

MiNNews

July 2023 Vol. 7 Issue 7
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

Giving back at its best

Employees go *beyond the wires* to help save lives

Check out
comparisons on
heat pumps vs. gas
furnaces



**CO-OP STARTS
EMAILING PEAK
ALERT NOTICES**

Where to look for tax
credits and rebates



Buyer beware

Caveat emptor is a Latin phrase that translates to "let the buyer beware." It means that an individual buys at their own risk, and it is a warning to do your research and ask questions. The buyer must inspect and know what they are purchasing.

With the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act and the extension of federal solar tax credits, in addition to other state and federal programs incentivizing the installation of a distributed energy system, more people are considering installing their own solar generation system. MiEnergy members are being targeted with advertising through postcards, direct mail, radio, television and social media to install solar.

Special offers are coming from companies hundreds of miles away that are unfamiliar with our interconnection process. Sales pitches like no electric bill are too good to be true.

Unfortunately, we've seen members purchase systems before the application to interconnect process has even been started.

We have seen pricing anywhere from \$2.50 to \$6 per watt. In addition, there can also be operational upgrade costs that a solar contractor has not taken into consideration, such as a transformer upgrade or meter relocation. Some fluctuation in pricing is to be expected as many factors can influence the installation cost of a solar system. However, that's quite a difference and double the installation costs.

Keep in mind, you will continue to be billed a monthly basic service charge from MiEnergy, even with a solar system installed. Any proposal showing no electric bill is false, and proposals showing yearly increases of 3-7% in electric rates are historically inaccurate. Ultimately, we want our members to have an excellent experience and a quality distributed generation system. We can help if you contact us from the start.

MiEnergy is your local electric cooperative. We're here to support you, our members, with all your electric energy needs, from helping with the replacement of a new electric water heater to assisting you with a new electric service for a home to providing a solar assessment if you are considering installing solar.

The cooperative has worked with over 900 members that have installed a solar system at their home, farm or business. We have worked with several excellent local solar contractors across our service territory. We are not here to influence your decision. We know which contractors have completed installations interconnected with our grid, and we can evaluate your contractor's proposal to ensure the details are accurate.

ABOUT THE INTERCONNECTION PROCESS

Once you've decided to install solar, you submit an online application for interconnection approval through the NOVA portal, located on our website. Approval by an electrical engineer at MiEnergy is required before members can proceed with the installation. This is part of the State of Minnesota's interconnection process and is also used for our Iowa members. We've been told by local contractors that MiEnergy is one of the best utilities for turnaround on application approvals. It generally takes a couple of weeks. We've heard of other utilities taking over a year.

As a Minnesota Solar Energy Industries Association member, we regularly engage with the solar industry business representatives to educate, inform and promote quality solar installations across the MiEnergy service territory.

Have a great summer – be safe and call us if we can assist. As always, I welcome your calls, emails and personal visits.

Board room highlights | June 29, 2023

- CFO Shelly Hove provided a favorable financial report.
- Youth Tour delegates Ava Thronson and Brady Burke gave a presentation of their recent co-op sponsored trip to Washington, D.C.
- Compliance & Training Coordinator Brad Pecinovsky provided a quarterly safety update.
- Jill Huffman, CEO of Harmony Telephone Company, MiBroadband and Spring Grove Communications, provided a quarterly broadband update.
- Approved a resolution in support of merging Harmony Telephone Company and MiBroadband, LLC.
- CEO Brian Krambeer provided updates on subsidiary organizations.

The next board meeting will be held at the Rushford office on July 26 at 9 a.m.

Pump It Up challenge winner with the American Red Cross

MiEnergy recognized for outstanding blood drive support

BEYOND THE WIRES

MiEnergy was recently named as a winner in the American Red Cross Pump It Up Challenge, which recognizes high-achieving blood drive sponsors that have grown the number of blood donations collected in their communities to help hospital patients in need.

Over the past eight years, MiEnergy has helped collect 850 blood unit donations for patients in need as part of its commitment to helping save lives. MiEnergy has already achieved the honored distinction of Premier Blood Partner with the Red Cross.

"Giving blood is a simple act of generosity that can truly make a lifesaving difference. Last year, we received an outpouring of support from the community at our blood drives, and our goal is to make it a success again this year for patients who are counting on us," said Brenda Tesch, MiEnergy's marketing and communications manager. "We are proud to partner with the Red Cross as a Premier Blood Partner and help it fulfill its critical mission."

EVERY TWO SECONDS

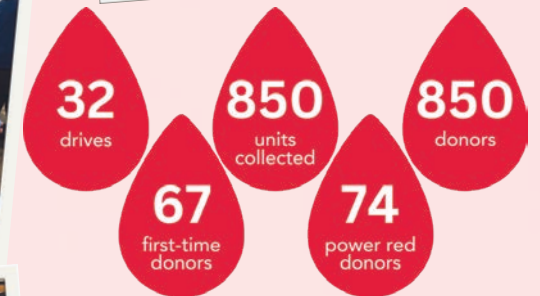
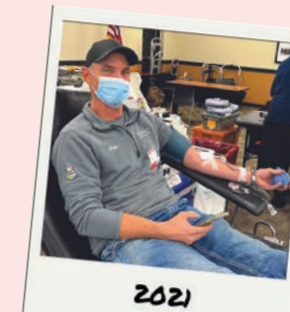
The need for blood is constant. In fact, every two seconds someone in the U.S. needs a blood transfusion, according to the Red Cross.

MiEnergy is proud to host American Red Cross blood drives in our local communities numerous times each year at our Rushford and Cresco office headquarters. We have ideal accommodations at our facilities to be a host for the blood drives, which supports cooperative principle #7, Concern For Community. Thank you to the employees, directors and family members who donate blood at the drives. And a special thanks to the employees who organize and work at the public blood drives to go above and beyond the wires. After all, that's the co-op way of doing things.

THE FEEL GOOD OF DONATING

Many people want to give back to the community but may not have a lot of time to volunteer. In only about an hour, volunteer blood donors can help save lives and feel instant gratification. Are you too busy? If you, a family member, a co-worker, a neighbor, or a friend were in need of a blood transfusion, would you want to hear this excuse? Donating blood is safe and easy, and takes less than an hour. Complete RapidPass before you donate to help save time. Plus, there are typically giveaways or incentives from the Red Cross at the blood drives.

Blood is a perishable product that can only come from generous volunteers. By donating blood, individuals can make a difference in the lives of patients in their community and throughout the nation. Trauma victims, cancer patients and those living with sickle cell disease often rely on blood products for lifesaving treatment. You can help make sure blood is readily available in our community by rolling up a sleeve for those in need.



Future Blood Drives

July 18
RUSHFORD OFFICE

September 7
CRESCO OFFICE

To schedule an appointment to donate blood at the MiEnergy blood drives, visit redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).



Electric versus gas price comparisons

There are several types of electric heating and cooling systems that when combined with MiEnergy's energy management rates, make electricity a safe, affordable and efficient choice. Electric heat pumps are a super efficient way to heat and cool a home. If you've wondered how the cost per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for heat pumps compares to the cost of other heating systems and fuels, check out the graphs below.

AIR-SOURCE HEAT PUMPS (ASHPS)

This is one of the most efficient ways to heat and cool your home with central venting systems. New cold-climate units can provide heat with lower temps than in the past. A backup heating system is required to be on the energy management rates.

Mini split systems work great in homes with no heating or cooling ducts in place, such as older homes or new additions.

The level of efficiency of ASHPs range from 200% to 400%. Lower efficiencies typically occur during the coldest winter days.

The chart compares the cost of a 300% efficient ASHP (10.2 HSPF) to a 92% efficient propane and natural gas system and a 70% fuel oil system. If your cost per kWh is 11¢, it is the equivalent to paying 68¢ per gallon for propane, 79¢/gallon for fuel oil or 74¢/therm of natural gas.

Electricity per kWh	Gallon Propane	Gallon Fuel Oil	Natural Gas/Therm
7¢	43¢	50¢	47¢
9¢	56¢	65¢	61¢
11¢	68¢	79¢	74¢
13¢	80¢	93¢	88¢

GEOTHERMAL HEAT PUMPS

This is the most efficient heating and cooling system available because it uses a renewable energy source: the earth.

It will meet 100% of a home's heating and cooling needs. The efficiency level of a geothermal system can be in the range of 300% to 600% efficient.

The chart compares the cost of a 500% efficient geothermal heat pump (5.0 COP) to a 92% efficient propane and natural gas system and a 70% fuel oil system. If your cost per kWh is 11¢, it is the equivalent to paying 54¢ per gallon for propane, 63¢/gallon for fuel oil or 70¢/therm of natural gas.

Electricity per kWh	Gallon Propane	Gallon Fuel Oil	Natural Gas/Therm
7¢	35¢	40¢	38¢
9¢	44¢	52¢	49¢
11¢	54¢	63¢	59¢
13¢	64¢	75¢	70¢

If you have questions about electric heating and cooling systems, contact the co-op for more details. MiEnergy rebates are available for qualified purchases. The Inflation Reduction Act has dollars available for qualified heat pump purchases.

Tax credits & rebates for energy savings

The U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Savings Hub is a one-stop shop to access the savings tools as part of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to cut energy costs. The new website (Energy.gov/Save) provides information on tax credits and forthcoming rebates, to help people take control of their energy costs and have cleaner and more efficient options as a consumer — whether they are looking to purchase an electric vehicle, update an appliance, or make their home safer and more comfortable.

Purchases must meet specific energy efficiency requirements. Here are some basics on the tax credits available:

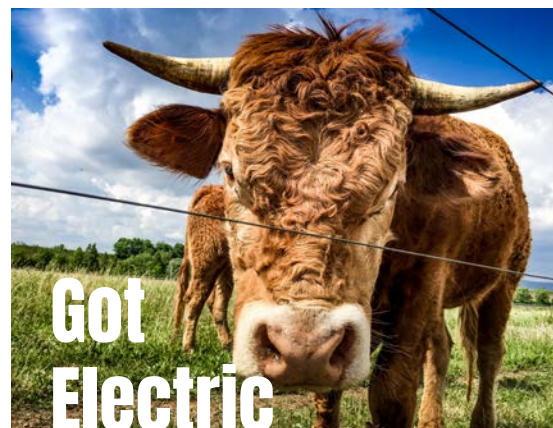
IRS FORM 5695 (2023-2032)

- Air conditioners, heating equipment, hot water boilers and water heaters: 30% of the cost paid by the consumer, up to \$600. Subject to a cumulative, annual cap of \$1,200.
- Air-source heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, biomass stoves/boilers: 30% of the cost paid by the consumer. Consumers have a \$2,000/year limit in total for heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, and biomass stoves/boilers.
- Geothermal (ground-source) heat pumps: 30% of the cost paid by the consumer.
- Solar water heaters: 30% of the cost paid by the consumer.
- Home energy audit: 30% of the cost paid by the consumer up to \$150.
- Residential solar photovoltaics: 30% of the cost paid by the consumer.
- Residential energy storage systems: 30% of the cost paid by the consumer.

IRS FORM 8936 (2023-2032)

- Electric or fuel cell vehicle (new): Up to \$7,500 for income-eligible buyers of qualified vehicles.
- Electric or fuel cell vehicle (used): Up to \$4,000 for income-eligible buyers of qualified vehicles.

Guidance on how rebates will be implemented isn't expected until late 2023. Anticipated rebates include electric load service center service/breaker box upgrades; electric stove, cooktop, range and/or oven; electric wiring; heat pump clothes dryer; heat pump heating/cooling; heat pump water heaters; and weatherization (insulation, air sealing, ventilation). Rebates will have income eligibility requirements.



Got Electric Fencing? INSPECT IT REGULARLY

1. Make sure that fencing is visible.
Use electric fence tape, warning signs or other methods.

2. Inspect electrical fencing regularly.
Ensure everything is tight, secure and free from frays.

3. Make sure your electrical fence is tight and well-supported.
A lack of support can cause it to sag.

4. Cap posts, especially metal T-posts.
This prevents an animal (or human) from being impaled.

5. Check for a loose or sagging fence.
Not only can animals escape, but wires can fall out of insulators.

Learn more about electrical safety at: [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)

Do The

SUMMER SHIFT

A LITTLE EFFICIENCY GOES A LONG WAY

Turn off unnecessary lights. Hang laundry to air dry. Raise the thermostat a few degrees. Reducing electric use from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on summer weekdays helps keep rates affordable.

Learn more about the Summer Shift at www.MiEnergy.coop.

New communication for peak alerts

MiEnergy is now able to communicate peak messages directly to members. When a peak alert was issued in the past, the co-op posted the information on its website and social media sites, in addition to alerting radio and TV media.

During summer peak energy alerts, the cooperative encourages members to reduce their electric use from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. The goal is to reduce MiEnergy's demand when MISO is predicting its monthly peak demand.

Beginning in June, MiEnergy added email and SmartHub as communication tools. Members who have an email address on file received notice via email about two peak alert events. Those who have the SmartHub app and have their notifications turned on received the notice through push notifications.



Renewable energy program for homes and businesses

Evergreen was developed to provide members an opportunity to voluntarily contribute to the increased use of renewable energy sources without the financial burden of installing their own system. The Evergreen program provides an option for your home, farm or business to be "green" without solar panels or wind turbines physically on the property. Starting at 65¢ per month, a member is assigned one Evergreen block of 100 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of clean, renewable energy.

- Evergreen Everyone:** Enroll to get 100 kWh for just 65¢ per month. Choose how many blocks to purchase.
- Evergreen Everything:** Enroll to have 100 percent of your electricity use generated by renewable energy. The average member's home uses about 1,000 kWh per month, which equals \$6.50 per month to be a green home. The co-op calculates the number of blocks based on your last year's electric use.

Signup at www.MiEnergy.coop/Evergreen or contact the co-op



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MiRecipes | Family Favorites

Submit your family's favorite recipe for consideration to be printed in the November 2023 newsletter. Deadline is October 12. 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.



BACON-CHEESE TOPPED CHICKEN | BECKY NEUZIL, CALMAR

½ c. Dijon mustard
 ½ c. honey
 4½ t. vegetable oil (divided)
 ½ t. lemon juice
 4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves
 ¼ t. salt
 ¼ t. pepper

Dash of paprika
 2 c. sliced fresh mushrooms
 2 T. butter
 1 c. (4 oz.) shredded cheddar cheese
 8 bacon strips (partially cooked)
 2 t. minced fresh parsley

In a bowl, combine the mustard, honey, 1½ teaspoons oil and lemon juice. Pour ½ cup into a large re-sealable plastic bag with the chicken and turn to coat; refrigerate for 2 hours. Cover and refrigerate the remaining marinade. Drain and discard marinade from chicken. In a large skillet over medium heat, brown chicken in remaining oil on all sides. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika. Transfer to a greased 11x7x2" baking dish. In the same skillet, sauté mushrooms in butter until tender. Spoon reserved marinade over chicken. Top with cheeses and mushrooms. Place bacon strips in a crisscross pattern over chicken. Bake, uncovered, at 375° oven for 20-25 minutes or until a meat thermometer reads 160 degrees. Sprinkle with parsley. Yield: 4 servings.

RHUBARB CAKE | MARLEEN NUMEDAHL, DECORAH

1 yellow or white cake mix
 4 c. of diced rhubarb mixed with 1 c. sugar
 1 c. of heavy whipping cream

Prepare cake mix according to directions and pour in 9" x13" pan. Sprinkle sugared rhubarb over and slowly pour cream over all. Bake at 350° for 40-55 minutes or until brown, use the toothpick method to check doneness.

STRAWBERRY DESSERT | NANCY DIETZENBACH, DECORAH

Crust
 ½ c. butter (melted)
 ¼ c. sugar
 1¼ c. graham cracker crumbs
 Mix and put in a 9" x 9" pan. (No need to spray). Bake 5-7 minutes until brown at 350°. Cool.

Strawberry mixture
 2 c. boiling water
 Add 1 small package cook and serve vanilla pudding. Mix.
 Add 1 small package strawberry Jello. Mix. Let cool.

Slice 3 c. strawberries (or more). Put on top of crust. Pour mix over berries. Cool in refrigerator.

Note: I boil water in a 4 c. glass measuring cup and just add the pudding and Jello in that.

SOUTH OF THE BORDER SALSA | JANICE DOUGHERTY, WAUKON

2 c. onions
 7 cloves of garlic
 3 c. red and green bell peppers
 6 jalapeno peppers (seeded)
 6 cayenne peppers (seeded)
 8 c. ripe tomatoes
 1 c. tomato sauce

1 t. ground cumin
 ½ t. paprika
 ½ t. salt
 2 t. red wine vinegar
 1 T. cayenne pepper
 ½ c. fresh cilantro
 3 limes (juice)

Chop and then sauté onions, garlic, and the peppers in oil for a few minutes. Add tomatoes and only the juice from the cutting board. Simmer uncovered on medium heat for 15 minutes, stir. Meanwhile, mix tomato sauce, cumin, paprika, salt, vinegar and cayenne. Add to the simmering tomato mixture and cook for 10 minutes. Remove tomato mixture from stove and add cilantro and lime juice.

out & about in your COMMUNITY



BE YOUR OWN BOSS CAMP – CRESCO

MiEnergy hosted 19 students from the NICC 'Be Your Own Boss Camp' from five school districts. Dave Wilkes taught the kids about MiEnergy's drone program and Roger Carman showed our fleet of trucks, each demonstrating the technology we have in place to efficiently serve our members and help assist our employees.

HOWARD COUNTY FAIR - CRESCO

MiEnergy sponsored three contests at the Howard County Fair: homemade salsa, strawberry dessert and light bulb decorating.

Pictured l to r: Judge Janelle Sunnes (MiEnergy), First Place Salsa Winner Kathy Ferrie, and Judge Deb Ohloff.

Pictured l to r: Judge Meagan Moellers (MiEnergy), Second Place Strawberry Dessert Winner Linda Hrdlicka, Third Place Winner Anne Wemark, Judge Roger Carman (MiEnergy) and First Place Winner Phyllis Stevenson.

There were 15 entries in the light bulb decorating contest taking used light bulbs and turning them into creative masterpieces.

First Place: Luther Govern, age 9 (Gone Fishing); Second Place: Emma Haskovec, age 7 (Dumbbells); and Third Place: Titus Ortner, age 6 (Owl).



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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 24/7 877-853-6517
 UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING 811

ONLINE

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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 DISTRICT 2 Dean Nierling, chair and Ron Stevens, vice chair
 DISTRICT 3 Don Petersen, treasurer, Skip Wieser and Dennis Young
 DISTRICT 4 Kyle Holthaus and Carl Reicks
 DISTRICT 5 Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer

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 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

2023 OFFICES CLOSED

SEP 4 Labor Day
 SEP 20 Employee Development Day
 NOV 23-24 Thanksgiving Holiday
 DEC 6 Employee Development Day
 DEC 22, 25 Christmas Holiday
 DEC 29 Close at 11:30 a.m. (New Year's Eve Observance)

ELECTRIC VEHICLES | ENERGY EFFICIENCY | RENEWABLE ENERGY

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COINS FOR CHANGE

Grant application deadline August 15

OPERATION ROUND UP

Operation Round Up (ORU), a voluntary community support program helps local organizations and worthy causes via spare change. MiEnergy members can choose to have their monthly electric bills rounded up to the nearest dollar, with the exceeding cents going towards ORU. Sign-up is available by calling the co-op or by filling out our online form.

The deadline to apply for grant funds is August 15. A list of program guidelines and an application is available online at www.MiEnergy.coop.

View power outages 24/7

Members can view a map of our service territory in real-time on their electronic devices. Members can click or tap on their township to get an estimate of the number of members experiencing an outage in that area. Visit www.MiEnergy.coop/outages to view the outage map. Outages can be reported by calling 800-432-2285 or through the SmartHub app.



MiEnergy also offers power outage text notifications. Sign up online at www.MiEnergy.coop/outages. Select “outage texts” and be prepared with your electric account number. A text message will be sent to you when the system indicates your power is out and another when it indicates power has been restored.

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Seal in savings with efficient exterior doors

The front door of your home has a lot of meaning. It is the first impression for your guests. Beyond curb appeal, the front door is a good place to look for energy savings.

Limiting airflow from exterior doors can result in lower heating and cooling costs. Throughout the years, the construction of exterior doors has improved to increase their efficiency. If your door is older, it likely is not insulated.

There are two strategies to address an inefficient front door: Purchase a new one or work with what you have.

If you want to replace your front door, consider upgrading to an ENERGY STAR®-certified model. The certification ensures the door you buy meets efficiency criteria for your local area. It also means the National Fenestration Rating Council independently tested and verified the door.

Certification requires any windows in the door to be double or triple pane to reduce heat flow, which results in a more efficient home. While windows in doors offer aesthetics, more glass means less efficiency. ENERGY STAR® offers different criteria based on the amount of glass the door has. That means that the bigger the windows in a door, the lower the efficiency. The most efficient doors have no glass or windows in them.

U-factor is the primary rating for efficiency on doors and windows.



U-factor is the inverse of R-value, which is the rating used for insulation. Unlike R-value where higher is better, the lower the U-factor, the more energy efficient the door.

ENERGY STAR®-certified doors are made of materials such as fiberglass, wood cladding and steel with polyurethane foam core. They are built to fit snugly into their frames, reducing drafts and airflow. There are many styles available to match the architecture.

When replacing a door and the frame, you can use expanding foam or caulk to fill the space between the door jamb

and structural framing. ENERGY STAR® doors have specific installation instructions to ensure the desired efficiency.

If a new door isn't in your budget, there are less expensive options to reduce air leakage and improve your home's efficiency.

If you can see daylight around the edges of the door or underneath it, it's time to stop those air leaks. Weatherstripping around the door jamb can be adjusted to make a snug seal or replaced if it's too far gone. Apply one continuous strip along each side, and make sure it meets tightly at the corners.

There are many different types of weatherstripping products on the market, so shop around for what's right for you. Don't forget the door sweep at the bottom of the door.

Adding a storm door can also help and is less expensive than replacing the entire door. Most storm doors have options for using a screen or glass. Swapping the screen for the glass insert can help save energy in both the winter and in the summer if you use air conditioning. Consider a storm door that's easy to switch between glass and screen so you can maximize the benefits.

Open the door to energy savings by improving the efficiency of your exterior doors—without compromising the aesthetics of your home.