

Photo: Larry Syverson, January Calendar Photo Contest Winner

NEWSLETTER

January 2026

A Fresh Start And A Thank You *by Jenny Stryhn, General Manager*

As we step into a new year, I want to begin by expressing our sincere gratitude for your patience and cooperation during the blizzard conditions that we experienced on November 25th and 26th. Strong winds, snow, and ice brought white-out conditions, impassible roadways, conductor issues, and trees down across our system. Our crews restored outages as quickly as possible when they were able to do so in a safe manner.

Looking Ahead: 2026 Rate Updates

As we move forward into 2026, we also want to be transparent about the rate adjustments that will take effect later this spring. As we have mentioned, cost increases on equipment, insurances, and plant buildouts have all played a part in these increases. For Agralite Electric Cooperative, our total cost of power is our biggest overall expense. It accounts for over 63% of our total expenses for 2025, and continues to rise. We understand that any increase impacts your household or business, which is why we are committed to being clear about the reasons behind these changes. Next month, we will review the updated rates that will allow us to strengthen our infrastructure, maintain reliable service and continue investing in the improvements needed to serve you well, especially during the extreme weather events like the one we recently experienced.

Our Commitment to You

As always, our priority is to provide dependable service and effective communication. In the coming months, we will work to keep our system strong, efficient, and prepared for whatever the new year brings. We look forward to working for you to ensure a strong and steady 2026!



Operation Round Up Helps Local Organizations



The Operation Round Up Trust Board met on November 12th to review grant applications received. They reviewed and considered 17 grant applications and distributed funds to 15 of them, totaling \$16,700. 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. 1350400 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!

EMPOWERING communities

with innovative and sustainable energy solutions

FOR OVER

85 YEARS

CONTENTS

PAGE 1 ► A Fresh Start And A Thank You, Operation Round Up Helps Local Organizations

PAGE 2 ► Save Money With A DIY Home Energy Audit, Find Your Account Number And Win, Energy Saving Tip

PAGE 3 ► Save Money With A DIY Home Energy Audit Cont., Tips to Avoid Energy Scams, 2026 Youth Tour

PAGE 4 ► 2026 Youth Tour Flyer

PAGE 5 ► 2026 Agralite Scholarships, 2026 Basin Scholarship, Cold Weather Rule

PAGE 6 ► Board Meeting Minutes, Pop Quiz Electrical Terms Activity

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:

8:00AM – 4:30PM



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

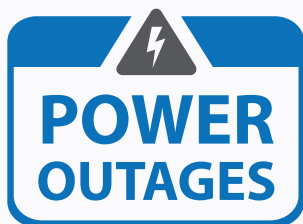
to Mark Janachovsky for finding his account number in the November newsletter.

Energy Saving Tip:



Winter weather can cause your home heating system to work overtime. 1587600

Check for air leaks and drafts around doors and windows. Next, seal them with weatherstripping or caulk. Close fireplace dampers when not in use, and consider installing insulating curtains to help keep warm air inside. You can also save energy by lowering your thermostat a few degrees.



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, and Mastercard.

Save Money With A DIY Home Energy Audit

Want to cut costs and make your home more comfortable? A DIY home energy audit can uncover hidden energy drains like leaky windows, drafty ducts, and inefficient appliances. Identifying trouble spots now can set you up for savings and comfort year-round.

Your Step-By-Step Efficiency Guide

Before you dive in, grab a few basic tools: flashlight, dust mask, tape measure and something to take notes (your phone works great!). We'll start with simple, no-cost changes you can do right away, then move on to tasks that take a little more effort.

Step 1: Adjust Your Thermostat

- Revisit your thermostat settings each season. Lowering the temperature at night or when no one is home is a simple way to cut costs.
- Use a smart thermostat for even greater savings. It automatically adjusts based on your schedule.
- Check with your utility provider for rebates or discounts on smart thermostat upgrades.

Step 2: Lower Water Heater Temperature

- Lower your water heater temperature to save money and reduce the risk of scalding burns. Some water heaters are factory-set to 140 F, but most households only need 120 F.

Step 3: Find And Fix Energy Vampires

- Shut off energy vampires — devices that draw electricity even when turned off. This idle load can account for 23% of your home's energy use.
- Unplug appliances when not in use and fully power down devices like computers or gaming consoles.
- Use a smart power strip to shut off multiple electronics at once — it's an easy way to stop energy waste at the source.

Step 4: Check Your Lighting

- Swap out older bulbs, like incandescent or CFLs, for LEDs. They use less energy and last longer. Lighting can account for about 10% of your electric bill.
- Add dimmers or timers to cut down on wasted electricity.
- Don't overlook outdoor fixtures. Choose LEDs with features like daylight shut-off or motion sensors for even more savings.

Step 5: Review Major Appliances

- Look for the ENERGY STAR label when buying new. If your refrigerator, washer, dryer, or heat pump is more than 10 years old, it may be worth replacing rather than repairing. Newer appliances are more energy-efficient and can often pay for themselves in savings within a few years.
- Check your heating and cooling systems. Their lifespan can range from 10-30 years depending on the type and maintenance. If your system is older, start planning ahead for an upgrade.
- Replace air filters to keep your system running efficiently.

Step 6: Seal Leaks

Air leaks can waste 10-20% of your home's energy each year, but they're often simple to fix. Here's where to look and how to seal them.

- Check baseboards, floor edges and wall-to-ceiling joints indoors.
- Focus on where different materials meet outdoors.
- Pay special attention to windows, doors, light fixtures, plumbing, and outlets.
- Use caulk for gaps around windows, doors, and baseboards.
- Add weatherstripping to doors and operable windows.

Article continues on page 3

Save Money With A DIY Home Energy Audit *Continued*

Step 7: Inspect Insulation

Check Attic Insulation:

- Grab your dust mask and tape measure to check the depth of the insulation. It should be at least 12 inches deep, but you may need more depending on the type and your climate. Check EnergyStar.gov for recommended R-values.
- Spread insulation evenly. Loose-fill or blown-in insulation should be fluffy with even coverage, while rolled batt insulation should fit snugly with no gaps.

Inspect Exterior Walls:

- Check insulation by turning off the power, removing an outlet cover or switch plate and shining a flashlight into the cavity. Many homes built before the 1960s have little to no insulation, and houses from the 1960s-70s often need more. 1411500
- Call a professional to blow in insulation (from the outside or inside) if wall insulation is missing.

Don't Forget The Basement:

- Ensure rim joists (the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the first floor) are well insulated in unfinished basements.
- Insulate the underside of the floor between the joists in crawl spaces.
- Add insulation to pipes and ductwork for an extra efficiency boost.

Enjoy Your Energy Savings!

Congratulations! You've taken important first steps toward lowering your energy bills and boosting comfort. Want to go further? A professional home energy audit can provide a complete plan to reduce waste, maximize savings, and make your home more efficient year-round. Contact us at 320-843-4150 to learn more.

2026 Youth Tour

Every generation leaves behind a legacy, footprints that shape the future. The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is your chance to do the same. For over 60 years, electric cooperatives have sent high school students to Washington, D.C., to discover their voice, step into history, and begin writing the story only they can tell.

This once-in-a-lifetime experience isn't just about seeing the nation's capital. It's about preparing students to lead, to grow, and to make their mark on the world.

What's In It For Students?

Delegates from Minnesota will join more than 1,800 students from across the country in Washington, D.C., June 15-20, 2026. During the trip, students will:

- Develop leadership skills through hands-on experiences and workshops
- Strengthen their resumés with a nationally recognized program that stands out to colleges and employers
- Connect with peers from 44 states, building friendships that last long after the trip
- Meet with elected officials and learn how government impacts their communities
- Experience history up close by visiting world-class museums and monuments
- Learn about cooperatives and how they support rural communities across the US

The best part? All expenses—travel, lodging, meals, and program costs—are covered by Agralite Electric Cooperative. The program is coordinated by Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Don't Let This Opportunity Pass By

Applications for Youth Tour will close February 6th, 2026. If you know a high school student who is ready to grow as a leader and take the next step in their journey, encourage them to apply today. For more details, visit our website at www.agralite.coop. This is more than a trip—it's a chance to leave your mark.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Beware of “winter bill relief” energy scams. Scammers often exploit high winter bills by offering fake discount or relief programs. They may ask for upfront payments or personal details to lower your rate. Legitimate utilities never demand gift cards, wire transfers, or payment through apps like PayPal or Venmo.

Always verify offers directly by calling your utility's phone number located on your energy bill. Do not call any phone numbers provided in a suspicious email or text.

Remember to take time to confirm before you pay; real savings programs won't pressure you for immediate action.



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.

APPLY FOR A **TRIP OF A LIFETIME**



JUNE 15 - 20, 2026

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 6, 2026.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.AGRALITE.COOP

EMPOWER



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

AGRALITE
Electric Cooperative



2026 Agralite Scholarships



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 eight \$2,000 scholarships. 471600 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 3, 2026. 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

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, 2026.

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



2026 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 20, 2026.

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 2025

Board Chairman Warren Rau called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., November 26, 2025. 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 #589, Work Order #590, and October Special Equipment were approved.

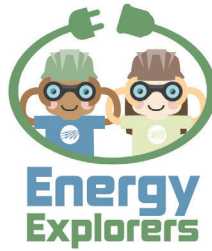
Jenny gave an update on the winter storm and power outages.

Jenny Stryhn reported on activities of the Finance department for the month. She discussed margins for the month of October. She discussed the 457b Plan Amendment and Resolution and the Board approved it. She discussed updates to Policy 506 Sick Leave and the Board approved it. She discussed updates to Policy 507 Leaves of Absence Without Pay and the Board approved it. She discussed new Policy 527 Paid Family & Medical Leave and the Board approved it.

The financials were given by Jenny with a PowerPoint presentation.

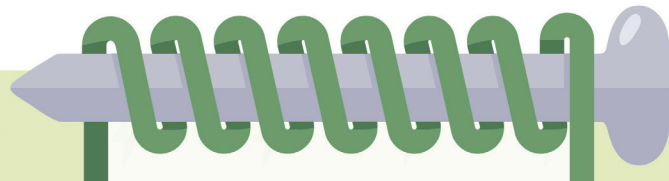
Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month. He discussed the Briggs generator program.

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 gave an update on the



POP QUIZ Electricity Terms

How well do you know terms related to electricity? Test your knowledge! **Read the definitions below. Then, look at the word bank to match the correct terms to the definitions.** You can only use the words once, so choose carefully. Check your work in the answer key.



Word Bank:

Conductor	Circuit	Insulator
Volt (Voltage)	Static Electricity	

1. A complete path that electricity flows through.

2. Something that allows electricity to pass through, such as metal or wire.

3. The standard unit of measurement for electricity.

4. Something that does not allow electricity to pass through easily, such as rubber.

5. Electricity build-up caused by rubbing two surfaces together.



Answer Key:
1. Circuit 2. Conductor
3. Volt (Voltage)
4. Insulator
5. Static Electricity

Hodges and Darnen substations. He gave an update on the outages from the previous day's snow storm.

Tom gave the safety report. He also reported on the RESAP Evaluation Summary.

Ben Bratrud, Financial Consultant with Power System Engineering, joined the meeting and gave a presentation on Agralite's Cost of Service and Rate Update.

Randy Schmidt and Blane Walberg, Engineers from STAR Energy Services, joined the meeting and gave a presentation on Agralite's 2026-2040 Long Range Plan and 2026-2029 Construction Work Plan and the Board adopted them.

There was a discussion on Policy 108 Directors' Fees and Expenses and the Board approved updates to the policy.

The 2026 Budget and Work Plan came before the Board and was approved with an April 2026 Rate Change.

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed the Federal government shutdown. She discussed recent meetings she attended including the East River Managers Meeting and GRE Managers Meeting. She discussed the Strategic Planning session that was held the previous week.

The December board meeting was set for the 30th.

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