

August 2023 Vol. 7 Issue 8
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

MiNews

Co-op awarded more fiber grants

Expansion continues to rural areas

What to know
about generators

4 KEY FACTORS
THAT AFFECT
ELECTRIC BILLS



Broadband expansion continues with grants

MiEnergy Cooperative received notice in June from the State of Minnesota's Office of Broadband Development that MiBroadband and MiEnergy were selected for two grants to install fiber in Fillmore County. One grant is for the north Fountain area, and the other is for the rural Preston area. The projects totaled \$10 million, with 40% of the cost covered by the grants.

MiEnergy also was given notice that it is receiving a USDA ReConnect grant. The ReConnect award is also a rural Fillmore County project estimated at \$13 million dollars. It is a 50% grant and a 50% loan.

We weren't the only ones getting good news. Dairyland Power Cooperative was a winner of a Middle Mile Infrastructure Grant from the National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) totaling \$14.98 million that will add fiberoptic cable on their high voltage transmission lines in Barron, Polk, Burnett, and Washburn counties in Wisconsin; Fillmore, Freeborn, and Mower counties in Minnesota; and Winneshiek and Mitchell counties in Iowa. This total project cost is \$30.4 million.

To date, we have won four federal ReConnect grants, four State of Iowa grants, and four State of Minnesota Border-to-Border grants for installing fiber. We are delivering broadband where the big companies refused to go. The challenges of providing broadband are the same as electricity in the 1930s. MiEnergy's electric distribution system has less than four members per mile of line, and the terrain in many areas is challenging for installing infrastructure.

Since our broadband partnership began in 2018 by forming MiBroadband with our local telephone cooperatives, Mabel Cooperative Telephone Company and Spring Grove Communications, MiBroadband has over \$70 million in broadband projects, and \$32.6 million is covered by grants. We have connected over 2,000 locations and have another 2,000-plus locations yet to be built. However, many areas of MiEnergy's electric service territory remain broadband barren.

MiBroadband's leadership of Jill Huffman and her team



L-R: Jill Huffman, Minnesota Commissioner of Employment and Economic Development Matt Varilek, Minnesota Office of Broadband Director Bree Maki and Brian Krambeer.

have followed the state and federal maps for funding opportunities to expand the network across the MiEnergy electric distribution system. It is a long process. The application period combined with engineering design takes six to eight months. Then another four to six months of waiting for award announcements and 18 months for construction. The winter season halts all construction, meaning it takes nearly two years to complete a project. Jill and her team have done outstanding work.

In June, the Iowa Chief Information Officer issued a Notice of Funding Availability for the eighth round of Iowa broadband grants. The state designated rural Winneshiek and Howard counties as broadband intervention zones. MiBroadband will evaluate the state maps and designated intervention zones and apply for a grant.

Minnesota recently announced that \$652 million is coming from the Federal NTIA Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program allocations. Iowa will receive \$415 million. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is also focused on 100/100 buildout requirements for future ReConnect programs, making fiber the gold standard.

Having broadband throughout our service territory will help us further our strategic initiative as an electric cooperative to help with grid modernization and support distributed generation resources and operations. Broadband will enhance the quality of life of our membership by allowing telework options, distance learning, telemedicine, entertainment and online purchasing, and enabling advanced farming practices, the use of data-driven technologies and job growth for our local communities.

I am very proud that our electric cooperative is making a difference locally by delivering essential broadband service in southeastern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa. It is one of the most exciting and gratifying initiatives of my cooperative career. We have much more work to complete our broadband initiative, but we are well on our way.

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

Local teens attend co-op D.C. trip

Ava Thronson, of New Hampton, and Brady Burke, of Cresco, recently participated in the National Electric Cooperative Youth Tour of Washington, D.C., sponsored by MiEnergy Cooperative. They spent June 18-23 in Washington, D.C., with 36 other student leaders from Iowa.

Every June, this weeklong leadership development program provides high school students opportunities to learn about government, the electric cooperative business model and today's pressing issues in the energy industry. Students met their elected representatives in the U.S. House and Senate, toured historic sites and ran their very own snack cooperative.

The Youth Tour has been a joint effort of locally owned electric cooperatives, such as MiEnergy, their statewide trade associations, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) for 65 years.

In addition to taking in the sights of the nation's capital, all the state groups convened for the Rural Electric Youth Day, sponsored by NRECA, to learn from public figures and other inspirational speakers.

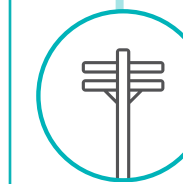


4 KEY FACTORS That Impact Energy Bills

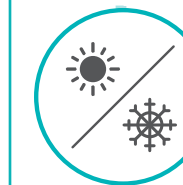
You pay for the electricity you consume each month, but there are additional factors that impact your energy bills.



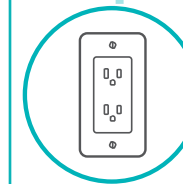
1 Fuel Costs
Before electricity can be delivered to your home, it must first be generated at a power plant or from a renewable source. The cost of fuels used to generate electricity fluctuates, which is why you see a power or fuel charge on your monthly bill. This monthly charge covers cost fluctuations without having to continually restructure electricity rates.



2 Service Costs
Your bill includes a monthly service charge, which recovers part of the co-op's ongoing investments in poles, wire, meters, system maintenance and additional costs necessary to provide electric service.



3 Weather
When temperatures soar or dip, your cooling or heating equipment must run longer and at maximum capacity, which can greatly increase your energy use. Extreme temperatures can also affect electricity market prices. When the need for electricity increases due to extreme heat or cold, the price of power typically rises.



4 Energy Consumption
This is the amount of electricity you use each month to power your home's cooling/heating system, appliances, lighting, electronics and more. The amount of electricity you consume is measured in kilowatt-hours, or kWh. You have control over how much energy you use, which can ultimately help manage your monthly costs.

Board room highlights | July 26, 2023

- CFO Shelly Hove provided a favorable financial report.
- Staff provided department updates.
- CEO Brian Krambeer provided updates on subsidiary organizations.
- Dairyland Power President Brent Ridge provided an overview on their projects.

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

Do The SUMMER SHIFT

YOU'RE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

When each member works to conserve electricity, we all win. 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.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Learn more about how the Summer Shift helps keep electric rates affordable at www.MiEnergy.coop/Summer-Shift

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Providing your own power during an outage

HOW TO SORT THE MANY CHOICES IN HOME GENERATORS



If you're wondering whether to buy a home generator in case of a power outage, you're not alone. Backup power sources have gotten so popular that manufacturers now offer a wide range of choices.

Options run from pull-start gasoline models costing a few hundred dollars to permanent outdoor installations for several thousand dollars. That variety makes getting exactly what you want easier, but harder to choose.

A good first step is to think about what you want a home generator to do. Do you just want to keep your phone charged? Do you want to make sure food doesn't spoil in your refrigerator? Do you want to ensure you have heat and air conditioning through an extended outage? Answering those questions will require you to know the wattage of the appliances you want to run so you know the capacity of the generator you need.

You may also ask if you really need a generator. The average U.S. home is without power for about seven hours a year. Is that enough to justify the expense and attention?

Another part of your planning should be contacting your electric co-op for expert advice on your home's best and safest fit.

Here's what to know about the four basic choices in home generators:

Portable generators are small enough that you might even take them on camping trips. These costs can vary—from as low as \$400 to more than \$2,000. Most should be able to run a refrigerator or a window air conditioner. Special attention to safety is required. They should never

be used indoors, not even in a garage. The carbon monoxide they produce can be deadly in minutes. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that 85 people die annually from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators. Portable generators should be operated more than 20 feet from the house and be connected only with outdoor extension cords matched to the wattage being used. Look for models with a carbon monoxide detector and automatic shutoff.

Appliances should be plugged into the generator—the generator should never be plugged into an outlet or your home's electrical system.

Arrange for an electrician to install the required transfer switch. That acts as a mini-circuit breaker to protect your appliances and can be an easier way to connect the house to the generator.

Inverter generators are higher-tech versions of standard portable generators. The power they produce changes to match what the appliances are using, so although they are a little more expensive, they use fuel more efficiently and make less noise. The same safety guidelines apply to both inverter and standard portable generators.

Standby generators can cost \$7,000 plus installation, but they can turn on automatically during a power outage and run your whole house. They're typically a permanently-mounted outdoor unit connected to your home electrical system and run on propane or natural gas. An electrician must install it.

Power stations, also known as batteries, charge themselves up while the power is on. They're not as powerful as some of the other options and can be more expensive, but they're quiet, easy to operate, and some are designed to look good hanging on the wall. They can cost between \$400 and \$6,000. One common use of power stations is to pair them with rooftop solar panels so that electricity from the sun can be available even at night.

With the increased intensity of storms and our reliance on electronic devices, power outages can be a bigger concern. Technology now gives you many choices for how to react, whether you want to make sure you're never without power or you're willing to light a candle and wait for the lights to come back on.

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.

PROPERTY FOR SALE

101 Prairie Ave E.
Canton, Minn.
40' x 48' Lot

This property was the site of the City of Canton Substation. Following upgrades, the property is no longer needed.

The property will be sold by sealed bid. Bid forms can be requested by calling Steve Oian at 800-432-2285 or emailing soian@MiEnergy.coop. Bid forms are due August 25.

Do research before a water heater failure

Most people don't think much about water heaters. It's easy to take hot showers, clean dinner dishes and freshly laundered linens for granted. The lonely water heater, tucked away in the basement or a utility closet, is out of sight and out of mind. But it's equally important to be confident that your water heater will keep the water hot until you need it.

The life expectancy of an average water heater is 10-15 years for electric and 8-12 years for gas. Prepare now, so you know your options.

The co-op sells 85 and 105-gallon electric Marathon water heaters.

If your water heater is enrolled in MiEnergy's energy management program, you qualify for:

- Free service, parts and labor during regular business hours.
- Water heater price discount.
- FREE Marathon water heater (enrolled in storage strategy) for members building a new home.

Whether you need a water heater for a new construction or to replace an electric or gas model, call the energy experts at MiEnergy today or visit our website at www.MiEnergy.coop for details on the co-op's water heaters and energy management programs.

Reduce costs with rebates

MiEnergy has a variety of rebates available to members that purchase energy-efficient products and appliances that meet or exceed specific criteria. Those rebates are only available until funds are depleted, or December 31, whichever comes first.

The list of available MiEnergy rebates includes appliances, audits, electric vehicle chargers, heating/ventilation/air conditioning systems, lighting, new construction and water heaters.

Tax credits and rebates are also available through the Inflation Reduction Act.

Rebate forms and information about the Inflation Reduction Act are available online at www.MiEnergy.coop/rebates or by calling 1-800-432-2285. View details of rebates and tax credits before making purchases to ensure your items qualify.

FORMS ARE COMPLETED, WHERE'S MY REBATE CHECK?

MiEnergy does not mail rebate checks. The rebate amount will appear as a line item on your bill with the word "rebate," and the amount will be listed as a credit.



**MOVE OVER
SLOW DOWN**

Distracted drivers are everywhere, and so are utility workers. When you see flashing lights, move over and slow down. It's the law, and you might just save a life.

TAKE CONTROL

SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.

SmartHub is a web and mobile app that allows you to do business with us like never before



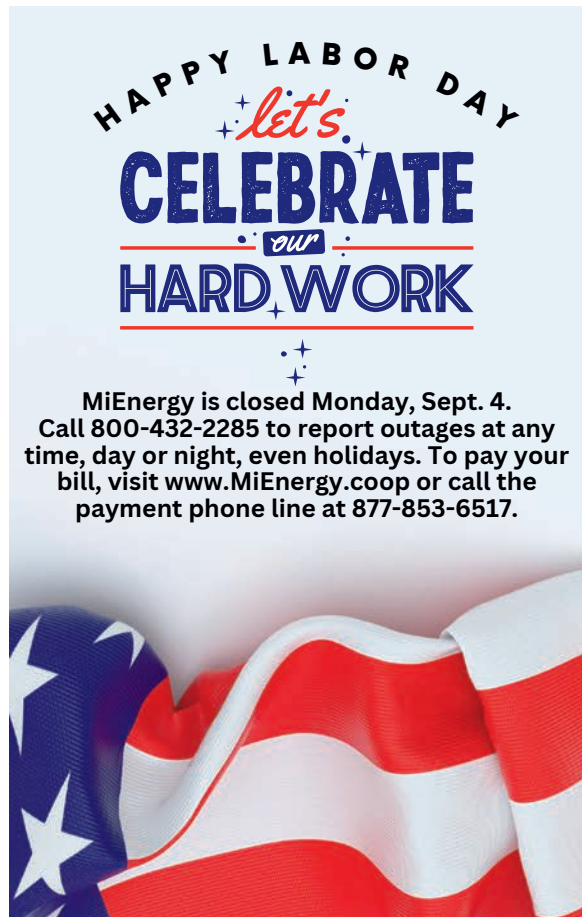
- Report service issues
 - Receive important notices
 - Manage your account
 - View and pay your bill
 - Monitor use 24/7
- ...all in the palm of your hand.

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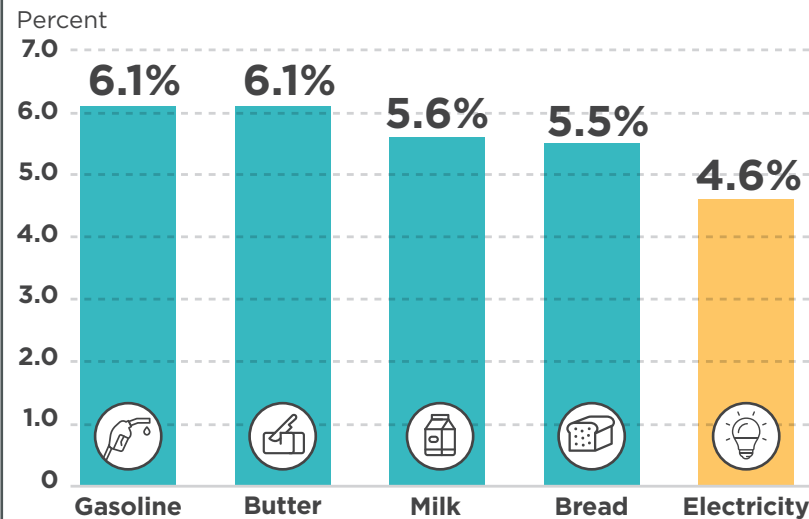


MiEnergy is closed Monday, Sept. 4. Call 800-432-2285 to report outages at any time, day or night, even holidays. To pay your bill, visit www.MiEnergy.coop or call the payment phone line at 877-853-6517.

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

Although inflation has led to increasing costs in many areas of our lives, the cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common goods. Looking at price increases over the last five years, electricity remains a good value.

Average Annual Price Increase 2017-2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index

At-home EV charging safety tips

Charging is a crucial concern among new electric vehicle (EV) owners, whether plug-in hybrid or full electric. But are home EV charging systems safe? Absolutely—as long as they're installed correctly.

EV owners should first consider how they will charge their vehicles. A licensed electrician can evaluate your home's EV charging situation, as well as:

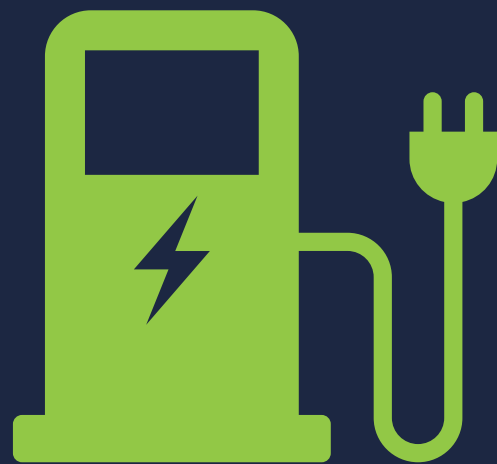
- The vehicle's charging capabilities and requirements. This can vary depending on the make, model and type.
- The potential location of the panel and vehicle, including the distance from the panel to the garage, the degree of difficulty and whether the garage is attached or detached.
- The capacity and overall condition of your home electrical system to identify any concerns or additional work.

There are two common home charging options. Level 1 charging is a straightforward plug-in of the EV into any standard 120V electrical outlet. This requires no electrical modification but typically takes 14 to 20 hours to charge the EV fully.

Some EV manufacturers and sellers provide inaccurate information on charging and will suggest that a standard 120-volt outlet is all you need. Unfortunately, this may not match the driver's daily travel needs.

Level 2 charging units are sold separately from the vehicle. A licensed electrician must install them because they plug into a 240V outlet and charge more quickly—typically in four to eight hours. Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind when charging your EV at home:

- Select charging equipment that is certified to meet safety standards. Plug Level 1 chargers directly into an outlet designed to handle the amperage of the charging device. Never use a multi-plug adapter or extension cord. Charging cables are a tripping hazard, so be aware of the cable's location. Purchase a Level 2 charging device certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory. This means the device has undergone rigorous testing and certification by a third-party company with extensive knowledge and pedigree in certifying EV technologies.
- Check with MiEnergy and a licensed electrician before modifying your electrical system or installing a charging station. An electrician must ensure your home's wiring complies with local, state and national codes and may need a permit before installation.
- Place all charging components out of reach of children when not in use.



- Maintain the components of your charging station according to the manufacturer's maintenance guidelines.
- Cover the EV charging station outlet to prevent water exposure. Check the manufacturer's guidelines to ensure it is safe to charge your EV in wet conditions.
- Most charging stations are equipped with safety devices such as GFCIs, which will identify electrical shorts and stop power to the charger to minimize risks. There is a low risk of electric shock, but safeguards are automatically built into the equipment.

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



WINNESHIK COUNTY FAIR - DECORAH

MiEnergy sponsored two contests at the Winneshiek County Fair: chocolate chip cookies and homemade apple pie.

Pictured above, front row l to r: fair royalty contestants Brynn Storhoff, Megan Blong; first place winner Deb Schott; second place winner Olivia Sheffield; third place winner Julie Scheidel; and fair royalty contestant Autumn Schmitt. Back row: Judges Mary Conway (Viking State Bank), Taylor Lensing (Decorah Bank & Trust), Johanna Stayskal (MiEnergy) and Holly Allen (Decorah Bank & Trust).

Pictured below, front row l to r: fair royalty contestant Autumn Schmitt, first place winner Harper Novak, second place winner Jada Bahls Kargalskiy, third place winner Luane Henzler and fair royalty contestant Megan Blong. Back row: fair royalty contestant

Brynn Storhoff, judges Ruth Riha (MiEnergy), Makenzie Schnitzler (Viking State Bank), Morgan Fechner (Decorah Bank & Trust) and Heather Benzing (Decorah Bank & Trust).



FILLMORE COUNTY RELAY FOR LIFE - FOUNTAIN

MiEnergy was proud to support its employees who were members of teams participating in the 2023 Fillmore County Relay For Life in Fountain, Minn., on Friday, July 28. Employees represented the teams of Mission: Possible, Ramblin' Rosebuds and United with Hope. Pictured l-r: Rhonda Bauer, Brian Bauer, Bill Cox and June Vitse. The event raises money for cancer research.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

OFFICE INFORMATION

Open Monday-Thursday 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. Friday by appointment.
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PAYMENT LINE 24/7 877-853-6517
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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)

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know ceiling fans can make a room feel 4 degrees cooler? To save energy through ceiling fan use, remember to raise your thermostat a few degrees while fans are turned on. In the summer, operate ceiling fans in a counterclockwise direction. Reverse the direction to clockwise during winter months and set fans on a low speed so warm air can circulate from the ceiling to the lower levels of the room. Remember, ceiling fans cool people, not spaces. Be sure to turn them off when you leave the room.

Source: energy.gov

SAVE THE DATE

Test drive electric vehicles or take an e-bike or scooter for a spin. Learn more about solar panels or careers in the energy industry.

EV TEST DRIVE & EXPO
Saturday, Sept. 16
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Winona State University
116 W Mark St, Winona
Gold Lot #1 Integrative Wellness
Center Parking Lot

MiEnergy will
be onsite!

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Teach your children well

When I was a kid, I dreamed of one day having a home where I could pay my own electric bill. Said no one ever. While it's not the most fun way to spend money, people typically want to live in a home with electricity. Educating kids on energy use and costs can help engage them in your family's goal to use less electricity. Here are some ways you can teach kids to use less electricity.

Show them how to read the electric bill. Focus on what you can control: kilowatt-hour use. If they are old enough, teach them how to do the math. You can calculate kWh use by multiplying wattage by hours used and dividing by 1,000. Multiply this by the kWh rate found on your electric bill to estimate how much you spend on power for each household appliance.

For example, if you have a space heater that uses 1,500 watts and is on for four hours a day for a month, it uses 180 kWh. With a kWh rate of 11.25 cents, the space heater costs about \$20 a month to operate.

For household appliance wattage, look for the amount stamped on the bottom, back or nameplate. If the nameplate does not include wattage, figure it out by multiplying the voltage by the amperage.

Have them help you conserve with the household's biggest energy-consuming appliances: heating and cooling. Teach kids to dress appropriately for the seasons, even when they are indoors, which allows you to set the thermostat to balance comfort and savings.

You can also leave the house during the hottest times of the day to go for a swim or play outside. Before you go, nudge

up the thermostat a few degrees to avoid wasted energy cooling an empty house. Turn off fans when you leave a room.

The second-highest use of electricity is typically the electric water heater. Use a shower timer so bigger kids can monitor how long they are in the shower. Teach them to wash their clothes with cold water.

Other ways to save include turning off the lights when you leave the room. If your child needs a nightlight to sleep with, make sure it's an LED bulb.

Powering down gaming stations and computers is another way to save. In the kitchen, keep the refrigerator door shut. Teach kids to take a quick peek and shut the door while they think about their snack options.

After teaching your kids about electric bills and showing them how to save electricity, make a game out of your family's energy conservation efforts. Challenge the family to use less energy than last month or the same month last year. Use the savings to reward them with a treat or let the winner pick the game night activity or film for family movie night.

Miranda Boutelle is the chief operating officer at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company. She has more than 20 years of experience helping people save energy at home, and she writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 electric co-ops.

