day
SEP 5 Labor Day
SEP 8 Employee Development Day
NOV 24-25 Thanksgiving Holiday
DEC 8 Employee Development Day
DEC 23, 26 Christmas Holiday
DEC 30 Close at 11:30 a.m. (New Year's Eve observance)

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

March is a great time to schedule an annual tune up for your home's cooling system to beat the summer rush when the pros are busiest.

A qualified professional can check the amount of refrigerant, accuracy of the thermostat, condition of belts and motors and other factors that can greatly impact the efficiency of your system.



SURGE PROTECTION

Keep your electronic equipment safe.

A power surge is typically caused by lightning, changes in electrical loads, faulty wiring or damaged power lines.

Install power strips with surge protection to protect sensitive equipment.

- Easy to use (just plug them in)
- Protect electronics plugged into the device
- Must be replaced over time or after a major surge event



REMEMBER:

Not all power strips offer surge protection. Carefully read the packaging labels when purchasing.

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ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 13, 2022

CHARGING FORWARD

ELECTRIC VEHICLES ENERGY STORAGE RENEWABLE ENERGY SMART ELECTRIFICATION

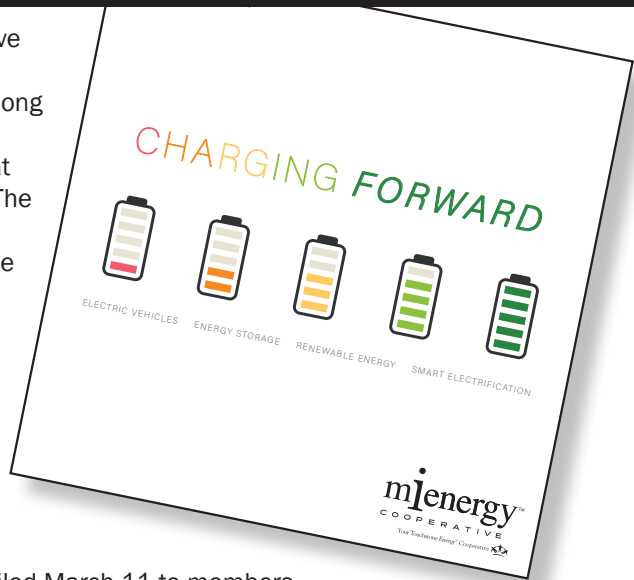
As a member of the community and the cooperative, you have a perspective that is valuable, and we invite you to share it with the co-op. At the annual meeting, co-op leaders will discuss the financial health of the cooperative, along with priorities and challenges.

The one-hour business meeting begins at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 13 at the Mabel Community Center in Mabel, Minn. Registration begins at 6 p.m. The meeting will follow Centers for Disease Control guidelines at the time of the meeting which could limit in-person attendance. The meeting will be available to view online. Watch for details in the annual report to be mailed to all members March 29.

DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

The results of the election for board directors in districts 4 and 5 will be announced at the annual meeting. Members in these districts will be able to vote by mail, online or in-person at the Mabel Community Center, 201 South Main Street, Mabel, Minn. on April 13, 2022, between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. The ballot box closes at the start of the annual meeting at 7 p.m.

A voting ballot, biographies for each candidate and instructions will be mailed March 11 to members in districts 4 and 5. Ballots are mailed from Survey and Ballot Systems, of Eden Prairie, Minn. in a yellow envelope. Members who have an email address with the cooperative will also receive voting directions via email. Survey and Ballot will be collecting and tabulating ballots. Security measures are in place to protect the confidentiality of your vote and to prevent duplicate voting.



DISTRICT 4 CANDIDATES:

Seat #1:
 Charles Frana (Incumbent) and Kyle Holthaus (Challenger)

Seat #2:
 Carl Reicks (Incumbent) running unopposed

DISTRICT 5 CANDIDATES:

Seat #1:
 Jenny Scharmer (Incumbent) and Bob Peterson (Challenger)

Seat #2:
 Beth Olson (Incumbent) and Travis Thul (Challenger)