

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association

SPARKS

April 2022

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Lineworker Appreciation

In the forties, our lineworkers **raised lines** for farmers and rural towns in the region, **blurring the line** between the world that was and the world that could be. Now, with an energy future **on the line**, their work is as critical as ever. We're not **feeding you a line**, because here's the **bottom line**: These lineworkers will push through the harshest conditions to **cross the finish line** with reliable, affordable, responsible electricity for your family. **They put it all on the line – for you.**

#ThankALineworker

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
Jennifer Erickson, Graphic Artist

April 2022
Volume 66, No. 3

Halstad, Minnesota (USPS 509-300)

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Roger Krostue Fisher
Chairman
Marvis Thompson Perley
Vice Chairman
Paul Baukol Hendrum
Secretary-Treasurer
Bob Kinkade Ada
Curt Stubstad Sabin
Trevor Sorby Glyndon

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: Foreman Jon Kuehn works on adding a crossarm to a new utility pole in Clay County.



THE CEO'S REPORT Life moving fast at your cooperative so far this year

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

Late winter/early spring has been quite busy for employees of Red River Valley Co-op Power. At its 85th annual meeting (mail-in/live in-person event), your cooperative transacted the business of the membership in an open forum.

Directors Roger Krostue (District 1) and Marv Thompson (District 2) were reelected to three-year terms. Directors Curt Stubstad (District 3) and Paul Baukol (District 2) were also elected to a two-year term and one-year term, respectively. You can also view a prerecorded video at rrvcoop.com discussing cooperative items of note.

Headquarters update

Red River Valley Co-op Power recently transitioned to the Hendrum school building as its main office while the rebuild and renovation of its Halstad headquarters begins in earnest. This project is expected to span 12-14 months. A big thank-you to employees as the transition was quite an effort when you've been in one building for almost 75 years. That is a lot of living!

Thank a Lineworker

You've probably noticed Red River Valley Co-op Power's lineworkers out working. Being a lineworker is a tough job – but one that is essential and must

be done – often in less than desirable conditions.

This month includes Lineworker Appreciation Day and I wanted to touch on a few points of emphasis with our lineworker. While they are equipped with excellent tools and resources in their bucket trucks, they still must climb from time to time. That involves up to 50 pounds of tools and equipment on poles that are north of 30 feet high.

Of course, the hours can be non-traditional due to blizzards, straight-line winds and whatever else nature wants to throw at the distribution system. In today's world, our lineworkers have a degree from line school plus thousands of hours of on-the-job training before they can even achieve journeyman status. The safety training does not end throughout the course of their career because lives are at stake when dealing with thousands of volts of electricity.

There is a camaraderie and a sense of community that drives them. Why else would they leave the comfort of home and family unexpectedly when called upon? Our lineworkers are service driven and care about keeping the lights on in a safe and effective manner.

Please join me in recognizing our lineworkers, and all our employees, for the good work they do on your behalf.

New services/upgrades

Now that the frost is out of the ground, construction season is upon us. Please let Engineering know as soon as possible if you have plans for a new service or upgrade. 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.

April is National Safe Digging Month

If you are planning an outdoor project, don't forget to **CALL BEFORE YOU DIG.**



That's right. Digging safety is so vitally important that there is an entire month dedicated to it. Your yard may be hiding underground utility pipes, cables and wires, so if you're planning a spring project that involves a shovel or excavator, it's critical to call 8-1-1 before you start. A quick call can keep your project on schedule, your family safe and your neighbors connected to the utilities they need.

Calling is critical

Installing a mailbox?
CALL 8-1-1.



Planting a garden?
CALL 8-1-1.



Building a deck?
CALL 8-1-1.



The process is easy

1 NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or submit a request online two to three days before you begin. The utilities affected by your digging will be notified of your project.



2 WAIT

It may take two to three days for utilities to send a locator to mark any underground lines.



3 CONFIRM

Compare the marks on your yard to the list of utilities contacted by 8-1-1. Confirm that all entities have responded to the request.



4 RESPECT

Protect and follow the utility markers – the flags and/or paint will remain important guides throughout your project.



5 DIG CAREFULLY

Be sure to avoid digging within two feet of the markers on all sides. If you can't, you'll need to consider moving your project.



Scan the code with your phone to submit a request online, or visit call811.com.



Cold-climate heat pumps – a northerner’s best friend

RED RIVER VALLEY COOPERATIVE POWER MEMBERS
HARNESS THE SAVINGS OF A COLD-CLIMATE HEAT PUMP

At a cozy rural home just west of Glyndon, Minn., Mike and Mindy Jo Halvorson were settling into another chilly winter season. The Red River Valley Cooperative Power members have never been worried about high heating bills or cold toes – their cold-climate heat pump (CCHP) has ensured that.

“It’s always the temperature we set it at. It doesn’t fluctuate much,” Mindy Jo said, glancing to the living room’s digital thermostat. “I really don’t think about it at all, because it’s always consistent.”

The Halvorsons’ CCHP is an advanced style of air-source heat pump, which efficiently transfers heat instead of generating it. In the winter, it absorbs and transfers heat inside, and in the summer the unit works in reverse, removing heat from your home. Heat pump technology has come a long way since its introduction to the public in the 1970s.

“This isn’t your grandparent’s heat pump,” Mike said. “With the newer cold-climate technology, the compressors – as it gets colder outside – can ramp up and absorb

more heat from the outside air and do it at lower temperatures.”

Mike is a Territory Manager for Auer Steel & Heating Supply Company, an Upper Midwest heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) distributor. Educating contractors about the best heating and cooling choices for consumers is a large part of his job, and air-source heat pumps dominate the conversation.

“Homeowners are starting to step up and ask for this now. Heat pumps are getting to be the big buzzword, and that’s why com-

“Homeowners are starting to step up and ask for this now. Heat pumps are getting to be the big buzzword, and that’s why companies are putting a lot of their investment into engineering the technology. **The future of our industry is air-source heat pumps.**”

— **Mike Halvorson**, Territory Manager
Auer Steel & Heating Supply Company

panies are putting a lot of their investment into engineering the technology,” he said. “The future of our industry is air-source heat pumps.”

With the improved engineering of CCHPs, the systems have become popular even in the coldest parts of Minnesota and North Dakota. The units are designed to transfer heat at as low as 20 degrees below zero, but the most efficient heating can be experienced at a balance point around

10 degrees – far lower than a standard heat pump. At that point, the system can switch to a backup heating source, like propane or hydronic.

As cooperative members, the Halvorsons take advantage of the off-peak program, through which they receive a reduced electricity rate (nearly 50%) to allow the co-op to control the CCHP if regional electric demand is too high. The switch to backup happens seamlessly with no interruption in comfort.

Mike explained that their CCHP efficiently covers 80% of the seasonal heating hours of their home. He adds that between the low off-peak rate, the large cooperative rebates available, and the current volatility of the fossil fuel market, installing an electric CCHP is an easy choice for homeowners.

“They all want to be comfortable, they want to lower their energy bills, and they want to do their part,” he said.



The Halvorsons enjoy the warmth of their home as the outside temperature dips to 17 degrees. (Minnkota/Michael Hoeft)

We have moved to the Hendrum school building for the next 12 months while our new office is being built and renovated in Halstad.



**RED RIVER VALLEY
CO-OP POWER**

While at the Hendrum school, we will continue serving you in an effective manner like we always have. Our phone numbers will remain the same: 218-456-2139 or 800-788-7784. Our payment drop box is now at the new location as well. If you want to discuss a new service or upgrade, please call. Engineering will be happy to set up a time to meet in person. Please use the south entrance of the Hendrum school.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we prepare your cooperative for a bright future of meeting your energy needs!

*320 Main St. E., Hendrum, MN 56550
Mailing: P.O. Box 358, Halstad, MN 56548 (stays the same)*

Plant Trees Safely

Before you dig, call 811 to locate buried utility lines.

LOW TREE ZONE

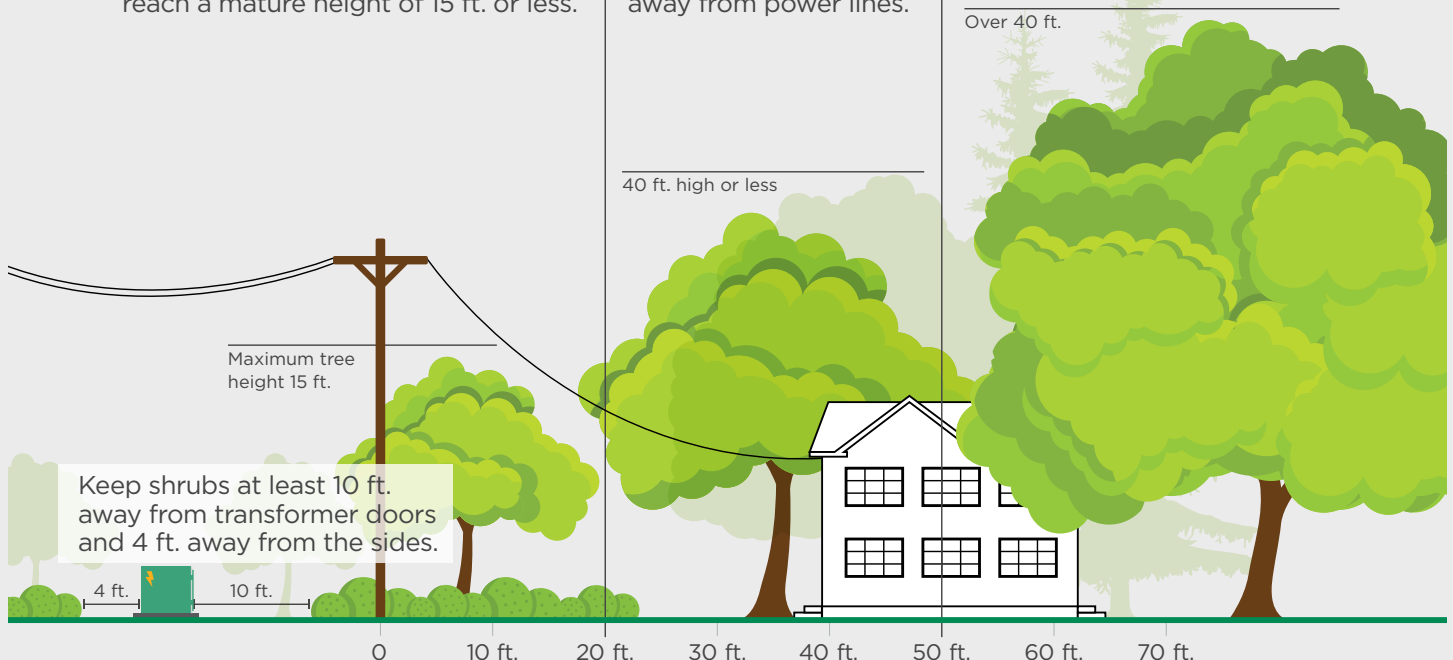
Avoid planting within 20 ft. of power lines. If planting is unavoidable, only plant shrubs and small trees that reach a mature height of 15 ft. or less.

MEDIUM TREE ZONE

Plant medium trees (under 40 ft. when mature) at least 25 ft. away from power lines.

LARGE TREE ZONE

Plant large trees (over 40 ft. when mature) at least 50 ft. away from power lines.



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 small, 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/ton
Electric floor heat	Ultimate comfort, off-peak rate	\$45/kW
Geothermal heat pump	Year-round best efficiency, long-term savings	\$500/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

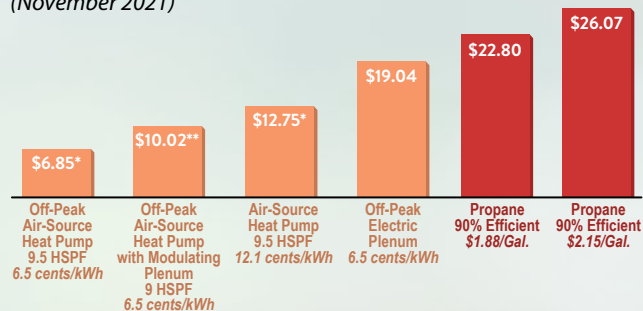
A large-capacity water heater on off-peak credit is another option. Purchase an electric water heater 80 gallons or larger and get great upfront rebates (up to \$650), plus the option of an \$11 recurring monthly credit for letting us control that water heater when energy demand is high.



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

(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.



**RED RIVER VALLEY
CO-OP POWER**

Power plant tour

July 13-14, 2022

Come and travel with your friends to learn how your electricity is generated during this year's cooperative power plant tour, July 13-14.

You'll travel in comfort in an air-conditioned charter bus for a fun and informative tour of Minnkota's Milton R. Young coal-fired generating plant and the BNI Coal mine. You'll also see the Garrison Dam.

At night you'll relax for the evening at the Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck where

you'll also be served a delicious banquet and hearty breakfast.

Bus fare, meals and hotel are included in the \$100 per person fee. The cost for children 14 and under is \$50. Space is limited, so reserve your spot by filling out and returning the form below, complete with your check.

Hundreds of Red River Valley Co-op Power members have enjoyed the tour through the years. Now it's your turn!



Milton R. Young Station



Garrison Dam

Power Plant Tour Registration Form

Deadline: June 17, 2022

Names of Participants

Address

Telephone Number _____

Account Number _____

Number Attending _____

MAIL FORM AND CHECK TO: Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association, P.O. Box 358, Halstad, MN 56548-0358
You will be mailed a letter of confirmation with more tour information.