



Photo: Lois Strei, January Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

January 2023

Manager's Article by Jenny Stryhn

As the new General Manager of Agralite, I would like to wish all of the members of Agralite a Happy New Year! It has been a few weeks since I have transitioned into the CEO/General Manager position and I am extremely thankful to be working with the member-owners of Agralite Electric Cooperative. I would like to thank Kory Johnson for the seamless transition, and all of his years of service at Agralite. Kory, we wish you the best in retirement!

We have had a few other changes in our employee base with retirements and promotions at the end of 2022. The cooperative has been filling these positions with qualified individuals and we will continue to serve you with the highest level of service in the coming year!

As we are wrapping up the financials for 2022 and we look forward into 2023, the cooperative is planning for the future. At the November board meeting, the Board of Directors approved the 2023 budget and work plan. In addition, the Board authorized an additional \$200,000 to be put into the cooperative's Revenue Deferral Plan to further help with rate stabilization in the coming years and to help offset future power cost increases for the cooperative. Our mission continues to be to provide our members with safe, reliable electric service and other related products to improve the quality of life in our region.

I would like to thank all of our member-owners that attended the cider and cookies event at the cooperative this past month. It was good to see all of you, and I hope you picked up one of the 2023 Agralite calendars featuring pictures directly from our members. Thank you to the member-owners of Agralite Electric Cooperative for your participation in your electric cooperative!

Wishing you the best!

Tami **37** YEARS *Clark* **30** YEARS

This past month, we said congratulations and good luck to two longtime employees at Agralite. Our Engineering & Operations Assistant, Tami Freetly, retired after 37 years with the cooperative. Our Member Services Representative, Clark McDonald, is leaving Agralite after 30 years with the cooperative.

We will miss them both and wish them all the best!



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

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

EMPOWERING

communities with
innovative, sustainable
energy solutions

FOR OVER

75
YEARS

CONTENTS

Page 1 ► Manager's Article,
Retirements, 2023 Calendars

Page 2 ► Winter Weather, Find
Your Account Number And Win,
Energy Tip

Page 3 ► 2023 Basin
Scholarship, Cold Weather Rule

Page 4 ► Common Causes
of Home Electrical Fires, How
Electricity Gets to You

Page 5 ► Yard Lights and
Extreme Cold, Snowmobilers:
Be Alert for Electric Co-op
Equipment, Severe Storms, Heat
Your Space Safely

Page 6 ► Board Meeting
Minutes, Energy Pledge

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



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:



Insulating your electric water heater can reduce standby heat loss by 25% to 45%, saving you 7% to 16% on annual water heating costs.

The Dept. of Energy rates this project as medium difficulty, meaning most homeowners can tackle this project on their own. You can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets for about \$20 at most home improvement stores. Visit energy.gov for project tips and additional considerations.

Source: energy.gov



**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.

Winter Weather

Winter can bring beautiful days for taking brisk walks, admiring the fresh snowfall, or creating snow angels. Winter's fury can also produce icy roads, sub-zero wind chills, and power outages. Unfortunately, heavy snow and accumulating ice can easily bring tree limbs down on power lines, cutting off power to homes and businesses. Even melting ice can be a problem because it can cause power lines to sag from the added weight. 1488500

Planning for future outages brought on by severe winter conditions can make riding out a prolonged power outage safer and a little more comfortable.

How long it takes for your power to be restored depends on several factors: the extent of the storm's destruction, the number of outages in your area, and when it becomes safe for utility personnel to get to the affected areas.

Take steps to help keep your family safe and comfortable during a winter storm long before one is forecast. A good way to start is to put an emergency kit together.

Safe Electricity suggests starting with these items:

- **Water:** Stock up on bottled water for consumption. FEMA recommends storing at least one gallon per person, per day.
- **Food:** Have at least enough food, including non-perishable packaged or canned foods, juices, special foods for infants or the elderly, and snack foods, for three to seven days.
- **Utensils:** Without electricity, be sure you have a manual can opener, paper plates, and plastic utensils.
- **Layers and added warmth:** Gather blankets, pillows, and warm clothing items.
- **Medicine and other items:** Locate a first aid kit, medicine, prescription drugs, and any essential medical equipment.
- **A charged cell phone:** Most people are used to having their phones with them, but also have a portable, fully-charged power pack on hand.

Also gather:

- Toiletries, hygiene items, and moist towelettes.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Battery-operated radio or a NOAA weather radio.
- List of emergency telephone numbers, including your local utilities.
- Toys, books, and games.
- Pet food and other pet-care items.
- Supplies for alternate heating methods, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- Insulate your home by installing storm windows or plastic covering on windows and caulk any cracks in your home. Finally, make sure the heating system is in proper working order.

Other safety tips include:

- Use caution using portable generators.
- Never use a portable generator indoors, in a garage, or near windows or doors because they omit deadly carbon monoxide.
- Never plug a portable generator into a wall outlet. Doing so can create deadly backfeed, which occurs when electricity travels from the generator back through the power lines.
- Monitor the temperature in your home. Infants and elderly people are more susceptible to the cold.
- Avoid going outside. Downed power lines could be submerged in snow and ice, making them difficult to identify. Consider all downed and hanging lines energized and deadly.

Along with causing outages, wintery conditions can create hiccups in power delivery that include blinking lights or ebbs and flows in the amount of power that comes into your home. 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. When this happens, protect your circuits and appliances by switching off lights and unplugging devices.

For more info about preparing for a winter storm and electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



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**

2023 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. 1639700

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 10, 2023.



COMMON CAUSES of HOME ELECTRICAL FIRES



An average of 346,800 home fires occur every year, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Electrical issues (either failure or malfunction) account for 46,700 of those fires.

Common Causes

The most common causes of electrical fires are incorrectly installed wiring; overloaded circuits or extension cords; defective or improper plugs, switches or outlets; and the misuse or poor maintenance of lighting.

Warning Signs

Know the signs that indicate a possible wiring or electrical problem. These include flickering or dimming lights; discolored cords, outlets or switch plates; switches or outlets that are hot to the touch or emit an odor; and recurring blown fuses and tripped circuit breakers.

Prevention

Hire a qualified electrician to examine and repair any electrical issues in your home. Do not take on do-it-yourself electrical projects if you are not qualified.

Learn more:



Sources: NFPA, The Hartford

How Electricity Gets to You

Whenever you flip a switch, charge your smartphone or store food in the freezer, you're relying on the grid to bring you reliable electricity.

At a basic level, the electric grid is a set of interconnected wires connecting places where energy is produced to where it is used. 888801 Over time, the grid has become smarter, more dynamic, and increasingly interconnected due to advancements in technology along with additional wind and solar energy resources.

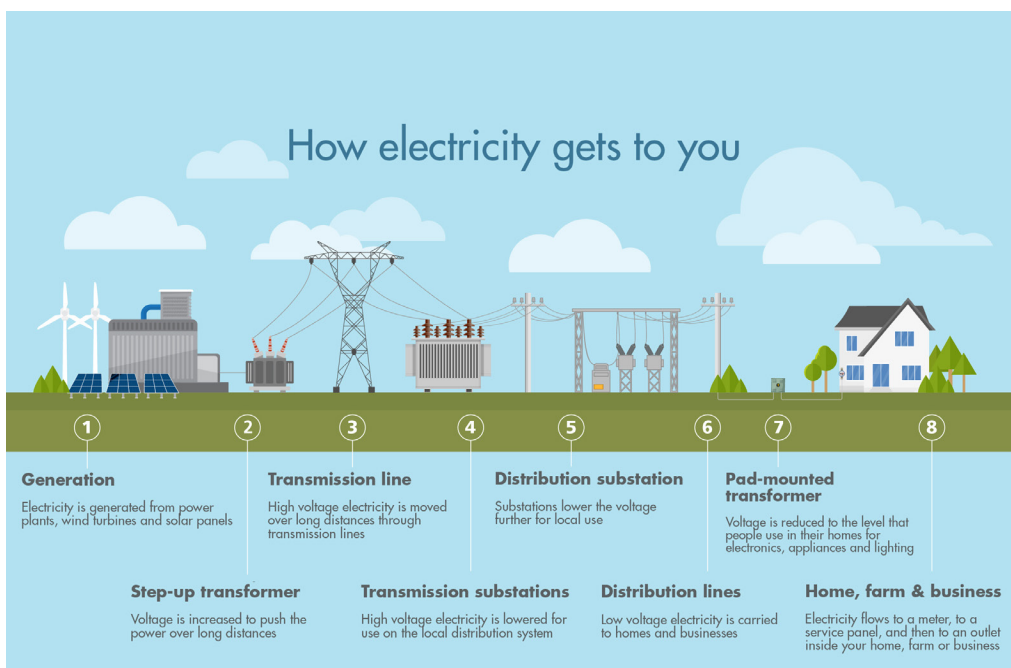
But how does the grid work?

Electricity is made by huge spinning turbines at generating stations using coal, wind, natural gas or water. Electricity from these generators, located at places like power plants and wind farms, is pushed along high voltage transmission lines to substations where the voltage can be "stepped down" to lower, more usable levels. Then, it is sent along smaller distribution lines, like those owned by Agralite Electric Cooperative, to be delivered to neighborhoods.

From there, smaller transformers reduce the voltage again to make the power safe to use in homes, schools, farms and small businesses. These smaller transformers may be mounted on poles or sitting on the ground (they're the big green boxes called pad-mounted transformers).

Electricity then runs underground from the transformer to your house and passes through a meter that measures how much each home or business uses. Then, it goes to a service panel where breakers or fuses protect the wires inside your house from being overloaded. Electricity then travels through wires inside the walls to the outlets and switches that we use every day in homes and businesses.

That's how reliable power gets to you in our increasingly power-dependent world.



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.

Yard Lights and 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.

Snowmobilers: Be 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. 157200 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. Stay alert.

Share this important information with family, friends, and anyone you know who rides a snowmobile.

SEVERE STORMS

CAN BRING DOWN POWER LINES

Never drive over a downed power line, as snagging a line could pull down a pole or other equipment.

If you're in an accident involving a power line, do not exit your vehicle.

Remember, power lines need not be sparking or arcing to be energized.



feeling chilled?

HEAT YOUR SPACE SAFELY



Keep flammable items at least 3 feet away



Place on a flat, level surface



Make sure the cord is not frayed or cracked



Plug it directly into an outlet



Follow all instructions and use models endorsed by a reputable testing lab



Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which can overheat



Do not use around small children or pets



Do not use one with a damaged plug or prongs



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 2022

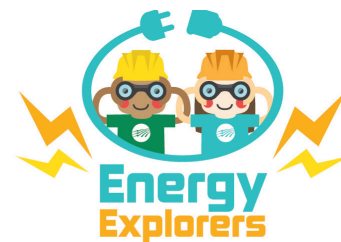
Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., November 23, 2022. All members of the Board were present. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, and payment of capital credits of deceased members were approved.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month and showed a graph. He gave an update on the Briggs generator program and the ALM project. He talked to Hancock kindergarten and first grade students about Agralite and electrical safety.

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's margins for the month of October. She discussed the Basin Annual Meeting that she attended and the bill credits they will be issuing. She discussed the Revenue Deferral account and the Board approved Resolution to Amend Revenue Deferral Plan to defer an additional \$200,000 revenue. She discussed the AS45 loan application with RUS for the newly approved workplan. She brought forth the Eide Bailly Audit Engagement letter per NRECA guidelines and the Board approved it. She stated that Casey Olson was promoted to Engineering & Operations Assistant and Theresa Klassen was promoted to Accountant. She brought forth 2022 Write-offs and the Board approved it.

PLEDGE TO SAVE ENERGY

It's a new year, and that means it's time to think about how you'll make a positive impact in 2023! You can help the planet by saving energy at home and at school. Take the pledge to save energy this year by completing the form below. Post it on your refrigerator or at school to remind others about easy ways to save energy and help our environment.



I Pledge to Save Energy

Name: _____

I pledge to do my part to save energy and help our planet. Every day, I'll do the following to save energy at home and/or at school.

My Daily Energy-Saving Plan:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Need some ideas to help you get started?

Here are a few easy ways you can save energy every day.

- Turn off all lights when you leave a room.
- Unplug phone and other device chargers when they're not being used.
- Turn off running water while brushing your teeth.
- Remind family members to wash clothes in cold water.
- Turn off ceiling fans when you leave a room.

Jenny brought forth Work Order #531 and Special Equipment October 2022 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 for the month. He discussed the FEMA process from the operations side.

Tom gave the safety report.

The 2023 Budget and Work Plan was approved by the Board.

An executive session was held.

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed the Basin bill credits, CVEC, Landi+Gyr, and the GRE managers meeting he attended.

Policy 126 Remote Participation in Meetings of the Board of Directors was discussed and tabled until the December Board Meeting.

Director Draeger will be the 2023 MREA Voting Delegate and Director Zierke will be the alternate. The December board meeting was set for the 29th.

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