



Cover Photo: Mary Ann Nolting, December Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

December 2021

EMPOWERING

communities with
innovative, sustainable
energy solutions

FOR OVER
75
YEARS

Deck The Halls Safely

There's nothing like putting up lights and decorations to get you in the holiday spirit. It's something that many do each and every year without incident, yet the holidays are also one of the most hazardous times of the year when it comes to electrical fires and accidents.

Safe Electricity offers several tips as you deck the halls this season:

- When decorating outside, look up and around for power lines. Never throw light or other decorations into trees near power lines.
- Keep ladders, equipment, and yourself at least ten feet from power lines.
- Match plugs with outlets. Do not force a three-pronged plug into a two-pronged outlet or extension cord.
- Outside, use only lights, cords, animated displays, and decorations rated for outdoor use. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use them. Ensure outdoor outlets or extension cords are equipped with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI's).
- Never string more strands of lights together than recommended by the manufacturer.
- Do not staple or nail through light strings or electrical cords. Use plastic or insulated hooks to hang lights.
- Do not attach cords to utility poles.



The outside of your home is not the only place where you need to be cautious of electrical dangers. Also be careful when placing a decorated tree inside your home. Place fresh-cut and artificial trees away from heat sources such as registers, fireplaces, and radiators; water fresh-cut trees frequently. Turn lights off before you go to sleep. Use a timer to help.

Safe Electricity wishes you and your family a safe and happy holiday season.

For more information on holiday safety tips visit, SafeElectricity.org.

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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

**We're Closed December
24, 27, and 31**



Touchstone Energy®
Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.

Manager's Article by Kory Johnson

2021 is coming to a close in a few short weeks! As we approach the end of the year, this is a very busy time for all of us. We have year-end business to attend to, marketing decisions need to be made, final decisions need to be made for tax purposes, and of course plans need to be made for the coming year.

And all of this is on top of the holiday season!

We have just finished Thanksgiving, a time for us to remember the many blessings we have received and to pause and give thanks for them. And now we are approaching the Christmas season. But before we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Christ Jesus, there are holiday concerts, kids' school programs, Sunday school programs, and of course company parties and gatherings with neighbors and friends. Oh, don't forget trips to the stores and malls, roving the parking lots for that last parking spot in the lot in search of that perfect gift for someone special! Or in my case, waiting for the UPS or Federal Express truck to arrive to deliver that special gift, hopefully before Christmas Eve. Am I forgetting anything?

This is also the time when I look back at the past year. I have many things to be thankful for! Agralite Electric Cooperative is having a tremendous year financially; our margins continue to be very strong as we approach the end of the year. The strong margins the cooperative has seen this year are a result of strong energy sales and savings in wholesale power costs through the use of the load control system. This past month, the Board of Directors instructed the staff to finalize recommendations on a bill credit to be approved at the November board meeting. 1175900 The bill credit will be based on energy usage in 2021 through the month of October and appear on the power bills received in early December.

In addition to the bill credit that will appear on the power bill, the Board of Directors also approved adding an additional amount of dollars to the revenue deferral plan the cooperative has. A revenue deferral will allow the cooperative to defer dollars to help offset future cost increases. With this plan in place, Agralite will be able to offset possible future cost increases the cooperative sees.

2021 has presented challenges throughout the year. COVID-19 continues to challenge us, a hot dry summer stressed our crops, and a wet fall brought its own challenges to our area. Even with these challenges, our membership has remained strong and will be ready to take on a new year in 2022. I am thankful that, throughout the year, Agralite has been able to deliver safe, reliable electric service to our member owners. And lastly to our member owners, thank you for your continued support of your electric cooperative!



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

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



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 Merlin Peterson for finding his account number in the October newsletter!

Energy Saving Tip:



Heading out of town for the holiday season?

Remember to unplug electronics that draw a phantom energy load. Some gadgets like TVs, phone chargers, gaming consoles, and toothbrush chargers use energy when plugged into an outlet—even when they are not in use.

Source: www.energy.gov

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

**From Our Co-Op Family To Yours,
We Wish You A Happy Holiday
Season And A Joyous New Year.**

Agralite Will Be Closed December 24, 27, and 31



Winter storm warnings and blizzard warnings are the two most serious types of winter storms that you should be cautious of. A winter storm warning is a life-threatening winter storm that has already begun or will begin within 24 hours. A blizzard warning means sustained or frequent gusts of wind at 35 mph or greater as well as blowing snow that reduces visibility to less than a quarter mile.

Prepare For The Storm

- Winterize your vehicle before winter to decrease your chances of becoming stranded.
- Have a mechanic check your battery, antifreeze, wipers and wiper fluid, lights and hazard lights, heater, brakes, defroster, and oil.
- Install winter tires with an adequate tread.
- Maintain a full tank of gas so you are able to leave right away in case of an emergency.
- Equip your vehicle with emergency supplies including a small shovel, windshield scraper and broom, a small amount of sand or non-clumping kitty litter to generate traction under a stuck wheel, matches in a waterproof container, a brightly colored cloth to attach to antenna in an emergency, a first aid kit, and a warm blanket.
- Ensure your home heating sources are performing efficiently to standards.
- Caulk or weather-strip doors and windows to keep cold air out.
- Consider installing a generator.
- Listen to a local area radio news station for the latest storm information and updates.
- Be prepared to evacuate if you lose power or heat. Determine routes and destination.
- Check and replenish your emergency kits and medications/medical supplies.



During The Storm

- Stay indoors and wear layers to ensure warmth.
- Continue listening to a local area radio or news station for storm condition updates.
- Conserve fuel – winter storms may last for several days and place a great demand on electric, gas, and other fuel distribution systems. Lower your thermostat during the day, close off unused rooms and cover windows at night.

If You Must Go Outside

- Wear layered clothing and cover as much exposed skin as possible. Outer garments should be tightly woven and waterproof. 1158200
- Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from severely cold air. Minimize talking.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia and frostbite.
- Keep dry – change wet clothing frequently to prevent loss of body heat.
- Avoid overexertion such as shoveling heavy snow or pushing a stuck vehicle. The strain from the cold paired with hard labor could cause a heart attack.
- Walk carefully on snowy, icy ground.
- Let someone know your plans and your travel destination so you can be accounted for.

After The Storm

- Check with your local transportation department or news station to ensure roads are safe and not closed or blocked before you leave home again.
- Slowly remove snow from your sidewalks and driveways – take breaks, push snow instead of lifting it, keep dry, and do not overexert yourself.
- Restock your emergency supplies.
- Learn from your experience. Consider what went well or what didn't so you can adjust and better prepare for the next one!



**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

Keep Your Holidays

MERRY & BRIGHT

Don't add stress to your holiday season. Knowing how to properly use and hang lights could prevent injury or fire.



Make sure your home's electrical system can handle the load.



Unplug lights or decorations before changing a bulb or other parts.



Do not use cords or plugs that are damaged, frayed or cracked.



Only use lights certified by a reputable testing lab.



In addition, consider LED lights when replacing old light strands. LEDs use 80 to 90% less energy than incandescent bulbs.

 Safe Electricity.org®

Holiday Décor Tips For An Energy-Wise Home

Whether you've already decked your halls or you're just getting started, there's still time to incorporate energy savings into your holiday décor planning.

If you haven't strung your twinkle lights, be sure to use LED light strands. LEDs consume far less energy than incandescent lights and they can last 40 holiday seasons. They're also safer because they're made with epoxy lenses, not glass, making them more resistant to breaking—and they're cool to the touch, so no burnt fingers!

If you missed Santa's memo about energy-saving LEDs and your holiday lights are already up, you can still save on lighting costs. All you need is a programmable light timer. Most models cost between \$10 to \$25 and can be purchased through online retailers like Amazon or at big box stores like Menards or Wal-Mart. With a light timer, you can easily program when you want your holiday lights turned on and off, which will save you time, money and energy. If you're using a timer for exterior lighting, make sure it's weatherproof and intended for outdoor use.

If Clark Griswold's décor style is a bit much for your taste, consider a more natural approach. Many Christmas tree farms, and even retailers like Home Depot, give away greenery clippings from recently trimmed trees. With a little twine, extra ornaments and sparkly ribbon, you can create beautiful garlands and wreaths to hang over your front door or windows. To add extra twinkle at night, you can install solar-powered spotlights to illuminate your new (essentially free!) greenery. Solar spotlights can vary in price, but you should be able to purchase a quality set of four for about \$30—and because they run on natural energy from the sun, there's no additional cost to your energy bill.

Regardless of how you decorate your home for the holidays, there are plenty of ways to save energy throughout the season. Visit Agralite Electric Cooperative's website for additional energy-saving tips.



Deck the Halls SAFELY

- Use only lights, cords, animated displays, and decorations **rated for outdoor use**.
- When decorating outside, **look up and around** for power lines. **Never throw lights** or other decorations into trees near power lines.
- Keep ladders, equipment, and yourself **at least ten feet away** from power lines.
- Cords should be plugged into outlets equipped with **Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)**.

For more **holiday safety tips** visit:

 Safe Electricity.org

2022 Basin Scholarship - Qualify? Please Apply!

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.

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.

The completed application and all other necessary information must be returned to Agralite Electric Cooperative **no later than February 18, 2022.**



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



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.

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 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.

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 2021

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., October 28, 2021. 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 the Brigg's generator program. He stated that Agralite will be doing a member survey with Touchstone Energy and it will begin November 22.

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's margins for the month of September. She discussed year-end margin rebates and the revenue deferral plan. A discussion was held. The Board approved a drawdown from the deferred revenue account. She discussed Homestead Funds' employer sponsored savings program. The Board approved a one-year savings program for eligible employees.

Jenny brought forth Work Order #516 and Special Equipment September 2021 and the Board approved them.

The financials were given by Jenny with a PowerPoint 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 showed a picture of downed power poles near the Hancock area after a small storm.

HOLIDAY SAFETY WORD SEARCH

Remember to keep electrical safety in mind this holiday season!

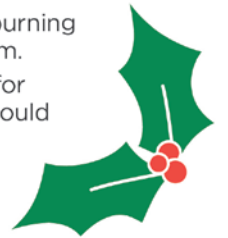
Read the safety tips below, then find and circle the bolded words in the puzzle.



D	T	T	X	M	L	N	L	W	V	B	H	G	P	M
P	E	Y	E	N	H	S	A	G	E	T	Q	W	C	O
D	C	R	A	K	P	T	C	K	J	X	N	C	J	Q
E	X	R	E	I	O	J	I	T	B	S	L	E	Y	I
M	P	W	W	T	W	F	R	V	V	Z	U	U	V	J
X	R	K	Z	Z	A	T	T	L	X	W	L	M	X	Y
D	T	Z	G	P	N	W	C	C	N	L	Z	A	H	Z
I	N	S	P	E	C	T	E	D	P	F	R	R	Z	T
D	P	G	V	B	E	E	L	L	Q	P	H	V	W	F
A	J	K	F	L	B	A	E	S	K	H	I	Z	W	M
N	M	V	D	T	W	V	X	R	I	R	B	H	U	C
C	O	N	B	B	R	W	O	H	O	W	Q	N	Q	P
X	A	W	X	S	N	O	I	T	A	R	O	C	E	D
C	K	L	B	T	K	R	A	J	B	C	M	D	Y	P
X	C	M	A	Y	S	K	B	O	Y	Q	M	Q	K	Q

- Do not overload electrical outlets with too many **decorations** or appliances.
- Make sure your Christmas tree is **watered** daily.
- Turn off all **electrical** decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.

- Never leave a **candle** burning if you're not in the room.
- Extension cords used for holiday decorations should always be **inspected** for damage or exposed wires.



Tom gave the safety report.

Alison Deelstra, Agralite's CFC RVP, gave a presentation on Agralite's 2020 Key Ratio Trend Analysis.

Don Wilcox, Agralite's Attorney, joined the meeting and an executive session was held.

The 2022 preliminary budgets were discussed by the department heads.

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed federal vaccine mandates, cybersecurity and passwords, and WAPA rates. Kory brought forth Approval of Temporary Substitute Fixed Resource Resolution with Great River Energy and the Board

approved it. Kory gave an update on the headquarters building project. 1140600 The Board approved Kory to enter into negotiations for purchasing the property adjacent to the headquarters facility.

Director Gronseth will be the voting delegate at the Mid-West Electric Annual Meeting. Director Zierke will be the alternate.

The November board meeting was set for the 24th.

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