



Cover Photo: Laura Loen, June Calendar Photo Contest Winner

# Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

June 2021

## Suds and Savings - 10 Ways To Save Energy In The Laundry Room

Your clothes washer and dryer account for a significant portion of energy consumption from major appliances, and let's face it--laundry is no one's favorite chore. Make the most of your laundry energy use! There are several easy ways you can save energy (and money) in the laundry room.

*The Department of Energy recommends the following tips for saving on suds:*

- 1 Wash with cold water.** Switching from warm water to cold water can cut one load's energy use by more than half, and by using a cold-water detergent, you can still achieve that brilliant clean you'd normally get from washing in warm water.
- 2 Wash full loads when possible.** Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy no matter the size of the clothes load, so fill it up if you can.
- 3 Use the high-speed or extended spin cycle when washing.** This setting will remove more moisture before drying, reducing your drying time and the extra wear on clothing.
- 4 Dry heavier cottons separately.** Loads will dry faster and more evenly if you separate heavier cottons like linens and towels from your lightweight clothing.
- 5 Make use of the "cool down" cycle.** If your dryer has this cycle option, you can save energy because the clothes will finish drying with the remaining heat in the dryer.
- 6 Use lower heat settings to dry clothing.** Regardless of drying time, you'll still use less energy.
- 7 Use dryer balls.** Dryer balls, usually wool or rubber, will help keep clothes separated for faster drying, and they can help reduce static, so you can eliminate dryer sheets.
- 8 Switch loads while the dryer is warm.** This allows you to take advantage of the remaining heat from the previous cycle.
- 9 Clean the lint filter after each drying cycle.** If you use dryer sheets, remember to scrub the filter once a month with a toothbrush to remove excess buildup.
- 10 Purchase ENERGY STAR®-rated washers and dryers.** When it's time to purchase a new washer or dryer, look for the ENERGY STAR® label. New washers and dryers that receive the ENERGY STAR® rating use about 20% less energy than conventional models.

To learn about additional ways you can save energy at home, visit the Department of Energy's home efficiency page, [www.energy.gov/energysaver](http://www.energy.gov/energysaver).

## EMPOWERING

communities with  
innovative, sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

# 75 YEARS

## CONTENTS

Page 1 ► Suds and Savings

Page 2 ► Manager's Article, Find Your Account Number And Win, Energy Tip, Annual Meeting Save The Date, Agralite Issuing 1.5 Million In Capital Credit Checks

Page 3 ► Preventing Electric Shock Drowning

Page 4 ► Take Cover When A Storm Is Brewing

Page 5 ► Brownouts: What Are They, And Why Do They Happen?, \$25 Million To Members: Great River Energy Returns Patronage Capital

Page 6 ► April 2021 Board Meeting Minutes, Energy Explorers Crossword

## Agralite Electric Cooperative

*We're member-owned!*

320 US-12, Benson, MN  
(320) 843-4150  
1-800-950-8375  
[www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop)

 Like us on Facebook



Closed July 5



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:



**A dirty filter causes your air conditioner to work harder than necessary. 1204501**

Remember to change your air filter every month (or every two months) to prevent dust buildup, which can lead to even bigger problems.

Source: [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)

## Agralite Members: Save The Date!

**2021**  
**ANNUAL**  
**MEETING**

**June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

### Manager's Article by Kory Johnson, General Manager

It is annual meeting time! On Monday, June 21st, Agralite will hold the annual meeting of the membership. This is an opportunity for the owners of the cooperative to hear reports from the cooperative and results of the elections and ballot questions. You will be receiving an official notice of the annual meeting in a separate mailing a couple weeks prior to the meeting outlining the details for the meeting. Included for all members in the packet will be a ballot question relating to updates to the bylaws of the cooperative. After reviewing the bylaws with the cooperative attorney, the board has discussed the recommended changes and voted to recommend for membership approval of the changes. Areas that have recommended changes are:

*Article II, Section 1, Annual Meeting - would allow the board to hold the annual meeting in an electronic, virtual, or other format that would allow the membership to hear or receive information and the participation in these formats would constitute attendance at the meeting. This change is being recommended as a result of the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*Article II, Section 5, Quorum – clarifies that for a ballot issue before the membership, voting by mail or persons present in person would count towards a quorum.*

*Add Article X to the bylaws entitled Arbitration. Arbitration, a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), is a way to resolve disputes outside the judiciary courts. The dispute will be decided by one neutral arbitrator for amounts estimated to be less than \$250,000 and three neutral arbitrators for amounts estimated to be greater than \$250,000. An arbitration decision or award is legally binding on both sides and enforceable in the courts.*

Please feel free to contact myself or any of the Board of Directors if you have questions concerning these bylaw revisions. A complete listing of changes to the bylaws will be included in the ballots mailed to the members. All members of the cooperative will receive a mail-in ballot to vote on the bylaw changes.

Also, this year the directors in District 1 and District 2 will be up for election. Members in district 1 or 2 will have a ballot for the election of a board members. Reminder: All Agralite elections are by mail in ballot or drop off at the office prior to the meeting. Ballots are not accepted at the meeting.

Tentatively, the annual meeting will be an in-person event at the new fine arts facility at the Benson Senior High School. This will be subject to change per the current status of COVID-19 restrictions at the time. As I mentioned earlier, please take note of the meeting details at the time the official notice and ballots are mailed. I hope to see many of you in person on Monday evening, June 21st.

### Agralite Issuing 1.5 Million In Capital Credit Checks

Your Board of Directors has authorized the return of approximately \$1.5 million dollars in capital credits to members who purchased electricity during the 1980s, 1995, 1996 and 2013. For eligible active members of the cooperative, capital credits of \$20.00 or less will be issued as a credit on your May electric bill that is sent out the first part of June. You will see this credit as a separate line item on your bill. For members whose capital credit refunds are greater than \$20.00 and are current on their electric bill, a check has been issued. Whether we return it to you in the form of a bill credit or a check, you can see the value of membership!

As a cooperative, Agralite allocates capital credits each year. At the end of the fiscal year, your capital credit amount allocated for the year is listed on your monthly bill. Capital credits are normally retained by the cooperative for a number of years and used as operating capital. Once the Board of Directors deems appropriate, they approve the refund of these capital credits. As a member owner of Agralite Electric Cooperative, you get money back. After the 2020 capital credit payout this year, Agralite will have returned over \$12 million in capital credits to its members. That's the power of the cooperative membership!



## Preventing Electric Shock Drowning by Carl Henning (CLCP), Star Energy Services

Electric Shock Drowning (ESD) is the result of the passage of a typically low-level AC current through the body with sufficient force to cause skeletal muscular paralysis, rendering the victim unable to react, while immersed in fresh water, eventually resulting in drowning of the victim. Higher levels of AC current in the water will also result in electrocution. Electric Shock Drowning (ESD) has become the catch all phrase that encompasses all in-water shock casualties and fatalities.

Although Electric Shock Drowning can occur virtually in any location where electricity is provided near water, the majority of Electric Shock Drowning deaths have occurred in public and private marinas and docks. 1638400 The typical victim is a child swimming in or around a marina or dock where electricity is present; it can also be someone working on their boat or dock using electricity.

In the typical scenario, the victim's muscles become paralyzed by the electrical current, he or she is unable to swim, and ultimately drowns. Unless there is a witness nearby to experience and report the sensation of electric shock in the water, the victim's death is typically labeled a common drowning. In the vast majority of Electric Shock Drownings, the victim's autopsy shows no signs of electrical injury and investigators often never learn that electricity was the cause of the drowning.

Faulty wiring or use of damaged electrical cords or devices not approved as "shore or marine rated" can cause the surrounding water to become energized from electricity leakage.

### How To Avoid Electric Shock Drowning

- Obey all "No swimming signs".
- NEVER swim near a marina or near a boat when it's running.
- If you feel any tingling sensations while in the water, tell someone and swim back in the direction from which you came. Immediately report it to the dock or marina owner.

### How To Respond To A Potential Electric Shock Drowning Situation

- Do not enter the water! Call 911 or VHF Channel 16 immediately.
- If possible, turn off all nearby power sources.
- Take extreme caution when removing the victim from the water.
- If the victim does not have a pulse and is not breathing, begin CPR or use an (AED) Artificial Electrical Defibrillator if available.

### Electric Safety Tips For Boat Operators

- Always maintain a distance of at least 10 feet between your boat and nearby power lines.
- Have your boat's electrical system inspected and upgraded by a certified marine electrician regularly to be sure they meet local and state NEC, NFPA, and ABYC safety code and standards.
- Have Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI) installed on your boat and insist that your marina/dock owners have them installed on the dock. Test them once a month.
- Use "UL- Marine Listed" portable GFCIs when using electricity near water. They decrease the chances of shock or electrocution.
- Consider having Equipment Leakage Circuit Interrupters (ELCI) installed on you boat to protect swimmers from potential electricity leakage into water surrounding your boat.
- Only use shore or marine power cords, plugs, receptacles, and extension cords tested by Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or ETL SEMKO (ETL). They are specifically designed to keep you safe when using them near water.
- Never use cords that are frayed, damaged or have had the prongs removed or altered. Damaged cords exposed to water could result in electrical shock or electrocution.
- If you question the safety of your boat's electrical system, immediately turn off the power supply at the electrical panel and do not turn it back on until it has been checked by a qualified electrician.

# ELECTRIC SHOCK DROWNING

## THE UNKNOWN DANGER LURKING IN THE WATER



Docks and boats carry sources of **electricity**. Faulty wiring or the use of damaged electrical cords and other devices can cause the surrounding water to become **energized**. NEVER swim near a marina or near a boat while it's running.



There is **no visible warning** to electrified water.



Electric current in the water causes the **paralysis of muscles** which results in **drowning**.



The 2017 NEC now **requires** marinas and boatyards to have **ground-fault protection** to help prevent water electrification. Check to see if your marina, and the boats in the marina, have proper **GFCI protection**.



As little as **10 milliamps**, 1/50th the amount used by a 60 watt light bulb, can cause **paralysis** and **drowning**.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE ELECTRIC SHOCK DROWNING TAKING PLACE

1



Turn power **off**.

2



Throw a **life ring**.

3



Call 911.

4



**NEVER enter the water** or you could become a victim too.



The 2017 National Electrical Code **requires** marinas and boat docks to post electric shock **warning signs** where electricity is used **near water**.



**30** Around 30 people are **killed** each year from lightning strikes.

**TOP 3**   
sports-related lightning fatalities  
1) Soccer 2) Golf 3) Running



**2/3** of lightning fatalities are associated with outdoor **recreational activities**.



## SEEK SHELTER

In a four-sided building or an enclosed hardtop vehicle at the first sight of lightning.



**WAIT 30 minutes**

...after the **last rumble** of thunder before heading back outside.

 **Safe Electricity.org**®

Source National Weather Service, NOAA

## Take Cover When A Storm Is Brewing

Sometimes a storm pops up or changes direction without any warning. Other times it is forecast days in advance and follows its predicted course. In either case, knowing what to do right before, during and after a storm can help to keep you safe.

### When A Storm Hits

*When storms roll in, follow these weather-related reminders from FEMA and the Red Cross:*

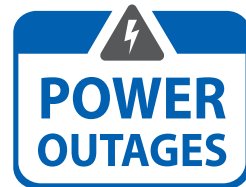
- Never seek shelter under an isolated tree, tower or utility pole, since lightning tends to strike tall objects.
- Immediately vacate elevated areas such as hills and mountain ridges and peaks.
- Get away from ponds, lakes and other bodies of water.
- Stay away from objects that conduct electricity, including wires and fences (and golf clubs!). (Approximately 5 percent of annual lightning deaths and injuries in the United States happen on golf courses, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.)
- Never lie flat on the ground. 915602
- Pick a safe place in your home, away from windows and doors, for family members to gather during a thunderstorm.
- Know the difference between a watch and a warning for extreme weather such as a tornado or severe thunderstorm. A watch means extreme weather is possible in and near the area. A warning means that severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. A warning is more serious than a watch and means that there is imminent danger to life and property.

### After The Storm

*Once the storm is over, follow these safety tips from Safe Electricity:*

- Never step into a flooded basement or other standing water. The water could be covering electrical outlets, appliances or cords. Never touch (or use) electrical appliances, cords, wires or switches while you are wet or standing in water.
- After a storm, a downed power line could be covered by standing water or debris. Never go near a downed line and warn others to stay away. If you see a downed power line, call 9-1-1, and a crew will be dispatched to de-energize the power and address the problem safely.
- The same safety know-how applies to a downed power line you might encounter while driving or after an auto accident. In either case, do not get out. Instead, call 9-1-1 to report the downed line (pull over first if you are driving). If you must exit your vehicle after an accident because of a fire or smoke, make a solid, clean jump out, landing with both feet together. Then make solid hops with your feet together, hopping as far away as you can.
- If your home has been damaged by a flood, turn off the power to your house if it is safe to do so. (Do not turn power off at the breaker box while standing in water or in damp conditions.)
- If the wiring, electrical system or appliances have been damaged by water, have your home inspected by an electrician; also, have appliances serviced by a qualified technician before using them.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org).



**Call Day or Night**  
**1.888.884.3887**

Do not call the office for outages

May Energy Payment  
is due June 20.\*

\*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

## Brownouts: What Are They, And Why Do They Happen?

The lights flicker and dim. The television suddenly reboots. Your computer screen goes dark. As soon as you start to wonder when or if you clicked save, the lights become brighter and everything seems to return to normal; except, perhaps, that document you were working on.

When these events occur simultaneously, it could mean that you have experienced a brownout, which gets its name from the way incandescent light bulbs dim and the light appears brown. But what exactly is a brownout, and how is it different from a blackout—also known as a power outage?

Where a blackout is a complete shutdown of power, a brownout means that energy is reduced by 10 to 25%. Brownouts typically occur when outdoor temperatures are extreme, causing a significant spike in energy demand. This heightened demand can cause electricity production to be near or at capacity. The opposite action, a temporary reduction in the voltage of electricity (a brownout), can help avoid a total shutdown of the electrical system.

Brownouts can also be caused by a transmission issue, damage somewhere in the power delivery infrastructure or an issue in your home.

### When energy demand is at its highest, Agralite Electric Cooperative and Safe Electricity recommend:

- Unplugging computers and high-end electronics to protect them from potential damage caused by power sags and surges. As a rule, these types of devices cannot regulate the amount of power they receive.
- Installing point-of-use surge protectors. This type of affordable surge protector plugs directly into an outlet and works by cutting the power when excessive voltage is detected. While most appliances are typically unscathed by dips and eventual surges in voltage levels caused by a brownout, damage can happen, and these devices add a layer of protection.
- Considering a whole-home surge protector, which helps protect all your home's electrical devices. While more of an investment than the plug-in variety, it works by diverting power from appliances and electronics through a home's grounding wires. It can also help protect appliances from spikes related to lightning strikes and other electrical issues. This type of whole-home protection should be installed by a qualified electrician directly into your home's electrical panel.
- Unplugging unessential appliances. Taking this simple step can help reduce the amount of power your home uses. If done in multiple homes, it may help shorten the length of the brownout.
- Being prepared for an outage. Unfortunately, brownouts are not always successful in reducing the load. Keep your home stocked with flashlights, batteries, water, non-perishable food and other emergency items in the event of an extended power outage.

## \$25 Million To Members: Great River Energy Returns Patronage Capital

Electric cooperatives aren't like other utilities. The members are not only customers, they own a portion of the business.

Great River Energy is owned by 28 distribution cooperatives. Cooperatives operate at cost, only collecting enough revenue to run the business. When there's excess revenue collected, it's returned to members through patronage capital payments.

That's what occurred in March when Great River Energy issued \$25 million in patronage capital payments to member-owners.

Cooperatives hold onto allocated capital credits to cover emergencies and to make necessary enhancements to their electric systems. It is an important financial mechanism that reduces the need to raise rates or borrow money to pay for infrastructure.

Great River Energy's board of directors sets a target to maintain an equity to capitalization ratio of 20%. Anything above that is returned to members through cash payments.

Great River Energy began issuing these payments to member-owners in 2019, after spending over a decade slowly building its equity to capitalization ratio to 20%. 65100

"This year's payment is special," said Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Michelle Strobel. "For many years, we targeted 2021 for our first patronage capital payments. Instead, we accomplished our financial plan early and this year will make our third — and largest — payment to member-owners."

Returning patronage capital is a component of the cooperative principle known as "members' economic participation." Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. Cooperatives allocate surpluses for a variety of reasons, including periodic cash returns.

What is a  
**brownout?**

Safe  
Electricity.org®

A blackout is a  
complete shutdown of  
power. A **brownout**  
means that **energy is**  
**reduced by 10 to 25%.**



## 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 April 2021

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., April 29, 2021. 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 management and distributed energy. He stated that Operation Round Up donated \$1,450 to each of the four area food shelves in March for MN Food Share Month. He discussed the Agralite scholarship program. Director Thomson and Director Nelson will be on the scholarship review committee. He showed a chart comparing cost of heat between all fuel types for the month of March. A discussion followed regarding renewable energy.

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's margins for the month of March. Jenny brought forth capital credit disbursement options and the Board approved option 2 and to include Great River Energy's capital credit payment on the same check that will be mailed out to members in May. She discussed the workplan draw down. She stated that Stephanie Wroblewski was promoted to Senior Accountant and the opening for her old position, Customer Service Representative, will be posted internally and externally. She discussed the cooperative's 990 tax return. Jenny brought forth Special Equipment March 2021 and the Board approved it.

## SWIMMING POOL ELECTRICAL SAFETY CROSSWORD

Water and electricity never mix! When you're cooling off in the swimming pool, remember to practice electrical safety. Complete the pool safety crossword puzzle below.

*Hint: Check your answers in the key below.*



### 1 Down:

When possible, use \_\_\_\_\_ operated devices when outside near a swimming pool.

### 2 Across:

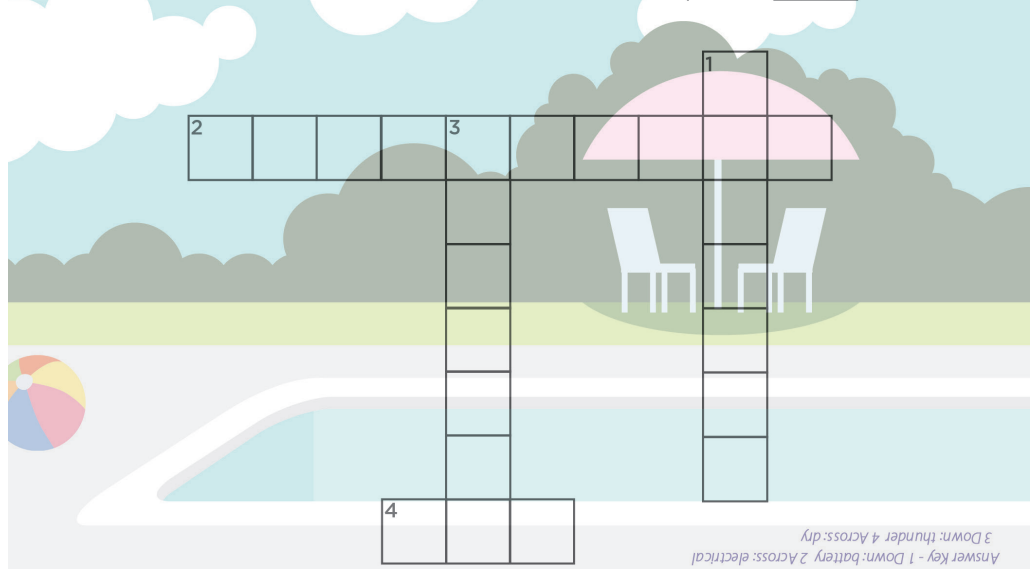
Never bring \_\_\_\_\_ devices near a swimming pool. If they come in contact with water, electric shock could occur. Devices should be kept at least 10 feet away from water sources.

### 3 Down:

If you hear \_\_\_\_\_, immediately exit the swimming pool. Storms may be near.

### 4 Across:

All outdoor electrical outlets should be covered to keep them \_\_\_\_\_.



Answer Key - 1 Down: thunder 2 Across: electrical 3 Down: battery 4 Across: dry

**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).

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 stated that Dustin Voorhees was hired as the new mechanic and he started on April 26th. He brought forth Quitclaim Deed for Highway 12 easements and the Board approved it.

Tom gave the safety report. Don Wilcox,

Agralite's attorney, joined the meeting.

An executive session was held.

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed meetings he attended. He and Jenny discussed the cost of service study.

The Board approved a donation to the Swift County Fair Office Project.

The May board meeting was set for the 27th. Being no further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.