



Photo: Kristina Motzko, January Calendar Photo Contest Winner

# NEWSLETTER

January 2025

## The Future Of Reliable Electricity *By Jenny Stryhn, General Manager*

As our country's economy continues to grow, so does the demand for reliable electricity. Data centers, new manufacturing facilities, and our daily lives are requiring more and more electricity. In fact, U.S. power consumption is expected to rise to record highs this year and next, and the demand for electricity in the U.S. is expected to at least double by 2050.

Meanwhile, our supply of electricity is already decreasing as always-available power plants are being prematurely shut down. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation has warned that 19 states could see rolling blackouts during times of high electrical usage over the next five years. We all know what happens when supply can't meet demand—prices go up, and the lights go off. As we prepare for this rising demand, Agralite Electric Cooperative is planning ahead to ensure local families and businesses have access to an affordable, reliable supply of electricity.

### Meeting the challenge

To meet these challenges, Agralite Electric Cooperative is utilizing a balanced mix of always-available energy sources as a safeguard to maintain a reliable energy supply. We're also investing in innovative technologies to bolster grid resilience and enhance data management to improve operational efficiency, expedite outage response times, and minimize service disruptions.

As electricity demand in the U.S. continues to rise, upgrading and building new infrastructure will be critical. That's why Agralite Electric Cooperative is collaborating with other electric co-ops by pooling resources and expertise on projects that advance technology, security, infrastructure and innovative energy sources to meet the increasing needs of our communities.

At Agralite Electric Cooperative, we are committed to enhancing reliability through investments in maintaining and upgrading the electrical infrastructure we own and operate. We are also focused on continuously improving our demand management programs and providing educational resources on energy conservation to our members. These efforts are just a few of the many ways we work to strengthen reliability for our community. As a co-op, this collaborative approach is a core strength of Agralite Electric Cooperative and enables us to deliver affordable energy to local families and businesses. Our priority is to ensure energy solutions are tailored to the unique needs of our community to help it thrive now and in the future.

Built by the community it serves, Agralite Electric Cooperative provides essential services that drive growth and pave the way for an energy future that prioritizes reliable electricity at a cost local families and businesses can afford.



**EMPOWERING**  
communities

with innovative  
and sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

**85**  
YEARS

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**Agralite Electric Co-op**  
*We're member-owned!*

320 US-12, Benson, MN  
(320) 843-4150  
1-800-950-8375  
www.agralite.coop

 Like us on Facebook



**Office Hours**  
8:00 am – 4:30 pm



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

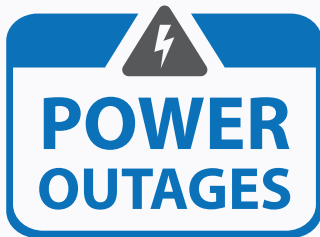
to Susan Lemmer & Michael Lonergan for finding their account numbers in the November newsletter.

### Energy Saving Tip:



Taking steps to help your home heating system run more efficiently can reduce energy use and lower winter bills. Check to see if any air vents around your home are blocked by furniture, curtains, or other items. Obstructed vents force your heating system to work harder than necessary and can increase pressure in the ductwork, causing cracks and leaks to form. If necessary, consider purchasing a vent extender, which can be placed over a vent to redirect air flow from underneath furniture or other obstructions.

Source: [energystar.gov](http://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.

## New Year's Resolution: Be Energy Efficient Year-Round

### Seal in comfort and savings

As energy consumers, we can all play a part in conserving resources and reducing our bills. Here are some practical tips to boost your home's energy efficiency throughout the year:

### Know your energy consumption

Start by reviewing your energy bills for the past 12-24 months. Calculate your average monthly usage to establish a baseline for measuring your energy-saving efforts.

### Adopt no-cost ways to save energy

Small changes can lead to significant savings:

- Turn off lights and unplug electronics such as chargers when not in use.
- Close or lower window coverings to regulate the temperature indoors.
- Change your air filters regularly as recommended.
- Use ceiling fans strategically: counterclockwise in summer and clockwise in winter to force warm air down.
- Grill outdoors in summer to keep the heat out of the kitchen.

### Insulate your home

Weatherproofing is key to maintaining comfort and reducing energy use:

- Check for air leaks around windows and doors using the wet finger or tissue test.
- Apply caulk or weatherstripping to prevent drafts.
- Remember to keep doors closed to maintain indoor temperature.

### Get smart with your thermostat

Optimize your heating and cooling by using your programmable thermostat's features—many homeowners never use them—and allow it to adjust the temperature when you're asleep or away.

- Consider upgrading to a smart thermostat for automatic adjustments
- In general, adjust the thermostat a few degrees up or down for energy savings.

### Explore renewable energy

Consider harnessing the power of natural energy sources:

- Look into installing solar energy panels for your home.
- Research local community solar programs that may be available.

### Consult your electricity provider early in the process. They can provide valuable information about:

- Grid connection requirements.
- Cost considerations.
- Potential rebates are available for renewable energy installations.

By implementing these tips, you'll not only save on energy costs but also contribute to a more sustainable community. 832002 For more tips on building a resilient and efficient home, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Never make a utility bill payment to anyone calling you on the phone, coming to your door (unless that is a verified bill payment method used by your utility company), texting you or emailing you. Always call your utility company at the number provided on your bill or on the utility's website if you have a question about payment or billing information. Know your utility bill payment options—online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail or in person.

Source: *Utilities United Against Scams*



## 2025 Agralite Scholarships

Starting in 2016, Agralite Electric Cooperative created a post-secondary education scholarship program. This program is open to the four-county region 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. 1561500 These scholarship funds were made available in part through both unclaimed capital credits and administration proceeds from The Rural Economic Development Loan program.

Obtain applications on our website at [www.agralite.coop](http://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 4, 2025. 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](mailto:mchevalier@agralite.com)

### 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, 2025.

*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

## 2025 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.

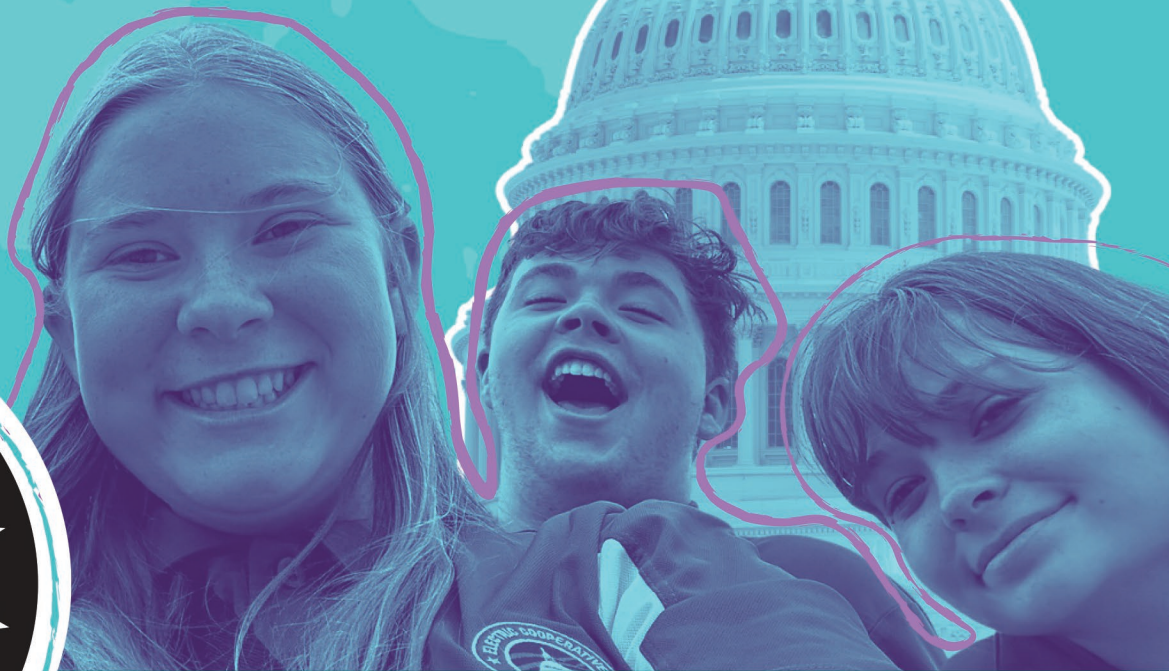
### How Do I Apply?

Obtain forms and applications from your school counselor, the Agralite Electric Cooperative office, or [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop).

The completed application and all other necessary information must be returned to Agralite Electric Cooperative:

**No later than February 14, 2025.**

# APPLY FOR A **TRIP OF A LIFETIME**



## JUNE 16 TO 21, 2025

AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

### WHAT IS YOUTH TOUR?

- An all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., paid for by Agralite Electric Cooperative.
- A week of visiting historic monuments, touring world class museums and meeting elected officials.
- Developing life-long friendships with delegates from across the country!

### HOW TO APPLY

- Applicants must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Agralite Electric Cooperative.
- The deadline to apply is February 14, 2025.

LEARN MORE AT [WWW.AGRALITE.COOP](http://WWW.AGRALITE.COOP)

**EMPOWER**



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

**AGRALITE**  
Electric Cooperative





## Operation Round Up Helps Local Organizations

The Operation Round Up Trust Board met on November 21st to review grant applications received. They reviewed and considered nine grant applications and a total of \$14,800 was distributed to eight of them.

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!

There is currently an open Board seat for District 1 (townships include: Prior, Almond, Malta, Otre, Big Stone, Ortonville, and Odessa). If you are interested in this position, please give our office a call!

## Load Control Notifications

Due to our current load control notification system no longer being supported, we are switching to notifications through SmartHub. To manage or receive load control notifications from Agralite Electric Cooperative, you will now need a SmartHub account.

### How to Set Up Load Control Notifications

Visit [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop), click on Pay Bill, and sign in (or create an account). If you haven't previously signed up for any notifications, you will need to take the following two steps:

1. **Add Contacts:** Under the Settings drop down menu, select Contact Methods. Add an email contact and/or a phone contact\*. Follow directions and enter the verification code where appropriate. You can set up as many as you'd like.
2. **Set Up Notifications:** Under the Settings drop down menu, select Manage Notifications. Select Reports, then choose Generators, Irrigation, and/or Residential LM Notice. Click Options and select the contact(s) you wish to receive load control notifications.

You can also download the SmartHub app and follow these steps on your phone or tablet.

Our current load control notification system will no longer be active effective 1/1/25. Please contact our office at 320-843-4150 if you have any questions.

# 6 TIPS For Year-Round ENERGY SAVINGS

- 1 Use a ceiling fan counter-clockwise in the summer for a down breeze, and clockwise in the winter for an updraft to force warm air down into your room.
- 2 Turn off lights and unplug chargers and electronics when not in use.
- 3 Regularly change or clean your furnace and indoor AC filters as recommended. Keep the area around your outdoor AC unit clear of obstructions.
- 4 Close or lower window coverings to keep out the heat or cold.
- 5 Insulate your home and weatherproof windows and doors.
- 6 Use a programmable or smart thermostat. Adjust the temperature a few degrees for overall savings.

Get more tips on creating a resilient and efficient home:

**Safe Electricity.org**

## Efficiency Tip

Seal in comfort and savings with weatherstripping. Check for air leaks around your windows and doors and install weatherstripping where needed. Prevent drafts to reduce energy loss and lower your heating and cooling bills, improving energy efficiency year-round.

**Safe Electricity.org**

*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).

## 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 2024

Board Chairman Warren Rau called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., November 27, 2024. 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 #572, Work Order #573, and October Special Equipment were approved.

Stephanie Wrobleski, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed margins for the month of October. She discussed the Energy Assistance Program, the Revenue Deferral Plan, and the Eide Bailly Engagement Letter.

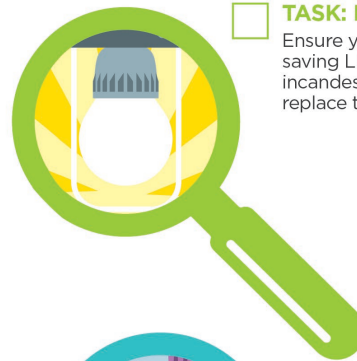
The financials were given by Stephanie with a PowerPoint presentation.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on the activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month. He discussed the headquarters project, changes to load control notifications, and distributed energy calls pertaining to solar. He reported on the Operation Round Up meeting that was held November 21st. He discussed a donation request from Prairie Playhouse Childcare Center. The request was tabled to gather more information.

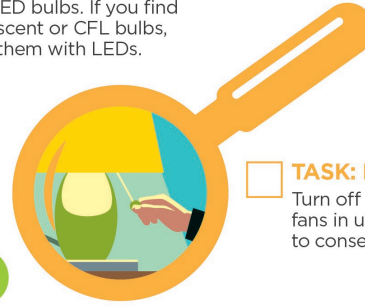
Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed line crew projects and outages

## ENERGY SAVINGS SCAVENGER HUNT

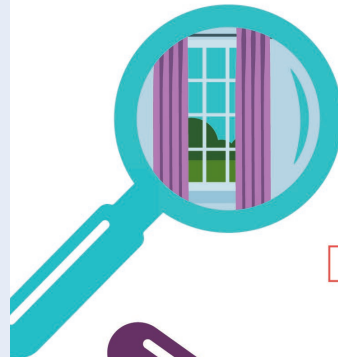
Saving energy at home is a great way to help the environment (and save money). With the help of an adult, look for ways you can save energy around your home. Use the tips below to get started, then check off the areas where you've identified ways to save!



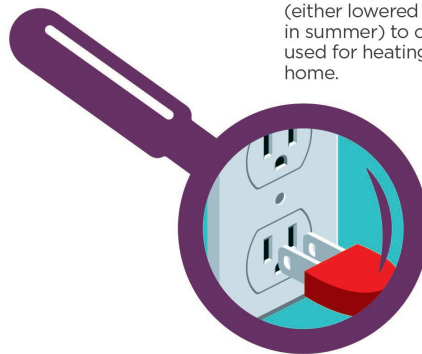
- TASK: Bright Ideas**  
Ensure your home uses energy-saving LED bulbs. If you find incandescent or CFL bulbs, replace them with LEDs.



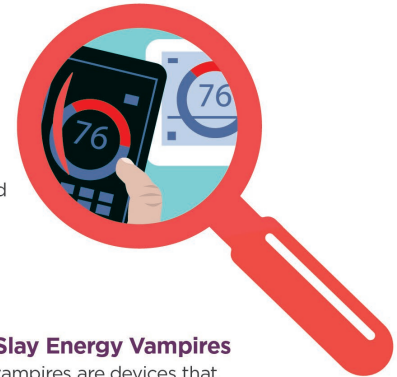
- TASK: Empty Rooms**  
Turn off lights and ceiling fans in unoccupied rooms to conserve energy.



- TASK: Sealed for Savings**  
Check windows to make sure they are closed and locked. Sealed windows help prevent air leaks, which saves energy.



- TASK: Set to Save**  
Check the thermostat to see if it can be adjusted a few degrees (either lowered in winter or raised in summer) to conserve energy used for heating or cooling your home.



- TASK: Slay Energy Vampires**  
Energy vampires are devices that consume energy even when they're not being used. Unplug these items, like phone chargers and tablets, when you're not using them.

for the month. He said he held interviews for the open lineman position on November 26th and 27th. 744101 He discussed the new headquarters building project.

Tom gave the safety report.

Board Policies 601-610 were reviewed and approved by the Board.

The 2025 Budget and Work Plan was approved by the Board.

The 2025 Update of the 2023 Basin Load Forecast was approved by the Board.

Alison Deelstra, CFC Regional Vice President, joined the meeting to give a PowerPoint presentation on the 2023 Key Ratio Trend Analysis.

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed

the new headquarters building project. There was a discussion on Distributed Energy. She discussed recent meetings she attended including the East River Managers Meeting, REED Board Meeting, WAPA meeting, and the GRE Managers Meeting.

The 2025 Board Meeting dates were discussed. The September meeting was set for September 29th, the November meeting was set for November 26th, and the December meeting was set for December 30th. All others will be on the last Thursday of the month.

The December board meeting was set for the 27th.

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