

SPARKS

April 2021

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Power over the market

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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

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April 2021
Volume 65, No. 3

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: Minnkota Power Cooperative's energy marketers Mark Fulbright (left) and Dan Trebil talk over the previous day's load data. Minnkota is Red River Valley Co-op Power's wholesale power provider. *Story pages 4-5.*

Photo: Minnkota/Michael Hoefl



THE CEO'S REPORT 84th annual meeting

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

At its 84th annual meeting (mail-in/live online hybrid event), your cooperative transacted the business of the membership in a transparent manner.

Directors Bob Kinkade (District 1) and Neil Wieser (District 3) were reelected unopposed to three-year terms. While I feel the virtual/mail-in format has been successful the last two years, I can say that I do look forward to an in-person annual meeting – hopefully next year. Technology is great and we take advantage of it to enhance our services to you. But something tangible is lost by not being able to engage in conversation in person.

At any rate, you can view a recorded version of the annual meeting on YouTube by clicking on the annual meeting link on our website. Part of the recording details plans for the renovation/rebuild at our Halstad headquarters. Plans continue to be refined and discussed. More information will be communicated once those plans and timeline have been finalized.

Swine operation progressing in Norman County

I recently attended a public meeting in Twin Valley put on by the Norman County Economic Develop-

ment Authority regarding a swine genetic breeding and dairy facility – both of which are being built in Norman County.

Red River Valley Co-op Power will provide three-phase power to the swine facility in Lockhart Township north of Ada owned by Barrick Family Farms. In fact, that line should be nearly complete by the time this goes to print.

A couple things impressed me about the public meeting. First, more than 125 people showed up at the meeting to learn more and to speak with representatives from Barrick Family Farms. That is great community involvement.

Second, the economic impact to Norman County from Barrick Family Farms alone, which is expected to be up and running in late summer, will be very positive. Barrick Family Farms plans to employ between 20-25 people from the local communities. The animals will also consume upwards of 6 million bushels of soybeans and 500,000 bushels of corn.

Finally, Barrick Family Farms had created a banner thanking all the local residents and businesses who are helping in the construction of their facility. The list was numerous and I thought that was a classy move from an organization making a positive first impression on the community.



They are there through all seasons.

- Your lineworkers** face the coldest winters in the country.
- Your lineworkers** sweat through humidity-soaked Midwest summers.
- Your lineworkers** rise high into winds with gusts that just don't quit.
- Your lineworkers** trudge through water, mud and snow – in the same week.

Your lineworkers are reliable through all seasons.
It's no wonder your cooperative electricity is reliable, too.

LINWORKER APPRECIATION DAY | APRIL 12, 2021

Energy assistance funding available



to help local homeowners and renters pay their electric bills

Members who meet income guidelines and have trouble paying their electric bills are encouraged to apply for the Energy Assistance Program by contacting their local energy assistance service provider. Plus, additional COVID assistance is available via funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. If you aren't sure where to begin, you can contact Red River Valley Co-op Power for additional guidance on how to get started.

Grants to help homeowners or renters pay their electrical bills range from \$200 up to \$1,400. The eligibility for energy assistance is based on the past three months of income. Criteria for the COVID monies may be separate. Residents can apply at their local energy assistance provider until Sept. 1, 2021, for energy assistance and up until Sept. 15, 2021, for COVID assistance.

How to apply for the Energy Assistance Program

Funding is limited and administered on a first-come, first-served basis. Households apply at their local Energy Assistance Program service provider.

- Clay County – Contact West Central Minnesota Communities Action at 1-800-492-4805 or go online to <https://www.wcmca.org/programs/energy-assistance-program/>.
- Norman and Polk counties – Contact Tri-Valley Opportunity Council at 218-281-9080 or go online to tvoc.org.

If you have questions or need help contacting these agencies, please call Red River Valley Co-op Power at 218-456-2139.

Household Size	Past 3 Months Income
1	\$ 7,066
2	\$ 9,240
3	\$11,415
4	\$13,589
5	\$15,763
6	\$17,937



DISTRIBUTED GENERATION

Grid access charge for distributed generation in effect

Effective Jan. 1, 2021, all members who interconnect distributed generation (primarily wind and solar) of less than 40 kilowatts (kW) or add capacity to existing systems connected to the cooperative's distribution lines will be charged a grid access fee.

The monthly grid access fee will help Red River Valley Co-op Power recover lost revenue from these systems that otherwise would have gone toward helping maintain the reliability of the distribution system that is used by all members. State statute 216B.164 recognizes this right to help ensure grid reliability.

There is no charge on the first 3.5 kW of distributed generation. After that a charge of \$3.64 per kW will apply for single-phase (not to exceed \$39 per month). For three-phase interconnects a charge of \$3.48 per kW applies (not to exceed \$81 per month). This grid access fee is in addition to the standard facility charge.

For members interested in distributed generation, please go to www.rrvcoop.com and click on DG Rules/Rates for more information.



Off-peak meter changeouts continue

Your cooperative continues to contact members who have an older off-peak meter in an effort to exchange those meters to newer technology. This effort is important for members and the cooperative alike.

Members who have not had their off-peak meter exchanged will no longer be able to obtain the off-peak electric heating rate after May 31, because the technology/software used to collect those readings at the substation will be effectively obsolete by June 30 per the manufacturer. That means we will no longer be able to obtain readings for those meters and the potential kWh will be rolled into the main meter at the higher rate. There are about 250 off-peak meters yet to be changed out. The co-op has been communicating this for the last 18 months in this publication, bill inserts, letters, phone calls and emails.

If you have a meter inside your home or garage that you think has not been changed out, please call the cooperative to schedule a time. We will continue the communication effort on our end as well. Thank you.



Minnkota's energy marketers examine the load data of the day.
 Photo: Minnkota/Michael Hoefl

Power over the market

ENERGY MARKETERS COMBINE RELIABLE RESOURCES AND DEMAND RESPONSE TO AVOID A COLD-WEATHER CRISIS

In mid-February, millions of Texans were learning how to get through brutal winter temperatures with no electricity, while many more were researching how to pay for suddenly enormous power bills.

During that same subzero-weather event, a group of energy marketers at Minnkota Power Cooperative (Red River Valley Co-op Power's wholesale energy provider) was getting a lesson on how to protect the cooperative's members from facing similar ice-cold consequences. And they skillfully passed the test.

"We've seen some extreme temperatures locally, and we know how that plays into what we do day-to-day," said energy marketer Mark Fulbright, who has been with Minnkota less than two years. "But during this event we had the opportunity to see extreme temperatures spread across the country, and how that can add a new dimension to how we handle operations here."

The "we" that Fulbright refers to is a trio of fairly new additions to Minnkota's power supply and resource planning department. Along with Fulbright, energy marketers Amber Langemo and Isaac Hoffart were all hired within the past two years, all three missing the last polar vortex event in January 2019. They join experienced energy marketer Dan Trebil, an 8-year veteran of powering through climate anomalies.

"They handled a very stressful situation very well," said Todd Sailer, senior manager of power supply and resource planning. "Trying to incorporate our demand response, managing the wind forecasts and understanding how the markets work – this was one of those experiences that will end up being very valuable for them in the future."

What happened?

The nearly two-week February cold snap that essentially crippled the Texas

power grid started up north. From approximately Feb. 8-14, Minnkota's service area experienced some of its coldest temperatures of the stretch. As the polar vortex dropped south, both regional demand and weather-related generation issues began to rise.

Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) – the organization that manages the transmission grid and energy markets of a 15-state region that includes Minnkota's territory – asked its providers to enter conservative operations Feb. 14-20 and declared a Maximum Generation Event on Feb. 16. Over those days, the combination of expanded regional need and less generation availability (from frozen plants, natural gas pipeline constraints and less production from wind farms across the midsection of the country) made the cost of buying energy from the grid skyrocket.

"We saw prices over \$100 all hours

of the day starting on Feb. 15, and it lasted four to five days,” Sailer recalled. “We might see it that high for a few hours but, typically, in the last couple of years, it’s been averaging less than \$20 per megawatt-hour. So when you’re seeing prices of \$200, \$400, sometimes up to \$900, it completely changes what you’re trying to manage.”

Minnkota had to protect itself from relying on the volatile market. Although the coal-based Young Station continued to provide electricity reliably throughout the event, wind power generation dropped due to low winds and temperatures. Minnkota’s healthy demand response program – through which members volunteer to have certain electric loads like dual-fuel heating and water heaters controlled for a reduced rate – helped Sailer’s energy marketers decrease the demand on the grid.

“Because we’re scheduling our generation resources into the market, we’re making sure we’re scheduling those resources in the right market. If the power plant’s going to be available or the wind’s going to be available, we’re making sure to schedule that properly,” Sailer explained. “With that, you identify where your exposure is in the market, or maybe identify some opportunities in the market related to our demand response program. We’re making sure we’re doing something that is beneficial to our members and maximizing the value of those resources.”

Ultimately, Minnkota came out of the cold snap with few weather-related service interruptions to its members. There were no rolling blackouts as briefly seen in neighboring grid systems, and no days-long outages as experienced in the south. Minnkota used 84 hours of dual-fuel heat control, which helped avoid high energy market costs. The electricity provided by the Young Station covered the remaining demand and added needed power into the national grid.

“Our value of reliability shined through in a moment where others were facing crisis,” said plant engineering and environmental manager Tim Hagerott, adding that the Young Station is specifically designed to operate in North Dakota’s cold-weather climate. “The majority of our equipment is

housed indoors in heated buildings. We also have several systems that utilize heat trace that is covered by insulation to prevent piping and equipment from freezing.”

A different situation

In Texas’ unique energy landscape, the situation was starkly different. Many generation resource technologies, including natural gas pipelines, coal plants and wind turbines, could not perform in the once-in-a-century low temperatures. For most of the country, this would mean importing energy from a neighboring grid system operator (such as MISO). However, the Electricity Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) is independent of those grid interconnections.

“They’re somewhat of an island when they start having problems on their system, because they’re limited in bringing in other resources from other regions,” Sailer said. “It was obviously a very extreme weather event for them, so some of their units just weren’t prepared for that cold. It wasn’t just one resource – they were nearly all impacted, which resulted in Texas being isolated.”

Additionally, hundreds of Texas power consumers who were enrolled in programs that connect them directly

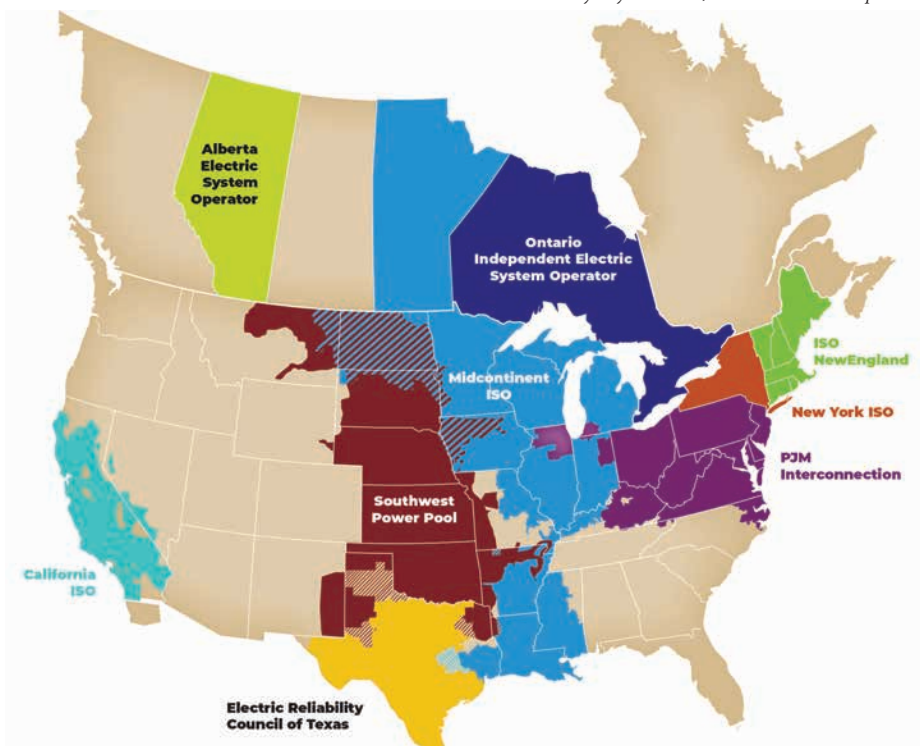
to wholesale power rates were burned by that week’s market volatility, receiving bills that were thousands of dollars higher than normal. Minnkota and its member cooperatives protect their member-consumers from this price fluctuation by using their own generation resources to limit market exposure.

When the polar vortex finally waned in late February, Minnkota’s energy marketers were able to return to some normalcy – regular work hours, stable market prices and infrequent demand response needs. The adrenaline may have faded, but the newcomer knowledge will stick around for the next time it’s their job to help keep power reliable and affordable.

“This is a unique job in the sense that it seems like we learn something new every day,” Fulbright said, surrounded by his fellow marketers. “And that week was tenfold.”

“It was exciting, because we hadn’t seen anything like that before,” Lange-mo added. “You can talk about these things in theory, but when you’re actually doing them, it’s a lot different. It was a great way to learn, when you have three other people to bounce ideas off of. That’s one thing with our group – we do function well as a team.”

By Kaylee Cusack, Minnkota Power Cooperative



MISO, in which Minnkota is a member, overlaps the Southwest Power Pool. Also shown is ERCOT, which was limited in its ability to import power from neighboring grids.





New services/upgrades

With the increased volume of calls Engineering has taken already this spring, please let the cooperative know as soon as possible if you have plans for a new service or upgrade this construction season.

Communicating soon helps because the delivery time for large transformers and some materials can be lengthy. In addition, line crews already have numerous projects planned. Your cooperative looks forward to working with you on your project, whether it be a new home, business or farming expansion.

Sign up for
SmartHub
@ rrvcoop.com



You have
the power to

- View daily and monthly energy use.
- View and pay your bills online.
- Go paperless and receive an email notice when your bill is ready to view.
- Compare energy use to changes in temperature.

For assistance, call us during
regular business hours at 218-456-2139
or send an email to info@rrvcoop.com.



Photos by Elliot Ross

Rivian tests electric truck near Baudette

When the world's top automakers want to test their products against cold weather conditions, they bundle up and head north.






This winter, engineers with Rivian traveled to Baudette, Minn., to perform some winter research on their R1T all-electric pickup, set to be released to the public later this year. The highly anticipated electric vehicle boasts 250-400 miles of range, all-wheel drive and a zero-to-60-mph time of three seconds (in some models).

A unique testing facility provided the ideal setting for Rivian to learn how its vehicle components and batteries stand up to temperatures of 40 below zero. Visit this link to learn about the Rivian team's experience in northern Minnesota: stories.rivian.com/cold-weather-testing.

5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Always call 8-1-1 first, because you never know what's below. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:

Source: call811.com

<p>1. NOTIFY Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before you start.</p> 	<p>2. WAIT Wait two to three days for a response to your request. Affected utilities will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.</p> 	<p>3. CONFIRM Confirm that all affected utilities have responded by comparing the markers to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.</p> 	<p>4. RESPECT Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. They are your guide for the duration of your project.</p> 	<p>5. DIG CAREFULLY If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project.</p> 
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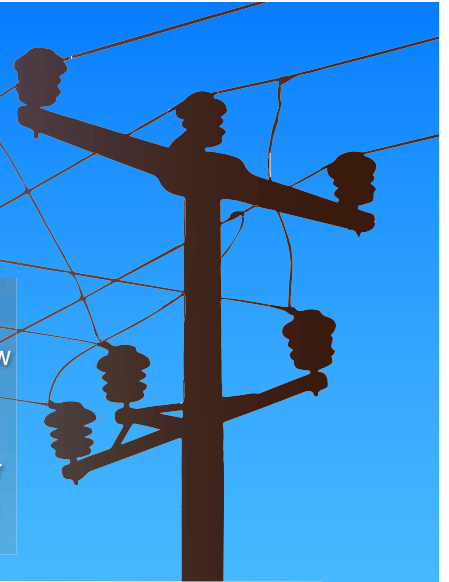
COLOR CODING FOR MARKING UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

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

KEEP FARM FOCUS FOR A SAFE PLANTING SEASON

Spring is planting season for the farmers of Red River Valley Co-op Power's service area. Although everyone is eager to get their crops growing as soon as possible, we want to take a moment to remind our members and neighbors to slow down and be aware of the electrical dangers surrounding the farm and field.

According to the National Ag Safety Database, an average 62 farm workers are electrocuted every year. Even if you are not in harm's way yourself, your tractor or equipment could cause an inconvenient, dangerous or deadly situation for others. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you head out this month:



TODAY'S LARGER EQUIPMENT MEANS MORE DANGER when driving around power lines. If you have new equipment, don't assume you can follow your usual route to the field.

REMEMBER THE 10-FOOT CLEARANCE RULE when moving large equipment like sprayers and planter arms that can tangle up in overhead lines. Keep 10 feet from power lines in all directions (above, below and to the sides), and have a spotter available to help get the right perspective.



BE MINDFUL OF LINE SAG that happens as power lines age. If you believe a line is sagging low enough to affect the safety of your work, call us at the cooperative to find a solution to the problem. **NEVER** try to fix a line yourself.

LOOK OUT FOR GUY WIRES when you are tilling or planting crops. They are the grounded wires that help to stabilize power poles. If they are broken, they can become extremely dangerous. If you're unsure if a guy wire is damaged, contact the cooperative right away to have an expert examine it.



DON'T FORGET THE ARC OF ELECTRICITY when working around overhead lines. Under the right conditions, coming too close to a live power line can cause the electric energy to jump a short distance to any conductive material. It's not just metal objects like ladders and poles that can conduct electricity. Tree limbs, ropes and hay can become conductive in certain situations as well.

KEEP YOUR CREW EDUCATED from the beginning of planting season to the end of harvest. It's easy to forget the dangers of the farm when the days are long and exhausting. Urge your family and employees to stay vigilant and to avoid taking risks with electricity.



IF ELECTRIC CONTACT HAPPENS, CALL 911 immediately. It's critical that you do not leave your equipment or vehicle until help arrives and you are sure the line is de-energized. If you must leave because of a fire, jump off and away from your equipment, being sure to land with your feet together and touching. With your feet still touching and never leaving the ground, shuffle as far away as you can (at least three tractor lengths). Don't touch any machinery or people that have been in contact with electricity.

If you have any concerns about the power lines or guy wires around your planting route, please don't hesitate to call your cooperative at 218-456-2139.



**RED RIVER VALLEY
CO-OP POWER**

Save money and energy in 2021 with energy efficiency rebates!



Energy efficiency rebates for members remain in effect for 2021. Please see the chart for a *sample* of incentives.

All incentives, criteria and guidelines for resident and business members can be found at

www.rrvcoop.com

or by calling

800-788-7784

All criteria are listed on the rebate form.

Sample 2021 Electric Rebates for Members

Equipment	Specifications	Rebate
Air-source heat pump	≥16 SEER	\$500/ton*
Ground-source heat pump	Energy Star-rated	\$500/ton*
Electric water heater	Min. 80-gallon capacity. Must be on load management program.	\$300-\$650 per unit
Off-peak electric heat (plenum, baseboard, hanging heater, etc.)	Must be resistance electric on off-peak program.	\$25/kW*
Electric boiler, brick storage, slab storage	Must be on off-peak program.	\$45/kW*
Electric vehicle (EV) charger	240V-rated Level 2 charger on load control	\$50/kW/limit \$500 per account
LED business lighting (retrofit only)	<40 watts (high-bay and wall pack applications)	\$4 per fixture
LED business lighting (retrofit only)	≥40 watts (high-bay and wall pack applications)	\$6 per fixture
LED tube lighting (retrofit only)	4-ft. linear lengths	\$2 per tube

Every install must be new equipment and provide proof of purchase unless site verification is approved.

*These amounts include a rebate from Minnkota Power Cooperative, which has a capped rebate, so call for details.