



Cover Photo: Paulette Jibben, February Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

February 2021

Committed To A Co-op Culture For All

Over the years, you've heard us expound on why and how Agralite Electric Cooperative is different—because we're a cooperative. Our business model sets us apart from other utilities because we adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community.

Electric cooperatives, including Agralite Electric Cooperative, have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We democratized the American dream by bringing electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies determined the effort too costly. Back then, cities were electrified, and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in rural areas. Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

Equal Access For All

When our electric co-op was founded, each member contributed an equal share in order to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still how we operate today. Agralite Electric Cooperative was built by and belongs to the diverse communities and consumer-members we serve. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the co-op, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the co-op.

We encourage all members to vote in Agralite Electric Cooperatives's director elections each year, and we invite all members to participate in co-op meetings to weigh in on discussions that set co-op policies and priorities.

We know members of our community have different needs and perspectives, and we welcome diverse views on all issues under consideration by the co-op. The more viewpoints we hear, the better we are able to reflect the needs of all corners of our community.

Inclusion

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community. Because we are your local electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right here in our community. In turn, we invest in our diverse community base through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

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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



 Like us on Facebook

 Follow us on Twitter

We're Closed February 15



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.

Energy Saving Tip:



Use wool or rubber dryer balls in the clothes dryer to reduce drying time and statics.

Wool dryer balls can also absorb extra moisture. These are an efficient alternative to dryer sheets, which can create buildup on the dryer's filter and reduce air circulation. If you prefer dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month to remove buildup.

Source: www.energy.gov



Committed to a Co-op Culture for All *continued*

While today's world is radically different than it was when Agralite Electric Cooperative was founded, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. We recognize that today's co-op members expect more, and our pledge to you—the members we proudly serve—is to promote a cooperative culture of inclusion, diversity, and equity for all.

Manager's Article by Kory Johnson

🎓 Attention college students! Agralite Electric Cooperative will again this year award scholarships to area students enrolled in secondary education. This year the cooperative will award two \$2,500 scholarships, two \$1,000 scholarships, and three \$500 scholarships. The cooperative reserves one of the \$2,500 scholarships for an individual pursuing a degree as an electric line worker or an electrician. The application for the Agralite scholarships is available on our website or at the office. [The application is due into the Agralite office by April 16th, 2021.](#) 1602700

In addition to the scholarships awarded by Agralite Electric Cooperative, Basin Electric awards a \$1,000 scholarship. Dependent children (including adopted or step-children) of Agralite Electric Cooperative members are eligible. The applicant must also be a U.S. citizen. The applicant must be a student who is 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. Basin scholarships will be awarded without regard to other awards, loans or financial assistance the applicant may have obtained. [Deadline to submit your application for the Basin scholarship is no later than February 19th, 2021.](#)

Both of the scholarship applications can be found on the Agralite website at <https://agralite.coop/content/scholarships>.

I am very pleased to say that over the past six years Agralite Electric Cooperative has had the privilege of awarding 48 scholarships to area students totaling over \$65,000!

Agralite funds the dollars for the scholarship program through unclaimed capital credit dollars. Agralite also designates 50% of a 1% administration fee that is collected on Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDL&G) loans. Agralite collects a 1% administration fee on the outstanding balance of any REDL&G loans. The Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program provides funding for rural projects through Agralite. USDA provides zero-interest loans to Agralite which, in turn, the cooperative passes the loan through to local businesses (ultimate recipients) for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas. The ultimate recipients repay the lending utility directly. The utility then is responsible for repayment to USDA. The application process for the REDL&G are submitted to the USDA and are awarded on a competitive process scored by the USDA.

Each year Agralite has a certain number of capital credits checks returned. Some of them are from entities that have gone out of business or members who have passed away or moved out of the area. By state law, the cooperative must attempt to locate these individuals. The state law allows the cooperative to use these funds for certain purposes after holding them in reserve for seven years. In 2015 the Board of Directors elected to allocate 40% of unclaimed capital credits to be used for scholarships, 40% to be donated to area food shelves, and 20% to Operation Roundup.

Since 2016, Agralite has awarded over \$200,000 through Operation Roundup to area students for scholarships, to the four county area food shelves, and to help people in need and organizations that benefits our area.

Agralite is proud to be part of the communities across the four-county area which we serve. Agralite Electric Cooperative is here to not only provide reliable electric service to our service area but also to be a vital part of the communities in which we serve.

HOW POWER IS SAFELY RESTORED

Please know that when the power goes out, we are doing all we can to safely and efficiently restore power. Here are the steps we take in the assessment and restoration process:



**STEP 1: ASSESS
THE DAMAGE**



**STEP 2: ADDRESS
SAFETY RISKS**



**STEP 3: RESTORE
ESSENTIAL SERVICES**



**STEP 4: PRIORITIZE
REPAIRS**

What Happens Behind The Scenes During A Power Outage?

The year 2020 was unique, to say the least, thanks to the arrival of COVID-19. Contributing to the chaos was a record-breaking hurricane season, intense heat waves, lightning storms that sparked wildfires, and various other inclement weather concerns.

What do all these weather phenomena have in common? Unfortunately, they all had the potential to result in power outages.

Here in the U.S., we are fortunate to have an advanced power grid in place. Power transmission and distribution is reliable in our country, and we are proud to deliver the electricity you depend on each day. Excluding outage times attributed to major weather or other catastrophic events, electricity consumers in our country typically experience only about two hours of total power interruptions per year, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. When outages due to major events are taken into consideration, the EIA reports the total outage time at six hours a year.

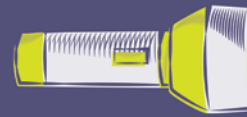
What happens on our end when your power goes out? Rest assured, we swing into action in a safe and efficient manner to ensure your power is restored. How long that takes depends on several factors: the extent of the storm's destruction, the number of outages, and how long it takes for our work crews to safely access the storm-damaged areas.

We are careful to follow standard restoration procedures to ensure safety and to get the job done right by:

- Assessing damage to utility equipment.
- Addressing immediate safety risks, including downed power lines.
- Ensuring that essential public health and safety facilities are operational.
- Prioritizing repairs that will restore power to the greatest number of people first.
- Evaluating power plants for damage and restore them to working order.
- Repairing transmission lines that carry power to large areas. 1176101
- Assessing and repairing (in this order) substations, distribution lines, and service lines to properties.

Thank you for your patience during power outages. Know that, in the event of an outage, we are working hard to restore it as safely and efficiently as possible, day and night.

POWER OUT?



22 WAYS TO UNPLUG

GET CREATIVE

- Write a story.
- Make up jokes.
- Draw or paint a picture.
- Set up an indoor bowling alley with plastic cups as pins.
- Fix something around the house.



PRACTICE SELF CARE

- Take a nap.
- Paint your nails.
- Go for a run or hike.
- Check in on your neighbors.
- Practice a skill, such as a second language, sewing, knitting, or tying knots.



AROUND THE HOUSE



Clean and
organize your
house



Rearrange
your
furniture



Fold laundry
or organize
your closet



Plant seeds or tidy up your yard

FUN FOR KIDS



Read a book



Play board or
card games



Look at old
photos



Make shadow
figures



Make a fort out
of boxes and
blankets



Sing your
favorite songs



Tell ghost
stories



Play Simon
Says

A Heat Pump Built For Minnesota Winters And Summers

Air source heat pumps (ASHPs) have been used for many years in nearly all parts of the United States but, until recently, were not common in areas with extended periods of subfreezing temperatures. However, in recent years, cold-climate ASHP (ccASHP) technology has advanced so that it now offers a legitimate space heating alternative in colder regions, like Minnesota.

A ccASHP can provide both efficient heating and cooling for your home. When properly installed, it can deliver up to three times more heat energy to a home than the electrical energy it consumes. This is possible because a heat pump moves heat rather than converting it from a fuel like combustion heating systems do.

A project recently conducted by the Center for Energy and Environment found that the efficiency of the newest generation of ccASHPs can operate down to minus 13 degrees Fahrenheit. The efficiency of these technologies in moderate climates is also two- to-three times more efficient than standard electric heating systems.

Since heat pumps provide heating in the winter and cooling in the summer, you should be aware of at least two heat pump energy efficiency ratings. The Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) measures cooling efficiency over the cooling season, while the Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) measures heating efficiency over the heating season. Given that we are in the depths of a Minnesota winter, let's further explore the heating aspect.

HSPF is a standardized rating used to compare energy efficiencies. HSPF is used by all heat pump manufacturers to indicate efficiency ratings. Like miles per gallon for your car, the higher the HSPF number, the more efficient the system.

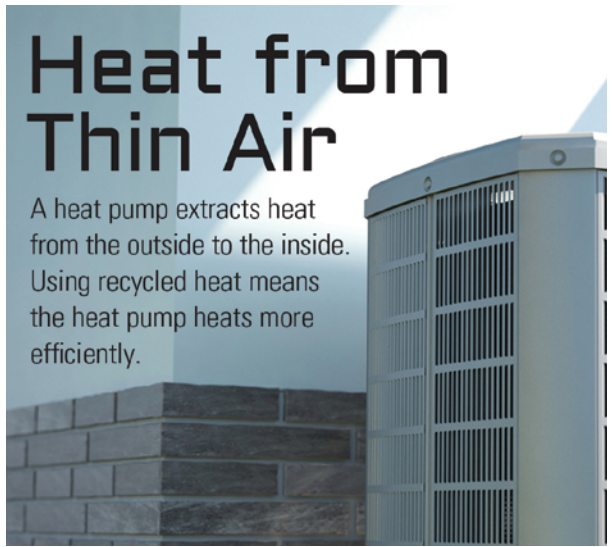
Heat pumps, when properly installed, provide members with several distinct advantages:

- When sized appropriately, today's ccASHPs can provide 100% of a home's heating needs down to temperatures as low as zero degrees, which is roughly 90% of all heating hours in Minnesota. If properly set, an ASHP can serve as your primary source for a good part of our Minnesota winters.
- The balance point of your heat pump is the outdoor temperature at which your home HVAC system switches over to its backup heating system, likely set by your installer. If your heat pump can keep your home warm down to 10°F, but your balance point is set to switch over to backup heat at that same temperature, then anytime it's in the 10- to 15- degree Fahrenheit range, you'll be paying more than you should for heat.
- Aren't sure of your ASHP's balance point? Take note of the temperature where your backup heating source kicks in and if it's above 10°F, your balance point may be set too high. 589400 If you have already installed an ASHP, you may also want to contact your installation contractor to inquire further and ensure your balance point is where you want it to be.

Agralite Electric Cooperative provides a variety of incentives and programs for heat pump technologies. Should you have any additional questions, feel free to contact an energy expert at 320-843-4150. Be sure to continue looking for additional ways to improve the energy efficiency of your home, and take advantage of all the rebates we offer by visiting us at www.agralite.coop.

Heat from Thin Air

A heat pump extracts heat from the outside to the inside. Using recycled heat means the heat pump heats more efficiently.



Stay Comfortable.



Space heating and cooling account for a large portion of the average home's energy use. A programmable or smart thermostat can help you control the temperature of your home and save energy.

2021 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 19, 2021.**

COLD WEATHER RULE

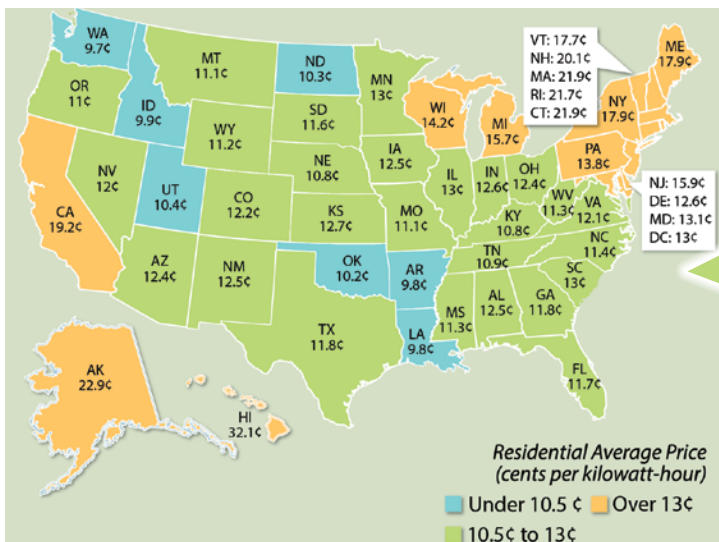
Minnesota residential cold weather law (MN Statute, Ch 235, sec.216B.097) provides that cooperative utilities cannot disconnect a residential consumer between October 15 and April 15, provided that certain conditions are met. These conditions include:

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



Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2019 figures, in cents per kWh

U.S. Average:
13.01¢ per kWh

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration - Numbers rounded to the nearest tenth of a cent.



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.

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 December 2020

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., December 31, 2020. All members of the Board were present via Zoom. 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, key accounts, and CIP rebates for 2020. He stated that all irrigation load control switches have been changed to the new Landis & Gyr switches.

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's margins for the month of November. The \$350,000 margin rebate was distributed on November energy statements. She is preparing to submit for a work loan drawdown for completed work order inspections. She stated the year end audit is scheduled with Eide Bailly for the last week in January and it will take place remotely. Jenny brought forth Work Order #503 and Special Equipment WO November 2020 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. He

WINTER ENERGY-SAVINGS WORD SEARCH

This winter, you can pitch in at home to help save energy!

Read the energy-saving tips below, then find and circle the bolded words in the puzzle.



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

WORD BANK:

- Open curtains and blinds during the day to allow **sunlight** in to warm your home.
- Instead of turning up the thermostat, add more layers of **clothing** to keep your body warm.
- If you have a **fireplace**, ask an adult to close the flue when a fire is not burning.

- Unplug **chargers** when they're not in use. They consume energy even when they're not charging phones and other devices.
- Ask an adult to check the **air filter** for your home's heating and cooling system. Filters should be replaced regularly to help the system run more efficiently.
- Always turn off **lights** when you leave a room.

stated that Jared Knutson was hired as an Apprentice Lineworker to fill the open position. He discussed the Cashel Substation and AMI project.

Tom gave the safety report.

Director Rau reported on the MREA Board Meeting. 965802

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed meetings he attended. Kory and Jennifer discussed wholesale power contracts. Breitbach Construction and Engan Associates visited to assess the headquarters building. He discussed the

DGC Reformer Integration.

Director Hufford will be the 2021 NRECA voting delegate. Director Nelson will be the alternate.

Director Nelson will be the 2021 NRTC voting delegate. Director Hufford will be the alternate.

The January board meeting was set for the 28th via Zoom.

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