

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association

SPARKS

August/September 2021 Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Late summer sun

SPARKS

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

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Rich Whitcomb, Editor
Jennifer Erickson, Graphic Artist

August/September 2021
Volume 65, No. 6

Halstad, Minnesota (USPS 509-300)

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

- Roger Krostue Fisher
Chairman
- Marvis Thompson Perley
Vice Chairman
- Trevor Sorby Glyndon
Secretary-Treasurer
- Bob Kinkade Ada

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: A field of sunflowers blooms in early August north of Dilworth.



THE CEO'S REPORT Facility Update

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

Plans to renovate/rebuild your cooperative's main office in Halstad continue to move forward.

Currently, preparations and plans are being finalized to move the building project from the conceptual stage to the bidding/procurement stage later this fall. Framework has already been preliminarily completed for a temporary transitioning process to another facility for employees and materials. Most importantly for members, any transitioning when construction does

begin sometime next year will not affect our ability to continue serving you at a high level. Line crews will do their work as they normally do and office employees will continue to answer your questions and meet your needs unabated like always.

Below is an architectural and conceptual rendering of the project in Halstad. I view it as an investment in service to members that meets the logistical and service needs of the cooperative as a whole.



South Exterior



North Exterior



Reception Area

District 3 director vacancy

In late July, District 3 director Neil Wieser stepped down from the board after serving members since 2012. His contributions are appreciated.

To begin the process of filling the vacant seat, members in District 3 have already received a letter with information about being a director.

Interested members have until Sept. 8 to send back the letter declaring their interest. At that time, the board will begin considering applicants.

If the board decides to appoint an applicant, that person will be up for reelection at the next annual meeting to fulfill the remaining length of the term.

COLD WEATHER RULE

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule (216B.096), electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between Oct. 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and all of the following statements apply:

- Your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by Red River Valley Co-op Power or by the local energy assistance provider (see graphic).
- You enter into and make reasonable and timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from Red River Valley Co-op Power.

Please note that the Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects.

Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between Oct. 1 and April 30, Red River Valley Co-op Power must provide:

- A 30-day mailed notice or 15-day hand delivered notice
- A statement of members' rights and responsibilities
- A list of local energy assistance providers
- Forms to request Cold Weather Rule protection
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

This program is federally funded and can help low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at 60% of the state median income to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2022.

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply visit the MN Dept. of Commerce Energy Assistance website at <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/> for more details and to access the application portal. Or simply contact your county's EAP service provider.

If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and regardless of whether you qualify for either of these programs, please contact Red River Valley Co-op Power to set up a payment plan.

LOCAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

Community Family Service Center Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.

1407 Erskine Street
Crookston, MN 56716
(218) 281-9080 or (866) 264-3729
(Norman County & W. Polk County)

West Central MN Community Action

411 Industrial Park Blvd.
Elbow Lake, MN 56531
(800) 492-4805
(Clay County Only)

RANKING HIGH IN RELIABILITY AND REINVESTING IN YOU!

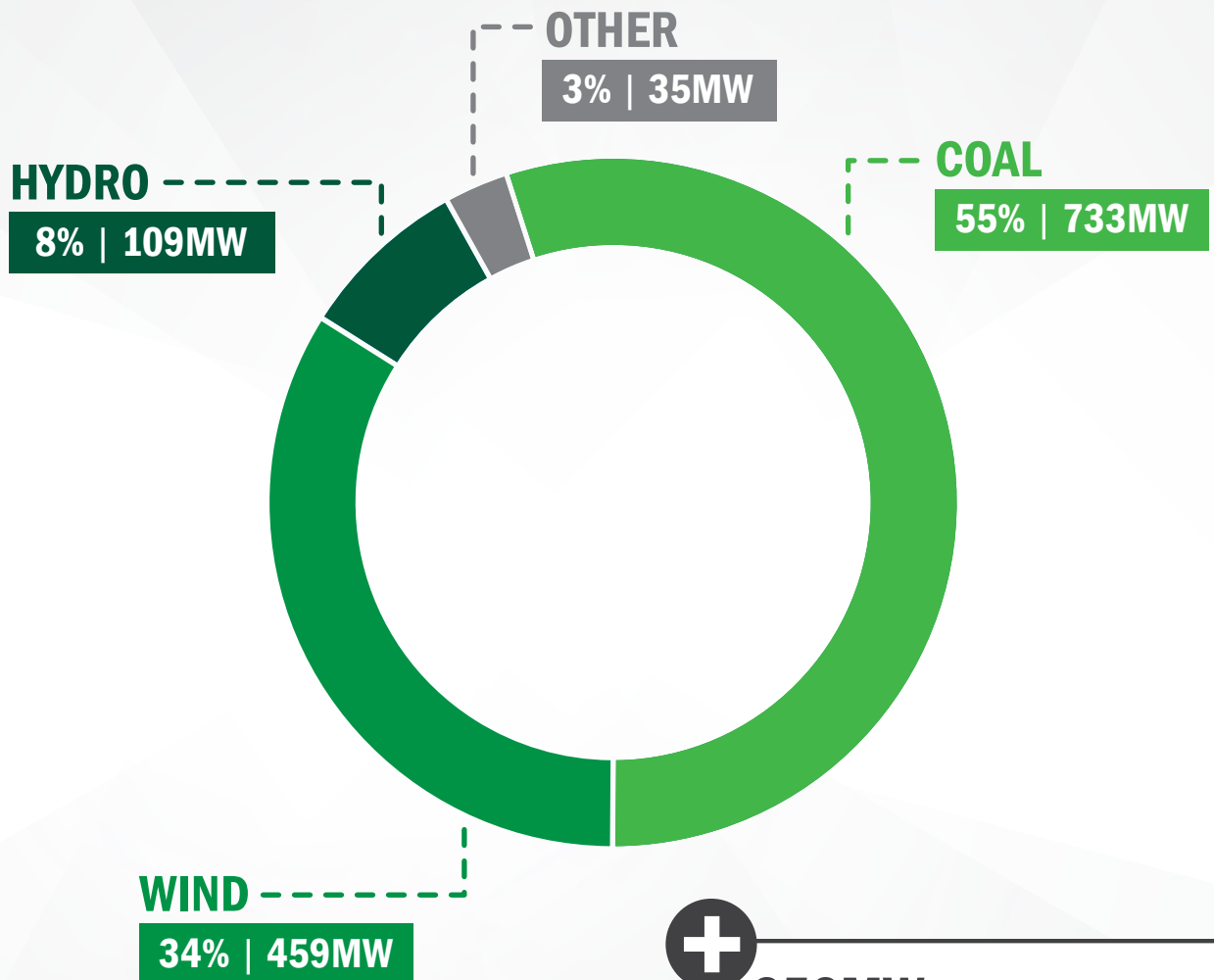
Red River Valley Co-op Power ranked in the **TOP 13%** nationally amongst electric cooperatives for service reliability and low average outage time.*

**Based on statistics for 2020 out of 815 utilities compiled by the Cooperative Finance Corporation.*



BALANCING COMPETITIVE RATES WITH RELIABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

Red River Valley Co-op Power provides its membership with reliable, resilient and responsible energy. A strong generation portfolio of coal, wind, hydro and other resources from Minnkota Power Cooperative, Red River's wholesale energy provider, helps meet your 24/7 needs. Coal remains the backbone of the system – providing stability when you need energy most. About 42% of Minnkota's generation capacity is derived from carbon-free resources, and innovative technologies are being explored to further reduce emissions. When the grid becomes strained, your cooperative can call on its robust demand response program – reducing peak electrical demands throughout the year and providing a low-carbon alternative to building additional power plants. This diverse mix of resources ensures you are receiving the best overall value in the energy you use each day.



350MW

Demand Response can reduce one-third of electricity usage during winter peak events.



GET CHARGED: Electric Trucks and SUVs are Coming

By Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen

Ford's all-electric F-150 Lightning, arriving spring 2022, can provide portable power to a jobsite. Photo Credit: Ford

Dear Pat:

I was an electric vehicle skeptic, but I just saw an announcement of the all-electric Ford F-150 Lightning. I didn't realize electric pickups could be this compelling or competitive. Are there other electric pickups or SUVs coming out soon? - Mike

Dear Mike:

The Ford F-150 Lightning is changing minds across America about what an electric vehicle can do. In fact, Ford declared this is their best truck to date — not best electric vehicle, but best truck, period.

Electric SUVs are available now and pickups will be soon. This development has been anticipated for years. Electric vehicle (EV) sales are about 24 times higher than they were 10 years ago, with several factors driving demand:

- The instant torque from electric motors boosts acceleration.
- The low center of gravity improves handling and reduces rollover risk.

- The superior traction control of electric motors can increase off-road capability and safety in winter.
- The upfront cost of an EV purchase is now more competitive with similar internal combustion models, and most EVs qualify for a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500.
- The cheaper operating fuel cost per mile (for electricity) compared to gasoline or diesel is another attractive feature for drivers.

Ford's electric F-150 Lightning is scheduled to arrive in spring 2022, starting under \$40,000 for the commercial trim package (230-mile range model). A 300+ mile battery is an option, and all models are 4X4 with respectable towing and payload capacities. The Lightning is also equipped to provide 9.6kW of home backup power or portable power for a jobsite.

Tesla has more than a million preorders for its new Cybertruck, which will likely arrive in 2022. The

250-mile range 2WD model starts under \$40,000 and steps up to \$50,000 for the 300-mile range 4WD model. Tesla plans to offer a 500+ mile range version for \$70,000 that can tow more than 14,000 pounds.

GMC has announced a late 2021 release of an electric Hummer with 1,000 horsepower and additional features for off-road performance.

Rivian, a startup backed by billions of dollars from Ford and Amazon, is planning to unveil its R1T electric pickup later this year.

Crossover SUVs (CUVs) are one of the most popular types of vehicles, and a number of manufacturers say they'll have electric models available soon. Ford's Mustang Mach-E is actually available now with a range up to 305 miles, starting at \$45,000.

If you're interested in an EV, talk to your electric co-op. They may offer special EV rates or rebates.



Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape. For additional energy tips and information on Collaborative Efficiency visit: www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.



SAFETY FIRST

Red River Valley Co-op Power's master electrician Paul Karsnia and member services advisor Wayne Tenneson conducted a safety demonstration Aug. 10 for about 25 Norman County 4-H members in Ada. The cooperative periodically performs safety demonstrations for interested parties. Tenneson and Karsnia said they enjoyed putting on the demonstration for the kids, who asked excellent questions about electricity.

*Photos courtesy of Linda Houghlum,
Norman County Extension Educator*

Minnkota joins coalition supporting carbon capture

Minnkota Power Cooperative, Red River Valley Co-op Power's wholesale power provider, has joined more than 160 companies, labor unions, conservation and environmental groups and other organizations to call on congressional leaders to advance policies that support the development and deployment of carbon capture technology. A letter was sent in early August encouraging Congress to focus on a suite of core priorities that are pivotal in keeping America's energy, industrial and manufacturing sectors on track to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. These priorities include:

- Providing a direct pay option for the federal Section 45Q tax credit;
- Extending the commence construction window for the 45Q credit;
- Enhancing 45Q credit values for industrial and power plant carbon capture and direct air capture;
- Eliminating annual carbon capture thresholds in the 45Q program that deter innovation;
- Financing the buildout of regional CO₂ transport and saline geologic storage networks; and
- Robust funding for commercial scale demonstration of carbon capture, direct air capture and carbon utilization technologies.

To read the letter, please visit scalingcarbonmanagement.com.



Four Ways to Combat Cyber Threats

1. Periodically change the password for your Wi-Fi router.
2. Use unique codes or phrases to create stronger passwords.
3. Do not click links or open attachments from unknown senders.
4. Update software regularly.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Old, uninsulated and improperly installed exterior doors can waste energy and money.

Shut the door on wasted energy by weather stripping and sealing all exterior doors. If you have an old exterior door, consider replacing it with a newer, energy efficient model.

Source: energy.gov



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.

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.

Members who have not had their off-peak meter exchanged will no longer be able to obtain the off-peak electric heating rate in the fall because the technology/software used to collect those readings at the substation is now obsolete per the manufacturer. That means we will no longer be able to obtain readings electronically for those meters and the potential kWh will be rolled into the main meter at the higher rate. There are about 90 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, please call the cooperative to check and schedule a time. We will continue communication efforts on our end as well. Thank you.



Rebates! for ELECTRIC WATER HEATERS

Buy a new electric water heater and get an up-to-\$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

80-gal. minimum, must be on load control

We sell 85- & 105-gallon Marathon water heaters!
Call for pricing and details.

218-456-2139 or 1-800-788-7784
www.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.

Sign up for SmartHub
@rrvcoop.com





**RED RIVER VALLEY
CO-OP POWER**

MAKE TIME FOR SAFETY THIS HARVEST SEASON

Now is the time for farmers to reap the rewards of a long growing season. When it comes to fall harvest, there is a lot to get done in a seemingly short amount of time, as shorter days and cooler weather can create a sense of urgency. These factors, along with today's technology and large farm equipment, can lead to serious accidents.

Overhead electric lines near end rows and along roadways can also be a danger to operators of large, taller farm equipment. Red River Valley Co-op Power urges farmers to keep equipment – and extensions – at least 10 feet away from power lines in all directions and recommends the following tips to keep farmers safe:

- Know where overhead power lines are before you head out to the field and have a plan to stay far from them.
- Use a spotter when raising any equipment such as augers, grain trucks and even ladders. It can be difficult to tell how close you are to overhead power lines.

- Know what to do and have a plan if you come into contact with an overhead power line. Do not leave the vehicle until utility workers have cut off electricity and confirmed that it is safe to exit the vehicle. Know what to do in the rare event the equipment catches fire!
- Always lower portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level – under 14 feet – before moving or transporting them. Wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can make it difficult to control raised equipment.
- Never try to move a power line to clear a path. Power lines start to sag over time, bringing them closer to farmers and others who need to avoid them. Contact Red River Valley Co-op Power to repair sagging power lines.

For more information on electrical farm safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

