



Photo: Karen Janachovsky, February Calendar Photo Contest Winner

## Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

February 2023

### Beat the Peak

If you look around your home, you likely have more devices and equipment that require electricity than ever before. Our connected lives are increasingly dependent on more electricity to function. At the same time, as demand for electricity rises, Agralite Electric Cooperative must deliver an uninterrupted 24/7 power supply—regardless of market conditions or other circumstances. As you would expect based on your family's habits, electricity use fluctuates throughout the day based on consumer demand. Agralite must be able to provide enough electricity to meet the energy needs of all members during times of highest energy use or "peak hours." These peak times are typically in the morning as people start their day and in the evening as people return to their homes.

What you may not know is that electric utilities, including Agralite, typically pay more for electricity—either from a power plant or from another utility with excess power—during those morning and evening "energy rush hours." In addition, the demand for electricity is even higher when it's especially cold outside, when heating systems must run longer to warm our homes. If the "peak times" concept is a bit puzzling, here's an easy way to think about it, and it's similar to a major concert. We know costs go up when there is strong demand for tickets (or electricity), and both are subject to the basic economic laws of supply and demand. When a lot of people want the same thing, it's more expensive. When they don't, it's cheaper—like a bargain matinee or an "early bird" special at a restaurant. During peak periods when the cost to produce and purchase power is higher, we encourage you to take simple steps to save energy, such as turning your thermostat down a few notches, turning off unnecessary lights and waiting to use large appliances during off-peak times.

You can also save energy by plugging electronics and equipment such as computers, printers and TVs into a power strip, then turn it off at the switch during peak hours. If you have a programmable thermostat, adjust the settings to sync up with off-peak periods. When we all work together to reduce energy use during periods of high electricity demand, we can relieve pressure on the grid and save a little money along the way. Another benefit of this time-of-use approach to electricity use allows greater control over your bill. Reducing the peak impacts the power-supply cost to every co-op member. This is particularly noticeable as energy costs have risen across the U.S. Collectively, everyone conserving energy and making small changes can truly make a difference. Remember, taking simple steps to save energy throughout the day and shifting energy intensive chores to off-peak hours is a smart choice for you and our community.

*Visit our website to learn more about our energy wise and off-peak programs.*

## 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

**Our office is closed  
President's Day  
February 20**



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 Floyd Eliason, Ross Hagen and Suzanne Paulson for finding their account numbers in our December issue.

### Energy Saving Tip:



Do you have a home office? Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment stays cooler, which will help extend its life.

Another way to save in the home office is to use energy efficient lamps for task lighting. Small lamps use less energy than whole room lighting.

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



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.

## Manager's Article by Jenny Stryhn

It is hard to believe we are already through the first month of 2023! Looking back at this past year, 2022 was a good year financially for Agralite Electric Cooperative. Strong energy sales, paired with another year of successful load control, helped the cooperative financially. Another factor contributing to the finances was the major disaster declarations received from the strong storms that went through our service territory in May of 2022. These declarations allowed for some of the eligible expenses to be reimbursed through the Federal Emergency Management Administration. All of these items, as well as credits received from our power suppliers and the dedicated employees of Agralite, helped round out a good year for Agralite Electric Cooperative.

After reviewing the financials through the end of November 2022 and estimating the December wholesale power costs, the Board of Directors at Agralite authorized a bill credit of \$700,000 back to the membership. This credit was seen on the December energy statement that was sent out in the first week of January.

As we move forward in 2023, I want to bring attention to the scholarship opportunities that the Cooperative has available. Basin Electric Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supplier to Agralite, is again offering a generous 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. 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. The Basin Scholarship application is due no later than February 10th.

Agralite Electric Cooperative is entering its 8th year of its annual scholarship program. This program is funded in part from unclaimed capital credits and in part through administration proceeds from the Rural Economic Development Loan program. This program is available to the four-county region that Agralite provides service to - Big Stone, Pope, Stevens, and Swift counties. 1619600 The cooperative will award two \$2,500, two \$1,000 and three \$500 scholarships. One of the \$2,500 scholarship awards is intended for persons interested in becoming an electrician or electrical line worker. New this year, winners will be drawn randomly pending a completed application. The Agralite scholarship application is due no later than April 7th.

To obtain forms and applications, please go to [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop), reach out to your school counselor or contact the Agralite Electric Cooperative office for the application and all other necessary information. Agralite takes great pride in helping develop rural leaders in our region. These scholarship programs are another way Agralite recognizes achievements by the young people in the communities we serve!







*Pictured, left:*  
Tom Hoffman  
interviews Ryan Dale,  
a Senior at Benson  
High School, for  
his Business class.  
1420000 Ryan is  
the son of Agralite's  
Meter Tech, Jon Dale.

***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).

## 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**

## 5 Ways to Save During Winter



**Winter weather typically means increased energy use at home. Keep your bills in check with these tips to save energy - and money!**

**Mind the thermostat.** If you have a traditional heating and cooling system, set the thermostat to 68 degrees or lower. Consider a smart or programmable thermostat for additional savings.

**Get cozy.** Add layers of clothing for additional warmth, and snuggle up under your favorite heavyweight blanket.

**Don't block the heat.** If your air vents or heating elements (like radiators) are blocked by furniture or rugs, your home isn't being adequately heated.

**Take advantage of sunlight.** Open window coverings during the day to let natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to block the chilly night air.

**Block air leaks.** Seal windows and exterior doors with caulk and weather stripping to improve indoor comfort and decrease the amount of energy used to heat your home.

## 2023 Residential Rebates

**ENERGY STAR® Appliance**  
\$75 for Refrigerator or Freezer  
(must recycle old one)  
\$25 Electric Dryer  
\$25 for Dehumidifier

**Battery-Powered Yard Tools**  
Lawn Mower: \$50  
Snow Blower: \$50  
Chainsaw: \$25  
Leaf Blower: \$25  
Trimmer or Weed Whip: \$25  
Check out our website for a full listing of our 2023 rebates:  
[www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop)

## Agralite Electric Cooperative has Partnered with Voices for Cooperative Power to Speak Up on Legislative Policies Impacting Rural Energy Consumers

*Help us work to keep energy reliable and affordable in Minnesota*

As a local energy cooperative, we work daily to provide reliable, affordable power to the communities and member-owners we serve. We have a long history of coming together to turn on the lights for rural energy consumers. Over the years, we have adapted our business practices to continue providing reliable, affordable energy even though the industry continues to change at a rapid pace.

But this year, we need your help!

**Agralite** is just one of 50 electric cooperatives that serves rural energy consumers in Minnesota. We have partnered with other Minnesota cooperatives through our statewide organization, Minnesota Rural Electric Cooperative (MREA), and our national organization, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), to ensure we have a voice at the table this upcoming legislative session and make our cooperative voices heard when it comes to energy policy in Minnesota.

Help us advocate for reliable, affordable energy for all of Minnesota's energy consumers by signing up for Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP), a network of electric cooperative member-consumers who are working together to ensure the needs of rural America are reflected in state and national policy decisions.

You can learn more and sign up at: <https://voicesforcooperativepower.com/minnesota>

Through VCP, you will have access to resources designed to help you learn more about your local and national legislators and about issues impacting rural energy cooperatives both in Minnesota and across the nation. VCP also provides the tools and information you need to communicate easily and effectively with our state legislators regarding Minnesota's energy policies and legislation.

Together, we can elevate the voice of our members and other rural energy consumers across the state and help keep electricity reliable and affordable for all. Thank you for your continued membership and partnership.

*VCP is a free service available for electric cooperatives through NRECA. Through the VCP platform, you will also be exposed to policy issues impacting energy cooperatives at a national level. NRECA maintains the service and sets the national priorities for VCP.*

*Joining VCP is an individual decision and completely optional. You will not be enrolled automatically as a member of Agralite, nor will you be required to contact your legislators by signing up for the service. Those who register can withdraw your registration at any time through VCP.*

**JOIN TODAY** **VCP** **Voices for Cooperative Power**  
*United for Stronger Communities*



**SCAN ME TO  
LEARN MORE  
AND JOIN!**

**LOOKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN  
YOUR COMMUNITY AND FOR YOUR  
LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE? THEN  
JOIN VCP!**

**VCP is a network of electric co-op  
members working together to influence  
public policy decisions that impact our  
co-ops and our way of life.**

 | [VOICESFORCOOPERATIVEPOWER.COM](https://voicesforcooperativepower.com) |     | @VOICES4COOPS

# Making Our Homes More Efficient: Clean Energy Tax Credits for Consumers

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: Who is eligible for tax credits?

A: Homeowners, including renters for certain expenditures, who purchase energy and other efficient appliances and products.

### Q: What do consumers do to get the credit(s)?

A: Fill out IRS [Form 5695](#), following IRS instructions, and include it when filing your tax return. Include any relevant product receipts.

### Q: Are there limits to what consumers can claim?

A: Consumers can claim the same or varying credits year after year with new products purchased, but some credits have an annual limit. See the table on the right.

### Q: How do consumers find qualified professionals to conduct home energy audits?

A: Visit <https://www.energy.gov/energysave/professional-home-energy-assessments>.

### Q: What products are eligible for tax credits?

#### Home clean electricity products

- **Solar panels for electricity** from a provider in your area.
- **Home back-up power battery storage** with capacity of 3 kWh or greater.

#### Heating, cooling, and water heating

- **Electric or natural gas heat pumps; electric or natural gas heat pump water heaters; central air conditioners; natural gas or propane or oil water heaters; natural gas or propane or oil furnaces or hot water boilers** that meet or exceed the specific efficiency tiers established by the Consortium for Energy Efficiency. Eligible products here: <https://cee1.org/node/729>.
- **Solar water heating products** that are certified for performance by the Solar Rating Certification Corporation or comparable entity endorsed by the state government in which product is installed. See: <https://solar-rating.org>.

#### Other energy efficiency upgrades

- **Oil furnaces or hot water boilers** if they meet or exceed 2021 Energy Star efficiency criteria and are rated by the manufacturer for use with fuel blends at least 20% of the volume of which consists of an eligible fuel. See: <https://www.energystar.gov/products>.
- **Panelboards, sub-panelboards, branch circuits, or feeders** that are installed according to National Electrical Code and have load capacity of 200 amps or more.
- **Insulation materials and systems** that meet International Energy Conservation Code standards. See: <https://www.energy.gov/eere/buildings/building-energy-codes-program>.
- **Exterior windows** that meet Energy Star's Most Efficient requirements. See: <https://www.energystar.gov/products/most-efficient>.

### Q: What if I have questions about products, standards, codes or other eligibility referenced above?

A: Ask a trusted contractor, plumber, or electrician.

### Q: Where do I get even more detailed information?

A: More information on the energy efficient home improvement credit and residential clean energy property credit is available for tax professionals, building contractors, and others at IRS releases frequently asked questions about energy efficient home improvements and residential clean energy property credits | Internal Revenue Service. See: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-releases-frequently-asked-questions-about-energy-efficient-home-improvements-and-residential-clean-energy-property-credits>.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
**ENERGY**

Equipment type	Tax Credit Available for 2022 Tax Year	Updated Tax Credit Available for 2023-2032 Tax Years
<b>Home Clean Electricity Products</b>		
Solar (electricity)	30% of cost	
Fuel Cells		
Wind Turbine		
Battery Storage	N/A	30% of cost
<b>Heating, Cooling, and Water Heating</b>		
Heat pumps	\$300	30% of cost, up to \$2,000 per year
Heat pump water heaters		
Biomass Stoves		
Geothermal heat pumps	30% of cost	
Solar (water heating)		
Efficient air conditioners*	\$300	30% of cost, up to \$600
Efficient heating equipment*		
Efficient water heating equipment*	\$150	30% of cost, up to \$600
<b>Other Energy Efficiency Upgrades</b>		
Electric panel or circuit upgrades for new electric equipment*	N/A	30% of cost, up to \$600
Insulation materials*	10% of cost	30% of cost
Windows, including skylights*	10% of cost	30% of cost, up to \$600
Exterior doors*	10% of cost	30% of cost, up to \$500 for doors (up to \$250 each)
Home Energy Audits*	N/A	30% of cost, up to \$150

\*Subject to cap of \$1,200/year



## 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 2022

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., December 29, 2022. All members of the Board were present. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Order #532, Work Order #533, and Work Order #534 were approved. 669000

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month and meetings with key accounts. He gave an update on the CVEC solar project. He discussed the 2023 Agralite Annual Meeting and the date was set for June 22, 2023. He discussed changes to the 2023 Agralite scholarship program.

Ralph Martin, the new Manager of Finance/CEO, introduced himself to the board.

Jenny Stryhn discussed Agralite's margins for the month of November. She discussed year-end margins and an end of the year margin rebate credit. The Board approved a bill credit on the January bill statements based on 2022 year-to-date kWh usage through November in the amount of \$700,000.

Don Wilcox, Agralite's Attorney, joined the meeting for a Board Education Session. Policy 126 Remote Participation in Meetings of the Board of Directors was discussed and tabled until next month pending revisions.

Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed line crew projects and outages for the month. He is working on securing funds from the Department of Energy's Grid Resilience Utility and Industry grants. He

## ELECTRICAL SAFETY WORD SCRAMBLE

Electricity is essential for our daily lives, but it can also be dangerous if you don't play it safe!

Read the safety tips below and unscramble the bolded text to complete the phrase. Use the answer key to double check your work.



1. Never place extension **rdsoc** under rugs or carpet.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Make sure electrical cords are not **yrafde** or broken.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Smoke **maalsr** should be tested every month.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Place electrical cords in areas where you won't **itpr** on them.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Keep flammable items at least 3 feet away from space **shetear**.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Electricity and **rwtea** never mix.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Answer key: 1) cords 2) frayed 3) alarms 4) trip 5) heaters 6) water

stated Tami Freetly's last day is December 30 and Casey Olson will replace her.

Tom gave the safety report.

Jenny continued with the Finance report. She discussed the 2022-2025 AS45 loan application and the Board approved it. Jenny brought forth updated CoBank Incumbency Certificate, RUS Form 675, RUS Form 674 and the Secretary's Certificate, Secretary's Certificate for RUS RD Apply, and Bank of the West Corporate Resolutions and the Board approved them.

The financials were given by Jenny with a PowerPoint presentation.

Jenny Stryhn, the new General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She stated that Kory Johnson's official last day was December

15th, as well as her first official day as GM/CEO. She gave a review of 2022. She discussed the East River, GRE, and STAR meetings that she attended. She discussed CVEC's solar array and Summit Carbon Solutions carbon capture projects. She brought forth updated Policy 300.3 Schedule Large Power Peak Alert (PA2) and the Board approved it.

Marissa Chevalier, Agralite's Executive Assistant, brought forth corrections to the October Board Minutes and the Board approved it.

The January board meeting was set for the 26th.

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