

September 2022 Vol. 6 Issue 9
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

MiNews

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opportunity to present to Minnesota
Public Utilities Commission

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Vice President of Operations Steve Oian gives attendees of the Co-op Innovation Day a tour at MiEnergy on the technology used by crews.
Read more about this event in the CEO Message.

MiEnergy hosts Co-op Innovation Day

On August 16, MiEnergy Cooperative was honored to serve as the host of the first ever Cooperative Innovation Day with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MN PUC). PUC Chair Katie Sieben, Vice Chair Joe Sullivan and Commissioner John Tuma led the information meeting that included presentations from MiEnergy, three other distribution cooperatives and Dairyland Power Cooperative.

Electric cooperatives are not rate regulated by the MN PUC or Iowa Utilities Board (IUB), who primarily deal with private investor-owned utilities such as Xcel Energy in Minnesota and Alliant Energy in Iowa. The PUC provides reviews, opens dockets, and provides public review of rate cases, transmission work planning, reliability reporting, new generation resource approval and compliance reporting for investor-owned utilities. Electric cooperatives do receive oversight from the MN PUC and IUB on service and reliability reporting. A locally elected board of directors, selected from the cooperative's membership, provides the governance, rate making and policy approval for electric cooperatives like MiEnergy.

Yet, the MN PUC wanted to know more about our state's electric cooperatives that are leaders in the energy industry on energy efficiency, distributed generation, electric vehicles, community partnerships and other energy innovations.

MiEnergy was selected as the host of the event to showcase our "rural" facilities along with our operations technology that includes our outage management system, advanced metering infrastructure, system mapping, vehicle tracking and solar

generation projects.

The Commissioners immediately commented on the cornfields, hills, valleys and beauty of our bluff country. MiEnergy's rural service territory, with less than four members per mile of electric distribution line, brings challenges in delivering electric service.

Minnesota State Representative Gene Pelowski, from MN House District 28A in Winona, provided the welcome for the event and highlighted his close working relationship with MiEnergy that included the disaster declaration from the August 2007 flood that resulted in federal and state disaster assistance provided to Tri-County Electric Cooperative, MiEnergy's predecessor.

DeeAnne Noris, CEO of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association, headquartered in Danube, Minn., leads one of the smallest cooperatives in the state with 1,700 members and addressed the Commission on their collaborative partnership with the University of Minnesota to educate students on the important role of cooperatives.

Joyce Peppin, corporate counsel to Dairyland Power Cooperative, discussed power supply evolution and the technological innovations with small scale nuclear options being identified.

Ryan Hentges, CEO of Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative, in Jordan, Minn., highlighted the innovative use of data, a member-driven operating system for air conditioning management and demand side management.

Tim Sullivan, CEO of Wright-Hennepin Cooperative Electric Association, one of Minnesota's largest electric cooperatives located in Rockford, Minn., discussed beneficial electrification, electric vehicles and incorporation into the transportation system, power supply challenges/options and commitment to communities in our cooperative service territories.

I emphasized the importance of our partnerships to deliver broadband across our electric service territory, our nine megawatts of local solar generation with Fillinona Solar, how we are working to balance the challenge of member-owned solar generation to ensure there is opportunity for all members to install solar, our residential battery pilot program and developing a local and regional electric vehicle charging network through CHARGE EV, LLC.

The presenters highlighted how committed we are to serving our members and our communities, the value of cooperative membership, the importance of partnerships and our commitment to innovation to better serve our members.

The Cooperative Innovation Day was a wonderful opportunity to engage in dialogue with the Commissioners, and we welcome more opportunities to highlight the great work of electric cooperatives.

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



Easy ways to help a neighbor save energy

On National Good Neighbor Day, which is September 28—or any day this month—join in the cooperative spirit and help your neighbors, friends and family save energy at home with these do-it-yourself energy-saving tips.

Tips range in physicality and cost, providing options based on your ability.

CHANGE LIGHTBULBS. Prioritize changing lights that are used the most, such as incandescent porch lights left on all night. LEDs use about 75% less energy and last up to 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs. Some neighbors can't climb step stools or ladders, so help them out if you are able. Be sure to check for overhead power lines when using ladders outside.

SWAP THE FILTER. Furnace filters should be checked regularly and replaced when they are dirty. Simply writing down the dimensions of the furnace filter can help your neighbor, who can pick up a pack of new ones in the store or order online.

If you find a really dirty furnace filter, don't remove it until you have a replacement. Operating your system without a filter allows dirt and dust in the system to go directly to the heating and cooling components, which can damage the system and necessitate costly repairs.

OPEN THE DAMPERS. Register dampers allow heated and cooled air to properly circulate throughout the home. If you have a central air heating or cooling system, dampers should be left open. The idea that closing registers saves energy is a common misconception. If furniture is on top of dampers, move it to a new permanent spot so it does not block air flow.

ADJUST THE WATER HEATER. Check the water heater and set it to 120 degrees. Use a kitchen thermometer to test the water temperature. At the faucet nearest the water heater, turn only the hot water on and wait until it gets hot. Let the hot water run into a glass and place a kitchen thermometer in it. Wait until it registers the highest temperature. If the water heater is set too high, you can save energy by lowering the setting.

KEEP OUTDOOR UNITS CLEAR. Clean brush and debris from around the air conditioner or heat pump. If leaves or brush pile up around the outdoor unit of a heat pump or air-conditioning system, it can reduce the airflow, making the system work harder than it should. That uses more energy and can reduce the life of the unit.

REMOVE THE WINDOW AC. By removing the unit before wintertime, the window can close properly. This prevents heat from escaping and wasting energy. It also keeps the room more comfortable. Window AC units are heavy and awkward. This project is best done with a buddy. Get that person to commit to helping put the unit back next spring.

Miranda Boutelle is the vice president of operations and customer engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company. She also writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



Thank You!

MiEnergy would like to thank members who voluntarily participated in the Summer Shift campaign during June, July and August. The Summer Shift incorporated simple modifications and new habits such as delaying the dishwasher, turning up the thermostat and shifting the start of laundry that will help change tomorrow's lifestyles for the next generation. Thanks for helping to keep electric rates affordable for everyone.

Board room highlights | August 30, 2022

- Received a favorable financial report from CFO Shelly Hove.
- Marketing and Communications Manager Brenda Tesch provided a review of the recent positive member survey results.
- Approved Resolution 22-09 capital credit retirements in the amount of \$2,185,662.97 for 2022.
- Approved Resolution 22-10 Load Forecast Report from Dairyland Power Cooperative.
- Approved Resolution 22-11 Investment & Job Acts of 2021. The Resolution states MiEnergy has a demand response and electric vehicle charging program.
- Member Services Vice President Kent Whitcomb addressed the distributed generation initiatives for MiEnergy.
- Approved presenting bylaw amendments to the membership.
- Approved redistricting of the director districts.
- Harmony Telephone Company and MiBroadband CEO Jill Huffman provided an update on broadband buildout.
- Approved amendments to the RECARE Program.
- Scheduled the advisory committee meeting for October 5, 2022.
- Set April 12, 2023, as the next annual meeting date.

The next board meeting will be held at the Rushford office on September 30 at 9 a.m.

NATIONAL DRIVE ELECTRIC WEEK 2022

SEPT. 23 to OCT. 2

Check out local charging stations in Caledonia, Cresco, Harmony and Rushford Village.

Coming soon to Houston, Lanesboro, Mabel, Rushford, St. Charles and Spring Grove.

CHARGE POWERED BY CO-OPS **mienergy** CO-OPERATIVE
www.CHARGE.coop Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Emerging electric farming equipment

Running a farm is traditionally dependent on oil and gas to keep the machinery operating. Fuel costs impact the bottom line of agricultural production and are a major driver of food prices and farming revenue. One major new change for farming equipment is the trend of switching fossil fuel-powered equipment to electric equipment.

Electric tractors are now commercially available from multiple manufacturers as well as niche, electric-only companies. There are many benefits of replacing diesel motors with electric motors. Highly-efficient electric motors can operate at 90% thermal efficiency, which helps to provide cost savings over time, compared to diesel motors that operate at 30% to 40% thermal efficiency.

But there are significant barriers to electric farming technologies. Electric tractors cost about a third more than traditional tractors. Battery life for electric tractors typically ranges from three to six hours depending on hauling

weight and workload, which can be a nonstarter for many larger farms where tractors are expected to run all day doing heavy-duty work. While battery life can be problematic, advancements have been made over the last few years. Some tractors can carry two batteries, allowing for a mid-day switch without returning the tractor to a charging point. At this stage of development, electric tractors are likely better suited to smaller farms or vineyards.

There are additional electric equipment options available for the farm. Utility terrain vehicles tend to look more like their gas-powered counterparts in terms of capability and price, making them an easier entry into electric equipment on the farm.

The future of electrification on farms may be focused on renewable energy, either in the form of solar power or waste heat recovery systems. There is ongoing research into the feasibility of placing solar panels on farms coupled



with a battery storage system, then using that system as a fuel source for electric tractor batteries. Solar power is already being used to directly power autonomous precision sprayers for row crops.

There are still limitations on heavy-duty use of electric farming equipment, but research and development will continue until these electric technologies are on par with their diesel or gas counterparts. With more time and investment, electric farming equipment will likely become more widespread in the coming years.

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

Energy Assistance Programs to help you pay your heat bills

****If you are having financial difficulties and cannot pay your electric bill, communicating with MiEnergy is essential. Don't ignore disconnection notices. Contact us at 1-800-432-2285 to discuss winter disconnection protection and the steps required to avoid being disconnected. Even if you don't qualify for either of these programs, the cooperative can help set up a payment plan to help members through tough times to avoid disconnection at any time of the year. ****

IOWA MEMBERS:

The 2022-2023 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season.

The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

If you are not sure where to apply, dial 2-1-1, visit <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply> to contact your local community action agency or write to: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Human Rights, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

INCOME MAXIMUMS	
Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$27,180
2	\$36,620
3	\$46,060
4	\$55,500
5	\$64,940
6	\$74,380
7	\$83,820
8	\$93,260
For households with more than eight members, add \$9,440 for each additional member.	

WHEN TO APPLY:

- Elderly (60 & over) and/or disabled: October 1, 2022 to April 30, 2023
- All other households: November 1, 2022 to April 30, 2023

WHAT TO TAKE:

- Proof of income (for all household members age 18 and over). Depending on your household income type, income documentation from the past 30 days, the last 12 months or last calendar year, whichever is easier or more beneficial for you.
- Proof of social security numbers for all household members (documentation required).
- Most recent heat bill.
- Most recent electric bill.

WAGE EARNERS:

Please bring copies of your check stubs for the 30-day period preceding the date of application or a copy of your federal income tax return.

FIXED INCOME:

This income may include: Social Security Benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Veteran's Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions. Please bring copies of your check stubs from the previous 30 days.

SELF-EMPLOYED/FARMERS:

Please bring a copy of your most recent federal income tax return.

If you receive alimony or child support, it will also need to be verified. Additional income not listed here may be required.

IOWA ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

CHICKASAW COUNTY: 641-394-2007
HOWARD COUNTY: 563-547-4413
WINNESHIEK COUNTY: 563-382-8436
NE IOWA COMMUNITY ACTION: 563-382-9608

MINNESOTA MEMBERS:

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service for Minnesota members cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between Oct. 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL the following statements apply:

- Your household income is at or below 50 percent of the state median income. Income may be verified on forms provided by MiEnergy or by the local energy assistance provider.
- You enter into and make reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from MiEnergy.

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects. Before disconnecting electric service to Minnesota residential members between Oct. 1 and April 30, MiEnergy must provide:

- A 30-day notice of disconnection.
- A statement of members' rights and responsibilities.
- A list of local energy assistance providers.
- Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection.
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

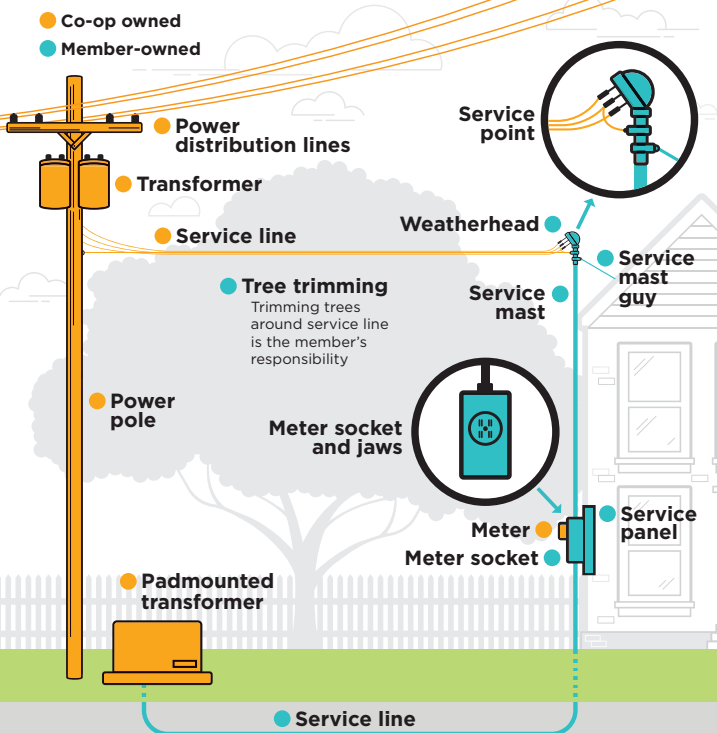
MINNESOTA ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

FILLMORE COUNTY: 507-765-2175
HOUSTON COUNTY: 507-725-5811
MOWER COUNTY: 507-437-9701
SEMCAC, INC: 800-944-3281
WINONA COUNTY: 507-457-6200

Who Owns What?

Electric Co-op Owned Equipment vs Member-Owned Equipment

This graphic depicts equipment owned by the co-op (in gold) and the member (in blue). If a storm damages any equipment owned by the co-op, we are responsible for repairs. If a storm damages any member-owned equipment, the member is responsible for repairs. Members should hire a licensed electrician when making any repairs to member-owned equipment.



Pictured above l-r: MiEnergy board directors Dennis Young, Jenny Scharmer and Jeff Redalen; Brian Krambeer, MiEnergy president/CEO; Rep. Gene Pelowski; MiEnergy board directors Beth Olson, Don Petersen and Ron Stevens.

Rep. Pelowski named Legislator of the Year

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) honored State Rep. Gene Pelowski (DFL-Winona) with the 2022 Legislator of the Year Award. MREA is the Minnesota statewide association representing 50 not-for-profit, member-owned rural electric cooperatives.

"I want to thank MREA and MiEnergy for this honor, and for their work in ensuring Minnesotans have access to affordable, reliable, and safe electricity," said Rep. Pelowski. "Their efforts, in tandem with my work at the legislature to secure disaster aid funding and historic broadband investments, ensure communities like ours always have access to the resources they need, and I look forward to continuing that work."

Rep. Pelowski, who chairs the House Industrial Education and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee, oversaw the largest investment in high-speed broadband internet in state history and authored successful legislation to replenish Minnesota's Disaster Assistance Contingency Account.

A TIME TO CHARGE AND A TIME TO UNPLUG FOUR PLACES NOT TO USE A PLUGGED-IN DEVICE

We use our cell phones, tablets and other devices so often that they are often an extension of our hands. There are a few places where using a device that is plugged into an outlet can be hazardous, however.

**DO NOT USE A CELL PHONE OR OTHER DEVICE
WHEN IT IS PLUGGED INTO AN OUTLET WHEN YOU:**



ARE IN OR NEAR A POOL OR HOT TUB

Water and electricity are a deadly combination. Electrical current running through water can cause shock or electrocution.



ARE IN THE TUB OR BY THE SINK

Never extend your cell phone or device so that you can reach it while bathing; also, do not plug it in near standing or running water.



ARE IN BED OR OTHER SOFT PLACES

A device can overheat when placed on or under a pillow or soft bedding. Also, charging cubes and cords can malfunction, causing burns, shock or other serious injuries.



HEAR THUNDER OR SEE LIGHTNING

Lightning can cause power surges that are not only harmful to electrical (charging) devices but also to you.

LEARN MORE AT:



MiRecipes Family Favorites

Submit your family's favorite recipe for consideration to be printed in the January 2023 newsletter. Deadline is December 12. Send to Meagan at PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136 or email: mmoeellers@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.

MAGIC PEACH COBBLER CROY FAMILY, CHATFIELD

½ c. (1 stick) butter
1 c. self-rising flour
1 c. sugar
1 c. milk
1 t. vanilla
4 c. peaches (peeled and sliced)

Preheat oven to 350°. Melt butter in a 2-quart baking dish. Combine flour, sugar, milk and vanilla. Pour over butter. Do not stir. Spoon peaches over batter. Do not stir. Bake about 40 minutes. Serves 6.

Personnel changes at the co-op



Cory Pederson

PROMOTION

Cory Pederson has accepted the metering/load management foreman position in Rushford. Cory has been with the cooperative for 27 years and in the meter department for 11 years. He started his new position on August 1.

NEW EMPLOYEE

Mitch Kuhn has accepted the position of journeyman lineworker and started on August 1. Mitch brings with him his experience and his familiarity with the MiEnergy territory since he is originally from the Mabel area. We welcome Mitch to MiEnergy Cooperative.



Mitch Kuhn

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COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

OFFICE INFORMATION

Open Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
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

DISTRICT 1 Dennis Ptacek, secretary and Jeff Redalen
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

MANAGEMENT STAFF

BRIAN KRAMBEER president/chief executive officer
SHELLY HOVE chief financial officer
STEVE OIAN vice president of operations - Minnesota
VASSIL VUTOV vice president of information technology
MIKE WALTON vice president of operations - Iowa
KENT WHITCOMB vice president of member services

MINEWS STAFF

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

2022 OFFICES CLOSED

SEP 20 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)

I ♥ MiCo-op gift basket drawing starts in October



IT'S YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A BASKET OF LOCALLY PRODUCED GOODS

To show our appreciation for our members, MiEnergy is pleased to announce a gift drawing contest in honor of National Cooperative Month in October. MiEnergy will draw names to give away 50 gift baskets filled with local items to members that enter the contest. And better yet, the co-op will come to you! A representative from MiEnergy will deliver the baskets to each winning residence.

HOW TO ENTER:

The contest opens on October 1. Visit www.MiEnergy.coop and click the link on our homepage to complete the form or call 800-432-2285. Members must provide their name, phone number, account number and service address to enter.

The contest closes on October 27, 2022. Winning members will be notified by phone on October 28. Baskets will be delivered Nov. 1-4.

CONTEST RULES:

One entry per membership. Employees and directors are not eligible to enter the contest.

Look for more information in the October MiNews!

Forget to worry about freezing pipes.



FREEZE SENSORS ALERT YOU TO EXTREME CONDITIONS AND KEEP YOU FROM COSTLY DAMAGES AND LOSS.

Freeze sensors in a monitored security system detect when the temperature gets too low at your home or cabin. Your system notifies the monitoring station who alerts you before pipes burst.

**Heartland
Security**[®] heartlandss.com
888.264.6380
SECURITY AUTOMATION VIDEO MEDICAL ALERTS





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MINNESOTA PO Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971

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WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT GOING SOLAR

Thinking about adding a solar array? Keep in mind that solar is not energy efficiency. Solar is generating energy. Energy efficiency is finding ways to use less energy. In MiEnergy's experience, members who install solar are motivated by saving money, concern for the environment or both. Focusing first on energy efficiency addresses both motivations.

ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Solar systems are sized based on a home's energy needs. The larger the system, the higher the cost. Before installing solar, make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible. That means it will use less energy and allow you to install a smaller solar system—which will save money and reduce your home's environmental impact.

Verify the efficiency of your lighting, HVAC systems and insulation. A fully insulated and air-sealed home uses less energy, and those measures are less expensive than solar panels. Finish these energy efficiency projects before installing solar.

ELECTRIC BILLS AND STORAGE

Solar is not "off the grid." Unless you plan to disconnect from your electric co-op, you will still receive a monthly bill. Think of the monthly bill as MiEnergy being your back up battery. Solar panels only produce power when the sun is shining. If you want power to your home at other times, like after dark, you need to be connected to your electric co-op or invest in a battery storage system—that comes at an additional cost.

During power outages, don't assume solar panels will supply you with power. Typical solar interconnection to the grid requires the panels to shut down during a power outage. This protects lineworkers from injury while making grid repairs.

CONTACT YOUR ELECTRIC CO-OP

MiEnergy has several resources available for free to help members decide if solar is a right fit for them. They can be found at www.MiEnergy.coop under Programs and Products and selecting Member-Owned Generation. Members can scroll down for top 10 considerations and other downloadable handouts.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES | ENERGY EFFICIENCY | RENEWABLE ENERGY



CURIOUS ABOUT RENEWABLE ENERGY OPTIONS?
 Learn more about community solar, Evergreen and member-owned generation by visiting www.MiEnergy.coop and selecting Programs and Products.

MiEnergy works with many local solar contractors. Most understand the offerings, rate structures and interconnection agreements, but before signing an agreement, check in with the co-op.

As with any other large purchase, compare equipment and pricing with more than one contractor. It also helps to get insight from someone who already has a system installed.

Another option may be community-owned solar or enrolling in MiEnergy's Evergreen program. They both can allow you to enjoy the benefits of renewable energy without the responsibilities of ownership and maintenance.

Understanding these considerations before installing solar will ensure you meet your money-saving and environmental goals.