



Cover Photo: Terri Barrett, January Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

January 2022

Operation Roundup

It started as a simple idea 27 years ago at one co-op in South Carolina. Just round up the co-op member's electric bill to the next dollar, and then use it to do good work in your community. Today, hundreds of electric co-ops throughout the country, including Agralite Electric Cooperative, use this idea to help members and organizations close to home.

All co-ops adhere to the seven cooperative principles, including "Concern for Community." The Operation Roundup program is the perfect embodiment of this core principle. The average co-op member donates \$6 with a maximum possible contribution of \$11.88 per year. This may not seem like a large amount, but when combined with all the participants in the Round Up program, it adds up to make a significant impact.

Each co-op decides how they want to operate the program, and the vast majority is governed by a board of volunteers that is different from the board of directors for the electric co-op. This ensures that the decisions are made in the best interest of the community. Agralite Electric Cooperative has nine board members from across the Agralite service territory.

The program is always voluntary, and at any time, members can change their minds about participating. Once folks see the good work the program does in their community, they almost always keep contributing.

Over the years, millions of dollars have been collected and distributed for a wide range of activities. This can include helping a family in need after a house fire, assisting the local food pantry, and providing funds so that the local fire department can get a needed piece of equipment. It also supports scholarship programs and dozens of other humanitarian efforts that bring electric co-ops even closer to the communities we serve.

While each co-op must respond to the needs of its members, one of the great attributes of co-ops across the country – and the world – is their willingness to share information about the programs that have been successful. Operation Roundup is a perfect example of that cooperative spirit.

Agralite Electric Cooperative is pleased to offer Operation Roundup. We welcome your participation. *If you are not currently signed up for the program and would like to, contact our billing department at 320-843-4150.*



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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

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Touchstone Energy®

Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.

Manager's Article by Kory Johnson

Happy New Year! 2022 has arrived. This past year was a very good year for Agralite Electric Cooperative. Energy sales were very strong for the cooperative with the commercial accounts and irrigation showing growth over the previous years. These strong sales, along with a year of very successful load control, helped to generate record margins for the cooperative. Also contributing to the strong margins are the benefits Agralite receives from the power supply arrangement the cooperative utilizes. This year the cooperative again saw wholesale prices remain stable or even a slight decrease. I would like to acknowledge the effort Great River Energy, East River Electric, Basin Electric, and Western Area Power Administration have done to hold wholesale rates stable. In 2008, Agralite began the new power supply arrangement. The cooperative's power supply arrangement saved the members of Agralite in excess of \$2,000,000 in wholesale costs in 2021!

As a result of the strong financial year Agralite experienced, the Board of Directors of the cooperative authorized a bill credit to the membership. After reviewing the financials through the end of October and anticipating the November wholesale power costs, the Board of Directors of Agralite voted to approve a \$750,000 bill credit. This bill credit was shown on the power bills sent out in early December. As I mentioned in the last edition of the newsletter, the Board also approved transferring an additional \$200,000 into the deferred revenue account. The deferred revenue account will be used in future years to offset increases in wholesale power costs. Even with the bill credit and dollars allocated to the deferred revenue account, the cooperative anticipates ending the year with strong margins.

Thank you to the member-owners of Agralite Electric Cooperative for your continued strong 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 Eugene Lysen and Mike Hennen for finding their account numbers in the November newsletter!

Energy Saving Tip:



Maximize your heating system's performance by inspecting, cleaning or replacing air filters once a month or as needed to reduce energy costs and prevent potential damage to your system.

Make sure radiators, baseboard heaters and warm-air registers aren't blocked so air flows freely.

Source: www.energy.gov

US Mail Delivery Could Be Slower - Bill Payments May Be Delayed

The US Postal Service started slowing its mail delivery on October 1, part of an effort by the Postmaster General to cut costs over the next ten years. According to reports, the most wide-spread and significant change will affect first-class mail like mailed electric bills and payments.

Prior to the change, our Billing Department had already been experiencing an increasing number of frustrated callers about missing or late bills and payments.

If you want to make sure we receive your payment on time, every time, we encourage alternatives to the age-old 'write a check, put it in an envelope and stick a stamp on it' method.

It's So Easy To Go Paperless

Go paperless and use one of five easy ways to make your payments:

- 1 Sign up for our automatic payment plan
- 2 Pay online with SmartHub
- 3 Pay by phone
- 4 Pay in person
- 5 Use the night depository

To learn more about these payment options, visit:

<https://agralite.coop/payment-options>



Mother Nature's Wrath Can Mean Service Disruptions

Although we work hard to maintain our equipment, monitor power delivery 24/7, and do all we can to keep the lights on, there are circumstances beyond our control that can interfere with power delivery. Winter weather is one example. Winter storms can impact the distribution of electricity due to ice, heavy winds, sleet, and other extreme conditions.

Regardless of the reason, know that when the lights go out — even during extreme weather — we are doing all we can to safely and efficiently restore power.

Along with causing outages, wintery conditions can cause hiccups with power delivery that include blinking lights or ebbs and flows in the amount of power that comes into your home. 1329100 Although blinking lights can be a symptom of other problems such as loose wiring connections or overloaded circuits, they can also be caused by extreme weather conditions.



Wintery Conditions Include:

Ice/freezing Rain: Ice accumulation on power lines makes them heavy. One-half of an inch of ice can add as much as 500 pounds to a power line. This added weight can impact power distribution and even bring down a power line. Ice that forms on power lines also increases its surface area, which means gusts of wind have more to catch. The weight of ice on tree limbs can cause them to fall on power lines as well.

Wind: Wind can cause tree branches to brush power lines, which can result in blinking or flickering lights. This is why it's so important for us to keep trees cleared around power lines and poles. In addition, heavy winds (or extreme wind plus ice) can cause lines to move and sway. If they gain enough momentum, they can gallop or jump. This, in turn, can cause disruptions in service since the extreme motion can cause lines to either break or make contact with each other, which they are not meant to do.

Melting Ice: Melting ice can be extremely heavy, putting extra strain on power lines and causing the lines to touch or rest on one another. Because of this, melting ice can cause outages even though the temperature is rising. Depending on conditions, melting ice can cause as many or more problems than the ice itself.

Wind/Ice And Tree Branches: In any weather condition (or even in calm conditions), tree-related issues cause the most power outages in many service areas. Branches, limbs or even tree trunks can fall into power lines and cause problems. Add wind, freezing rain, or ice to the mix for an increased potential for problems.

Icy Roads: Vehicles sliding on ice or that collide with one another can strike a power pole or pad-mounted transformer, causing an outage or other problems.

Blizzards: Heavy snowfall, icy roads, or reduced visibility can make it a little more difficult for our crews to get out and fix problems, although we do all we can to get out there to address service issues as soon as possible.

Be sure to have a storm preparedness kit ready before a storm strikes to help get you and your family through a power outage. Items to gather include bottled water, non-perishable food, blankets, warm clothing, hand sanitizer, first aid kit/medicine, flashlight, radio, back-up phone chargers, extra batteries, and toiletries.

To learn more about preparing for storms and electrical safety, go to SafeElectricity.org.






SNOWMOBILERS:

**ALWAYS BE ON ALERT FOR
ELECTRIC CO-OP EQUIPMENT**



Agralite Electric Cooperative reminds snowmobile enthusiasts of all ages to be cautious while snowmobiling. Heavy snow and drifting can bury electrical equipment, causing dangerous situations for snowmobilers. Most snowmobile accidents occur along roads and ditches where riders encounter culverts, signs, mailboxes, and even electric cooperative equipment.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BE SAFE BY KEEPING THESE TIPS IN MIND THIS SNOWMOBILING SEASON:

-  Watch out for power poles, guy wires and electrical equipment that can be hidden in the snow. Heavy snowfalls can often bury transformer boxes and cabinets.
-  Slow down, know the area where you are snowmobiling and stay on the trails.
-  If you see a downed power line, stay away from it; call your electric cooperative to report it. There is no way to tell if a power line is energized just by looking at it. Always assume it is live and can carry currents strong enough to kill.
-  Always wait for help to arrive before you approach an accident scene where a power line may be involved.
-  Don't drink and stay alert.

**SHARE THIS IMPORTANT INFORMATION
WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND ANYONE
YOU KNOW WHO RIDES A SNOWMOBILE.**



Yard Lights & EXTREME COLD

You may experience or notice your yard light having some trouble this winter, such as intermittent failure to turn on, or it appears dimmer than normal. Severe cold weather, especially below negative 10 degrees, may affect the operation of your yard light.

If you have a gas filled lamp, the problem involves the formation of gas inside the bulb that is hampered by the cold – effectively the gas can't do its job when it is very cold out. Usually, when the temperature comes back up, the lights can return to normal operation.

If you experience trouble with your yard light, please keep in mind that it may be related to extreme cold temperatures. If you think your yard light isn't working properly or it doesn't return to normal operation when the weather warms up, please let us know.



GOING THE EXTRA MILE

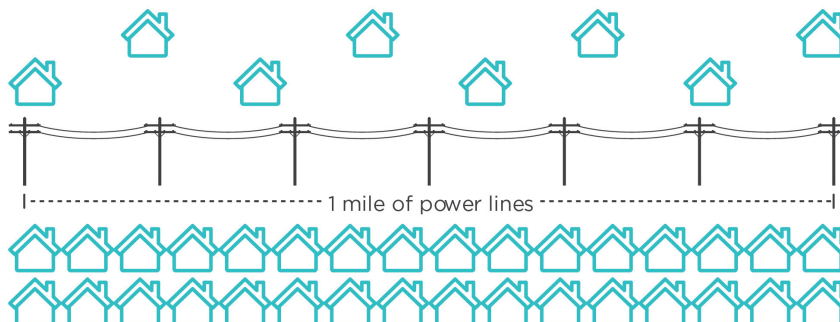
Electric co-ops maintain more miles of power lines per consumer than other electric utilities. 1260401 Even though we power fewer consumers on our lines compared to other utilities, we'll always go the extra mile for you, the consumer members we proudly serve.

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Serve 8 consumer-members per mile of line

OTHER ELECTRIC UTILITIES

Serve 32 consumer-members per mile of line



'Standby' Me: The Pros and Cons of a Permanent Standby Generator

Many livestock facilities and big businesses rely on standby power when the power goes out – for the safety of their animals, employees and customers as well as to power essential items.

More and more home versions are being installed so that families can have backup power when they need it, to power appliances and essential medical equipment, or simply for convenience.

There is more than one type of permanent generator. One has a transfer switch that must be manually "thrown" before turning on the alternate source of power, which is wired into a house. 1340301 This type of generator is permanent but not considered "standby" because of the manual switch, and it should not be located near a home. (Consult a professional electrician when installing or maintaining a permanent generator.)

Not throwing the switch can result in back feeding, which sends electricity back into power lines, and it can seriously injure or kill electric line workers or others.

Another type of fixed generator is permanently housed in a metal box and is usually located near the yard pole. A standby version that is permanently and professionally installed to power your entire home.

When needed, a standby generator automatically transfers the power source from the electric grid to the generator. Agralite is a certified Briggs and Stratton dealer. We sell and maintain 12Kw, 20Kw, and 26Kw models all with a 10-year warranty as well as many other models ranging up to 125kw 3-phase. The cost of this type of permanent generator varies depending on how much backup power you want. You can view our complete price list as well as spec sheets from our most popular models at www.agralite.coop/generators.

Besides the cost of the system, there are also installation costs to consider since it will need to be installed by licensed and bonded contractors for both LP and electrical. (This is definitely not a DIY project.) We are typically seeing these costs come in at \$2,000-\$4,000.

When considering a standby generator, a representative from Agralite will assess your home's energy needs and will ask you what you would like to power in the event of an outage. We will also talk to you about the option of allowing us to load control it in the event of peak demands to the grid. By allowing Agralite to control your whole home generator, you will receive a discount on your energy rate. This can be a great option for many to get peace of mind and gain a return on investment.

To inquire about purchasing a standby generator or how permanent generators should be safely used and installed, contact Agralite Electric Cooperative at 320-843-4150 or 800-950-8375 and ask for Jeremy or Jonathan.



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.

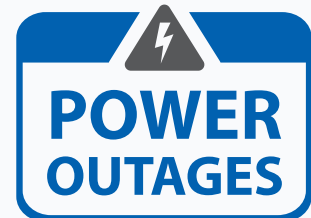
Energy Assistance Program

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

December Energy Payment
is due January 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 November 2021

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., November 24, 2021. All members of the Board were present. 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 gave an update on the ALM project. He discussed the generator program and fuel reimbursements costs.

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's margins for the month of October. She discussed the revenue deferral plan and the Board approved Resolution to Amend Revenue Deferral Plan. She discussed the FFB loan draw down. She discussed an end of the year margin rebate credit and the Board approved a bill credit based on year-to-date kWh usage in the amount of \$750,000. She brought forth 2021 Bad Debt Write-Offs and the Board approved it. She brought forth Corporate Resolution for Bank of the West and the Board approved it. She brought forth Policy 623 Telecommuting Employee Procedure and the Board approved it.

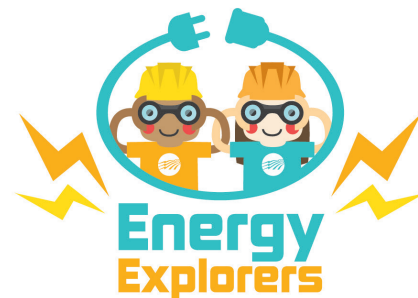
Jenny brought forth Work Order #517 and Work Order #518 and the Board approved them. 1601700

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 EFFICIENCY CROSSWORD

Did you know there are several ways you can fight the winter chill *and* save energy at home? Complete the crossword puzzle below to learn how to save energy during winter months.



1 Down: Open curtains and blinds during the day to allow _____ in to warm your home.

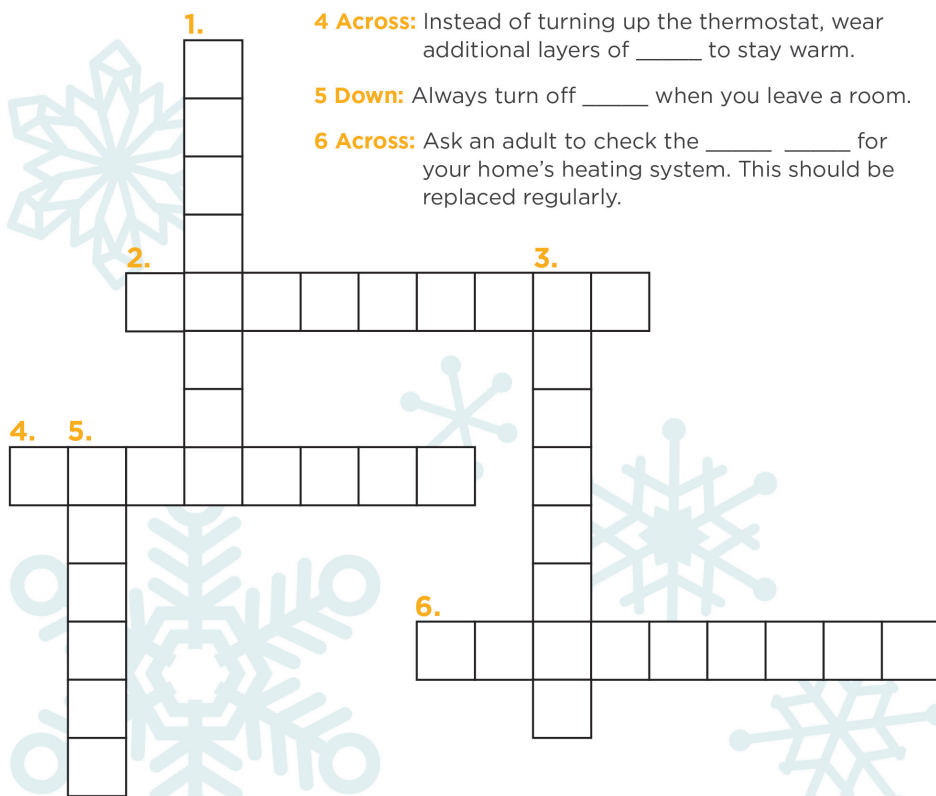
2 Across: If you have a _____ at home, ask an adult to close the flue when a fire is not burning.

3 Down: Unplug phone and tablet _____ when they're not in use.

4 Across: Instead of turning up the thermostat, wear additional layers of _____ to stay warm.

5 Down: Always turn off _____ when you leave a room.

6 Across: Ask an adult to check the _____ for your home's heating system. This should be replaced regularly.



Answer Key: 1 Down) sunlight 2 Across) fireplace 3 Down) chargers 4 Across) clothing 5 Down) lights 6 Across) air filter

met with Chad Knutson from Federated Insurance for Agralite's annual review. He stated that Tree Story is nearing completion in Big Stone County.

Tom gave the safety report.

Director Gronseth and Director Zierke discussed the Basin Electric Annual Meeting that they attended.

The 2022 Budget and Work Plan came before the Board and the Board approved it.

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed the cost-of-service study, East River, and the workman's comp retention group. He discussed a meeting with the City of Benson for an industrial park preliminary

estimate. The Board approved cost sharing with the City of Benson for a feasibility site plan layout for the industrial park.

Dave Eide, a member from Dakota Energy, joined the meeting. He discussed the member movement to halt the legal action taken by the Dakota Board against East River.

Director Zierke will be the 2022 MREA voting delegate. Director Rau will be the alternate.

The December board meeting was set for the 30th.

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