



Photo: Barb Mulvaney, December Calendar Photo Contest Winner

## Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

December 2022

### Final Article From Kory Johnson, Retiring General Manager

Today is the 184th article I have written for the Agralite News and it is also my last as I intend to retire in the middle of this month! As I look back over the past 14 years as the General Manager of the cooperative, many things have changed.

When I began as manager of the cooperative, the cooperative was just beginning to transition to a new power supplier in East River. The new wholesale agreement fixed the purchases for capacity and energy from Great River Energy and determined load growth, along with any retired resources by GRE, would be supplied by East River. Over the past 14 years, the cooperative saw the purchases from East River increase significantly. This is due, in part, to the load growth the cooperative has seen over the years and also because Great River Energy retired generation units that Agralite was originally part of. As you will recall, Agralite receives an allocation of federal hydro power through Western Area Power Administration (WAPA). Currently the WAPA allocation Agralite receives is approximately 17% of the total energy needs of Agralite. In 2008, when I began as the General Manager, the WAPA allocation was the same as today but the balance of energy needs of the cooperative were supplied by GRE. As I look into my crystal ball for the future, I see the WAPA allocation remaining constant but the GRE percent of energy supplied to Agralite drop to 3.6% of total energy and East River supplying approximately 80% of total energy needs for the coming year.

The new power supply arrangement that Agralite negotiated just prior to my arrival in 2008 has saved the cooperative approximately \$20,000,000 over the past 15 years! These represent dollars that the cooperative did not have to collect in rates from the membership. This new supply arrangement did not stop the cooperative from needing to raise rates over time but these savings significantly reduced the increases that would have been necessary absent of the wholesale agreement that is in place today. I do predict that this power supply arrangement will continue to be a significant benefit to Agralite well into the future.

Another change I have seen over the years is a turnover of employees. Over the years, I have seen about 18 retirements, representing nearly two thirds of the workforce! Agralite is very fortunate to have a very talented group of employees, both past and current, who dedicate themselves to providing safe, reliable, and affordable electric service to our member-owners. Also, over the past years at the cooperative, I have also seen a turnover of 6 of the 7 board members of the cooperative. Most importantly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the membership of Agralite for allowing me the privilege to lead this organization for the past 14 ½ years! It is our members who are at the heart of the cooperative and who make Agralite Electric Cooperative a success. [Article continues on page 2](#)

## EMPOWERING

communities with  
innovative, sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

# 75 YEARS

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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](http://www.agralite.coop)

 Like us on Facebook



Merry Christmas & Happy New  
Year! Our office will be closed  
Dec. 23 & 26 and Jan. 2



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 Darrell Davidson and Robert Erdman Jr. for finding their account numbers in our October issue.

## Energy Saving Tip:



**Blocked air vents force your heating system to work harder than necessary and increase pressure in your ductwork, which can cause cracks and leaks to form.**

Make sure all air vents are unobstructed from furniture, drapes or other items to ensure sufficient circulation throughout your home. If necessary, purchase a vent extender, which can be placed over a vent to redirect airflow from underneath furniture.

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



**Call Day or Night  
1.888.884.3887**

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

November Energy Payment is due December 20.\*

\*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

## Final Article From Kory Johnson, Retiring General Manager *Continued*

Now I want to extend my congratulations to Jennifer Stryhn who has been named the next CEO and General Manager of the cooperative. Jenny has been an important member of the management staff at the cooperative for the past 7 years serving as the Finance Manager and most recently as the Assistant Manager. I am very confident that the cooperative will be positioned for continued success under the leadership of Jenny for many years to come!



## Small Change Can Change Lives *By Jonathan Messner*

The holiday season is finally here. Some call it the most wonderful season of all because we associate it with family traditions and gathering with friends and loved ones. It's a time of giving and spreading joy.

Giving back reminds me of the many good things we have right here in our community. That is why it is so important to spread the good as far as we can, especially to the most vulnerable in our local area. I am also reminded of how wonderful our community is and what a big impact we can have when we work together.

When you are a member of Agralite Electric Cooperative, you help us spread the good throughout the year. Through our Operation Round Up program, your donations help local families and individuals in need. For more information about this program, you can visit our website or call our office at 1-800-950-8375.

When you "round up" your monthly bill from Agralite and donate to this fund, you're making a big difference in someone's life. You are helping to meet an immediate, critical need, but just as importantly, you are telling this person the community cares. Over the years, our community-focused programs, food donations and other giving projects have: supported local schools and young people, fed hungry families, enabled families in need to keep the lights on and so much more.

You have likely heard us say that the cooperative principle "concern for community" is part of Agralite's DNA. 17701 It defines who we are as an organization. When we first brought electricity to this community in 1940, the quality of life improved. Through the years, this co-op has been at the forefront of bringing improvements to the quality of life in this community. It is why we created Operation Round Up. To date, with your help, we gave over \$600 thousand back to local families and individuals through this program. Across the country, more than 350 electric co-ops have an Operation Round Up program, and together, we have raised millions for local communities. This shows that small donations from electric co-ops like ours, over time, can collectively make a big impact.

As a local cooperative, we have a stake in this community. It is why we support local organizations like our county food shelves. We hope you will think of Agralite as more than your energy provider, but also as a catalyst for good in our community.

*I hope all our members have a very Merry Christmas. May it be merry and bright!*



**Pick up your calendar featuring member photos at the Agralite office!**

**Winter Office Hours:  
8:00am – 4:30pm**



## Community Involvement

One of the many things we do here at Agralite is community involvement and education. Below Jonathan Messner, our Manager of Member Services, talked to about 80 kindergarten and first grade students from Hancock about what we do at Agralite and what they can do to stay safe around electricity.



## 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 60% 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 60% of the state median income (\$67,764 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2022.

*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**

## 2023 Basin Scholarship *Qualify? Please Apply!*

Basin Electric Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supplier to Agralite, is again offering this generous scholarship. 1228100 Basin Electric's scholarship program began in 1990. Each year, Agralite solicits scholarship applications throughout our service area.

### **How Much Is The Scholarship?**

The Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC) Scholarship Program will award more than 180 scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each. The scholarships must be used for educational costs, and the student must enter college in the fall of the school year for which the scholarship is given. Checks will be made payable to the school, and will be distributed to the school by BEPC. Scholarships will be distributed in August.

### **Who Is Eligible To Receive The Scholarship?**

Dependent children (including adopted or step-children) of member-system consumers and dependent children of member-cooperative employees are eligible. The applicant must also be a U.S. citizen and enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school. Recipients are selected on the basis of academic record, potential to succeed, leadership, and participation in school and community activities, honors, work experience, a statement of education and career goals, and an outside appraisal.

### **How Do I Apply?**

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 10, 2023.**



## POWER YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS ON 100% RENEWABLE ENERGY



Agralite offers RECs for purchase to offset your current usage with 100% renewable energy options. The electricity is still the same reliable, affordable energy you've always received from Agralite but, by participating in this program, your home or business will be supporting current and future renewable projects.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**What is a Renewable Energy Credit (REC)?** 1 megawatt hour produced by a renewable energy source equals 1 REC. RECs are also called *Green Tags* and they represent the valuable renewable attributes of wind energy.

**Do I need to purchase any special equipment?** No special equipment is needed. Agralite Electric will fulfill all your electric needs while you enjoy the benefits of powering your business with renewable energy.

**Where do RECs come from?** Our RECs come from several wind farms in our region that supply renewable energy to our cooperative.

**How much does it cost to power my home or business on 100% renewable energy?** \$1 per MWh. Example: If you use 1,200 kWh per month, participating in the REC program would add \$1.20 + tax to your monthly bill.

### SHOWCASE YOUR SUPPORT FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

1.800.950.8375  
agralite@agralite.com

## Five Ways To Fight The Winter Chill And Save Energy

We all have our favorite season. Some people love crisp, cool weather and bundling up under a favorite blanket, while others prefer the warm temperatures summer brings and all the fun outdoor activities that go with it. But there is one thing we can all agree on: high winter bills are never fun. Agralite is here to help you find ways to manage your home energy use and keep winter bills in check.



*Here are five tips to help increase your home's energy efficiency this winter:*

- 1 **Mind the thermostat.** This is one of the easiest ways to manage your home energy use. We recommend setting your thermostat to 68 degrees (or lower) when you're home. 1344502 When you're sleeping or away for an extended period of time, try setting it between 58 and 62 degrees; there's no need to heat your home when you're away or sleeping and less active.
- 2 **Button up your home.** The Department of Energy estimates that air leaks account for 24% to 40% of the energy used for heating and cooling a home. Caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors is another simple, cost-effective way to increase comfort and save energy. If you can feel drafts while standing near a window or door, it likely needs to be sealed.
- 3 **Use window coverings wisely.** Open blinds, drapes or other window coverings during the day to allow natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to keep the cold, drafty air out. If you feel cold air around windows, consider hanging curtains or drapes in a thicker material; heavier window coverings can make a significant difference in blocking cold outdoor air.
- 4 **Consider your approach to appliance use.** When combined, appliances and electronics account for a significant chunk of our home energy use, so assess how efficiently you're using them. For example, if you're running the dishwasher or clothes washer, only wash full loads. Look for electronic devices that consume energy even when they're not in use, like phone chargers or game consoles. Every little bit helps, so unplug them to save energy.
- 5 **Think outside the box.** If you're still feeling chilly at home, think of other ways to warm up—beyond dialing up the thermostat. Add layers of clothing, wear thick socks and bundle up under blankets. You can even add layers to your home! If you have hard-surface flooring, consider purchasing an area rug to block cold air that leaks in through the floor.

*If you're taking steps to save energy but continue to see major increases in your bills, give us a call at 1-800-950-8375. Agralite's energy experts can help identify areas and other factors impacting your home energy use and recommend next steps for savings.*

Winter months often bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. By being proactive about saving energy, you can increase the comfort of your home and reduce monthly bills.

### *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).



# DANGER!



## How to Check Ice Thickness

- Ice Chisel
- Ice Auger
- Cordless Drill
- Tape Measure

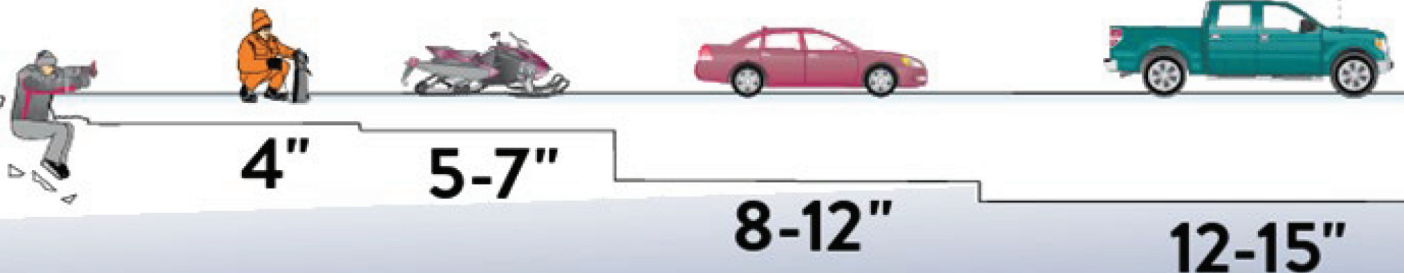
*Thickness guidelines should be doubled when traveling on white ice.*

## Driving On Ice

- Stay Off the Ice at Night
- Roll a Window Down and Unlock Doors
- Don't Wear Life Vest Inside Vehicle
- Don't Go Back into Partially Submerged Vehicle

## ICE IS NEVER 100% SAFE!

Minimum guidelines for new clear ice only



## 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 October 2022

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., October 27, 2022. All members of the Board were present except Director Thomson who joined by phone. The meeting was held in the office of the Cooperative in Benson, Minnesota.

A motion was made by Director Gronseth and seconded by Director Zierke to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Director Rau and seconded by Director Draeger to approve the minutes of the September 2022 meeting. Motion carried.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed updates on the Briggs Generator program, load control for the month, communications to the membership, and cancellation of the Ford Lightning.

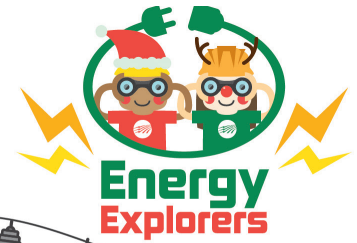
Jennifer Stryhn, Manager of Finance, reported on activities of her department for the month. 1408800 She discussed FEMA briefings, 2023 power supply rates, and pre loan paperwork for the AS45 loan. She discussed a preview to the 2023 budget.

Jennifer brought forth Work Order #530 and Special Equipment

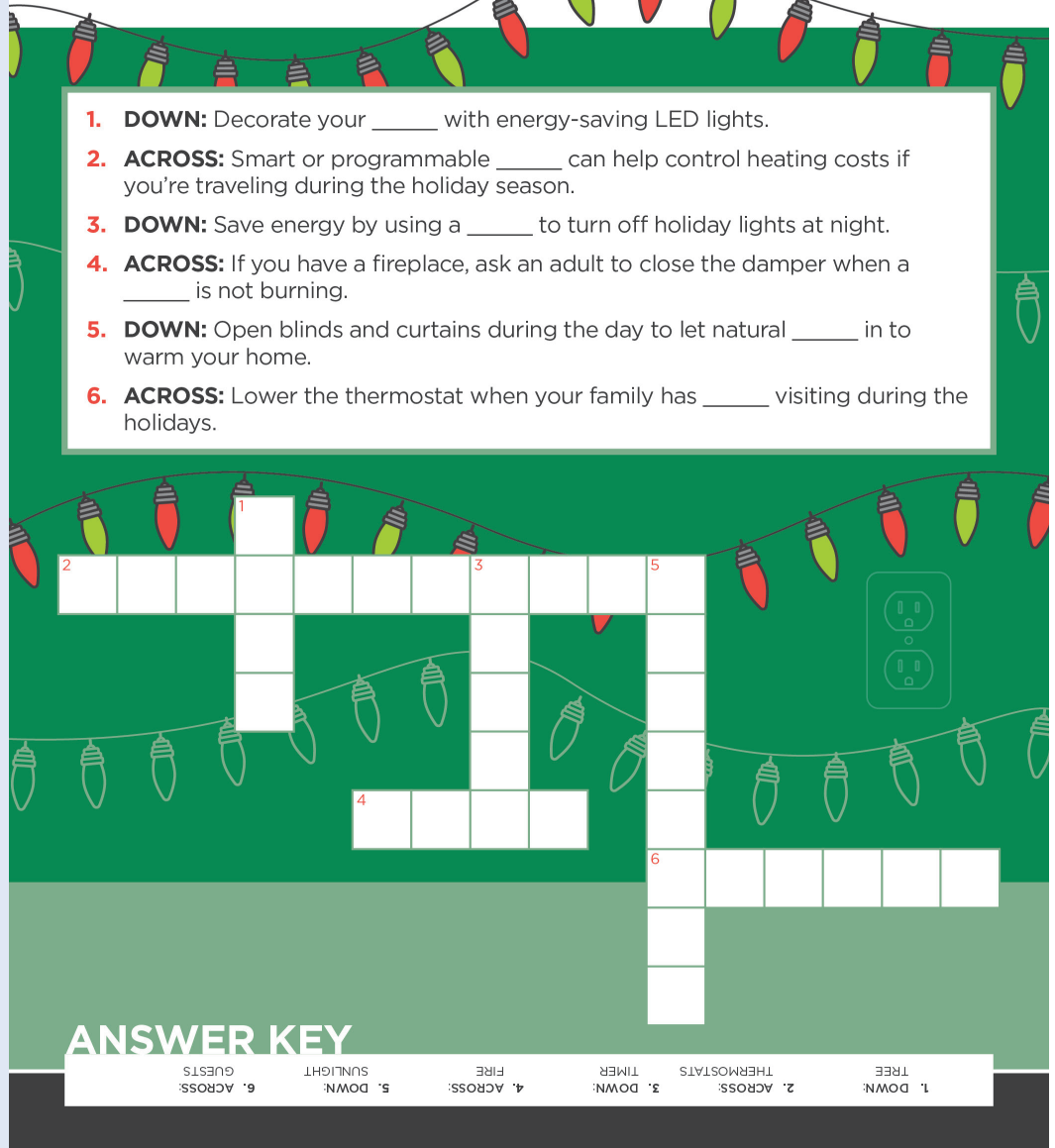
## HOLIDAY EFFICIENCY CROSSWORD PUZZLE

The holiday season is a fun, festive time of year! It's also a time when we use more electricity.

Complete the crossword puzzle below to learn how you and your family can be more energy efficient this holiday season.



1. **DOWN:** Decorate your \_\_\_\_\_ with energy-saving LED lights.
2. **ACROSS:** Smart or programmable \_\_\_\_\_ can help control heating costs if you're traveling during the holiday season.
3. **DOWN:** Save energy by using a \_\_\_\_\_ to turn off holiday lights at night.
4. **ACROSS:** If you have a fireplace, ask an adult to close the damper when a \_\_\_\_\_ is not burning.
5. **DOWN:** Open blinds and curtains during the day to let natural \_\_\_\_\_ in to warm your home.
6. **ACROSS:** Lower the thermostat when your family has \_\_\_\_\_ visiting during the holidays.



September and the board approved them. The financials were given by Jennifer with a PowerPoint presentation.

Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed line crew projects for the month. He discussed outages for the month and the FEMA process from the operations side.

Tom gave the safety report.

The 2022 preliminary budgets were discussed by the department heads.

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed the upcoming Basin Annual Meeting, and DGC. He reviewed the 2023 purchased power costs, and Great River Energy business dealings for the month.

The November Board meeting was set for the 23rd.

An executive session was held.

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