

SPARKS

April 2020

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Coming together

in a time of need

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SPARKS

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

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Rich Whitcomb, Editor
Mary Merrill, Graphic Artist

April 2020
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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: Barb Kesselberg, Ada, volunteers to pick up and deliver groceries to homebound residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Norman-Mahnomen Public Health Department is leading these efforts in Norman County.



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for outage updates and other
useful information.



Rich Whitcomb
CEO

THE CEO'S REPORT

Stronger together

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well.

Collectively, we've all experienced some firsts since COVID-19 entered our consciousness. A new virus overseas can seem abstract when we hear about it on the news. But when it appears here and starts affecting people we know, it becomes real very quickly.

An event like this forces people to make difficult choices – economic, personal and societal. Sometimes it is hard to know the right balance. And in the absence of concrete facts regarding the length and severity, we do the best we can.

I want to talk about the good lessons your cooperative has learned during the last few weeks.

First, as soon as the decision to postpone the annual meeting was made, staff began planning early to identify a path forward, broken into appropriate phases. We have an emergency response plan, but one that was geared more toward natural disasters like floods, ice storms and the like. So we quickly shifted into planning for this new problem. Those phases included restricting office visits, in-home visits and identifying potential operational changes that may need to happen should this situation continue.

Second, we implemented those phases as they became necessary. The

lobby was closed, crews isolated and office staff split into pods to try to reduce potential exposure and take extra precautions.

Third, your cooperative crew has shown great resiliency in adapting to these work changes, knowing full well that your cooperative will never close because we provide a critical service – electricity. In fact, many maintenance and power line projects we undertake can continue because they are isolated from people.

Fourth, we know some people are hurting and look forward to working with our members whatever their needs may be. Communication is key.

Finally, I saw many times over in employees, and members on the phone and via email, the bond that comes with shared experiences and being in this thing together.

One thing I am confident in – the strength of the cooperative business model because it focuses on people. Our employees and board enjoy a sense of camaraderie with you, the member, knowing we are working with and for you – not to make a profit, but to serve you with reliable and competitive power, in foul weather and fair.

I look forward to crops growing in the fields and a nice 75 degree day. Together and with some time, we will come out of this stronger.



RED RIVER VALLEY COOPERATIVE POWER ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL MEETING POSTPONED

Membership will be notified of new meeting date.

Coming together in a time of need

In the heart of the valley, many Red River Valley Co-op Power members are coming together to help those in need during this time of coronavirus concern and uncertainty.

They are sewing masks, coordinating grocery drop-offs for residents, stocking food shelves and providing general hope for communities and rural residents.

Co-op member Jody Bendel of Perley started making masks after speaking with her aunt who resides in a Minneapolis nursing home. Her aunt mentioned that workers and nurses at the facility didn't have any masks to wear as the virus started making its presence known in the Twin Cities. Concerned for her aunt and the workers, Bendel, who is the art director at Minnesota State University Moorhead, received approval from the nursing home to start making masks for them.

At the same time, she started speaking with rural first responders to see if they needed masks as well.

"There is such a critical need for masks and so many people want to help," Bendel said.

Halstad resident and farmer Rachel Arneson wanted to help and be productive while at home. She called local nursing homes and hospitals and was told that masks were still a critical need. So Arneson researched mask templates and started



Jody Bendel, Perley, started making masks after speaking with her aunt who lives in a nursing home in Minneapolis.



Rachel Arneson, Halstad, is making masks for local nursing homes.

"I'm grateful that we have people who, even though this is kind of a scary time, volunteer without hesitation. I think that shows who we are. I'm grateful to play a part in that."

– Kim Myers, wellness coordinator,
Norman-Mahnomen Public Health Department



sewing. She made her first delivery to the Halstad Living Center and Essentia Health, which will send masks to area rescue squads.

"One person can make a huge helpful impact with this virus," Arneson explained. "The fact that I've made 148 masks so far will hopefully prevent people from contracting the illness."

Arneson has plans to continue making about 100 masks per week as needed.

According to Kim Myers, wellness coordinator for the Norman-Mahnomen Public Health Department, staff recognized a role to play early on as the state issued orders directing residents to stay at home.

Myers, who also is a cooperative member, said the department is coordinating efforts with grocery/convenience stores and local volunteers to deliver medical supplies and groceries to homebound residents, or those who are at potentially higher risk of contracting the virus. Norman-Mahnomen Public Health already has more than a dozen volunteers who are making deliveries to residents in need.

"I'm grateful that we have people who, even though this is kind of a scary time, volunteer without hesitation. I think that shows who we are," Myers said. "I'm grateful to play a part in that."

For general information on best practices, please visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/>. If you live in Norman County and want to learn more about what the Health Department is doing, please visit https://www.co.norman.mn.us/departments/public_health/.

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Wall units **lack efficiency**, as they only provide spot cooling and air can leak through window seals. Central air units are comparable to ASHPs in summer

- Smaller upfront cost, but does not offer heating
- No installation rebates offered

CAN I USE IT YEAR-ROUND?



Heating and cooling through every season

IS IT VERSATILE?



Works like an air conditioner in the summer, but offers the **versatility** of the reverse process to heat your home in the winter

IS IT EFFICIENT?



Super energy efficient, as the unit moves both cooled and heated air throughout the home

CAN I SAVE MONEY?



- **Large rebates** available for unit installation
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Electric ASHP heating is **much more efficient** than fuel heat technology, delivering up to three times more energy than the electricity it uses.

PUMP UP YOUR SAVINGS WITH AN AIR-SOURCE HEAT PUMP!



Contact Member Services at 218-456-2139 or visit rrvcoop.com

4 Heating Options

TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING A NEW OR RETROFIT HEATING SYSTEM

Stand-alone air-source heat pump or mini-split heat pumps

Air-source heat pumps (ducted or mini-splits) offer some of the highest efficiencies available for heating and cooling, offering homeowners both comfort and savings. Standard air-source heat pumps are ducted and look like central air conditioners. Mini-split heat pumps are smaller, sleek and operate without ducting to provide zoned heating and cooling.



Great rebates of \$500 per ton from your cooperative are also available due to the extreme efficiencies of the units. Heat pumps transfer heat instead of creating it and cold-climate models are available (ask your contractor for details).

Air-source heat pump with modulating plenum heater and gas backup

Air-source heat pumps are very efficient systems that transfer heat instead of creating it. In the summer, they work exactly like a central air conditioner, but in the winter they provide very comfortable and efficient heat until the temperature drops below the set point. Then the modulating plenum heater kicks in and works with the heat pump for extra savings. When controlled, a gas furnace kicks in.



What's nice about air-source heat pumps is how they provide year-round benefits and either pair nicely with a propane or natural gas furnace or in a heat pump/modulating plenum/propane furnace combination on the off-peak rate. This gives members the freedom to choose fuel sources.

Plus, great rebates are available that cover a large portion of an upgrade from a central AC to a heat pump.

In-floor heat

A popular option for off-peak due to its comfort is in-floor heat. The key is to install the proper heat storage base with sand and slab or install a dual-fuel system. Complete perimeter insulation is necessary for both styles. A \$45 per kW rebate is available (to a cap amount).



Example rebates

System	Benefits	Potential Rebates*
Air-source heat pump or mini-split	Versatile, great efficiency, save money	\$500 per ton
Electric floor heat	Ultimate comfort, off-peak rate	\$45/kW
Geothermal heat pump	Year-round best efficiency, long-term savings	\$500 per ton
Electric water heater >80 gallons	Large capacity for families, great warranties, no venting worries, lower install cost	Up to \$650

*Example based on size, efficiency, off-peak option. Some rebate amounts are capped.

Geothermal heat pumps

Geothermal heat pumps provide the highest efficiencies for space heating and cooling today. They use the constant temperature of the earth to transfer heat. Energy efficiency rebates of \$500 per ton are available as well.



When paired with a fossil-fuel furnace backup, geo heat pumps get the off-peak rate for a heating price that is hard to beat when you combine efficiency with the 6.5 cents per kWh off-peak rate.

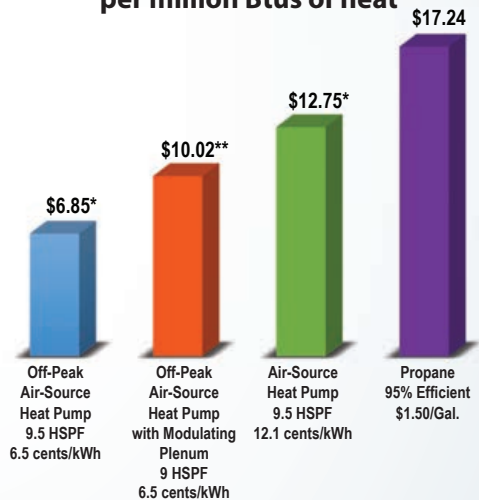
Bonus option

A large-capacity water heater on off-peak credit is another option. Purchase an electric water heater 80 gallons or larger and get great upfront rebates (up to \$650), plus the option of an \$11 recurring monthly credit for letting us control that water heater when energy demand is high.



For more information about off-peak, heat pumps and electric water heaters, contact Member Services at 800-788-7784 or email info@rrvcoop.com.

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, MN.

Rebates!

for ELECTRIC WATER HEATERS



Buy a new electric water heater and get up to a \$650 rebate!

Gallon size	Rebate
80-99 gal.	\$300
100 gal.	\$400
Additional rebate for new construction	\$100
Additional rebate for conversion from existing natural gas or propane	\$250

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but it's important.
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This is about the *power*,
flowing from pole to pole.
Putting that line up,
keeping that line up,
making that line go farther – for you.

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4 COMMON CULPRITS OF ELECTRICAL FIRES

Outdated wiring and overloaded circuits are the most common causes of electrical fires. Check the following areas of your home to ensure your home's electrical safety is up to par.



Electrical outlets: Faulty electrical outlets are a leading cause of home fires. As outlets age, so do the wires behind them that you can't see. Any loose, damaged or warm-to-the-touch outlets should be repaired or replaced.



Electrical wiring: Outdated wiring is another common cause of electrical fires. Frequently tripped breakers, flickering lights and burning smells are clear warning signs. If your home is more than 20 years old, it may not be able to handle today's increased power load. If you suspect your home's wiring is outdated, leave this one to the pros and contact a qualified electrician.



Overloaded cords and outlets: Extension cords are not permanent solutions. If your big-screen TV, home theater system and other electronics are plugged into one extension cord, it's time to call an electrician and install additional outlets.



Old appliances: Older appliances are more likely to have loose or damaged wiring, which means they're more likely to catch fire. Check older appliances for damage and determine if it's time to upgrade or replace. Also check to ensure you're using appliance-grade outlets. A qualified electrician can help with installation.



Plan ahead for new services

If you plan on upgrades or new services, especially if large fans for drying are involved, please contact your cooperative as soon as possible. This is helpful because the delivery time for large transformers can be lengthy. In addition, line crews already have a number of projects planned and the schedule gets especially tight later in the summer. As much as practical, the service upgrades will be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. Please call and ask for Engineering.

Notice to cogenerators

In compliance with Red River Valley Co-op Power's adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, Red River Valley Co-op Power is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers whom satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. Red River Valley Co-op Power is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales, and purchases are subject to resolution by Red River Valley Co-op Power. Interested members should contact Red River Valley Co-op Power by calling 218-456-2139.

DIGGING SOON?

One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked AND helps protect you from injury and expense. Safe digging is no accident: always call 811 before you dig.



Visit www.call811.com for more information.

Know what's below. Call before you dig.

COLOR CODING FOR MARKING UNDERGROUND UTILITIES	
WHITE	Proposed excavation
PINK	Temporary survey markings
RED	Electric power lines, cables, conduit and lighting cables
YELLOW	Gas, oil, steam, petroleum or gaseous materials
ORANGE	Communication, alarm or signal lines, cables or conduit
BLUE	Water
PURPLE	Reclaimed water, irrigation and slurry lines
GREEN	Sewer and drain lines



**RED RIVER VALLEY
CO-OP POWER**



INTRODUCING A NEW SMARTHUB EXPERIENCE

New Look. New Experience. Same SmartHub.

The SmartHub mobile app now has a refreshed and enhanced look!

Red River Valley Co-op Power's SmartHub online and mobile app provides a lot of features that help you manage your account, from billing and payment info to detailed usage analysis. It's a great tool to help you access your account information on the go or online.

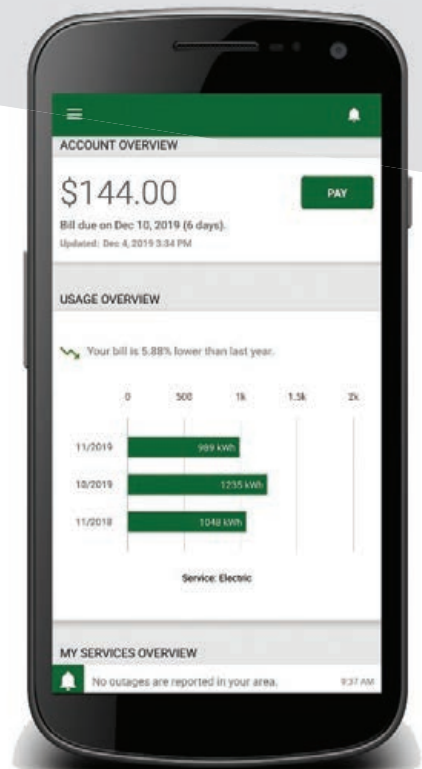
Red River Valley Co-op Power has rolled out a new upgrade for the SmartHub mobile application that will help you get to the features you need quickly and efficiently.

First, you'll notice the mobile app will have a fresh, new look. When you open the app, you'll be able to see your usage analysis right up front or you can contact us with the click of a button right from the home screen.

Outage and billing alerts will also be displayed right on the home screen, making it easy for us to communicate important information with you. Billing, payment and other features will be available with one click of a button in a new condensed menu.

Update your SmartHub in the app store to see these changes! We hope these app updates will help provide a more user-friendly and efficient experience. All of the features you love about SmartHub will still be available, just with a refreshed look and an enhanced user experience. New Look. New Experience. Same SmartHub.

SmartHub Mobile 3.0 will automatically occur on your mobile devices using at least Android 5.0 or iOS 9.0. Users with a lower version will stay on the current SmartHub mobile version 2.42.



SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.