

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association

SPARKS

November 2020

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

00
7530
BARNESVILLE
AREA
FIRE & RESCUE

**Volunteering
to help others**

page 3

SPARKS

Red River Valley Co-op Power is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Sparks (USPS 509-300) is published nine times a year – January, February/March, April, May/June, July, August/September, October, November and December – by the Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association, 109 2nd Ave. E, Halstad, MN 56548. Periodical postage paid at Halstad, MN 56548. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sparks, Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association, P.O. Box 358, Halstad, MN 56548-0358.

Phone (218) 456-2139 or (800) 788-7784
www.rrvcoop.com

Subscription rates: \$1/year
 Rich Whitcomb, Editor
 Mary Merrill, Graphic Artist

November 2020
 Volume 64, No. 8

Halstad, Minnesota (USPS 509-300)

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

- Roger Krostue Fisher
Chairman
- Marvis Thompson Perley
Vice Chairman
- Trevor Sorby Glyndon
Secretary-Treasurer
- Bob Kinkade Ada
- Sarah Tommerdahl Hendrum
- Neil Wieser Moorhead

- Rich Whitcomb
Chief Executive Officer

Scheduled Board Meeting

Board meetings are held in Halstad at the cooperative office starting at 8:30 a.m. on the next-to-last Monday of each month.

Outages: 800-788-7784

On the Cover: Like so many others in rural areas or small towns, Paul Karsnia is a volunteer firefighter. Karsnia, a Red River Valley Co-op Power employee and Barnesville resident, has volunteered for the last 26 years.

VETERANS DAY

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

Our offices will be closed
 Wednesday, Nov. 11, for Veterans Day



Rich Whitcomb
 CEO

THE CEO'S REPORT

Capital credits returned to members

At its October board meeting, your Board of Directors authorized returning about \$391,000 worth of margins (called capital credits) to members who purchased electricity in 1993.

Members receiving capital credits will see their credit on their December statement. Since its inception, your cooperative has returned almost \$8.5 million back to members. Capital credits are operating margins left over after all expenses have been paid at year-end. Red River Valley Co-op Power is not-for-profit and therefore only needs enough margins to meet lender requirements and operate. Before margins are returned, they are reinvested to help finance construction and maintain the distribution system.

Directors decide when to retire capital credits based on the cooperative's financial condition and other factors. All members receive their share of yearly margins once those are retired in the future. Please call 800-788-7784 if you have questions about your capital credit balance or how margins are retired. Remember to provide us with your new address if you move outside the co-op service territory.

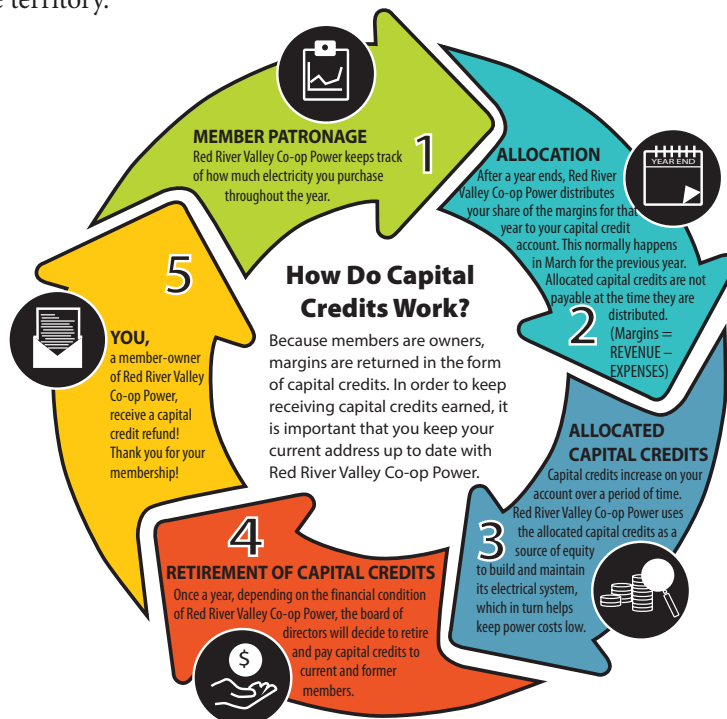
Small billing change proposed

As of now, it appears likely your cooperative will meet its operational and financial requirements for this year.

Preparations for the 2021 budget are well under way to be presented to the board at its November meeting. We are factoring in upcoming changes to the wholesale power rate structure and continuing to evaluate how that affects the cooperative financially.

In reviewing our rate structures, there is one billing change we propose to make that is revenue neutral to every cooperative member – rolling the ½ cent “Minnkota surcharge” that has appeared on your bill for the last 10 years into the regular kilowatt-hour (kWh) rate. That surcharge has a direct link to cover wholesale power costs and the revenue is still needed.

So now instead of having two lines on a residential member's bill – one line that says 11.6 cents per kWh and a second line that says .05 cents per kWh – there will simply be one line that says 12.1 cents per kWh. Again, this is simply a change in billing presentation. We anticipate that billing presentation change to occur in January.



Cooperative employee volunteers to help others

A master electrician by trade, many members know longtime Red River Valley Co-op Power employee Paul Karsnia for his work maintaining the cooperative's off-peak system. What they may not know is that when Karsnia is off the clock for the co-op, he is on the clock as a volunteer firefighter for Barnesville and the surrounding rural area.

Every call a first responder receives is unique, but the vast majority do have positive outcomes.

"Most calls aren't catastrophic," Karsnia explained. "There is an easy call and then there is a hard call that you don't want to go on. But regardless, it gives you a good feeling to be helping people during a time when they absolutely need your help."

Volunteerism is a way of life for many in the area who perform vital and often overlooked emergency first responder services for the towns and rural communities. In fact, looking

at the counties and communities that Red River Valley Co-op Power serves (Glyndon, Dilworth, Hendrum, rural Beltrami, Barnesville, Ada, etc.), volunteers make up 100% of these first responders.

Karsnia has spent the last 26 years as a volunteer firefighter in Barnesville. Like so many others, he joined because he wanted to get to know people in the community. When a call comes in, the first responder on scene does an initial assessment and then provides aid or stabilization before the ambulance or other help arrives. Then other arriving responders do traffic control and come to the aid of fellow volunteers to protect themselves and those providing immediate assistance. As a general reminder, Karsnia said the biggest thing an approaching vehicle can do is slow down when they see the flashing lights of those trying to render aid for the safety of everyone involved.



Red River Valley Co-op Power load management technician Paul Karsnia changes out light bulbs at the Hendrum Elementary School.

While being a volunteer requires training and sometimes uncertain outcomes, the camaraderie from shared experiences also makes the efforts worthwhile.

"My greatest pleasure in doing this is helping somebody whose life is in chaos at that moment," Karsnia said. "To help them get through."

THANK YOU
VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
AND FIRST RESPONDERS

To all the first responders who selflessly give of themselves day after day ...

Thank You.

Stable warmth in unstable times

Cooperative energy planners predict an average winter season of demand response

Uncertainty has been the name of the game for much of 2020. But as we slip into the last few weeks of the year, Red River Valley Co-op Power feels certain about one thing – your continued warmth and comfort throughout the winter.

The energy planners at Minnkota Power Cooperative (power provider for Red River Valley Co-op Power) expect a standard season for members with electric heat on demand response. The voluntary program allows the cooperative to temporarily interrupt service to a member's off-peak loads, like electric heating and large-capacity water heaters, in exchange for a lower electric rate. For technologies like air-source heat pumps and plenum heaters, the system automatically switches to a backup fuel source such as propane, so there is no break in comfort.

Todd Sailer, Minnkota senior manager of power supply and resource planning, says he expects the level of winter demand response to be comparable to the past 4-5 years – less than 100 hours. Members should always be prepared for up to 200-250 hours of management, but have histori-

cally encountered much less. Last winter, Minnkota only logged 10 hours of interruption due mild weather and low wholesale energy prices.

“The only things that are really going to drive that up are a shift in the energy market, which is typically going to be weather related,” Sailer explained. “If you get a polar vortex or a wind event where there's simply no wind during high loads, that's where that number suddenly goes from 70 to 250 hours really quick.”

Demand response doesn't just happen during extreme cold. A planned generator outage or extended lack of intermittent resources across the region can push the program into action. “When we see there's no wind in North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and those areas where there's often a lot of wind, that's when we start to see high markets, and that's when you'll see more demand response,” Sailer said.

Although Minnkota expects a typical level of demand response this year, COVID-19 may change when it activates. When more people are working and learning from home, times of peak energy usage shift, which impacts the availability of excess resources to

cover energy demand.

“Instead of demand response from 7-9 a.m., it might be from 8-11 a.m.,” Sailer said. “The load curve changes, so it might change how we actually implement our load management.”

Red River Valley Co-op Power will run a demand response test sometime in early December. During that time, make sure your system is working properly and that you have adequate backup fuel before the coldest days arrive. If you are not a participant in the program but are interested in how to save money with an all-season air-source heat pump, a cost-effective plenum heater or zero-maintenance underfloor storage heat, call your energy experts at Red River Valley Co-op Power.

The demand response program began as a way to manage power during peak seasonal need without building additional generation resources – a costly solution for only a few days a year. But the electric heating technologies that have evolved within the program are helping our members enhance their comfort and safety, things we could all use a little more of in 2020.

California blackouts show need for all-of-the-above energy strategy



Amid a global pandemic, millions of Californians were plunged into darkness this summer as heat-waves battered the state's electric grid.

Rolling blackouts were required as record-setting temperatures pushed the demand for electricity well above the available generation resources at times during Aug. 14-15. California's Independent System Operator (CAISO), the entity that manages the state's grid, ordered utilities to impose temporary blackouts for the first time in nearly two decades, pulling the plug on air conditioners, refrigerators, TVs and other electric appliances when consumers needed them most. In addition to the outages, CAISO spent significant stretches of the summer pleading with consumers to reduce their electricity usage as it dealt with system instability.

There are several causes of this crisis, but a primary issue is the overreliance on intermittent resources, such as wind and solar, while undervaluing generation resources that can operate 24/7. CAISO experienced this issue firsthand on Aug. 14, as the wind stopped blowing that evening and nearly 1,000 megawatts (MW) of wind generation vanished from the grid without warning. No additional dispatchable generation, such as coal, natural gas or nuclear, was available to meet the demand, leaving communities in the dark.

In October, CAISO completed a preliminary root-cause analysis of the summer blackouts. The analysis found that "resource planning targets have not kept pace to lead to sufficient resources that can be relied upon to meet demand in the early evening hours (as the sun goes down and solar farms no longer operate). This makes

balancing demand and supply more challenging. These challenges were amplified by the extreme heat storm."

California Gov. Gavin Newsom said, "Collectively, energy regulators failed to anticipate this event and to take necessary actions to ensure reliable power to Californians. This cannot stand. California residents and businesses deserve better from their government."

Following the events in California, some have wondered if a similar situation could happen in Minnesota. The answer is yes. To date, utilities have been able to collaborate through the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), which manages the electric grid in the Upper Midwest, to remove the risk of rolling blackouts. There have, however, been several emergency situations in recent years that have presented significant challenges for utilities, including the polar vortex event in January 2019. With limited production from wind and solar facilities due to extreme cold conditions, the electric grid remained reliable thanks in large part to the operation of dispatchable resources. Future plans to retire dispatchable resources and replace them with intermittent resources has the potential to create and accelerate grid reliability challenges in the Upper Midwest.

Renewable energy remains an important part of the future of the energy grid, but it is not positioned to stand alone as the only resource, especially in the near future. The California blackouts should serve as a reminder that an all-of-the-above energy strategy must be embraced to ensure the region has a reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible supply of electricity – now and in the future.



Closed Thanksgiving Day

Red River Valley Co-op
Power will be closed
Thursday, Nov. 26
for Thanksgiving

In case of an electrical outage
or emergency, call 800-788-7784.



Around our co-op

Anderson retires after 31 years

Jon Anderson, Halstad, is set to retire in early January after a 31-year career as a journeyman lineman with Red River Valley Co-op Power. As a lineman, Anderson logged many hours around the clock working for the membership and was an integral part of restoration efforts during foul weather, including the historic 1997 flood.

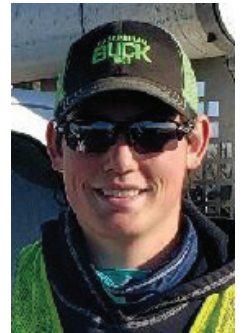


Jon Anderson
Journeyman Lineman

Nord hired as apprentice lineman

Justin Nord, Halstad, has been hired as your cooperative's newest lineman after completing a 1,000-hour position at Red River Valley Co-op Power this summer.

Nord, a recent graduate of the Minnesota West Community & Technical College – Jackson power lineman program, will be posted out of the Halstad office. He is also a recent graduate of Norman County West High School.



Justin Nord
Apprentice Lineman

Four ways to save energy in the kitchen

Ah, the kitchen. It's undeniably one of the most-loved rooms in our homes. It's where we gather with family and friends for our favorite meals and memories. But like most of us, you probably aren't thinking about saving energy when you're planning that perfect dish. Here are four ways you can save energy in the kitchen with minimal effort.

When possible, cook with smaller appliances. Using smaller kitchen appliances like slow cookers, toaster ovens and convection ovens is more energy efficient than using your large stove or oven. According to the Department of Energy, a toaster or convection oven uses one-third to one-half as much energy as a full-sized oven.

Unplug appliances that draw phantom energy load. Halloween may be over, but it's possible you have energy vampires in your kitchen – these are the appliances that draw energy even when they're not in use, like

coffee makers, microwaves and toaster ovens. The Department of Energy has estimated that one home's energy vampires left plugged in year-round can add up to \$100-\$200 in wasted energy costs. Unplug them when they're not in use, or better yet, use a power strip for convenient control.

Help large appliances work less. There are small ways you can help your larger kitchen appliances run more efficiently. For example, keep range-top burners clean from spills and fallen foods so they'll reflect heat better. When it's time to put leftovers in the refrigerator, make sure the food is covered and allow it to cool down first. That way, the fridge doesn't have to work harder to cool warm food.

Use your dishwasher efficiently. Only run full loads, and avoid using the "rinse hold" function on your machine for just a few dirty dishes; it uses 3-7 gallons of hot water each use. You can also save energy by letting your dishes air dry. If your dishwasher



Use smaller kitchen appliances, like slow cookers, toaster ovens and convection ovens when possible. These smaller appliances use less energy than a full-size oven.

doesn't have an automatic air-dry switch, simply turn it off after the final rinse and prop the door open so the dishes will dry faster.

Bonus tip: The best way to save energy is to not use it. Try a tasty, no-bake dessert recipe. Your sweet tooth (and energy bill!) will thank you.

By slightly adjusting a few of your habits in the kitchen, you'll be well on your way to energy savings. Contact us to learn about additional ways you can save energy and money at home.

Time to ditch your old space heater?

If you can't remember when you purchased your space heater, it might be time to replace it. Just like the flip phones of yesteryear have progressed into today's modern cellphone, portable space heaters have come a long way, too. Most of today's models have built-in safety features, such as non-exposed coils and sensors that detect overheating or touch, as well as an automatic shut-off feature in case it gets tipped over.

Regardless of whether your space heater is fresh out of the box or several years old, consider most home heating fire deaths (86%) involve using one, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). In fact, heating equipment is the second-leading cause of U.S. home fires, right behind cooking.

Along with using a unit that is in good working order, be sure to keep clothing, papers, rugs and other flammable items at least 3 feet away from a space heater. More than half of the heating-related home fires start when items are too close to the heat source, according to the NFPA, including upholstered furniture, clothing, a mattress or bedding.


Safe Electricity and Red River Valley Co-op Power recommend these additional space heater safety tips:

- Read all instructions and only use as recommended.
- Do not leave a space heater unattended.
- Plug it directly into an outlet; most power strips and extension cords are not equipped to handle the energy spikes caused by a space heater cycling on and off.
- Unplug any other item from the outlet you are using; also try to use a dedicated circuit to avoid overload.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Turn them off before you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Do not use a heater in disrepair or with a frayed cord or damaged plug.
- Place them on flat, level surfaces and never place on furniture, counters or carpet, which can overheat.

For additional safety tips, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org).

feeling chilled?

HEAT YOUR SPACE SAFELY



- 1 Keep flammable items at least 3 feet away
- 2 Place on a flat, level surface
- 3 Make sure the cord is not frayed or cracked
- 4 Plug it directly into an outlet
- 5 Follow all instructions and use models endorsed by a reputable testing lab
- 6 Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which can overheat
- 7 Do not use around small children or pets
- 8 Do not use one with a damaged plug or prongs

Safe Electricity.org



**RED RIVER VALLEY
CO-OP POWER**

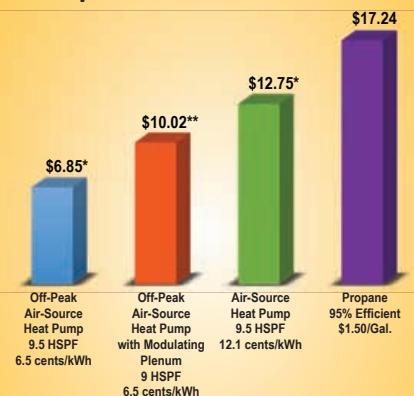
Snuggle Up to Savings

*with an
Air-Source
Heat Pump*



An air-source heat pump and/or a modulating plenum heater is a great way to achieve comfort and super efficiency year-round. Heat pumps make perfect cents, especially when coupled with up to \$500 per ton in rebates from Red River Valley Co-op Power!

**Price difference in heating fuels
per million Btus of heat**



* Outside temperatures fluctuate, affecting the heat pump's efficiency. Efficiency and price per million Btus is estimated at 47 degrees F. Need additional heat like plenum heater in winter.
** Heat pump with modulating plenum assumes a coefficient of performance of 1.9 at 10 degrees F using information provided and reviewed by Electro Industries, Monticello, Minn.

For information on great rebates of up to \$500 per ton for heat pumps, please call Member Services at 218-456-2139.



**RED RIVER VALLEY
CO-OP POWER**