



Cover Photo: Robin Miles, January Calendar Photo Contest Winner

# Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

February 2020

## EMPOWERING

communities with  
innovative, sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

# 75

YEARS

## New Year. New Look.

Welcome to the new edition of the Agralite newsletter!

We are kicking off the new year with a redesigned version of the newsletter in an effort to continually engage our evolving membership.

This new format will resemble a magazine-style publication featuring quick-and-easy reads relating to energy efficiency, technology, community features, co-op news and electrical safety. With the use of more infographics and visuals, we hope you find the information useful and appealing.

It's a new year, and that means new resolutions. Whether this is the first year you're looking for ways to save energy or you want to lower your energy bills even more than last year, read our monthly newsletters for energy efficiency and energy savings tips.

Regardless of your interests, we hope you find a valuable takeaway or two in each issue of this newsletter. We exist to serve you, our members, and to help you make informed energy decisions.

We are a community-focused organization working to safely and efficiently deliver affordable and reliable energy. We were built by the communities we serve, we belong to the communities we serve, and we are led by members like you.

## CONTENTS

Page 1 ► Newsletter Introduction

Page 2 ► AMI Project Update, Manager's Article

Page 3 ► Director Nominations and Sample Petition, Board Members

Page 4 ► Agralite Scholarship, Basin Scholarship, Cold Weather Rule

Insert, Side 1 ► Four Tips for Winter Safety

Insert, Side 2 ► December 2019 Meeting Minutes, Word Scramble

We are closed February 17 for Presidents Day.

## STAY CURRENT.

For the latest energy news in your community, visit us at [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop).



## Agralite Electric Co-op We're member-owned!

320 US-12, Benson, MN  
(320) 843-4150  
1-800-950-8375  
[www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop)  
8:00am - 4:30pm M-F



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Touchstone Energy®  
Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.

## AMI Project as of 01.10.20

- All 6 collectors and 257 routers have been installed across the system for the RF metering infrastructure.
- 3,287 single phase meters have been changed.
- 495 three-phase meters have been changed.
- This month, crews will be changing meters in the Baker, Fairfield, Moyer and Edison townships.

For more information, visit our website: [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop) (AMI Tab)



## Find your account number and win a \$100 credit!

If you find your account number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) hidden in this issue, give our office a call by the end of the month and you will receive a \$100 bill credit.



Call Day or Night  
1.888.884.3887

[Do not call the office for outages](#)  
January Energy Payment IS DUE  
February 20.\*

\*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

## Manager's Article *Kory Johnson*

2020, a new year and a new decade are upon us! With the beginning of the new year, Agralite is looking at another busy year. The line crews have a number of projects they will be undertaking this coming year. They will be working to finish connecting the new Dublin Substation into the distribution system. Once these projects are completed in the coming year, the cooperative will look to retire the old Cashel Substation in 2021. This work, along with the new Swenoda Substation that was completed in 2018, will enable the cooperative to better serve the growing loads across the southern part of the cooperative.

This year, the crews will continue with the meter replacement project that was started this past year. The new metering system was necessary as the previous metering system was no longer supported or produced by the manufacturer. The new metering platform has many advantages over the previous system. The new system has the ability to provide outage information to the cooperative and allows the engineering of individual loads at the time of system peaks to better determine areas needing upgrades.

The communications system that is used to gather meter readings will also be used for the new load control system that the cooperative will begin installing this year. The existing system that Agralite has used for many years is being discontinued in 7 or 8 years. The new system will provide more reliable load control, saving the cooperative money.

Another item the cooperative will be doing this year is an evaluation of the cooperative headquarters facilities. Our headquarters facility was opened in 1964 and, over the years, the equipment used to operate and maintain the system has increased both in size and number. The cooperative plans to hire an architect to evaluate the current facilities and make a recommendation on whether to build an addition onto the existing facility to accommodate the equipment of today or if the cooperative is better off building an entire new headquarters facility. Please look for more information concerning this in future additions of the Agralite newsletter.

Also, in the coming year, the cooperative is looking to have an outside consultant do a cost of service study. A cost of service study is done to analyze and recommend rates to help ensure that each rate class pays their appropriate share of the costs of providing electric service. The purpose of this cost of service study is not necessarily to increase rates but rather to explore alternate rate structures for our members. This may include demand rates for both single phase and multi-phase accounts, prepayment for accounts whereby a member could prepay a dollar amount and they could then monitor their usage to help them better control their usage, or multiple billing cycles to enable a member to better manage their cash flow. The idea with these different rate structures would be to allow our members to select a rate option that would allow them to best utilize electric energy that matches their individual use patterns and also help to reduce their cost of electricity.

As these ideas develop and move forward, I will be sharing information about these topics in future articles to keep our members informed about your electric cooperative!



### Energy Saving Tip:

Don't leave your mobile phone plugged in overnight. It only takes a couple of hours to charge.

Source: <https://www.directenergy.com/learning-center/energy-efficiency/25-energy-efficiency-tips>

**AGRALITE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
PETITION FOR NOMINATION**

To: Jeff Hufford, Board Secretary

I \_\_\_\_\_, would like to be a candidate to serve as a director for Agralite Electric Cooperative representing District No. \_\_\_\_\_. I hereby certify that I meet the requirements set forth in Article III, Section 2 of the Bylaws of the Cooperative and I request that my name be placed on the ballot that will be mailed to the members with the notice of the annual meeting of the Cooperative to be held on May 18, 2020. I respectfully file this petition with a minimum of fifteen (15) members of the Cooperative who are residents of District No. \_\_\_\_\_ and who support my candidacy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Candidate

We, the undersigned, certify that we are members of Agralite Electric Cooperative and that we reside in District No. \_\_\_\_\_. We are familiar with the requirement for serving as a director of the Cooperative and we believe that the above named candidate meets the requirements to become and/or remain a director of Agralite Electric Cooperative representing District No. \_\_\_\_\_. By our signatures below we show our support for this Petition for Nomination. We further attest that, to the best of our knowledge and belief, the above named candidate is a member of Agralite Electric Cooperative and is a resident of District No. \_\_\_\_\_.

Printed Name	Signature	Address	Phone #	Date
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Kathy Draeger, Clinton<br><i>District 1</i>                     | Steve Nelson, Starbuck<br><i>District 4</i>              | Andrea Thomson, Benson<br><i>District 6</i>                |
| Jeff Hufford, Morris<br><i>District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer</i> | Orvin Gronseth, Murdock<br><i>District 5 - President</i> | Warren Rau, Appleton<br><i>District 7 - Vice President</i> |
| Bennett Zierke, Hancock<br><i>District 3</i>                    |  |  |

***This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*** To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

**Director Nominations Now Open for Districts 5, 6, and 7**

*Would you like to serve as a director on the Agralite Electric Cooperative Board for your district?*

Agralite Electric Cooperative is governed by a seven-member board of directors elected by our membership. The cooperative's service territory is divided into seven districts with each district represented by a director who resides in that district. Directors elected serve a three-year term.

This year, we will have an election for directors for Districts 5, 6, and 7.

**District 5:** includes the townships of Camp Lake, Kerkhoven, Kildare, Hayes, Cashel, Dublin, Pillsbury, and Lake Johanna

**District 6:** includes the township of Tara, Clontarf, Benson, Marysland, Six Mile Grove, Torning, and Swenoda

**District 7:** includes the townships of Hegbert, Fairfield, Shible, Moyer, Appleton, Edison, West Bank, Artichoke, Upper Akron, Lower Akron, Stevens, and Synnes

As per the Bylaw changes in 2016, any member meeting the qualifications as specified in the Bylaws of Agralite Electric Cooperative may become a candidate for election to the Board by submitting a written petition for nomination with the signatures of no less than 15 members who are residents of the district for which the election is being held. All voting will be done by mail. Ballots will be mailed to all Agralite voting members on record in these districts before the Annual Meeting. The election will take place at the Annual Meeting on May 18, 2020, at the Benson High School.

*For questions about the nominating process and becoming a director or to pick up a petition for nomination, please call 320-843-4150 or stop by our office.*

**Petitions are due to the office by 4:30 pm on Wednesday, April 8th, 2020.**



# 2020 Scholarships

Qualify? Please Apply!



**EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS IN ENERGY SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY**

## 2020 Agralite Post-Secondary Education Scholarship Program

Agralite Electric Cooperative post-secondary education scholarship program is now accepting applications. This program is open to the four county region that Agralite provides electric service to: Big Stone, Pope, Stevens, and Swift counties. Agralite Electric Cooperative will award two \$2,500, two \$1,000, and three \$500 scholarships. One of the \$2,500 scholarship awards is intended for individuals interested in becoming an electrical line worker or electrician. These scholarship funds are made available in part from unclaimed capital credits and in part through administration proceeds from The Rural Economic Development Loan program.

Obtain forms and applications from your school counselor, the Agralite Electric Cooperative office, or [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop).

The completed application and all other necessary information must be returned to Agralite Electric Cooperative no later than April 17, 2020.

Please call, click or visit Agralite Electric Cooperative for more information today. Applicants who applied for the Basin Electric scholarship may also apply for the Agralite scholarship.

## 2020 Basin Scholarship

Basin Electric Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supplier to Agralite, is again offering this generous scholarship. Basin Electric's scholarship program began in 1990. Each year, Agralite solicits scholarship applications throughout our service area. The recipient must be a dependent of a member of Agralite who is enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school in the fall of 2020. This scholarship must be used for educational costs, and the student must enter college next fall.

Obtain forms and applications from your school counselor, the Agralite Electric Cooperative office, or [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop).

The completed application and all other necessary information must be returned to Agralite Electric Cooperative no later than February 21, 2020.

## COLD WEATHER RULE

Minnesota residential cold weather law (MN Statute, Ch 235, sec.216B.097) provides that cooperative utilities cannot disconnect a residential consumer between October 15 and April 15, provided that certain conditions are met. These conditions include:

1. **The disconnection would affect the customer's primary heat source; and**
2. **The customer has declared an inability to pay on forms provided by the coop; and**
3. **The household income of the customer is less than 50% of the state median income, as documented by the customer to the coop; and you have entered into a payment schedule and are reasonably current with your scheduled payments.**

**It is important to remember that a customer must meet all of the above conditions in order to be covered by the law.**

There are several agencies that provide financial assistance to qualifying households. We urge you to check with them for details on available programs. Contact your local health and human services department, or one of the community action councils listed below:

**Prairie 5 CAC 320-269-7976**

**West Central CAC 800-492-4805**

**Heartland CAC 320-235-0850**



## Four Tips for Winter Safety

It's no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. During the coldest months, consumers are using additional electrical devices and appliances, like space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

**This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.**

**1. Don't overload outlets.** Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections—they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.

**2. Never leave space heaters unattended.** If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed at least three feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.

**3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets.** These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire hazard. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads – look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.

**4. Use portable generators safely.** Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, before you plug in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

## FACT:

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,700 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage annually.

## Energy Saving Tip:



Are you using your fireplace efficiently? Remember to turn down your thermostat when burning a fire, and close the damper when a fire is not burning.

*Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)*



**MINUTES OF MEETING  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
December, 2019**

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., December 19, 2019. All members of the Board were present. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, and payment of capital credits of deceased members were approved.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load management and showed demand graphs. He discussed the Agralite News, the electric vehicle, and gave an update on the Operation Round Up meeting.

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's margins for the month of November. She discussed year end. The year-end audit will take place the end of January. Jenny brought forth Work Order #486 and Special Equipment WO November 2019 and the Board approved them.

The financials were given by Jenny with a Power Point presentation.

Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed line crew projects and recent outages. He discussed the Dublin Substation and the AMI project. He showed a report of the collectors and routers installed as of 12/13/19.

Tom gave the safety report.

Director Rau reported on the CFC Workshop he attended.

Director Gronseth and Kory reported on the Mid-West Electric Annual Meeting that they attended.

Director Rau reported on the MREA board meeting.

Tom brought forth updated Policy 606 and the Board approved it.

The Board approved NRECA RC3 Board Letter.

Director Draeger will be the voting delegate at the NRECA Annual Meeting. Director Gronseth will be the alternate.

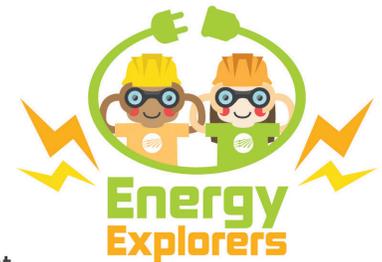
Director Gronseth will be the NRTC Voting Delegate. Director Draeger will be the alternate.

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed recent meetings that he attended.

The January board meeting was set for the 30th.

Being no further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

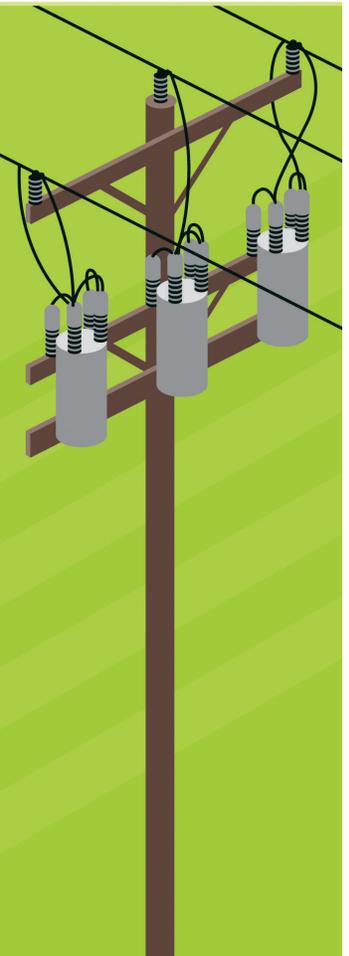
# ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT WORD SCRAMBLE



Electric co-ops use a variety of equipment to make sure you and your family receive reliable electricity. Can you unscramble the equipment terms below?

Use the provided clues for help, and double check your work in the answer key below.

- ORNSTAMREFR**  
These can look like large metal cans on top of utility poles or big green boxes on the ground. They are used to reduce the voltage of electricity, making it safe for use in your home.
- OERPW NSLIE**  
These can hang overhead or be placed underground. They carry electricity from where it's generated to homes and businesses in your community.
- OUTASBSNTI**  
This is an electrical facility that contains equipment for controlling the flow of electricity.
- RTLEIE ERMTE**  
These devices are typically found outside the home and measure the amount of electricity you use.
- CBUTKE KTURC**  
Lineworkers use these types of vehicles to reach power lines and poles when making repairs and updates to the electrical system.



Answer Key: 1. TRANSFORMER 2. POWER LINES 3. SUBSTATION 4. ELECTRIC METER 5. BUCKET TRUCK

## Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2018 figures, in cents per kWh

