

MAY 2021

# VOLTS & VIEWS

**Roseau Electric Cooperative, Inc.**  
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**NORTHSTREAM**   
Powered by  **FIBER**



**Built  
for service**

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# VOLTS & VIEWS

MAY 2021 – Vol. 66, No. 5

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF

**Roseau Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

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Regular Business Hours: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Phone (218) 463-1543

**OUTAGE CALLS:**

Toll-Free 1-888-847-8840

## MINNESOTA STATE ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

*Northwest Angle, Kittson, Marshall,  
Pennington and Roseau Counties  
and parts of Beltrami County:*

**Ronald Ditsch – 218-779-6758**

*Lake of the Woods County:*

**Curt Collier – 218-966-5070**

*Inspector list is subject to change at any time.*

The State of Minnesota has high wiring standards, which are in the best interest of you and your family or business. Improper wiring can damage your home, your property and equipment, and injure or kill the people you love. Currently, the state does allow homeowners to do their own residential wiring; however, it is critical that the current electrical code is followed. Any time you or an electrician does wiring or other electrical work at your home or farm, Minnesota state law requires a state wiring inspector to conduct a proper inspection of the work. A rough-in inspection must be made before any wiring is covered. A final inspection is also required. For more information visit [dli.mn.gov](http://dli.mn.gov) and go to the electrical page.

**Gopher State One Call**  
1-800-252-1166 or 811  
[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)



Anyone who plans to dig is required by law to notify the state of their intentions at least 48 hours in advance. All digging requires the 48-hour notification so that buried telephone line, television cable, pipelines, utility electrical lines, municipal water and sewer lines can be located to ensure that none will be severed or damaged.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*Roseau Electric Cooperative is committed to providing its member-owners low-cost, high-quality, safe and reliable electricity with friendly, efficient and knowledgeable service.*

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*



**Attention  
Roseau Electric  
members:  
*Important  
Billing Matter***

# OFF-PEAK METER CHANGEOUT

Roseau Electric is upgrading the Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) system due to a software end-of-life announcement from the meter manufacturer. After June 1, 2021, Roseau Electric will not be able to receive readings from the off-peak heat meters and members will not receive the off-peak rate unless this meter is updated.

Roseau Electric will be changing out off-peak heat meters to the new upgraded meters.

**Please contact Roseau Electric at 1-218-463-1543 to schedule an appointment for your meter changeout to continue receiving the off-peak rate.**

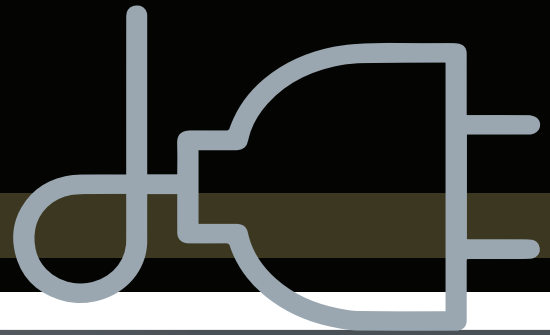
***If you do not contact Roseau Electric to have your off-peak meter updated, you will lose your off-peak rate effective June 1, 2021.***

***Heat meters in the Northwest Angle do not need to be changed.***

**On the cover:** REC lineworker Chad Johnson hangs overhead fiber-optic cable along power lines near the City of Roseau. The installation is just one small section among hundreds of miles of high-speed fiber currently being built out by Roseau Electric's NorthStream Fiber project. *Story pages 4-6.*

# BE POWERFULLY PROACTIVE FOR

## National Electrical Safety Month



May is Electrical Safety Month, and your team at Roseau Electric knows you're aware of the big rules of electrical safety – stay away from downed power lines, don't overload an outlet and keep electrical devices away from water. But there may be additional safety precautions you could take to keep your home undamaged and your family safe. We gathered some lesser-known electrical safety tips to get your summer off to a secure start.

### Be wise with GFCIs

If you have an older home, it may not be equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) – so get some! These are a vital safety tool for rooms with water sources, like kitchens and bathrooms. A GFCI acts as a split-second circuit breaker to shut off electricity fast in case of a ground fault.

### Careful with your cords

Did you know extension cords have different ratings? Some are only rated for indoor use and can cause dangerous issues if they are used outside in the elements. If you are using an outdoors-rated extension cord, also be sure that the electrical source is protected from the weather.

### Observe your outlets

If your outlets are warm to the touch, trouble could be around the corner. Heat could mean that the load is too high, the wiring is melting or the electrical work isn't up to code. Also be mindful of how your plugs are fitting – if they feel loose, you may need an outlet replacement. Call an electrician to help.

### Be quicker to stop the flicker

If you are noticing flickering lighting in any of your home's rooms, don't assume it is just a bulb starting to burn out. It could indicate you have a damaged electrical panel that needs replacing, or you have too many appliances plugged into a single circuit.

### Prepare for pets

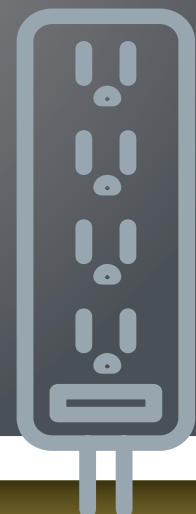
If you've never lived with a playful puppy or a curious kitten, you might not think about electricity when bringing one home. Young pets tend to find things to chew on, including cords. Safely tuck away or bind any cords that may be low and exposed, and don't leave pets unattended until you know their habits.

### Protect your power tools

If your shop or garage isn't well-protected from the outside world, be sure to store your electrical tools inside. This will protect them from extreme temperature fluctuations, snow or water that may get into the garage or any gnawing critters that sneak through the cracks.

### Fire extinguishers are your friend

The Electrical Safety Foundation International says electrical fires account for around 51,000 fires each year, causing an average of \$1.3 billion in damage. Never use water on a fire that may be electrical. Have a fire-retardant chemical fire extinguisher on every level of your home – and know how to use it.



# Built for service

ROSEAU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EXPANDS FIBER-TO-THE-HOME NETWORK TO MORE RURAL MEMBERS, CITY OF ROSEAU



An REC lineworker drills a hole to prepare the placement of a fiber cable trunnion. Inset: Stacy Rose displays a trunnion used to hold the fiber line along the power poles.

Roseau Electric Cooperative (REC) lineworker Ross Nelson will be spending this summer building out miles of overhead and underground fiber-optic cable for his co-op's expanding network.

It's hard work, but not harder than his task last summer – seeing his son, Jarrett, off to basic training for the U.S. Marines.

“The Marines can't have their phones for 13 weeks during boot camp,” Nelson said, a photo of his uniformed son tucked in his wallet. “They can still rely on letters in the mail, so my wife got an app that's called Sandboxx.”

Nelson explained that Sandboxx allows users like his wife, Mary, to type a thousand-character message and upload photos. That content is printed by the company and sent as a tangible letter to the training base. It's a handy service, but only if you have a solid internet link, which the Nelsons did not have.

“So she would be standing out in the yard, phone in the air like the Statue of Liberty, waiting for a connection,” Ross explained, pantomiming his wife's distress. “That was for the first month he was gone. Then, the second day we had fiber, she tried it. And it just went, boop – done. It was sent.”

The Nelsons were one of the first rural member families to be connected to reliable high-speed internet through NorthStream Fiber, REC's broadband deployment initiative started in 2019. Now, that sense of connection is spreading across more areas of Roseau County, including the City of Roseau itself.

Early in 2021, REC was conditionally awarded \$1.2 million in funding from the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) to expand fiber service to unserved or underserved regions of Roseau County. Some of the census-block groups that were included in that coverage zone lie adjacent to the census-block groups REC al-

# NORTHSTREAM FIBER

ready began to serve in 2019, after the co-op was initially awarded \$2.1 million from the FCC's Connect America Fund Phase II (CAFII). In total, REC will receive around \$3.3 million over the next decade to build out a network to more than 550 member homes and businesses.

The hunger for high-speed has been obvious. As of mid-March 2021, NorthStream Fiber had already connected more than 130 customers. REC assistant manager Ryan Severson says they expected a take rate (or, rate of signing up for the service offered) of around 35%. On the first buildout, they've been exceeding 80%.

"We hope that continues throughout," Severson said. "Our main goal is that every one of our members has access to a high-speed internet connection, whether we accomplish that through NorthStream Fiber or through our partnership with Wikstrom Telephone Company. Call us, and we will connect you."

The City of Roseau was one area that was not in NorthStream Fiber's initial buildout plan. Residents currently have access to coax connections for internet, but wanted more reliability and speed.

"We had people in town calling – 'Can we get your service?'" Severson said. "With some of the infrastructure that's in place in the City of Roseau, it made total sense for us to start serving some customers there."

REC hopes to start hanging overhead fiber for the city this summer, coinciding with the four-year rollout plan of its two other rural buildouts. Depending on the infrastructure of the area, the co-op's line crews install either underground fiber lines or string the fiber from already-existing power lines. It's a service integration that fits a quickly evolving society.



REC lineworker Ross Nelson holds a photo of his son, Jarrett, who is stationed across the country for Marine training.

"We believe here at Roseau Electric, and now NorthStream Fiber, that these two businesses will completely mesh. At some point, one will complement the other, and we're already starting to see that," Severson said. "When you go down the road of smart electricity – thermostats, EV chargers, all of these technologies – you're going to need a good internet connection to be able to do any of it."

Severson knows the co-op will also benefit from the marriage of fiber and electricity. As innovation

continues, internet-connected meter reading could become the new normal, and REC will now have a stronger foundation to connect its substations and enhance its use of SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) for better member service.

## Perfect timing

It's not lost on fiber service director Stacy Rose that NorthStream's deployment couldn't have come at a better time. Just months after they started the project, COVID-19 hit. Solid internet was suddenly essential.

"Our customers have all been extremely happy," Rose said. "A lot of them are working from home now, so they like having that feature. They don't have to use their mobile hotspots, which get disconnected all the time. They have a consistent connection."

For lineworker Nelson, it wasn't just communication with his Marine-in-training that his family needed. His sophomore son was now distance learning online, and his wife was now working strictly from home.

"The company she works for gave her a cellphone, but whenever she did Zoom meetings, it would be in and out, in and out," Nelson



An inside look at the overhead fiber cable being strung this year by REC's NorthStream team.

**“COVID challenges reinforced why we’re doing this. We’ve had comments from people who have done doctor’s appointments or consults virtually instead of having to go into the hospital. It’s being used, and that is just going to increase with what’s going on today.”**

– RYAN SEVERSON, REC ASSISTANT MANAGER

said. “With fiber, that went away. Now, she would never let me buy a house that doesn’t have fiber.”

Major Roseau County companies were also thankful for the new service from REC. Severson said he received a lot of positive feedback from employees of business members Marvin and Polaris, whose engineering teams had to abruptly take their highly technical work home. He’s also heard from those in the medical field.

“COVID challenges reinforced why we’re doing this,” he said. “We’ve had comments from people who have done doctor’s appointments or consults virtually instead of having to go into the hospital. It’s being used, and that is just

going to increase with what’s going on today.”

The pandemic may have pushed Roseau County further into a web-based world, but it was already heading that direction. As a younger generation of families looks to build their futures in rural Minnesota, high-speed internet will be key to recruiting and retaining thriving community members.

As Nelson puts it, fiber has become a quality-of-life necessity. When he was young, any purchase of a new home- stead would need to include a good source of water to be valuable.

“I believe fiber is the new well,” he said. “They expect the water, the electricity, all of that stuff. But now it’s also



REC’s line crew prepares a stretch of fiber at a future splicing point along the network path northwest of Roseau, Minn.

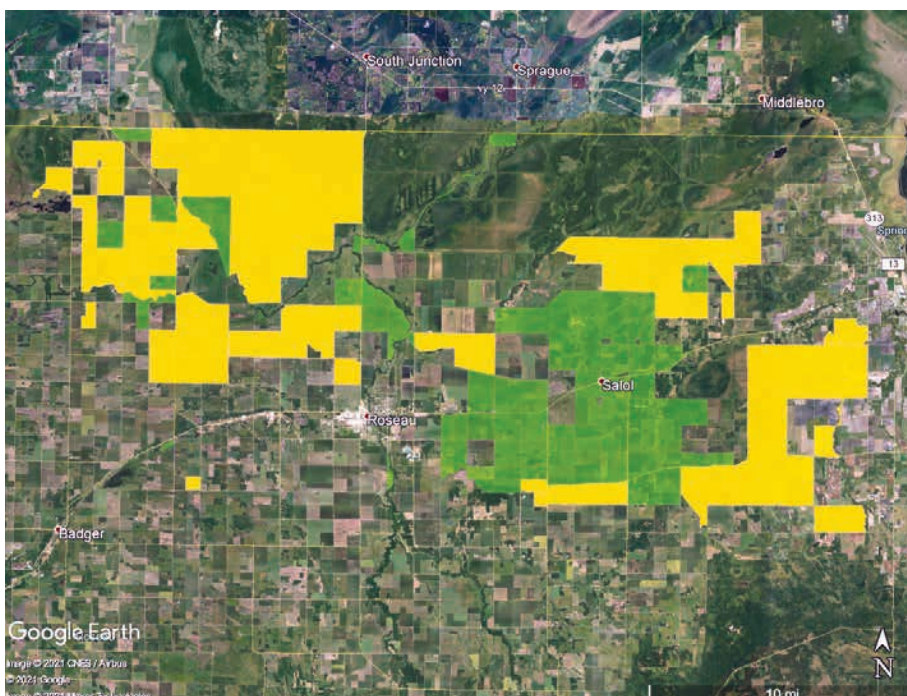
the fiber connection.”

Many of Nelson’s fellow lineworkers have also connected to the NorthStream network over the past year, personally intertwined with a design plan that will have them hanging and trenching more than 250 miles of fiber cable.

“The things that our lineworkers accomplished last year – being new to it, and the amount of line they built out – it feels great,” said Rose, who is often in the field with her crews, talking them through the more technical aspects. “It got to be overwhelming some days, but at the end of the day, you look back and think, wow, we did it.”

Although Nelson is thrilled his family can now have substantial Wi-Fi video calls with Jarrett as he continues Marine training in North Carolina, he’s equally pleased to be giving that opportunity to other families in the north.

“It is a good feeling, and the hope is that we can get as many people on as soon as we can,” he said, squinting through the sun at his co-op brothers stringing fiber from the bucket truck. “Just like electricity – we want to get them ‘lit up.’”



The Roseau County areas marked in green show the initial groupings of NorthStream Fiber coverage awarded in the Connect America Fund Phase II (CAFII). The areas marked in yellow indicate the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) areas that NorthStream Fiber was conditionally awarded.

# Energy Efficiency Incentives

## Sample 2021 PowerSavers/Powerful Value/REC Residential Electric Incentives for Members (Incentive shall not exceed 50% of project costs)

Equipment	Specifications	Incentive
LED Screw-in Bulb	40-60W equivalent incandescent. ENERGY STAR®-recommended.	50% of the purchase price up to \$2/bulb
LED Screw-in Bulb	65W or greater equivalent incandescent. ENERGY STAR-recommended.	50% of the purchase price up to \$4/bulb
LED Fixture	Complete fixture or replacement kit. ENERGY STAR-recommended.	50% of the purchase price up to \$4/fixture
LED Outdoor Fixture	Dusk to dawn operation required. DesignLights™ Consortium or ENERGY STAR-recommended.	50% of the purchase price up to \$10/fixture
Clothes Washer	Must be ENERGY STAR-approved.	\$25/unit
Clothes Dryer	Must be ENERGY STAR-approved.	\$25/unit
Refrigerator or Freezer	Must be ENERGY STAR-approved.	\$25/unit
Recycle Old Refrigerator or Freezer	Recycling receipt required.	\$50/unit
Electric Water Heater • 55 gallon or less • 80-85 gallon • 100 gallon or greater • Conversion from gas to electric	Must be on demand response program.	\$125/\$125/\$100/unit \$200/\$200/\$300/unit \$300/\$300/\$300/unit \$250/unit
Programmable Thermostat		50% of the purchase price up to \$25
ENERGY STAR Smart Thermostat	Wi-Fi connectivity required.	50% of the purchase price up to \$50
Tuneup for Central AC	Not valid on window AC units. Checklist on form must be completed with application.	\$25/unit
Tuneup for Air-Source Heat Pump or Mini-Split Ductless Air-Source Heat Pump	Checklist on form must be completed with application.	\$25/unit
Supplemental Heating Source Air-Source Heat Pump	Must modulate to allow ENERGY STAR-rated air-source heat pump to operate down to 5° F and be on load control.	\$500/unit
Air-Source Heat Pump or Mini-Split/Ductless ASHP	Less than 17 SEER Equal to or greater than 17 SEER	\$300/\$150/\$50/ton \$500/\$150/\$50/ton
Furnace (Air Handler) with ECM Blower	Furnace with an ECM blower. Retrofit applications only.	\$100/unit
Ground-Source Heat Pump Open Loop less than 135,000 BTUH @ 59° F	16.2 EER/3.6 COP Maximum incentive \$2,500/home.	\$200/ton
Ground-Source Heat Pump Closed Loop less than 135,000 BTUH @ 77° F	14.1 EER/3.3 COP Maximum incentive \$5,000/home.	\$400/ton

Insulation and air-sealing incentives for existing homes are available. See Roseau Electric for details.

All incentives, criteria and guidelines for residential and business members can be found at [www.roseauelectric.com](http://www.roseauelectric.com) or by calling **888-847-8840**

## OPERATING STATISTICS

	Monthly		Yearly	
	March 2020	March 2021	March 2020	March 2021
Members	6,532	6,565	6,532	6,565
kWh purchased	14,334,667	13,360,151	47,739,966	46,674,527
% change		-6.80%		-2.23%
Revenue	1,678,484	1,611,395	5,391,740	5,342,393
Cost of power	1,022,552	962,408	3,286,885	3,192,464
Other expenses	474,188	503,549	1,620,775	1,703,046
Operating margins	181,744	145,438	484,080	446,883
Nonoperating margins	15,624	16,397	43,470	36,796
Patronage dividends	-	-	-	-
Total margins	197,368	161,835	527,550	483,679



### ENERGY TIP

Spring cleaning? Use your vacuum to clean dust buildup on refrigerator coils, which will help the unit run more efficiently. Change out your HVAC filters, and check for dust around vents which could be a sign of leaky ductwork, causing your HVAC to run less efficiency. While cleaning windows, check for cracks around the edge or for loose panes, which can lead to air leaks. Use caulking to seal them up.

### SAFETY TIP

When using a wet-dry vacuum cleaner or a pressure washer, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid electric shock.

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Spring is the time of the year when it is summer in the sun and winter in the shade."

- Charles Dickens

### DATES TO REMEMBER

- May 9** – Mother's Day
- May 15** – Walleye fishing opener!
- May 21** – Electric bill is due
- May 31** – Memorial Day, office closed

### OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Phone 218-463-1543

### AFTER HOURS/OUTAGE NUMBER

Toll-free 1-888-847-8840  
(main outage call center)

### CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

1-800-252-1166 or 811

### PAY BY PHONE – 1-877-999-3412

### SMARTHUB

<https://roseauelectric.smarthub.coop/>

### WEBSITE

[www.roseauelectric.com](http://www.roseauelectric.com)



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TO STAY UP TO DATE!

# 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting



## *Grand Prize Winner* **55-inch LG Smart TV**

James & Carol Christianson

## *Prize Winners*

### **\$50 Energy Bill Credits**

Kay Prothero	Marlys Olson
Shawn Yates	Kyle Rauser
Michael Agre	Jeff Howell
Bryan Landwehr	Gregg Welin
Gary Lund	Janet Nyhus
Teresa Vertina	Dennis & Diane Monkman
Neil Richards	Faye Hamerl
Ellis Waage	Allen Brandt
Keith Barsness	Muriel Larson
Curtis & Carol Amundson	Jamie Loken

### **\$250 Energy Bill Credits**

Tony Gust  
Michelle Slater