Destructive “Spring” Storm

The strong winds of the snow and ice storm that began April 10 wreaked havoc on power lines and substations. Storm damage across the Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services system resulted in wide destruction of the cooperative’s infrastructure. Restoration of Power in an Emergency (ROPE) was activated and coordinated for critical infrastructure repair. Crews and equipment came to help from 24 electric cooperatives in Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin, along with two contractor companies and one neighboring municipal. Ironically, the storm hit during the week we observed Lineworker Appreciation Day.

Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services greatly appreciates the assistance provided by Dairyland Power Cooperative and these electric cooperatives. They were restoring power in very treacherous weather and hazardous conditions.

We thank and appreciate our Freeborn-Mower members for the patience and understanding that they showed throughout this ferocious weather event.

“This has been a storm that can only be compared to the Halloween Ice Storm of 1991. We experienced major damage across much of our service territory. In total we had nearly 10,000 members without power as the storm passed and around 600 poles either broken or damaged. I’d like to extend thanks to all those employees from FMCS and the many others that sent help during our restoration efforts. Cooperation among Cooperatives has certainly been on display throughout and following this dangerous storm.”
— Jim Krueger, President & CEO

COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
#PowerOfMembership
A New Strategy for CIP

The energy industry is in the middle of tremendous transformation. New technologies and innovations are emerging more rapidly than ever. Energy production is diversifying and becoming greener.

In Minnesota, our utilities have made great strides through the years to reduce the demand for power during peak usage periods and lower our carbon footprint. Yes, Minnesota has been lowering demand for electricity while also lowering carbon emissions.

The State of Minnesota’s Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) was established in 2007. CIP establishes target for all utilities to lower electric usage and spend on promoting energy conservation. However, the program in its current form focuses solely on lowering electricity use while also lowering carbon emissions.

Minnesota’s electric cooperatives have a better idea. Let’s modernize and expand CIP to build on its past success. Our plan empowers utilities to find new ways to invest in technologies and products that improve energy efficiency, save consumers money and reduce carbon emissions. We can’t simply focus on using less electricity when we should be leveraging the investments we have all made in the electric grid to provide economic and environmental benefits for all.

Our voices matter. Minnesota’s electric cooperatives serve about a third of the state’s population. This legislative session, the state’s cooperatives have proposed a bill (HF 1839/SF 1915) that will modernize CIP and build on its successes. This new proposal recognizes that today’s energy policy needs to be multi-faceted, allowing us to create new opportunities to produce greater efficiencies and consumer savings. Keeping electric rates affordable is one key reason we need to make improvements to CIP. Our proposal will produce new benchmarks based on total energy efficiency that will make the cooperative more cost-effective over time.

—Jim

EXAMPLES OF MISSED OPPORTUNITIES:

In its current form, CIP discourages options that could improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon through electrification. For example, the state Department of Transportation set a goal of electrifying 20 percent of all family vehicles within a decade. After all, gasoline vehicles are producing more carbon emissions than the power plants that will fuel electric cars.

But electric vehicles use more electricity, which contradicts CIP’s current goal of lowering electricity use. We need a new CIP to recognize that an electric vehicle uses 72 percent less energy than a gasoline vehicle (as measured by BTUs), and it costs less to power an electric vehicle than one that burns gas.

Further, we see the same benefits with air source heat pumps in homes. Only 18 percent of Minnesota households rely on electricity for heat, while space heating accounts for 10 percent of all carbon emissions in the U.S.

An air source heat pump offers an electric-based alternative over propane or fuel oil that is more efficient and would reduce our carbon footprint. But the current version of CIP wouldn’t support a rebate program for modern heat pumps because it would create new demands for electricity.

CIP is part of state law that governs all electric utilities in Minnesota. The state Legislature must enact any changes to the program. Please encourage your state lawmakers to support House File #1839 and Senate File #1915.
A large crowd was welcomed for the 82nd Annual Meeting of Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services on Saturday morning, March 30. The event was held at the Albert Lea High School.

**Carbon Free Energy by 2050**

- CEO Jim Krueger explained that a legislative bill introduced in St. Paul is giving Minnesota’s electric cooperatives considerable concern. Introduced by Governor Walz, the bill calls for 100% carbon-free energy by 2050. While the utility industry embraces the adoption of renewable resources, Krueger expressed concern about proposals that appear to ignore the engineering limits of existing technology. “During the last week of January, we all experienced firsthand the life-threatening weather extremes of a polar vortex,” noted Krueger. “Unfortunately, at the very time we needed electricity the most, wind generation output throughout the entire Midwest dropped by 80%. Many wind turbines had to be shut off due to the extremely cold temperatures. The lights stayed on only because of existing base load plants that could be called on and dispatched at will. The cooperative will continue to advocate for a balanced approach to energy policy with our elected officials.”

**Beneficial Electrification**

- Beneficial Electrification (or strategic electrification) is a term for replacing direct fossil fuel use like propane, heating oil and gasoline with electricity in a way that reduces overall emissions and energy costs. Krueger outlined how Beneficial Electrification will grow member demand for electricity at a time when the grid is becoming greener and also allow us to be part of the solution to reducing carbon emissions. “The electricity used will be a cleaner and more efficient choice that reduces the overall energy costs from a cost perspective for our members and our cooperative,” he explained. Member account number one thousand eight hundred forty-six.

**New Headquarters Building**

- Plans were announced for the construction of a new cooperative facility on a tract of land on the north side of Albert Lea. The current headquarters building was designed to house approximately 40 employees. The cooperative now employs more than 60. Additionally, some vehicles, equipment and materials have had to be stored outside. Expanded facilities will solve these concerns.

**Infrastructure Updates**

- Each year the cooperative spends a significant amount of money on both construction of new power lines and the replacement and maintenance of existing infrastructure. The upgrades included in the 2018 work plan totaled $4.5 million. At this time, we cannot say how April’s devastating ice storm will impact infrastructure construction and replacement plans during 2019.

**Dairyland Power Cooperative**

- This past year, our power supplier Dairyland Power Cooperative contracted to purchase the output of a 1.5 MW solar facility located east of Albert Lea just off County Road 46. At its peak it will produce enough electricity to power approximately 250 homes and will also be a pollinator site for bees and butterflies.
Grassroots Day at the Capitol

Each legislative session, the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) coordinates a Grassroots Day. Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services was included among the electric distribution cooperatives that sent delegates to meet with state legislators at the Minnesota Capitol on April 3rd. The event was timed to coincide with final committee debates on electricity proposals.

Grassroots advocates share professional and personal expertise on bills that have a critical impact on the day-to-day operations of the cooperatives and the quality and affordability of electricity to the cooperative member-owners.

Grassroots political involvement is a critical component of the continued success of Minnesota’s electric cooperatives. Telling the cooperative story is important, particularly when it comes to unique challenges our members face. The day motivates and engages grassroots advocates in electric issues and strengthens relationships with legislators. The event also provides an opportunity to advocate for flexibility so that electric cooperatives can operate efficiently and continue to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.

Representatives from Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services, along with Kenric Scheevel from Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC), met with Senator Dan Sparks and Representative Jeanne Poppe about energy related issues. Member account number twenty thousand twenty-six.
Electric Vehicle Charging Rates Announced

Electric vehicles are becoming widely available and incorporate significant advancements in power electronics and energy storage technologies. Anticipating the continued growth in electric vehicles (EVs), Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services now offers EV charging rates. We let you decide what makes sense for you.

• **Time-of-Use Rate** *(Policy 5.905)*
A meter is installed that allows the rate to change depending on the time you charge your electric vehicle. You are able to charge the vehicle at any time, however during On-Peak hours, the rate is significantly higher than Off-Peak hours.

On-Peak Rate: 21 cents per kWh, 2 p.m. to 9 p.m., weekdays
Off-Peak Rate: 7 cents per kWh, all other times not defined above.

• **Interruptible Rate** *(Policy 5.906)*
The Interruptible Rate requires a meter to be installed. Charging on this rate is billed at the low energy charge of 5.3 cents per kWh. The meter will control the start and stop times of the interruptible periods. The interrupted hours are roughly from 2:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on weekdays. Please allow plus or minus 30 minutes to these times. Members who choose the Interruptible Rate to charge their electric vehicle during off-peak hours can receive up to four blocks of Evergreen™ Energy in support of renewable energy sources. Member account number nineteen thousand three hundred seven.

There are four basic types of vehicles on the market today. The order in which we have listed them is from the most to the least amount of fossil-fuel used in their operation.

1. **Our society is most familiar with conventional vehicles.** These have an internal combustion engine and are fueled by gasoline or diesel.
2. **Hybrid vehicles have both a gasoline engine and an electric motor and battery.** Both gas and electricity power the wheels. The electric motor and battery are designed to improve fuel economy, so less gasoline is used to operate the vehicle. **The battery is charged solely by operating the vehicle, eliminating the need to plug it in to recharge.**
3. **Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) have larger batteries than hybrids and use both gas and electricity to power the wheels of the car.** These vehicles vary in their electric range, but shift to gasoline-only operation when battery power is depleted. **These vehicles must be plugged in to recharge the battery.**
4. **Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) are powered solely by electricity.** These vehicles are recharged by plugging in the vehicle.
**Before going into the fields—**

**Understand and Discuss Electrical Dangers**

Farmers are heading to the fields for spring planting, facing long work hours and the dictates of weather. Entanglement with overhead power lines and farm equipment is one of the most common, and potentially lethal, hazards on the farm. Yet, these instances are preventable!

**Before going into the field:**

- **Discuss safety.** Make certain all full-time and seasonal workers understand the locations of electric utility equipment.
- **Designate preplanned routes to avoid hazard areas.** Routes must maintain a 10-foot or greater clearance from power lines.

**When in the field:**

- **Know your clearances.** Judging distance can be tricky, especially with farm equipment that have tall communications antennas.
- **Designate someone to act as a spotter.** Make certain proper clearance is maintained between the equipment and power lines, poles and guy wires. Member account number one thousand eight hundred forty-six.
- **Look up!** Avoid raising the arms of planters or cultivators or raising truck beds when near power lines.
- **Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.**

- **Know the location of buried utility facilities.** Also locate underground electric transformer and junction boxes. These facilities are energized just like overhead power lines.
- **Stay away from power pole guy wires.** Guy wires are a grounded wire used to stabilize power poles. Bumping into guy wires can cause the overhead power lines to sag and make entanglement more likely.

**Always:**

- **Look all around!** Be aware of your surroundings.
- **Immediately report any damage to utility equipment!** Never try to make repairs yourself.

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**Participants Selected for 2019 Youth Tour**

Congratulations to Shayna Skaar and Mikenna Erickson who will represent Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services this summer at a prestigious youth educational and leadership event in Washington, D.C. They will be part of the Minnesota youth delegation to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s annual Youth Tour. The event brings together high school students from across the nation to learn about electric cooperatives, civic leadership, and explore how our government works. The experience also includes visits to museums, memorial and historical sites, as well as other fun activities for the participants.

Shayna is the daughter of Tracy and Suzann Skaar of rural Hayward. She is a junior at Albert Lea High School.

Mikenna is the daughter of Jeff and Ann Erickson of rural Alden. She is a junior at Alden-Conger School.
Safety Starts with You

You are the first line of defense in spotting potential electrical hazards around your home. May is national Electrical Safety Month and this is a great time to look around for potential safety hazards.

Remember, every electrical device has a purpose and a service lifespan. Periodic inspections can tip you off to electrical hazards that could not only cause the device to fail, but potentially start a fire.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI)

Outlets in the kitchen, bathroom, laundry room or outdoors should include GFCI features. These are designed to sense abnormal current flows, breaking the circuit to prevent potential electric shocks from devices plugged into the outlets. These outlets have a test button. Contact a licensed electrician to replace any failing GFCI outlets.

Loose or Damaged Outlets or Switches

An outlet or switch plate showing signs of heat damage or discoloration may be a potential shock or electrical fire hazard. Loose connections can allow electrical current arcing. Contact a licensed electrician to investigate and make the proper corrections.

Surge Protectors

Power strips with surge protectors can help safeguard expensive equipment like televisions, entertainment systems and computer components from power spikes. A nearby lightning strike can cause a voltage spike. Voltage spikes are measured in joules, and surge protectors are rated for the number of joules they can effectively absorb. That means if your surge protector is rated at 1,000 joules, it should be replaced when it hits or passes that limit. When the limit is reached, protection stops, and you’re left with a basic power strip.

Some surge protectors include indicator lights that flicker to warn you when they’ve stopped working as designed, but many do not. If your electrical system takes a major hit, or if you don’t remember when you bought your surge protector, replacement may be the best option.

Extension Cords

If you use extension cords regularly to connect devices and equipment to your wall outlets, you may live in an underwired home. The modern family uses a growing number of electrical devices, so having enough outlets in just the right spots can be challenging. Remember, extension cords are designed for temporary and occasional use.

Member account number twenty thousand twenty-six.

If an extension cord gets noticeably warm when in use, it could be undersized for the intended use. If it shows any signs of frayed, cracked or heat-damaged insulation, it should be replaced. If the grounding prong is missing, crimped or loose, a grounded cord will not provide the protection designed into its performance. Always make sure that extension cords used in outdoor or potentially damp locations are rated for exterior use.

Electrical Safety

Electrical Accidents

Short circuit → Electric shock → Overload → Heating of conductors → Damaged Insulation → Fire

Death
SPOT YOUR NUMBER

– $25 Bill Credit –

To reward our faithful readers, three member account numbers have been selected at random to be spelled out each two times within the newsletter. If you spot your account number, call the cooperative by the 15th of the current month to claim your $25 bill credit. Find your account number on your electric bill and exclude the last two digits when searching for your account number in the newsletter. Good luck!

There were no Spot Your Number winners in April.

There are three member account numbers hidden in this issue. WATCH FOR YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER!

RECIPES

German Egg Noodles
Geraldine Waltman

4 eggs / 2 tsp. salt / 2 c. flour

Stir eggs & salt in large bowl. Gradually add flour. When dough becomes too stiff knead with hands, divide into 3 balls. Roll out & lay to dry. Cut into strips or drop for dumplings.

Do you have a recipe to share with County Lines readers? Please submit them online at our website (www.fmcs.coop) or typed to our office. The recipes should be short to medium in length and use common ingredients. If your recipe is selected to be printed in the newsletter, you’ll receive a $10 bill credit.

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