



Photo: John Godwin, April Calendar Photo Contest Winner

# Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

April 2023

## EMPOWERING

communities with  
innovative, sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

# 75 YEARS

### Remember To Thank A Line Worker On April 10

Lineworkers serve on the front lines of our nation's energy needs, and on April 10, 2023, Agralite Electric Cooperative, along with other electric cooperatives across the country, will honor the brave men and women who work hard to keep the lights on.

Line crews work around the clock, sometimes in difficult and dangerous conditions, to keep power flowing to our local communities. Whether they're restoring power after a major storm or maintaining critical infrastructure to our electric system, lineworkers are at the heart of our co-op.

When a storm hits, they set aside their personal priorities because Mother Nature doesn't work around holidays, vacations and birthdays. A service-oriented mentality is one of the many admirable characteristics of an electric lineworker.

Agralite Electric Cooperative is proud to honor the 10 lineworkers that maintain over 2,500 miles of power lines in our service territory.

Agralite Electric Cooperative invites all co-op members to take a moment and thank a lineworker for the important work they do. On April 10, you can use #ThankALineworker on social media to show your support for the brave men and women who power our lives.



Pictured above: Agralite's 10 linemen, along with our meter tech, construction engineer, warehouseman, mechanic, and cable locator

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

320 US-12, Benson, MN  
(320) 843-4150  
1-800-950-8375  
www.agralite.coop



 Like us on Facebook



Touchstone Energy®  
Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.



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

If your account number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) is one of the [four account numbers](#) hidden in this issue, give our office a call by the end of the month and you will receive a \$100 bill credit. If more than one member finds their account number in a single issue, \$100 will be split equally amongst them.

### Congratulations

to Marlin Zahn for finding his account number in our February issue.

### Energy Saving Tip:

This planting season, include energy efficiency in your landscaping plans.



Adding shade trees around your home can reduce surrounding air temperatures as much as 6 degrees. To block heat from the sun, plant deciduous trees around the south side of your home. Deciduous trees provide excellent shade during the summer and lose their leaves in the fall and winter months, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

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



Call Day or Night  
1.888.884.3887

[Do not call the office for outages](#)

March Energy Payment  
is due April 20.\*

\*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

We've all heard the phrase, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." This popular adage is often used in conversation or a story when someone is about to do something foolish or risky. If they heed this advice, it means they did not commit to "one basket", but instead hedged their bets with multiple options.



This strategy is how I describe Agralite's common sense approach to the current energy transition. 1623800 We know that consumer interest in renewable energy continues to grow. We've seen this trend here in Minnesota.

Recent innovations and advances in renewable energy technologies have led to sharp decreases in costs, making renewables more feasible, accessible and scalable. Over the last few years, Agralite Electric Cooperative has adjusted our fuel mix by utilizing more renewables, and today, just over 40% of our fuel mix is comprised of renewable energy, the majority of which is hydropower and wind.

Nationally, there is increasing reliance on renewable energy sources at the same time that we're seeing fossil fuel plants taken off-line, often ahead of schedule. Additionally, we're seeing more pressure on the electric grid due to the increasing frequency and intensity of severe weather events and rising electricity demand.

### Competing Pressures

So how do we reconcile these challenges of grid pressure and a changing fuel mix? Solar and wind energy are certainly beneficial for the environment, but they are limited resources because the sun does not always shine, and the wind does not always blow. Our primary responsibility is to provide electricity 24/7 to you and our community. To do this, we need reliable sources of power that will meet all the peaks and valleys of on-demand energy in our connected world.

So where are we netting out? That's where our familiar adage comes into play. While utilization of renewables is increasing, we still need to incorporate other forms of energy in the mix to ensure reliable service. Remember, solar and wind are intermittent power sources. This fact coupled with the growing demand for renewables creates its own challenges.

That's why we spread our eggs into multiple baskets. There is great value in maintaining a diverse mix of fuel sources—fossil fuels and renewables to ensure reliability, resiliency and meet the growing demand for electricity.

Reliability also means repairing and replacing utility equipment to prevent wear-and-tear, ensuring our equipment can withstand severe weather. We are laser-focused on providing our Agralite Electric Cooperative members with safe, reliable, affordable energy. That's why fuel diversity—or placing our eggs in multiple baskets—is essential to reliability.

### The Bottom Line

Lowering the overall carbon footprint in this country means we're going to electrify more and more of our economy. Solar and wind power are an important part of a broader energy portfolio, but they are not available 24/7. In today's ever-connected world, people need power around the clock.

As our nation increasingly depends on electricity to power the economy, Agralite Electric Cooperative is working to anticipate, plan and respond to market trends and policy shifts. That's how we can power your home and our economy, while continuing to serve as your local energy provider.



## Director Nominations Now Open For Districts 5, 6, & 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, Norway Lake, Louriston, and Lake Johanna.

**District 6 includes the townships of:** Tara, Clontarf, Benson, Marysland, Six Mile Grove, Torning, Swenoda, and Mandt. 1628100

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

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 takes place at the Annual Meeting on June 22, 2023.

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

**Petitions are due to the office no later than 4:30 pm on Friday, May 12th, 2023.**

**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 June 30, 2022. 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.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

## Dig Smart. Dig Safe.

Before you dig, call 811 or visit [call811.com](http://call811.com) to mark underground utility lines. 811 is a free service that helps keep our community safe.

## April Is National Safe Digging Month



***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).

## LEC Teacher Seminar Is June 12-15 In Bismarck, ND

The Lignite Energy Council (LEC) is conducting the 2023 Teacher Seminar, "Energy, Economics and Environment," at the Bismarck State College in Bismarck, ND, June 12-15, 2023. Basin Electric will pay for travel costs for teachers from SD, MN, MT, WY and IA, and LEC will cover the rest.

This seminar will provide teachers with the information and educational materials needed to teach about how lignite is mined and used to produce electricity for homes, farms and businesses in the Upper Midwest. The seminar also covers lignite's economic impact on the region and important environmental issues affecting the lignite industry.

Two grad professional development credits are available through the Center for Economic Education at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND or Minot State University, Minot, ND.

Teachers can apply online:  
[www.lignite.com/teachers](http://www.lignite.com/teachers)

**Applications are accepted until the seminar is full or until April 28.**

A \$60 deposit is required to reserve each teacher's spot, and can be submitted online. This deposit will be returned when they check in at the seminar.

Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. While LEC encourages all educators and admin staff to apply and attend, preference is given to:

- 4th-12th grade teachers
- Science, math or social studies teachers
- Career counselors
- Principals and vice principals

Teachers must track their mileage and individual meal expenses (*up to two each way*) from home to the seminar and back. Packets with travel expense reimbursement forms will be given to the teachers at the seminar. Receipts for meals are required.

[Reimbursement forms are due July 7, 2023.](#)

## Work Zone Awareness Week Sheds Light On Safety

National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 17–21, 2023, is a good time to learn more about work zone safety; however, work zone safety should be observed 365 days a year to save lives.

Cars or trucks that speed through a work zone not only endanger workers on the ground. Driving too fast or too close to a work truck can also put an elevated worker in danger by causing their raised bucket to move or sway.

Streets and highways are lined with power poles and electrical equipment, and narrow roadways often require crews like ours to place their equipment in or near traffic lanes. Be alert to utility and other work zone crews for their safety and yours. Besides our crews, you might encounter road workers, other utility crews, tree trimmers or first responders working in or on the side of the road.

According to the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse, 774 fatal crashes and 857 deaths occurred in work zone crashes in 2020. Many other work zone crashes result in injuries. 994300 In 2020, 102,000 work zone crashes occurred.

**To help keep roadside crews safe:**

- Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment and workers.
- Be patient. Traffic delays are sometimes unavoidable, so allow time for unexpected setbacks.
- Obey all signs and road crew flag instructions.
- Merge early and be courteous to other drivers.
- Use your headlights at dusk and during inclement weather.
- Minimize distractions. Avoid activities such as texting, operating a radio, applying makeup or eating.

Remember, slow down when approaching a work zone and move over for first responders and work crews. Do your part to help everyone return home safely at the end of the day.



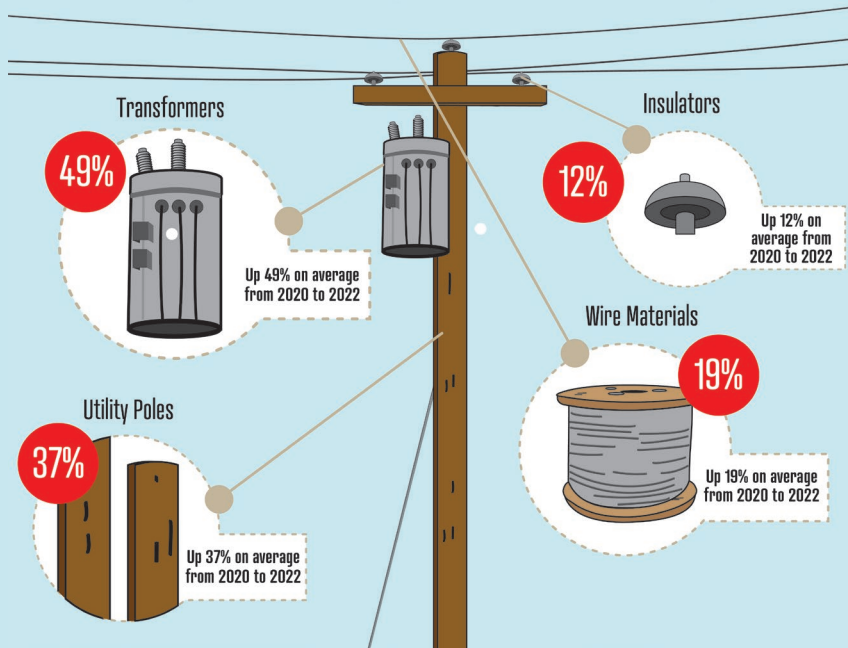
### SEMINAR CONTACT INFORMATION

Retha Mattern, at the Lignite Energy Council, can answer questions related to the teacher seminar: [rethamattern@lignite.com](mailto:rethamattern@lignite.com) or 800-932-7117.

Retha can also answer questions regarding Basin Electric's sponsorship of teachers from SD, MN, MT, WY and IA: [elaverdure@bepc.com](mailto:elaverdure@bepc.com) or 701-557-5625.



## The Rising Cost Of Utility Materials Is Industry-Wide



## The Rising Cost Of Utility Materials Is Industry-Wide

As mentioned in the newsletter last fall, Agralite Electric Cooperative is working with Power System Engineering to review its cost and revenue needs through a Cost-of-Service study. The electric rates for the cooperative have been constant since the last rate change in January of 2017. Since then, the cooperative has faced increased pressures of wholesale power supply increases over the last six years, inflationary pressures on the cost of materials, and increased labor and fuel costs.

As part of the study, Power System Engineering has been reviewing all classes of energy users and have been identifying ways to protect the fiscal health of the Cooperative, while maintaining safe and reliable service. 1338200 Once the study is complete in the next month, Agralite Electric Cooperative will update you, our member-owners of the complete results, and the best options for the cooperative moving forward to manage increases while continuing to provide safe, reliable electric power to our membership.

## COLD WEATHER RULE & ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NOTICE

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between October 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 Agralite Electric Cooperative or by the local energy assistance provider.
- You enter into and make reasonably 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 Agralite Electric Cooperative.

### Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects

Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between October 1 and April 30, Agralite Electric Cooperative must provide:

- A 30-day notice of disconnection;
- A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
- A list of local energy assistance providers;
- Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

### Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50% of the state median income (\$58,793 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2023.

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website, <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>, for more details and to access the application portal.
- Contact your county EAP service provider for additional information and assistance.
- Agralite Electric Cooperative exists because of you, and we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please contact our billing department to set up a payment plan.

Prairie 5 CAC 320-269-7976 West Central CAC 800-492-4805  
Heartland CAC 320-235-0850



## CURRENT AGRALITE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Draeger, Clinton

*District 1*

Jeff Hufford, Morris

*District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer*

Bennett Zierke, Hancock

*District 3*

Steve Nelson, Starbuck

*District 4*

Orvin Gronseth, Murdock

*District 5 - President*

Andrea Thomson, Benson

*District 6*

Warren Rau, Appleton

*District 7 - Vice President*

## MINUTES OF MEETING BOARD OF DIRECTORS February 2023

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., February 23, 2023. All members of the Board were present via Zoom due to the weather. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Order #539 and Special Equipment were approved.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month. He stated that he hired Jack Hoeke as the new Electrician and he will start February 27th. He discussed Operation Round Up donations and the Basin Scholarship. He discussed the updated 2023 Co-Generation Reports and the Board approved them.

Ralph Martin, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed margins for the month of January. He discussed FEMA payments, CVEC equity earnings for 2022, and the audit. He discussed CoBank year-end financial results.

The financials were given by Ralph with a PowerPoint presentation.

Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on activities of his department

## SPRING EFFICIENCY WORD SCRAMBLE

Did you know there are several ways you can save energy during spring months?

Read the efficiency tips below and unscramble the bolded letters to reveal how you and your family can save energy during springtime.

Don't forget to check your work in the answer key below!



1. Sealing air leaks around doors and **diwwson** saves energy and keeps your home comfortable.

2. LED **hlgist** typically use 75% less energy than traditional incandescent light bulbs.

3. Unplug devices and electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use, like phone **scragher**.

4. Planting shade **esrte** around your home can block unwanted heat from the sun.

5. Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. Turn them off when you leave the room to save **yengre**.

Answer Key: 1) windows 2) lights 3) chargers 4) trees 5) energy

for the month. He discussed line crew projects and outages for the month. He discussed the two grant applications he has been working on.

Tom gave the safety report.

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed the recent meetings that she attended. She discussed progress on the cost-of-service study, progress on the Landis+Gyr reimbursement, the Carbon Free by 2040 bill, and WAPA contracts.

The Board reviewed the composition of

the seven districts as per the Bylaws and declared them as equal.

Director Thomson will be the GRE Voting Delegate.

Aaron Clayton, CPA with Eide Bailly, joined the meeting via Zoom to present the 2022 Audit Report and the Board approved it.

The March board meeting was set for the 30th.

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