



Photo: Karen Janachovsky, February Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

February 2022

Five Ways To Save Energy When Working From Home

Today, more Americans are working from home more than ever before. More time spent at home means more energy used throughout the day. If you're punching the clock from home, there are small steps you can take to reduce your energy use and save on electric bills. Here are five easy ways to save energy when working from home.



- 1 Use a smart power strip.** Plugging in your most-used devices, like computers, monitors and routers, to a smart power strip ensures these devices aren't drawing power when they're not in use. Smart power strips also give you the option to select which devices should stay in "always on" mode.
- 2 Unplug your least-used equipment.** If your home office includes equipment like printers and scanners, you're probably not using these electronics every day. In this case, go ahead and unplug your least-used electronics and devices, since many of them draw energy even when they're not being used.
- 3 Choose ENERGY STAR®-certified office equipment.** If you're looking to purchase new equipment for your workspace, look for the ENERGY STAR® label to ensure you're getting the most energy efficient features. Computers, monitors, imaging equipment and other office electronics that receive the ENERGY STAR® rating include power management features to make saving energy easy, and most are designed to run cooler and last longer.
- 4 Flip the switch and use natural light instead.** It's still chilly out there, so take advantage of natural light and additional warmth from the sun. When you're working during the day, open blinds, curtains and other window coverings to let natural light in—and don't forget to turn off the lights to reduce energy use!
- 5 Lower the thermostat.** Home heating makes up a significant portion of your energy bills. Turn the thermostat down a couple degrees during the day to reduce energy use and save money. The Department of Energy recommends setting the thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler during winter months. You're more likely to stay focused and alert when it's cooler in your home, so all the more reason to mind the thermostat.

Working from home doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bills. Whether you're working remotely or not, these practical tips can help everyone reduce their energy use. 1603700

Contact Agralite Electric Cooperative if you have questions about your bills or want additional information about saving energy at home.

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

We're Closed February 21st



Touchstone Energy®

Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® 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.

Energy Saving Tip:



About 30% of a home's heating energy is lost through inefficient windows. Caulk and weatherstrip all windows to seal air leaks.

When running your home heating system, lock all operable windows to ensure the tightest seal possible.

Source: www.energy.gov

Manager's Article by Kory Johnson

Attention students! Will you be enrolling in a technical college, a junior college or a 4-year program? If so, Agralite Electric Cooperative and Basin Electric are awarding scholarships again for the 2021-2022 school years.

Each year Basin Electric Cooperative provides a \$1,000 scholarship for each of the member distribution cooperatives to award to a dependent of a member or a member of the cooperative. This scholarship is part of the program administered by Basin Electric Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supplier to more than 130 electric cooperatives in nine states, including Agralite Electric Cooperative. Basin Electric's scholarship program began in 1990 and is considered an investment in the economic future of rural areas. Each year, Agralite solicits scholarship applications from throughout our service area and selects one outstanding young person to receive this award.

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 2022. This scholarship must be used for educational costs, and the student must begin college next fall. Checks will be distributed and made payable to the college in August of 2022.

Scholarship 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, an essay question, and an outside appraisal. [The completed Basin scholarship application form is due on February 18, 2022.](#)

Starting in 2016, Agralite Electric Cooperative has created a post-secondary education scholarship program. 1515900 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.

The applications for both scholarships can be found on the agralite.coop website under the "Community" tab, from your school counselor, or in our office. Applicants who applied for the Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship may also apply for the Agralite scholarship. [The completed application and all other necessary information must be returned to Agralite Electric Cooperative no later than April 6, 2022.](#)

Mail Scholarship(s) To:

Agralite Electric Cooperative,
320 E Hwy 12, PO Box 228, Benson, MN

Or Email Scholarship(s) To:

mchevalier@agralite.com

Shut the Door on Energy Waste.



**Did you know
25% to 40% of
energy used to
heat and cool
your home is
wasted through
air leaks?**

**Seal all exterior
doors with
weatherstripping
to minimize
energy waste.**



Five Reasons We Love Serving Our Members

February may be the shortest month, but it's packed with special observances like Presidents' Day, Black History Month, and Valentine's Day, in addition to a host of unofficial "national" days you've probably never heard of like "National Tater Tot Day." But they all have something in common. They were created to draw attention to a particular issue or theme.

Valentine's Day may seem like an observance originally created by a greeting card company, but

over time, it's become a widely celebrated day generating millions of dollars spent on flowers, candy, and of course, greeting cards professing our love. But Valentine's Day isn't just for the lovebirds. It's also the perfect time to let our friends, family, co-workers and other special people in our lives know we care about them—with or without a store-bought greeting card.

So, in that vein, we've listed our top five reasons why we love serving you, the members of Agralite Electric Cooperative.

- ♥ **We love serving our members because, without you, the co-op wouldn't exist.** Our purpose is to provide you with reliable, responsible and safe electricity. Simply put, Agralite exists to serve you. That's why we were formed in 1939—to bring power to our local area when for-profit utilities would not.
- ♥ **You enable us to complete our mission by supporting our efforts to give back.** A major part of our mission is to serve our community and look after the greater good. With your assistance, we're able to help the most vulnerable members of our community through programs, like Operation Round Up, that help local families pay their energy bills when times are tough.
- ♥ **Members of our co-op also serve on the board of directors.** They provide guidance for setting co-op priorities and helping make big decisions. Because our board members live in the area, they're able to serve as the pulse of the larger community and identify immediate and long-term needs. The broader co-op membership provides helpful input through their vote on director elections and by weighing in on co-op and community issues.
- ♥ **You help us get it right.** Agralite members are great about keeping us in the know. We do our best to avoid power outages, but Mother Nature can occasionally throw us a curveball; our members are quick to report any power disruptions and are patient as our crews work to safely restore power. 929301 We know outages are frustrating, and your support as we work through storms means so much to our employees. We also appreciate your feedback on co-op programs and services like our load management program, our billing process, and this newsletter. Your opinions are critical for the co-op's success, and we thank you for that.
- ♥ **You and other Agralite members make up the community we serve—and, for us, it's all about community.** Our employees live and work here too, and care about our community the same way you do. We're invested and work to help it thrive. That's why Agralite donates to local charities, schools, and scholarship funds. It's also why we invest in economic development, and why you'll see our employees volunteering at local schools and other charitable and community endeavors.

As a co-op, our mission is to enhance the quality of life in our community and look after its long-term interests. We love serving our members and our local community, and just like you, we want to see it continue to thrive.

How To Charge Your Electric Vehicle Safely + Other Safety Tips



Don't overlook the importance of safety when charging your electric vehicle (EV).

Common missteps include using an extension cord and using inappropriate or sub-standard charging equipment.

Do not increase the reach of the charger's cord by using an extension cord, regardless of its rating. Extension cords cannot handle the amperage car chargers require.

Always use a professional charger. Not doing this can cause serious safety issues and possibly compromise your vehicle.

Other home-charging safety tips include:

- ⚡ Purchase a charging system and equipment endorsed/sold by an EV manufacturer when possible. (This is not the time to buy an off-brand or bargain.)
- ⚡ Ensure charging equipment is safety tested and endorsed by a lab such as UL.
- ⚡ Get a Level 2 charging station, which requires a 240-volt outlet, installed by a licensed electrical contractor. (Plugging an EV into a standard 120-volt outlet is considered Level 1 charging.)
- ⚡ Use a charger on a dedicated circuit and make sure your home's electrical system can handle the load.
- ⚡ Look for excessive wear or damage. It can be a shock hazard, especially for DC fast chargers, also called Level 3 chargers.
- ⚡ Always follow manufacturer's instructions for charging and using your EV.
- ⚡ Keep all charging components out of children's reach when not in use.

If you don't own an EV yet but are considering buying one, do your homework. Since EV features vary, **thoroughly research** your options before buying one.

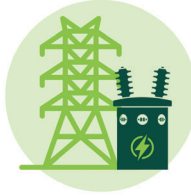
Consider how far you would like to drive it in between charges (*short-range versus extended*), what type of home-charging system you will use (*Level 1 or Level 2*), your budget, the type of electric vehicle (*e.g., SUV, sedan, truck*) and the vehicle's safety ratings.

To learn more about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safepower.org).



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**



**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.

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**

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.

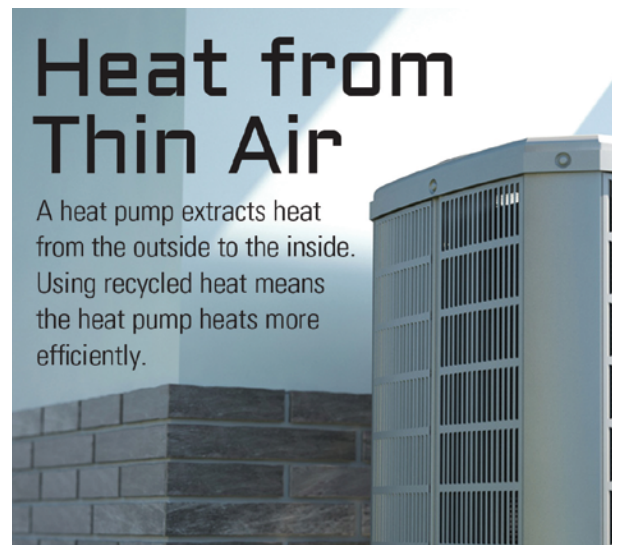
Since heat pumps provide heating in the winter and cooling in the summer, you should be aware of at least two heat pump energy efficiency ratings. The Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) measures cooling efficiency over the cooling season, while the Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) measures 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.



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.

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 2021

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., December 30, 2021. All members of the Board were present except Director Draeger. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, and the monthly disbursements were approved.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load management and key accounts. He gave a report on the 2021 Residential Member Satisfaction Survey that was completed. 511501

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's margins for the month of November. She discussed the Margin Rebate credit, the year-end audit, and workplan loans. She stated that the mileage rate for 2022 business travel will be 58.5 cents.

Jenny brought forth Work Order #519 and Special Equipment November 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

ENERGY CONSERVATION BINGO

Cross off a square for each energy conservation task you complete. Share this with your friends and family to see who can get a "BINGO" first!



B	I	N	G	O
Turn water off while brushing your teeth	Use a reusable bag	Pick up trash	Turn off lights when you leave a room	Walk somewhere instead of riding in a car
Unplug unused phone chargers	Collect items to recycle	Use a smart power strip	Carpool with friends	Reuse a water bottle
Take a 5-minute shower	Use solar lights outdoors	FREE	Unplug unused phone chargers	Use a reusable bag
Carpool with friends	Pick up trash	Turn off lights when you leave a room	Take a 5-minute shower	Collect items to recycle
Reuse a water bottle	Use a smart power strip	Turn water off while brushing your teeth	Walk somewhere instead of riding in a car	Use solar lights outdoors



projects. He stated that the Highway 12 project has been completed. He discussed recent outages.

Tom gave the safety report.

Director Gronseth and Director Zierke discussed the Mid-West Electric Annual Meeting that they attended.

Director Rau reported on the MREA board meeting.

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed recent meetings that he attended, WAPA REC's, GRE's sale of

Coal Creek Station to Rainbow Energy, and the Benson Industrial Park. He discussed an RFP for a company seeking electrical service and land.

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

The January Board meeting was set for the 27th.

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