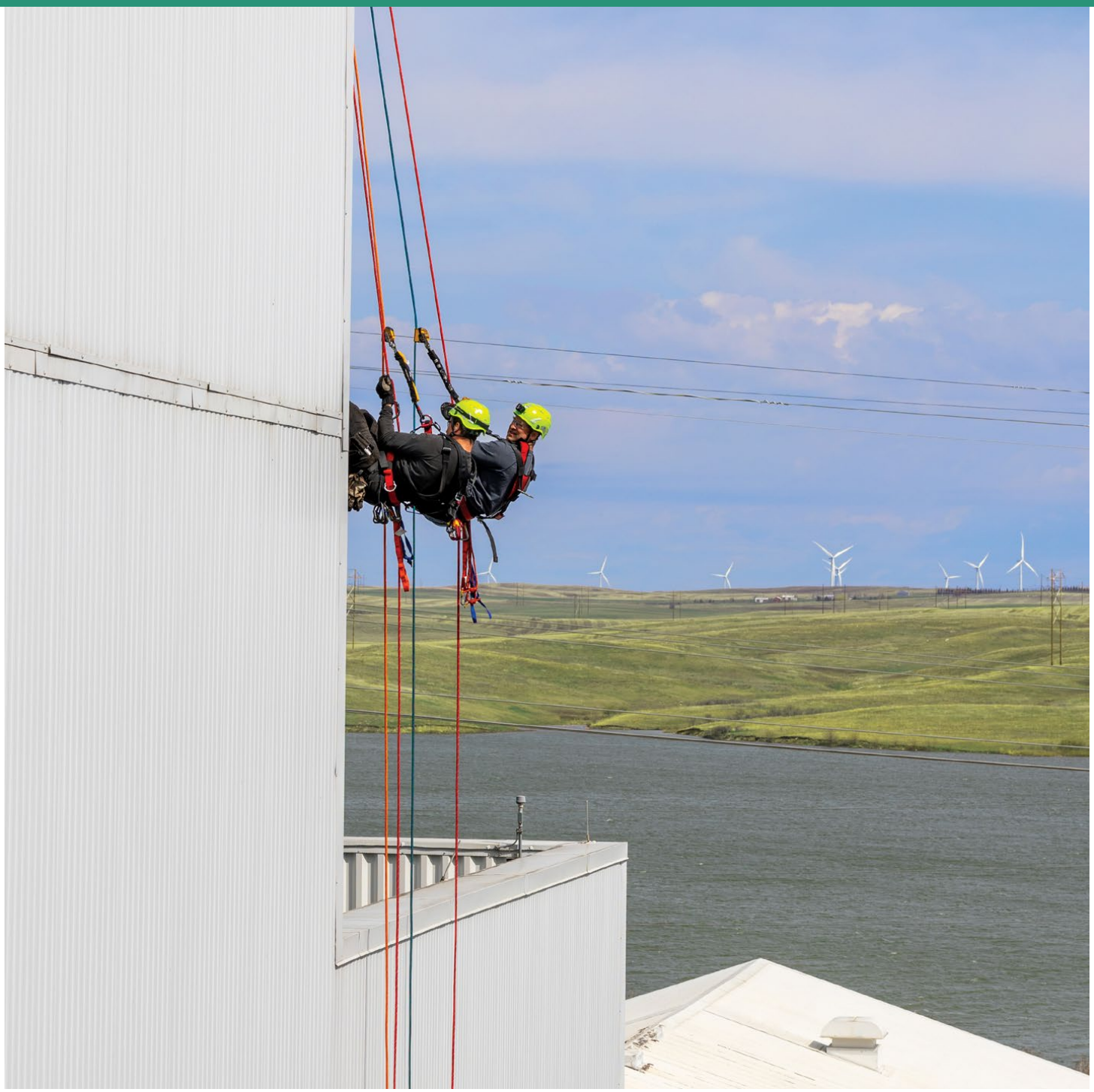
MINNKOTA

MESSENGER



MAY - JUNE **2023**

6 RISING TO THE OCCASION

It takes a combination of training, adaptability and fearlessness to navigate a high-pressure emergency. The members of Minnkota's Emergency Rescue Team have it all – and they utilize their skills at ANY elevation.

On the cover: Minnkota Emergency Rescue Team members Channing Schafer (left) and Tim Krous rappel down a Young Station building during monthly rescue training.

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Minnkota Power Cooperative is a generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Grand Forks, N.D. It supplies wholesale electricity to 11 member-owner distribution cooperatives, three in eastern North Dakota and eight in northwestern Minnesota. Minnkota also serves as operating agent for the Northern Municipal Power Agency, an association of 12 municipal utilities in the same service region. Together, the Joint System serves more than 162,500 consumers.

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Thanks to quick thinking and strong leadership from Cavalier Rural Electric Cooperative's general manager, some unusual line damage was resolved safely in the midst of a record-breaking snowstorm.

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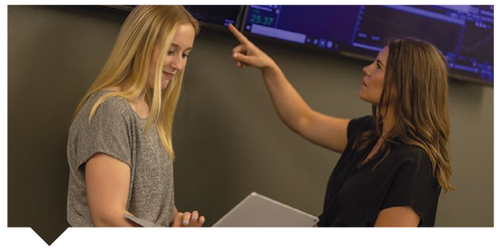
Cooperatives are committed to safety in all levels of power delivery. Meet a lineworker who extended that dedication to safety when he witnessed a rollover accident in Red River Valley Co-op Power territory.



12 ENERGY FOR EVERY SEASON

As the energy industry rapidly evolves, more is changing than the ratio of power generation sources. The regional energy market is also switching up its technique, in hopes of fostering a balanced grid year-round.

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Minnkota continued its annual recognition of aspiring engineers in 2023, handing a first-place prize to a team of innovative student inventors at the University of North Dakota.

TOWERING LEADERSHIP

Cavalier Rural Electric's line crew responds to downed communication tower with quick thinking, focus on safety

By **Emily Windjue** /// Photography **Michael Hoeft**

(Left to right) Lineworkers Tyler Feist, Andrew Nyhagen, Derek Belle and General Manager Marty Tetrault stand near one of the cooperative's trucks.

With a potentially record-breaking spring snowstorm on its way, Cavalier Rural Electric Cooperative (CREC) General Manager Marty Tetrault was preparing his team for iced-up power lines and possible outages on the morning of April 5. Instead, he was surprised to receive a dispatch call that a 300-foot radio communication tower had fallen on one of the rural co-op's distribution lines, and was now laying across Highway 1 south of Langdon, N.D.

"You see that tower every day and you don't think it's that high in the air until you see it lying on the ground. Then it's really big," Tetrault said.

With the tower's debris strewn across the roadway along with potential electrical hazards, the CREC crew needed to respond quickly. With 25 years of line-work experience before becoming the co-op's leader in May of 2022, Tetrault wasn't going to be content sitting on the sidelines. So he grabbed his coat and rounded up his team.

As Tetrault helped block and redirect traffic, his crew worked through the worsening winter storm conditions to ground the affected lines and begin assessing if the scene was safe. After determining the lines were de-energized, the crew began disassembling the tower and removing it from the highway with support from the local sheriff's department. "Hats off to the Cavalier County Sheriff's Department," said Tetrault. "They did a great job stopping traffic far enough away, so we didn't have any bystanders walking up."

The downed communication tower was owned by Grand Forks-based Stones Mobile Radio. With the blizzard conditions fast approaching, it wasn't safe for the Stones team to make the two-hour trek up to Cavalier County.

"Marty Tetrault and his crew made my life very easy that day," said Chris Ranisate, owner and president of Stones Mobile Radio. "After we received the call that our tower was laying across Highway 1 and took out Cavalier Rural Electric power lines, Marty asked what he could do to help. He and his crew handled everything."

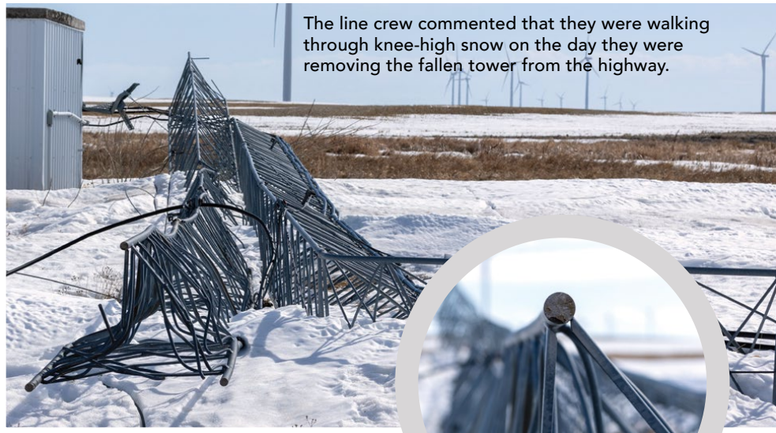
The fallen tower was cut into two separate pieces before a bucket truck towed it away from the middle of the road. After the road was safely reopened to traffic, the line crew of Tyler Feist, Derek Belle and Andrew Nyhagen got to work repairing their line.

"For line damage, it's usually farm equipment or lightning, storms, something like that," Feist said of the unusual event.

"It was a new one for us," Belle added.

CREC's line was repaired and back online by 2:30 p.m. that afternoon. Not every general manager has the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and work alongside their crews, but Tetrault's quick thinking and years of experience confirmed that he was the right man for the job.

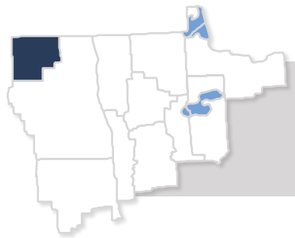
"In my opinion, Cavalier Rural Electric went above and beyond," said Ranisate.



The line crew commented that they were walking through knee-high snow on the day they were removing the fallen tower from the highway.

The communications tower collapsed onto CREC's distribution line, which broke a few crossarms and caused minor wire damage.

Another priority for the CREC crew was to make sure the tower stayed off nearby snowmobile trails. The upcoming storm would have made it very difficult for riders to see the fallen structure.



CAVALIER RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Langdon, N.D.

Incorporated: September 5, 1945
Board members: 7
Manager: Marty Tetrault
Members: 1,584
Miles of line: 1,378

RISING TO THE OCCASION

Minnkota Emergency Rescue Team uses rope training to lower injured contractor from 40-foot scaffold

By **Kaylee Cusack**
Photography **Michael Hoeft**

When Simon Manifold's phone rang on March 10, he was expecting the contractor foreman on the other side of the line to be calling with a question about scaffolding. The foreman was someone who Manifold, a maintenance coordinator at Minnkota's Milton. R. Young Station near Center, N.D., had worked with a great deal over several major maintenance outages at the power plant.

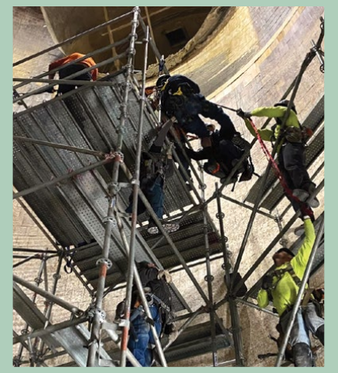
But the caller's question wasn't about scaffolding this time.

"He asked if anyone on the rescue team was on site today. I was like, 'Yeah, what do you got? What do you need?'" Manifold recalled. "He said he had a guy hurt up on some scaffolding, and he was thinking of throwing something together to get him down. I said, 'No. No you can't. We have equipment for that.'"

Minnkota had the team, the training and the technique necessary to complete the rescue of a contractor who had injured his knee while taking down a set of scaffolding in the Young Station's scrubber tower. The man made a misstep on the top level of the 40-foot structure, dislocating and fracturing his patella. He wouldn't be coming down without specialized rescue ropes and harnesses.

Manifold, who also serves as co-leader of the 14-person Minnkota Emergency Rescue Team, put a call out to all available

Minnkota Safety & Physical Security Specialist Tim Krous rappels from a height of nearly 140 feet during rope rescue training at the Milton R. Young Station.



(Above and right) Photos from the March 10 rescue show the ERT teamwork involved in safely lowering the injured contractor to the ground.

ERT members Pat Weninger (left) and Trever Himmelspach begin their double descent during training.

Members of Minnkota's ERT, left to right: (Back row) Simon Manifold, Casey Zarr, Channing Schafer, Treavor Hendrickson, (front row) Trever Himmelspach, Pat Weninger, Tim Krous

rescue team members. Within 5-7 minutes, half of the team was at the site with the Roco Rescue ropes needed to get the contractor down safely.

"This is the first time – I think in all of our careers – that we've actually gotten to utilize the ropes portion of our training," Manifold said. He explained that the rescue team trains at least once a month in different areas of emergency response, so they were well prepared for this moment.

Minnkota Plant Mechanic Trever Himmelspach was the first to the top of the scaffold, and was soon followed by Project Engineering Supervisor Treavor Hendrickson and Plant Technician Ben Howard. They ensured that the injured knee was the only medical issue at hand and began the process of swapping out the contractor's safety harness with the rescue harness.

Since the scaffolding was in the process of being disassembled, the hired scaffolding crew worked to reinforce the structure to provide high-point anchors as the rescue team acted. Manifold joined the men at the top as Yard Operator Dan Imdieke, Safety & Physical Security Supervisor Troy Karlberg, and HR Coordinator Laura Fleckenstein prepared a stretcher for patient care.

"Within our team, we really know each other's strengths – like Trever is super good on ropes, Troy and I are medical because we're EMTs," Fleckenstein said. "We all have our strengths and weaknesses."

Howard worked the safety line as the others slowly lowered the man toward the floor. The rescue rope system performed beautifully, allowing the contractor to maintain a seated position to guard his knee. As he came down, the scaffold builders came together to fill in the gaps, with someone staged at every level to hold the precious cargo out away from the tower.

With the patient safely lowered to the stretcher, Karlberg and Fleckenstein put their volunteer EMT skills to work. They cut the contractor's pants, stabilized the knee, put on a brace and made him comfortable for ambulance transport. As the emergency vehicle sped off to the hospital, the seven Minnkota rescuers gathered for a debrief meeting.

"It really hadn't sunk in yet for me," Manifold said. "I was like, it's over – that really happened, and it's over already. We knocked it out of the park. I didn't have to coach any of them. They just picked it up and did it. They made my job really easy."

Building the team

The Minnkota Emergency Rescue Team falls under the supervision of Tim Krous, the plant's Safety & Physical Security specialist. Krous was not on shift on the day of the incident, but he followed the response through the rescue team's group text thread – as did the other emergency responders who weren't present. Texts of "Go get him!" and "You got this!" and "Congrats!" flooded their phones that morning.

"I'm extremely proud of the team. These guys knew exactly what they needed, put together a team quickly and got him down quickly. A lot of times in these situations, time is of the essence," Krous said. "Had it been a heart attack or needed CPR, that kind of scenario, time is huge. And that's why we train together. It was awesome."

The role of building a strong rescue team is not one Krous takes lightly. Plant employees must apply for one of the positions in the rare times there is an open slot. Although no previous training is required, the selected candidates must illustrate a blend of physical fearlessness and calm under pressure. "Not everyone is built for that. Everyone has that natural instinct of fight or flight. You need people who will fight," Krous said.

Some rescue team members do bring past work experiences to the table. For instance, Krous previously worked on the police force, and three rescuers serve in the military (Dan Imdieke, Johnathon Torfin and Jordan Ternes). However, the ability to learn lifesaving skills is one of the reasons many others are drawn to apply.

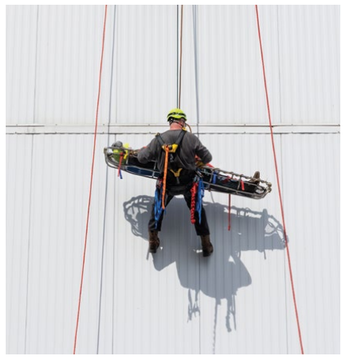
"I didn't have any kind of prior medical training. And that's a part of the reason I wanted to do it – so I could take it home," said Howard, referring to his wife and son. "And it's just thrilling to me."

Roco Rescue, the company who provided the training critical to the rope rescue that day, awarded the Minnkota team with its Real Rescue Award, a plaque that now hangs in the hallway of the plant. The company now has plans to roll out scaffolding-specific training, and they've asked to use Minnkota's scenario as a way to kick off the session. Manifold says the group of contractors they assisted that day expressed mountains of gratitude, with compliments specifically from the foreman who called him on the phone that morning.

The Minnkota Emergency Rescue Team doesn't do what they do for plaques or praise. They do it simply because helping people is the cooperative way.

"It's not even a thought – it's just a reaction," Fleckenstein said. "I treat them all as my family, no matter where I am or what I'm doing."

ERT co-leader Simon Manifold runs a rope rescue drill with the help of a volunteer "victim."



HIGHWAY 75 HERO

Red River Valley Co-op Power lineworker assists expectant mother following rollover crash

By **Kaylee Cusack**
Photography **Michael Hoeft**

Service.

The significance of the term is something soldered in Nate Zurn. Before completing line school and joining Red River Valley Co-op Power (RRVCP) as an apprentice lineworker in 2021, Zurn served in the U.S. Air Force. Country, co-op, community – he helps when help is needed.

In January, Zurn was making the Highway 75 drive from Halstad, Minn., to Moorhead to lend a hand to the RRVCP crew stationed there. As he watched the sedan driving southbound in front of him, he noticed the vehicle swerve.

"Then all of a sudden, the car skidded out and spun into the ditch and rolled over," he remembered. "It rolled onto its top."

Without hesitation, Zurn pulled over to the right shoulder and parked at the site of the rollover.

Apprentice Lineman Nate Zurn didn't hesitate to help when a vehicle rollover occurred in front of him earlier this winter.

"I knew I had to go see if she was OK and get her out of there," he said. "I hopped out and walked over to the car and got down by the window. She was awake and was leaned over." The woman in the car told Zurn that she already had 911 on the phone, and they were responding.

She also revealed that she was nearly nine months pregnant.

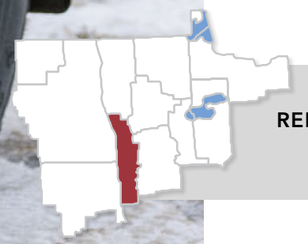
Zurn stayed calm and worked fast, running back to his RRVCP truck for a shovel to clear enough snow around the car to get the driver's door open. He helped the woman safely crawl out of the vehicle. After making sure she wasn't in any pain and was able to walk, the two made their way to Zurn's pickup to drink some water and wait for first responders to arrive. The ambulance was there in less than 15 minutes.

"It was pretty cold out, so they let her sit in the pickup the whole time and just talked to her through the window to make sure she was OK," Zurn said, recalling his relief that no injuries – not even a scratch – were reported. The woman and her unborn child were taken by ambulance to the hospital for a thorough examination, but everything appeared positive.

RRVCP CEO Rich Whitcomb says what happened that January day doesn't surprise him. "You really can't make a career out of being a lineworker without practicing service to others. Our crews want to help, whether it involves restoring power due to an outage or just being in the right place at the right time," he said.

Whitcomb described the unspoken partnership between co-op crews and their communities. RRVCP member-consumers often plow paths to help lineworkers restore power, step in to help pull trucks out of snow and mud, and generally offer patience and understanding during trying times. Neighbors help each other, and everyone is ready to serve. Especially in co-op country.

"Helping others in need is typical for our crew, and lineworkers in general. They have lifelong safety training due to the nature of the work, and many are rural and small-town first responders anyway. In Nate's case, he has military service," Whitcomb said. "Other linemen in our crew have done similar things over the years. While Nate is being recognized for this particular instance, it really represents a devotion to service larger than any one individual."



RED RIVER VALLEY CO-OP POWER
Halstad, Minn.

Incorporated: February 21, 1938
Board members: 6
CEO: Rich Whitcomb
Members: 4,754
Miles of line: 1,792

ENERGY FOR EVERY SEASON

Minnkota prepares for regional energy market's new four-season approach to resource planning

By **Kaylee Cusack** /// Photography **Michael Hoeft**

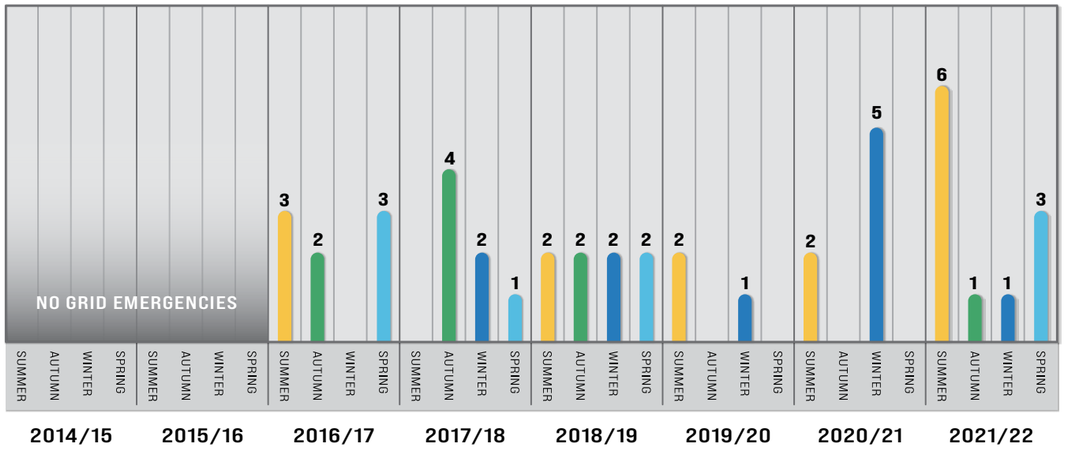
North Dakotans and Minnesotans have been adjusting to four unique seasons since the beginning of human history. Now, their modern energy resources will abide by the annual cycle as well.

In May 2023, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) held its first Planning Resource Auction under a new four-season resource adequacy construct. For many years, MISO – a nonprofit organization that combines the generation and transmission capacities of power utilities across several states – had followed a "summer-peaking" system of capacity pricing across its grid footprint, from the cold region of Manitoba, Minnesota and the Dakotas all the way down to the steady warmth of Louisiana. However, the grid operator has experienced more and more shortfalls and emergency grid events over the past few years, during EVERY season (attributed to increased reliance on intermittent resources, more baseload generation retirements, extreme weather events and declining excess reserve margin). To combat grid imbalance, MISO knew it had to start sending new pricing signals to get utilities thinking differently about their power portfolios year-round.

Minnkota's Energy Supply team, left to right: Isaac Hoffart, Sarah Horner, Amber Langemo, Todd Sailer, Paige Dahl, Dan Trebil

NUMBER OF EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS BY SEASON PER YEAR

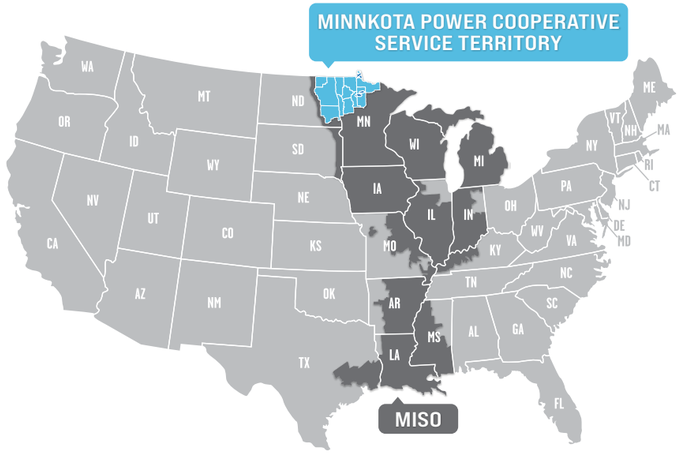
DATA COURTESY OF MISO



Before 2022, the MISO capacity market offerings fell anywhere from $1 to $5 a megawatt-day (MW-day). In 2022, that price rocketed to nearly $237, showing that extra resource capacity was direly needed and, thus, incredibly valuable. This value was based on summer needs only. The 2023 four-season construct balanced MISO's capacity prices according to season:

- Summer – $10/MW-day
- Fall – $15/MW-day
- Winter – $2/MW-day
- Spring – $10/MW-day

Clair Moeller, MISO's president and chief operating officer, said that this year's auction results were "encouraging," and that the new seasonal approach is a step in the right direction. "As we navigate an unprecedented transformation of the power system, we must continue to make further enhancements to maintain reliability and send the right pricing signals to the market," he noted in a May 17 statement.



MISO as a whole is a "summer peaking" system, meaning its highest demand for power comes in the summer when people are running cooling systems and staying indoors. The Minnkota Power Cooperative system, on the other hand, is "winter peaking," which means its highest demand falls in the cold winter months. Minnkota long benefited from the capacity pricing of summer-peaking resource planning, but it will now engage in new resource scheduling techniques to ensure affordable and reliable participation in the energy and capacity markets.

Dan Trebil serves as Energy Supply Manager and leads Minnkota's team of energy marketers.

The nuances of the new seasonal construct can be difficult to understand, so we sat down with Minnkota Energy Supply Manager Dan Trebil to explain what MISO's pricing changes will mean for Minnkota, as well as the entire MISO grid.

How does MISO's Planning Resource Auction work? Is it an actual auction with bids?

"It's not quite that exciting. There's no real auction. Basically, utilities submit their demand obligation (their load obligation), and then their capacity resources that they're using to use to meet that obligation. Once those are submitted, MISO goes back and does its calculations to determine if you met your obligations, if the local resource zone met their obligations, and if the entire footprint met its obligations. The prices come from those calculations."

With the new construct, how does Minnkota's energy marketing team need to look at resource scheduling differently?

"There are a lot of things that we're changing. When we initially started working with the auction, we were expecting to be short capacity. The way it worked out, we were long in all four seasons. There were a lot of different inputs that we had to consider and we had to calculate in order to get to our capacity number. There was significant back-and-forth with MISO. In the end, MISO was wonderful – they were great to work with."

Is there a season that will now be more of a challenge for Minnkota?

"Fall is going to be our tough one. That's when we always schedule our major outages [at the Milton R. Young Station]. We are talking with the plant team right now as far as the potential to move some outages for Young Unit 1 to have capacity available."

How will the new seasonal construct affect Minnkota financially in the long term?

"How it will affect us financially is really more in the future. We anticipate that at some point under this construct we will be short capacity and we will have to secure it either from the MISO market or bilaterally from neighboring utilities. Under the previous construct, the likelihood of us being short capacity was really minimal, because we don't take planned maintenance outages in the summer, and our obligation is lower in the summer than it is in the winter. Generally speaking, under the single season construct we would have, for the most part, been long capacity – if not even. Where under this new construct, we're somewhat confident that at some point we will end up having to buy capacity."

Why should members be confident that Minnkota is ready for shifts in MISO regional capacity?

"Part of it is our baseload resources. We also have a significant amount of wind that helps cover those baseline resources when they're not available. Not to mention the fact that we've forged good partnerships with our neighboring utilities that will allow us to leverage those relationships to share capacity when we need it."

Will MISO's new four-season construct do anything to reduce the current risk of grid reliability issues?

"Short term, it will not. Long-term? That's to be seen. Part of the reason MISO wanted to do this was to incentivize those utilities who lean on the market – or who lean on other utilities or neighboring RTOs (regional transmission organizations) – to find different ways of either reducing their load, reducing their demand, or increasing their generation resources. But right now, the resources that are available are still the resources that were available last year, so short term I don't believe it will have any impact on the reliability of the grid."

Minnkota engineers Kasey Borboa (far left) and Brendan Kennelly (far right) grab a photo with competition winners Riley Sondrol (middle left) and Michael Ramseth (middle right). Online teammates not pictured: David Barber and Robbie Robison.

ANDREW FREEMAN COMPETITION TEAM TAKES THE CAKE

Minnkota recognizes students behind the "Batter Shaker" as annual innovation contest winners

By **Kaylee Cusack** /// Photography **Michael Hoeft**

The most beloved inventions are often those that solve an irritating problem faced by everyday people. For Andrew L. Freeman, former general manager of Minnkota Power Cooperative, the irritating problem was his vehicle not starting during North Dakota's coldest winter days, and the solution was his invention of the headbolt heater – now called an engine block heater.

In the spirit of making life a little sweeter, the winners of the 2023 Andrew Freeman Design Innovation Competition created a contraption called the "Batter Shaker," which shakes cake batter on a platform to remove bubbles that cause voids in a cake. The four-person team of University of North Dakota (UND) engineering students responded to a request from a national company to develop the appliance. They impressed the competition sponsors at Minnkota with their simple ingenuity and teamwork and were awarded the $2,000 prize for demonstrating the innovative spirit of Minnkota's first leader.

"There were three values that he held dear: teamwork, innovation and communication," said Brendan Kennelly, Minnkota Vice President of Power Delivery, to the room of competition finalists on May 5. "That's how we rated the presentations and projects, based on his principles."

The Andrew Freeman Design Innovation Competition began with a 1996 endowment honoring Freeman's history with UND's College of Engineering & Mines. The first awards were given in 2000, and the contest has become an annual source of pride for UND's brightest aspiring engineers.

"It's a great feeling," said Batter Shaker team member Riley Sondrol, a mechanical engineering student set to graduate in spring 2023. "We knew we would enter our project in the career expo, but I didn't know we could go on to the Andrew L. Freeman Competition – and stand a chance of winning it."

"It's amazing," added fellow mechanical engineering student and teammate Michael Ramseth.

Two student teams tied for second place in the competition, earning them both a $1,000 prize. One group determined the feasibility of using a steam-iron process to produce hydrogen from syngas. They found that the steam-iron process would be more environmentally and economically beneficial than the standard method that is widely used today. The other group developed a proof-of-concept prototype to show the benefits of a laser-based wireless power transmission system.

"We're very impressed with your ability. The projects, and the technical content of the projects, and being able to communicate them," Kennelly told the participants, noting the fact that several teams – including the winner – were mixed teams of on-campus and online students. "Remote work is just a part of the equation now, in the workforce as well, and you guys flew right through that. You did a really nice job."

UND College of Engineering & Mines Dean Brian Tande congratulated the top teams, and he offered his gratitude to Minnkota for shining a light on the generation's next problem solvers.

"This longstanding partnership is indescribable," he said. "We're happy to have your support, so thanks for coming back and doing this every year."

Minnkota's Brendan Kennelly speaks to competition participants.

Regulators warn of ‘catastrophic’ reliability concerns

Center to Grand Forks line near Finley, N.D.

Members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) expressed significant concerns about the reliability of the nation’s electric grid at a May 4 Senate hearing.

FERC Commissioner Mark Christie emphasized that the retirement of many reliable power plants without adequate replacement is straining the electric grid and contributing to the growing risk of energy shortfalls.

“I think the United States is heading for a very catastrophic situation in terms of reliability,” Christie told members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

“The core of the problem is actually very simple. We are retiring dispatchable generating resources at a pace and in an amount that is far too fast and far too great and is threatening our ability to keep the lights on.”

Minnkota leaders have repeatedly communicated to lawmakers, regulators, businesses and others about challenges presented by an accelerating pace of change in the energy industry. In 2021, Minnkota CEO Mac McLennan testified in front of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee about specific challenges when extreme cold has severely impacted the ability for renewable resources to operate for extended periods.

“It is an exciting time for our industry, but it can also be daunting,” McLennan testified. “We all want to push for electricity to be a better product – more reliable, more resilient, affordable for every household, and as clean as possible. To reach these goals, we need to work together as utilities, policymakers and regulatory agencies.”

A few weeks later, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) released its 2023 Summer Reliability Assessment. The grid reliability watchdog determined that two-thirds of North America could face power shortages this summer during extreme weather events and high electrical demand periods.

“The system is closer to the edge. More needs to be done,” said John Moura, NERC director of reliability assessment and performance analysis, in a news briefing on the assessment.

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) CEO Jim Matheson called the increasing strain on the electric grid “unacceptable.”

“American families and businesses expect the lights to stay on at a cost they can afford,” Matheson said. “But that’s no longer a guarantee. Nine states saw rolling blackouts last December as the demand for electricity exceeded available supply. Absent a major shift in state and federal energy policy, this is the reality we will face for years to come. It’s vital that policymakers work to prioritize reliability in every energy policy discussion.”

Pictured left to right: Jenna Chase, Ben Fladhammer, Emily Windjue, Michael Hoeft, Kaylee Cusack and Jennifer Erickson

Minnkota receives communications honors from NRECA

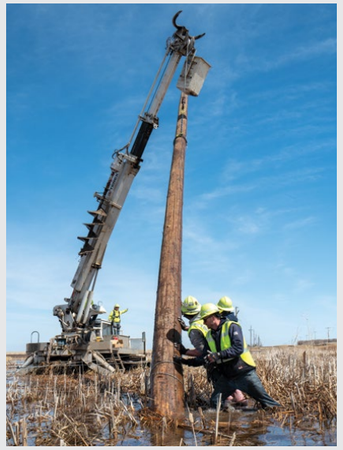
For the fifth consecutive year, Minnkota’s Communications department has been awarded top honors from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s (NRECA) Spotlight on Excellence Awards. The program recognizes outstanding work produced by electric co-op communication and marketing professionals across the country. This year, Minnkota received two Gold awards and one Silver award for projects completed in 2022. All winning submissions were judged against other G&Ts and statewide organizations.

Minnkota won a first-place Gold award for Best Individual Ad for its latest in a series of All In on All-of-the-Above Energy videos, titled "Your Region, Your Resources." The 30-second ad features a fast-paced rhyming concept that includes all of Minnkota’s energy resources along with the unique visual elements of North Dakota and Minnesota.

Another first-place Gold award for Best Video was given to "Your Off-Peak Program," a fully animated educational video illustrating how Minnkota’s off-peak (demand response) program works and its benefits to the grid, the co-op and the membership.

Minnkota digital media specialist Michael Hoeft received a Silver award for Best Photo for his photograph, "Rise Up," which captured the Minnkota teamwork involved in helping to restore power for a fellow co-op in western North Dakota. The shot was also voted as Photo of the Year by NRECA’s RE Magazine.

The Spotlight on Excellence Awards consist of several categories that reflect the scope of cooperative communications, including writing, graphic design, marketing campaigns, etc. Entries are judged by industry peers.



Rise Up

See the winning videos:

Your Region, Your Resources

Your Off-Peak Program

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Watts Up at Minnkota

By **Emily Windjue**

New employees enjoy snacks and pop at the "frunkgate" social hour.

Tours of Minnkota's critical infrastructure were an employee highlight during *Watts Up*.

Minnkota launched its brand-new onboarding event, *Watts Up at Minnkota*, in May. About 28 new employees from Grand Forks and the Milton R. Young Station spent two days learning the ins and outs of how Minnkota serves its members every day. The electric co-op crash course began with a brief history of Minnkota and a breakdown of what it means to be a part of a cooperative. Red River Valley Co-op Power CEO Rich Whitcomb spoke to the group about his experience working for one of the Minnkota member cooperatives and the important connection between distribution cooperatives and the communities they serve. Attendees were also able to enjoy a "frunkgate" social hour where they learned more about Minnkota's new Ford F-150 Lightning all-electric pickup.

Day two began with a jolt as vice presidents Brendan Kennelly and Todd Sailer spoke to employees about Minnkota's power delivery and power supply systems. *Watts Up* attendees had the opportunity to tour the operations shops, ask questions of the superintendents and see the power control center where Minnkota's electric grid is monitored 24/7.

The fun didn't stop as the employees were bussed to local substations to see firsthand the infrastructure Minnkota has in place to distribute safe and reliable power to its members.

Nearly one-third of Minnkota's employees have fewer than five years of service, and two-thirds have fewer than 10 years of service. With the growing number of new faces around the cooperative, enhanced educational opportunities, like *Watts Up at Minnkota*, will be needed to ensure the workforce is positioned to keep pace with a rapidly changing industry.