

# The gift of light

I have grown up and grown old on our farm, but my wife and I have been blessed to live where we do. The farm has not only been our home, but also a part of our lives. We raised crops here, some better, some worse, but the best crop we raised here was our children! I do not believe that farms are wealthy in terms of cash, but in terms of life we are wealthy indeed. Hopefully, our children will treasure some of the things they grew up with and lived through!

Recently, I called our kids to tell them something Dad told my brother and I one December evening back in the mid-fifties. We had finished milking the cows in the evening and only recently had the co-op install an all-night yard light. That light is still on the power pole, and although the pole very likely has been replaced in all that time and the light upgraded, it still lights up our yard each night.

On that December evening, Dad, my brother and I went out the east door on the back side of the barn and stood in the star-filled sky – the side of the barn that the yard light did not reach. Dad told us boys to look out around us at the lights in the dark. He said that in the span of the last few years that had changed. He told me the year before I was born, the REA (Red River Valley Co-op Power) put poles up and brought light where there had only been darkness before. He said there was a sense of neighborhood in the dark and those little specks of light illuminated the yards of our friends and neighbors. He talked about how we could come into the barn and with a flip of a switch we had light to do our evening chores! He also said that he hoped we appreciated the gift of light. The dim lights of kerosene lamps were in the past.

All of the above is sort of a wistful memory, but it was brought back into clarity by something that happened last week. Dad would remind me for years that while I was grumbling about poles out in our fields to farm around that those poles meant “light in the darkness!” Last week the power lines coming into our yard were converted to underground service wires. This will mean more safety when moving machinery and equipment around. It is a wonderful change for which we are glad.

But it is also the end of an era, as far as the overhead power lines, and quietly and out of sight the power still comes into our yard brought to us by our rural electric co-op. When the grandkids come for a visit, maybe about Christmas perhaps, it will behoove me to take them out beyond the grove of trees and point out the yard lights across the fields and then have them close their eyes to know what dark is and what light means to us all.

Please know that we are thankful for our electric co-op!

— Londa and Loren Ingebretsen

# SPARKS

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

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*Rich Whitcomb, Editor  
Jennifer Erickson, Graphic Artist*

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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  
Curt Stubstad ..... Sabin  
Paul Baukol ..... Hendrum

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**



## THE CEO'S REPORT **2022 budget approved with small facility charge increase**

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

**A**t its November meeting, Red River Valley Co-op Power's board of directors approved the 2022 budget that included two small facility charge increases – the first increase of any kind in five years.

Rate 1 members (residential/general single-phase) will see a \$1 per month facility charge increase and any member with off-peak electric heat will see a 75 cent per month facility charge increase per meter. The rest of the rate components will remain unchanged in 2022.

In deciding where to implement the necessary increase, a 2020 third-party cost of service study was used to help determine what components to change. The two small changes will go in effect Jan. 1, 2022.

As a not-for-profit, rates are increased only to meet lender requirements and organizational financial and operational standards.

### **Steen retires/Brommenschenkel new Plant Accountant**

Suzanne Steen, Halstad, will retire in early January after a 21-year career, primarily as Plant Accountant. Steen's duties as Plant Accountant were an integral part of keeping track of inventory, the records of the cooperative's distribution system, and much more.

Heather Brommenschenkel, Ada, has been promoted internally to take over the Plant Accountant position.



**Seasons Greetings**  
*from all of us at Red River Valley Co-op Power*

**Our offices will be closed Thursday at noon, Dec. 23,  
and all day Friday, Dec. 24, for the Christmas holiday.**

**We will also be closed Friday, Dec. 31,  
for the New Year's holiday.**

If you experience a power outage on those days,  
you may reach the lineworkers on call by phoning  
dispatch at (800) 788-7784.

# 2022 Director Elections

## 2022 director elections

Red River Valley Co-op Power members in District 1, 2 and 3 can now submit nominations to compete for a seat on the board of directors.

As a cooperative, Red River Valley Co-op Power is owned by its members. Members elect a board of directors to represent them at the cooperative. Four directors will be elected at the 2022 Annual Meeting on March 24. Due to the ongoing pandemic, it has yet to be determined if the annual meeting will be held via the mail-in/virtual meeting hybrid method that has occurred the last two years, or the traditional in-person meeting. Your cooperative's bylaws allow for both methods.

### Directors whose terms expire in 2022 are:

*District 1 (three-year term): Roger Krostue*

*District 2 (three-year term): Marv Thompson*

*District 2 (one-year term): Paul Baukol*

*District 3 (two-year term): Curtis Stubstad*

## How to run

To run for a director position, interested members in the abovementioned districts (see map) must request to have the material mailed to them or arrange a time to pick up the packet at the office in Halstad. Per the bylaws, any 15 or more members who reside in District 1, 2 or 3 may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that specific district.

No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in this manner. No write-in ballots will be accepted. The cooperative must receive the completed petitions and forms from the packet no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 18, 2022. Please see below for the section of the bylaws pertaining to nominations and qualifications. Please call with questions.

## Director Districts

### District 1 Townships

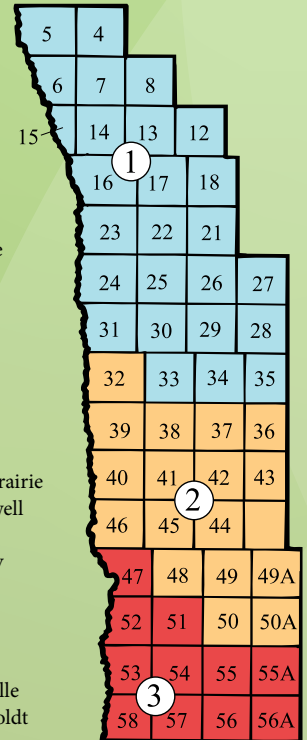
- 4 - Nesbit
- 5 - Huntsville & Rhinehart
- 6 - Bygland
- 7 - Fisher
- 8 - Lowell
- 12 - Fairfax
- 13 - Andover
- 14 - Roome
- 15 - Tynsid
- 16 - Vineland
- 17 - Hammond
- 18 - Russia
- 21 - Reis
- 22 - Scandia
- 23 - Hubbard
- 24 - Shelly
- 25 - Good Hope
- 26 - Lockhart
- 27 - Spring Creek
- 28 - Green Meadow
- 29 - Pleasant View
- 30 - Anthony
- 31 - Halstad
- 33 - Hegne
- 34 - McDonaldsville
- 35 - Lake Ida

### District 2 Townships

- 32 - Hendrum
- 36 - Rockwell
- 37 - Winchester
- 38 - Mary
- 39 - Lee
- 40 - Georgetown
- 41 - Viding
- 42 - Felton
- 43 - Hagen
- 44 - Flowing
- 45 - Morken
- 46 - Kragnes
- 48 - Moland
- 49 - Spring Prairie
- 49A - Cromwell
- 50 - Riverton
- 50A - Hawley

### District 3 Townships

- 47 - Oakport
- 51 - Glyndon
- 52 - Moorhead
- 53 - Kurtz
- 54 - Elmwood
- 55 - Elkton
- 55A - Skree
- 56 - Barnesville
- 56A - Humboldt
- 57 - Alliance
- 58 - Holy Cross



## Petition for Nomination

The following members wish to nominate [insert name] for the three-year District 1 director position and place such name on the ballot for the March 24, 2022 election at the annual meeting of the Cooperative, in accordance with Article III, Section 4, of the bylaws.

The following members wish to nominate [insert name] for the three-year District 2 director position and to place such name on the ballot for the March 24, 2022, election at the annual meeting of the Cooperative, in accordance with Article III, Section 4, of the bylaws.

The following members wish to nominate [insert name] for the one-year District 2 director position and to place such name on the ballot for the March 24, 2022, election at the annual meeting of the Cooperative, in accordance with Article III, Section 4, of the bylaws.

The following members wish to nominate [insert name] for the two-year District 3 director position and to place such name on the ballot for the March 24, 2022, election at the annual meeting of the Cooperative, in accordance with Article III, Section 4, of the bylaws.

NAME	ADDRESS	ACCOUNT NO.
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____
11. _____	_____	_____
12. _____	_____	_____
13. _____	_____	_____
14. _____	_____	_____
15. _____	_____	_____
16. _____	_____	_____
17. _____	_____	_____
18. _____	_____	_____
19. _____	_____	_____
20. _____	_____	_____

The Cooperative must receive the completed petition no later than 4:30 p.m., February 18, 2022. At the March 24, 2022 annual meeting, elections will be held for a three-year term for one director in District 1 and one director in District 2; and a one-year term in District 2 and a two-year term in District 3.

It is important that nominees for District 2 put their name in the proper year-term that they wish to be slotted. Directors whose terms expire in 2022 are:

DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3
3-year term	3-year term	1-year term	2-year term
Roger Krostue	Marv Thompson	Paul Baukol	Curtis Stubstad

Any 15 or more members who reside in District 1, 2 or 3 may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that district. No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in this manner. In the event of joint membership, only the signature of one joint member shall be acceptable.

## Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association Bylaws

### ARTICLE III – DIRECTORS

#### Section 4. Nominations.

- (a) Any fifteen (15) or more members who reside in any one district may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that district. Such nomination shall be in writing and signed by said fifteen (15) members, or more, and delivered to the Secretary at least thirty (30) days before the members' meeting.
- (b) No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in the manner provided by this section. No write-in ballots shall be accepted.
- (c) The members may, at any meeting at which a director or directors shall be removed, as heretofore provided, elect a successor or successors thereto without compliance with the provisions herein with respect to nominations.

continued on page 5



Red River Valley Co-op Power CEO Rich Whitcomb hands Ada-Borup-West Superintendent Aaron Cook a \$12,700 donation to go towards student education/scholarships.

# Giving back in time for the Holidays

Your cooperative returns \$450,000 to members from 1994 and donates \$53,000 from unclaimed capital credits to area schools as scholarships!

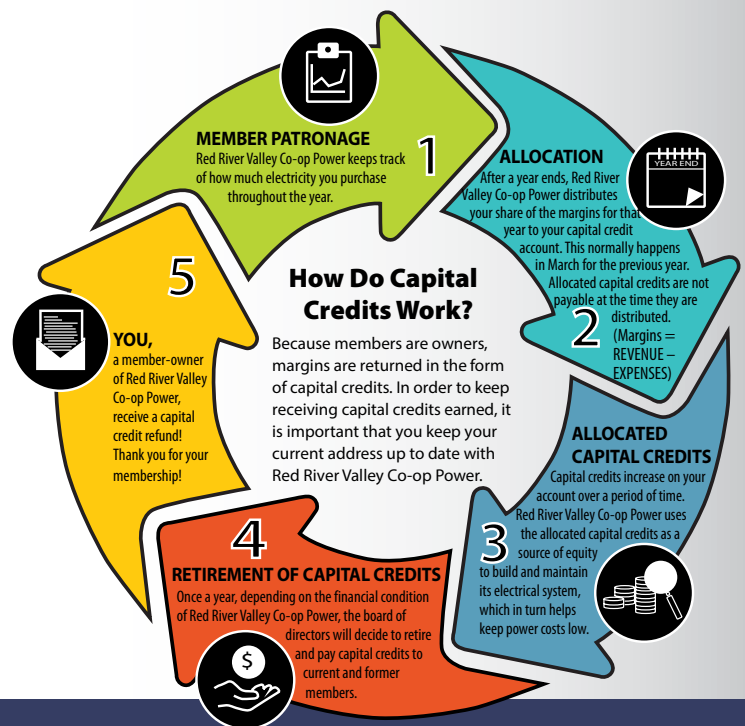
Staying true to cooperative principles, Red River Valley Co-op Power is returning \$450,000 to members who purchased electricity in 1994 and also donating \$53,000 to area schools in unclaimed capital credits.

Members who were part of the co-op in 1994 will see their capital credit amount as a credit on their December statement.

Since its inception, your cooperative has returned almost \$9 million worth of operating margins back to members. Since 2008, about \$200,000 has been given to area schools for scholarships. State law states that if capital credits go unclaimed for seven years they can be awarded for educational purposes.

Capital credits work like this: Red River Valley Co-op Power is not-for-profit. As such, the cooperative only needs a margin to meet lender requirements and to operate. Before being returned to members, margins are reinvested into the cooperative 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.

Please call 800-788-7784 if you have questions about your capital credit balance. Remember to provide us with your new address if you move outside the co-op service territory.



- (d) If a member is absent from any meeting, the member may vote by mail for the election of directors as provided in these Bylaws, or as may be permitted by law.

Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall not affect in any manner whatsoever validity of any election of directors.

### Section 2. Qualifications.

Persons eligible to become or remain a director of the Cooperative shall:

- (a) be a member in good standing receiving electric service;
- (b) have voting rights within the district from which the director is to be elected;
- (c) not be employed by, materially affiliated with, or have a material financial interest in, any individual or entity which either is:
  - (1) directly or substantially competing with the Cooperative; or
  - (2) selling goods and services in substantial quantity to the Cooperative; or
  - (3) possessing a substantial conflict of interest with the Cooperative;

For purposes of this section, the terms “material” or “substantially” shall be interpreted as constituting a minimum of 5% of a member’s total hours of employment, sales or income on an annual basis;

- (d) not be an employee or not have been an employee of the Cooperative within the last three (3) years;
- (e) not be a close relative of an employee, or of a director, unless the close relative is a candidate for the director’s seat, where as found in these Bylaws “close relative” means any individual

who is, either by blood, law, or marriage, including half, step, foster, and adoptive relations, a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, or sibling, or principally resides in the same residence;

- (f) be only one (1), and not more than one (1), member of a joint membership, provided, however, that none shall be eligible to become or remain a director or to hold a position of trust in the Cooperative unless all shall meet the qualifications herein set forth;
- (g) if a member of the Cooperative is not a natural person, i.e. a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or similar, then the member may appoint or elect one (1) duly authorized natural person, residing within the external boundaries of the district from which (s)he is nominated, to be eligible for election as a director to the Board of Directors;
- (h) never have been convicted of a felony;
- (i) agree, upon election, to regularly attend all Board, regular and special members’ meetings; and
- (j) not become physically or mentally unable with reasonable accommodation to perform substantially all of the duties of Director, and the condition that creates such inability is reasonably expected to last six (6) months or more.

**Exception.** In regard to the restrictive provisions of this section that are based upon close relative relationships, no incumbent director shall lose eligibility to remain a director or to be re-elected a director if, during a director’s incumbency, a director becomes a first kindred relative of another incumbent director or of a Cooperative employee because of a marriage or an adoption to which the director was not a part.

Nothing contained in this section shall, or be construed to, affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken at any meeting of the Board of Directors.

## 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](mailto:info@rrvcoop.com).

Sign up for  
SmartHub  
@ rrvcoop.com





# THINK ELECTRIC

## *This Holiday Season*

Believe it or not, the holiday season is here and it's time to start gathering gift lists. Whether you're looking for stocking stuffers or the big box under the tree, electric gadgets are always a winner.

While things like TVs, video games, smartphones and computers are obvious electric choices, we've put together a list of emerging products that can help your friends and family ditch their old, gas-powered equipment in favor of new electrified technologies. Tools and equipment operated by electricity are often safer, quieter and less costly to operate. **Check out these five electrified gift ideas and feel free to pass the list along to Santa.**



1

### **ELECTRIC LAWN CARE TOOLS - AVERAGE PRICE POINT: \$75-200**

Have you heard the buzz? Electric lawn care tools – like trimmers, edgers and leaf blowers – are quietly proving to be just as mighty as many of their gas-powered counterparts. These items share the same rechargeable battery, which helps cut the stress out of your yard cleanup activities.



2

### **ELECTRIC PRESSURE WASHER - AVERAGE PRICE POINT: \$150-200**

With their lightweight design, quiet operation and low maintenance requirements, an electric pressure washer is a great gift for the DIYer on your list.



3

### **ELECTRIC SMOKER - AVERAGE PRICE POINT: \$200-300**

Who doesn't want a gift that can produce perfect ribs, chicken, brisket or salmon? An electric smoker is easy and safer to use compared to its propane and charcoal counterparts. Even heating and clean operation makes cooking the ideal meal a breeze!



4

### **ELECTRIC SNOW BLOWER - AVERAGE PRICE POINT: \$500-1,000**

Removing snow is part of life in Minnesota. That doesn't mean it needs to be back-breaking work. With an electric snow blower, you don't need to worry about gas, oil or regular maintenance. Instead, you pop in the battery and start it up – making it a great gift for the practical person.



5

### **ELECTRIC BICYCLE - AVERAGE PRICE POINT: \$500-1,000**

An electric bicycle provides the best of both worlds when it comes to outdoor activities. It can be used as a regular bike, or the rider can use the electric motor to reach speeds north of 20 mph without the need to pedal. There are many popular models for commuting, trail riding and other off-road activities.

## Are portable space heaters efficient for my home?

Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. Unfortunately, using portable space heaters to heat an entire home can really take a toll on your energy bills.

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home. If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weather stripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot. Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

Perhaps your home is energy efficient but you're cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a

similar way during winter months. Only use a space heater in small spaces that you're occupying. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space; most heaters include a general sizing table.

A word about safety: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year. If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating, and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

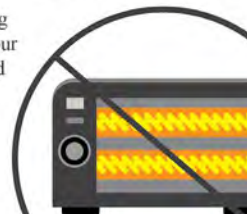
Consider alternative ways to stay warm like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation (and appeal!) and maintain warmth.

We know it's cold out there, but remember in addition to safety concerns, space heaters can greatly increase your energy bills if used improperly.

### TIPS TO DITCH THE SPACE HEATER

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.



## Is your off-peak heating system

# Ready for winter?

Since weather conditions and future wholesale power market prices make the amount of load control hours hard to predict, all our off-peak members are encouraged to have a reliable, automatic dual heating system in place and ready to use.

To ensure your total comfort this winter, consider the following questions about your backup heating system:

- 1. Is the system sized to heat your entire home or business?**
- 2. Does it maintain an adequate comfort level?**
- 3. Is it reliable?**
- 4. Is it fully automatic?**

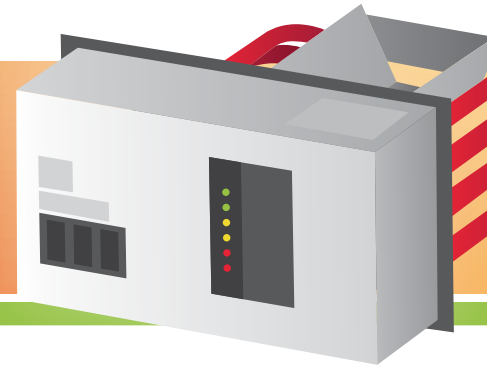
Check current fuel prices and be sure to fill your propane or fuel oil tank. Also, make sure your tank is large enough to hold an adequate supply. Remember, prices typically rise as demand increases during the heating season.

Our member services department is glad to answer any off-peak questions you may have. A loan program is also available to assist you in replacing your old, inadequate off-peak heating system.





## Protect yourself from rising propane prices with off-peak electric



The costs of propane and fuel oil used to heat our homes in the winter are rising. Propane prices entered this year's cold season nearly 100% higher than they were at the same time last year. In a northern state like ours, heating with only propane or fuel oil can quickly take a chunk out of your holiday shopping budget – and beyond.

Protect yourself from the volatile price of propane by utilizing a dual-fuel electric plenum heater on our popular off-peak program. The cost of off-peak electricity has remained low and stable for more than a decade, unlike the seasonal swings of propane. If you already have a plenum or baseboard, make sure it's turned on and working smoothly to take advantage of enormous savings.

A plenum pairs easily with your existing oil or propane forced-air system. It uses the furnace fan you already have to move air across heater elements to heat your home, as well as the same thermostat and ductwork. Most of the fall and winter season, the plenum will deliver reduced-cost off-peak electric heat to keep your space cozy and comfortable. When your cooperative finds it necessary to lower the electric demand on its system (usually 150-200 hours per year, often during extreme cold), it will

remotely switch your heat to a backup fuel, like propane. You notice no difference in comfort – but you'll notice a big difference on your energy costs!

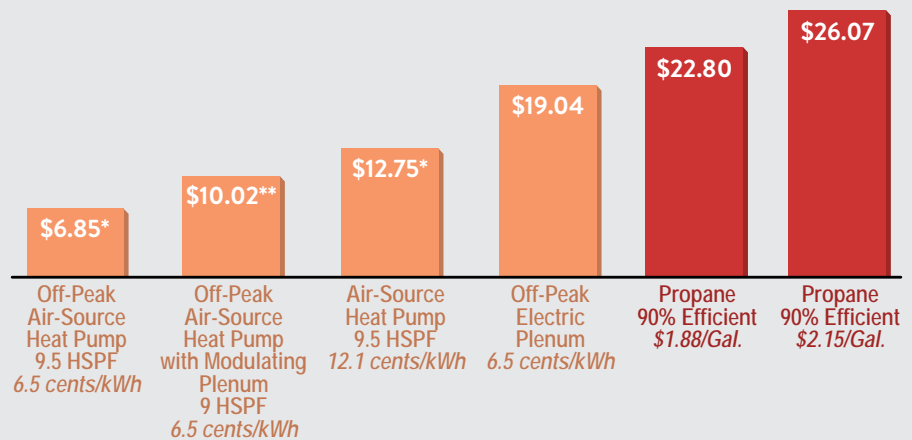
Plenums are a safe and clean way to warm your home, and they allow you to receive the off-peak heating rate – about 45% of the standard rate – as well as a large rebate on installation. Plus, installing a plenum heater

will have you relying less on your gas furnace, which can help increase the furnace's lifespan. In many cases, a plenum can be installed in conjunction with an air-source heat pump, which brings additional benefits.

Propane prices are projected to remain high throughout the winter, so call Red River Valley Co-op Power today to find out how you can get started.

### PRICE DIFFERENCE IN HEATING FUELS PER MILLION BTUS OF HEAT

(November 2021)



\* 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.