



Photo: Nada Carter, January Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

January 2024

EMPOWERING

communities with innovative, sustainable energy solutions

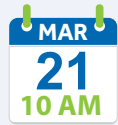
FOR OVER

80 YEARS

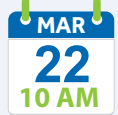
2024 Power Hour Events

Do you want to meet the cooperative's new CEO, discuss the recent rate adjustment, or ask questions about our plans for the cooperative headquarters? Join us for our new 2024 Power Hour events. Power Hour events provide members with the opportunity to meet their directors and staff, ask questions, and mingle with other co-op members in a casual environment. It is a time to hear what is happening at your local electric cooperative including member programs, work plan projects, and the financial health of the cooperative.

Upcoming Power Hour Events



CHS
31999 US 75
Clinton, MN



Camp Lake Town Hall
Danelz Ave., Swift Falls, MN
(Next to Brink's Beer Joint)

Coffee and rolls will be provided. Our 2024 Power Hour events are open to all co-op members. You are welcome to attend either event, even if it does not align with your district or area. Visit our website or call us at 320-843-4150 if you have any questions regarding these events. We look forward to seeing you there!



Operation Round Up Helps Local Organizations

The Operation Round Up Trust Board met December 7 to review grant applications received. They reviewed and considered 12 grant applications and distributed funds to 8 of them totaling \$6,600. Orvin Gronseth was introduced as the newest board member. An election for officers was held. 1612800 Andrea Thomson was elected President, Joe McGearly was elected Vice President, and Richard Ehrenberg was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

Operation Round Up is a program made possible by Agralite Electric Cooperative members who round up their monthly electric bill to the next dollar. The average donation of each participating Agralite member is less than \$6 annually. The extra cents go directly into a Trust that is administered in grants to community organizations. A voluntary Board of Directors of nine co-op members adheres to specific guidelines to ensure your dollars are spent wisely.

Contact our billing department at 320-843-4150 if you would like to round up your bill!

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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



Office Hours

8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.



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 Greg Neu and Michael Knutson for finding their account numbers in the November newsletter.

Energy Saving Tip:



During winter months, ensure your home is well-sealed to reduce the need for excessive heating.

Seal air leaks around your home and add insulation where needed to save up to 10% on annual energy bills.

Install weather stripping on exterior doors and apply caulk around windows. Check attic insulation levels and hire a qualified contractor if additional insulation is required.

Source: energystar.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, General Manager

I would like to start out by wishing all of our member-owners a Happy New Year! As we look back at 2023, the cooperative had a successful year despite the ongoing challenges the cooperative faced. Energy sales started out strong in January 2023 with very cold temperatures, followed by a hot, dry summer, and ending the year with very mild temperatures, including 50-degree days in December!



[As we look back on 2023, there have been a few large items that we have worked on this past year that I would like to touch on:](#)

- The cooperative continues to move forward with our load control receiver changeouts on our system. This is an important project for our load management system, as it not only reduces energy costs for the member, but it also helps control wholesale power costs for the cooperative. Our goal is to have this project completed in 2024.
- We have finished repairs on our leaning poles from the two major storms that rolled through our territory in May of 2022. This project was approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for straightening. This past July, our north eastern territory was hit with storm with strong winds that caused damage to our system. Our safe and diligent crews restored members' power in a timely fashion.
- The cooperative completed a cost-of-service study with Power System Engineering. The results determined that the increased costs from materials, wholesale power costs, long term interest rates, and equipment costs that the cooperative is incurring are no longer absorbable through our daily operations. After careful consideration, an overall 4.1% rate increase was approved for January 1st, 2024. While rate increases are not easy, they were necessary to continue to provide safe, reliable electricity for our membership today and into the future while maintaining the financial health of the cooperative. These numbers were included in the 2024 budget that was approved by the Board of Directors.
- Agralite continues to evaluate opportunities with our existing cooperative facility. The cooperative headquarters was built in the early 1960's, and while it has worked for Agralite for many years, changes in fleet vehicles, equipment, growth in employees, and operations efficiencies have changed since then. An updated feasibility study was completed this fall on the current facility and estimated costs associated with the study on a remodel versus new facility on our existing footprint. It seems like yesterday that this discussion began, but in reality, it has been years in the making. 1343100 The cooperative continues to carefully navigate each step while completing its due diligence required for such an important undertaking.
- We expanded our member engagement opportunities. The cooperative hosted a MN Twins Youth Baseball Clinic, attended area events including Prairie Harvest Fest, Trunk or Treat, and parades, and hosted a North Dakota Energy Tour. I would like to thank all of our members that joined us for these events as they were very successful!



As we look forward in 2024, Agralite Electric Cooperative will continue to work hard for you, our member-owners. As a not-for-profit utility, Agralite is here to serve our member-owners by providing you with the safe and reliable electricity you've come to expect. Lastly, thank you for your continued interest in your electric cooperative.

2024 Agralite Scholarship

Starting in 2016, Agralite Electric Cooperative created a post-secondary education scholarship program. 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 ten \$2,000 scholarships. Two of the scholarship awards are 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.

Obtain applications on our website at www.agralite.coop, from your school counselor, or in our office. The completed application and all other necessary information must be returned to Agralite Electric Cooperative no later than April 5, 2024. Applicants who applied for the Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship may also apply for the Agralite scholarship. Winners will be drawn randomly pending a completed application.

Mail to: Agralite Electric Cooperative, PO Box 228, Benson, MN 56215
Or Email to: mchevalier@agralite.com

When Winter Winds Howl, Power Lines Can Gallop

Severe weather with strong winds can cause damage to trees, buildings, and electrical equipment. While power lines can sway in high winds, add freezing rain or icy conditions and the result can be galloping power lines.

Galloping is the bouncing or bucking movement of overhead lines. It can cause several problems, from temporary power interruptions to equipment damage, and even the collapse of power poles and downed lines.

Galloping lines often result from ice buildup on one side of the power line due to strong winds. The buildup of ice creates an airfoil, which changes the flow of air around the line, causing bouncing wires, or galloping power lines.

There isn't much utility workers can do until the wind dies down. That's why many power lines have objects, like twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal attached to the line. 1128700 These help reduce galloping of lines and prevent potential danger.

If you see galloping power lines:

- Keep your distance. Ice can break off or power lines can break loose.
- Contact your utility to make them aware of the potential damage as soon as possible.

If you see a downed line:

- Stay far away and warn others to stay away too.
- Remember, a downed line can remain energized even if it is not sparking or arcing.
- Always report the location of a downed power line and damaged electrical equipment.

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

To learn more about storm and outage safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

2024 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. Agralite will award one \$1,000 scholarship. The scholarship 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 21, 2024.



Attention High School Juniors or Seniors of Agralite Electric Cooperative!

APPLY FOR A **TRIP OF A LIFETIME**



JUNE 18 TO 23, 2024
AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHAT IS YOUTH TOUR?

Agralite Electric Cooperative is taking applications for the annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. This year, Minnesota will be in D.C. from June 18-23, 2024. Delegates will tour monuments, visit museums, meet with elected officials, learn about the cooperative business model, and make new friends from all over Minnesota and 43 other states!

HOW TO APPLY

- Applicants must be a junior or senior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Agralite Electric Cooperative.
- The deadline to apply is February 21, 2024.



The best part? It's FREE! Everything is covered by Agralite Electric Cooperative!
It truly is the trip of a lifetime.

Check out our website for more information or contact Marissa Chevalier at 320-843-4150 or mchevalier@agralite.com with any additional questions.

LEARN MORE AT AGRALITE.COOP

EMPOWER



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:

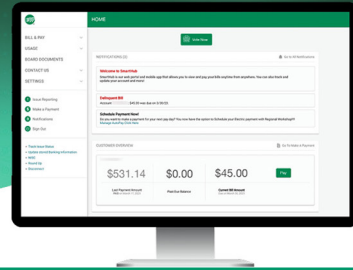
- ⚡ Watch out for power poles, guy wires and electrical equipment that can be hidden in the snow. Heavy snowfalls can often bury transformer boxes and cabinets.
- ⚡ Slow down, know the area where you are snowmobiling and stay on the trails.
- ⚡ If you see a downed power line, stay away from it; call 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.



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NEWLY REDESIGNED SMARTHUB



Save time and money by managing your account at anytime from anywhere.

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, 2024.

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**

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 - Vice President

Andrea Thomson, Benson
District 6

Warren Rau, Appleton
District 7 - President

MINUTES OF MEETING BOARD OF DIRECTORS November 2023

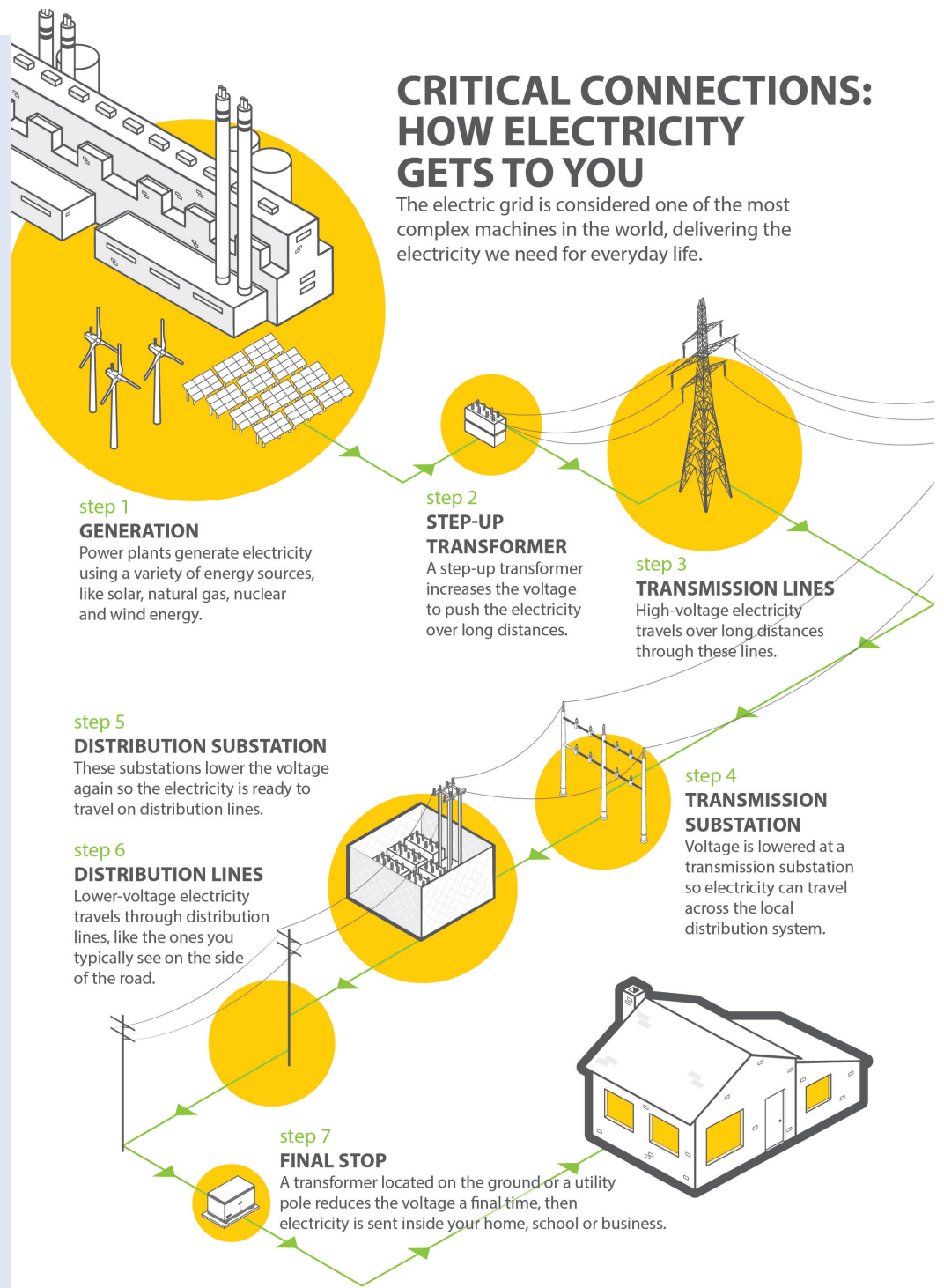
Board Chairman Warren Rau called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., November 30, 2023. All members of the Board were present. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Order #553, and Special Equipment for October were approved.

Stephanie Wroblewski, Agralite's new Manager of Finance/CFO, was introduced to the Board.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month. He discussed new Power Hour events that will be held in 2024 in Clinton and Swift Falls. He discussed the scholarship program and the Board approved to award ten \$2,000 scholarships, with two dedicated to a lineworker/electrician in 2024. He discussed the 2024 Rural Electric Youth Tour and Director Gronseth and Director Nelson will be on the review committee.

Ralph Martin, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed margins for the month of October. He stated this will be his last meeting as his last day at the coop will be December 22. He brought forth updated Resolution Authorizing the Amendment of the Retirement Security Plan 24079-001, 24079-002, 24079-003 and the Board approved it. He brought forth Resolution to Amend Revenue Deferral Plan and the Board approved it. He brought forth CoBank Resolution of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to update officers and the Board approved it. He brought forth RUS Secretary's Certificate to update officers and the Board approved it.

The financials were given by Ralph with a PowerPoint presentation.



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 discussed the GRE transmission projects and yearly oil sampling. 712400 Tom gave the safety report.

Ryan Breitbach, with Breitbach Construction, and Nick Engan, with Engan and Associates, joined the meeting to review initial proposed plans for the headquarters facility.

The Board approved the 2024 Budget and Work Plan.

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed the Mid-West and East River REED meetings that she attended. She brought forth a REED loan recommendation for Abundant Ag and the Board approved it. She

discussed the GRE Special Meeting to be held on December 6th and the Board approved voting in favor of the amendments to the Articles and Bylaws. She discussed East River and Basin margins.

Director Draeger will be the 2024 MREA Voting Delegate and Director Zierke will be the alternate.

Director Thomson will be the 2024 NRECA Voting Delegate and Director Gronseth will be the alternate.

Director Rau will be the 2024 CRC Voting Delegate and Director Gronseth will be the alternate.

The December board meeting was set for the 28th.

The November 2024 Board meeting was set for November 27. The December 2024 Board meeting was set for December 27. Being no further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.