



Photo: Julie Light, March Calendar Photo Contest Winner

## Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

March 2023

### Manager's Article by Jenny Stryhn

As your local electric cooperative, Agralite provides reliable, affordable electric power to our member-owners and the communities we serve. In January, the Minnesota State Legislature proposed a bill to transition all electricity sold in the state of Minnesota to be 80% carbon free by 2030 and 100% carbon-free by 2040. As initially written, the bill had potential to impact Agralite Electric Cooperative and the electric reliability and affordability of the 1.7 million members served by Minnesota's electric cooperatives.

In the Agralite newsletter last month, the cooperative announced that we partnered with Voices for Cooperative Power to speak up on legislative policies such as these impacting our member-owners. Through grassroots efforts among member-owners, the Minnesota Rural Electric Association and other cooperatives, our voices were heard. On February 7, Governor Walz signed legislation requiring Minnesota electric utilities to serve 100% of retail electric sales without carbon dioxide emissions by 2040. In total, five provisions were added to this legislation including lowering the 80% carbon free in 2030 to 60%. This is favorable to Minnesota electric cooperatives to help continue to provide reliable, affordable power to our members, no matter what the weather conditions may be.

Electric cooperatives were founded by individuals that were looking for their voice to be heard and to bring change to their rural communities. I encourage you to stay informed on future state and national issues that have the potential to impact your electric cooperative and the communities we call home by registering for Voices of Cooperative Power. As always, I thank you for your continued interest in your electric cooperative.



**SCAN ME TO  
LEARN MORE  
AND JOIN!**

**JOIN TODAY** **VCP** **Voices for  
Cooperative  
Power** United for Stronger  
Communities

**LOOKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN  
YOUR COMMUNITY AND FOR YOUR  
LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE? THEN  
JOIN VCP!**

VCP is a network of electric co-op  
members working together to influence  
public policy decisions that impact our  
co-ops and our way of life.

[VOICESFORCOOPERATIVEPOWER.COM](https://www.voicesforcooperativepower.com) | @VOICES4COOPS

## EMPOWERING

communities with  
innovative, sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

**75**  
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](http://www.agralite.coop)

Like us on Facebook



Touchstone Energy®  
Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.



## Find your account number and win a \$100 credit!

If your account number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) is one of the [four account numbers](#) hidden in this issue, give our office a call by the end of the month and you will receive a \$100 bill credit. If more than one member finds their account number in a single issue, \$100 will be split equally amongst them.

### Congratulations

to Debra Andrews & Randall Baker for finding their account numbers in our January issue.

### Energy Saving Tip:



**Washing windows and screens are great ways to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning.**

Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity.

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



**Call Day or Night  
1.888.884.3887**

[Do not call the office for outages](#)

**February Energy Payment  
is due March 20.\***

\*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

## Play It Safe: 10 Do's and Don'ts When Using Portable Generators



Storm season is upon us, which means greater potential for power outages. If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, Agralite Electric Cooperative reminds you to play it safe.

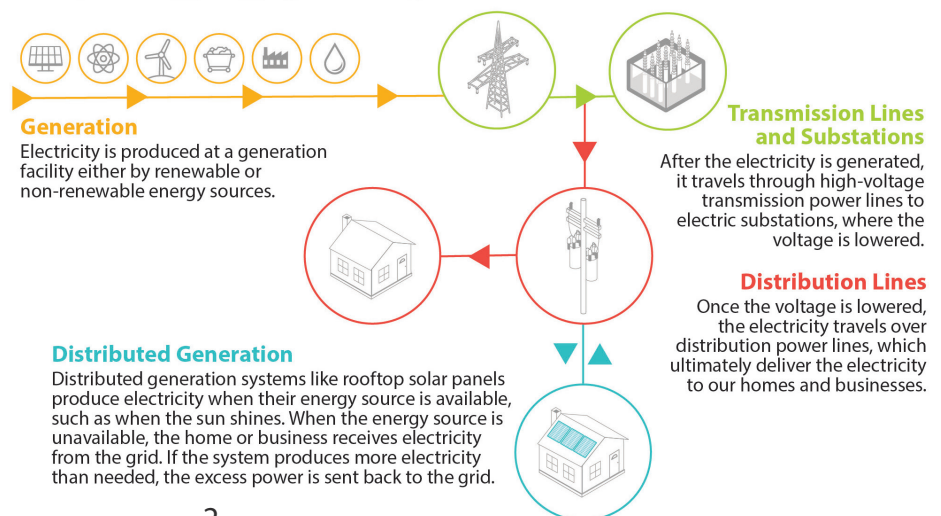
With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous. In a 2022 report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated 85 U.S. consumers die every year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators.

*Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:*

- 1 **DO:** Install backup CO alarms.
- 2 **DO:** Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.
- 3 **DO:** Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.
- 4 **DO:** Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to prevent electric shock injuries.
- 5 **DO:** Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. 878200 Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays or other damage before use.
- 6 **DON'T:** Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially-enclosed) space. Generators produce high levels of CO, which can be deadly.
- 7 **DON'T:** Open windows or doors while the generator is running.
- 8 **DON'T:** Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential equipment or appliances.
- 9 **DON'T:** Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.
- 10 **DON'T:** Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute utility lineworkers making repairs.

While generators provide convenience during power outages, they can quickly become hazardous—even deadly—if improperly operated. Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips. If you have questions about proper use of portable generators, we're here to help. Give us a call at 320-843-4150.

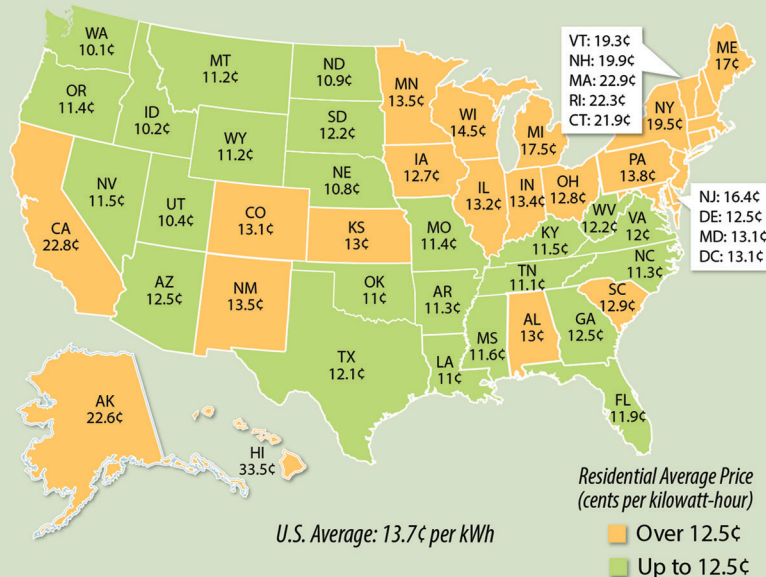
## HOW ELECTRICITY REACHES YOU





## Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2021 figures, in cents per kWh



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

Numbers rounded to nearest tenth of a cent

## COLD WEATHER RULE & ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NOTICE

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between October 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL of the following statements apply:

- Your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by Agralite Electric Cooperative or by the local energy assistance provider.
- You enter into and make reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from Agralite Electric Cooperative.

### Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects

Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between October 1 and April 30, Agralite Electric Cooperative must provide:

- A 30-day notice of disconnection;
- A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
- A list of local energy assistance providers;
- Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

### Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50% of the state median income (\$58,793 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2023.

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website, <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>, for more details and to access the application portal.
- Contact your county EAP service provider for additional information and assistance.
- Agralite Electric Cooperative exists because of you, and we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please contact our billing department to set up a payment plan.

Prairie 5 CAC 320-269-7976 West Central CAC 800-492-4805  
Heartland CAC 320-235-0850

## 2023 Agralite Scholarship Qualify? Please Apply!

Agralite Electric Cooperative will award two \$2,500, two \$1,000, and three \$500 scholarships. 928501 One of the \$2,500 scholarship awards is intended for individuals interested in becoming an electrical line worker or electrician. Scholarship funds are made available by unclaimed capital credits and administration proceeds from the Rural Economic Development Loan program.

The application can be found on the [agralite.coop](http://agralite.coop) website under the "Community" tab, from your school counselor, or in our office.

Applicants who applied for the Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship may also apply for the Agralite scholarship. NEW this year, winners will be drawn randomly pending a completed application.

Please return application to Agralite Electric Cooperative no later than **April 7, 2023**.

### Mail scholarship(s) to:

Agralite Electric Cooperative  
320 E Hwy 12, PO Box 228  
Benson, MN 56215

### Or email to:

[mchevalier@agralite.com](mailto:mchevalier@agralite.com)

### 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).

## Cogeneration - Annual Notification To Membership

In compliance with Agralite Electric Cooperative's adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, Agralite Electric Cooperative is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers, whom satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility.

Agralite Electric Cooperative is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales, and purchases are subject to resolution by the Agralite Electric Cooperative Board.

You can find all of our Cogeneration information on our website at [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop).

Interested members should contact Agralite Electric Cooperative, 320 E Hwy 12 PO Box 228, Benson, MN 56215 or call 320-843-4150.

## 2023 Residential Rebates

### ENERGY STAR® Appliance

\$75 for Refrigerator or Freezer  
(must recycle old one)  
\$25 Electric Dryer  
\$25 for Dehumidifier

### Battery-Powered Yard Tools

Lawn Mower: \$50  
Snow Blower: \$50  
Chainsaw: \$25  
Leaf Blower: \$25  
Trimmer or Weed Whip: \$25  
Check out our website for a full listing of our 2023 rebates:  
[www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop)



## Only Certified Workers Can Trim Trees Near Power Lines

Can anyone trim trees near power lines? The answer is no. Specialized tree trimmers, certified by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in utility clearance, are the only persons legally allowed to trim within 10 feet of power lines.

OSHA requires this certification because electricity is a serious and widespread hazard to tree workers. According to the Tree Care Industry Association, electricity is the leading cause of death in the tree care industry, causing about 15 percent of all industry fatalities. Tree care industry workers do not have to directly contact a power line to be electrocuted; about half of all electrocution fatalities are the result of indirect contact.

Qualified line-clearance trimmers must be specially trained to safely work in proximity to energized lines. They must understand how an electrical grid functions, the effects of tree growth patterns and tree damage and how to implement directional pruning, as required by the American National Standard for Arboricultural Operations' safety standards.

According to OSHA, the duties of line-clearance certified tree trimmers typically include:

- Undergoing annual evaluations by licensed professionals to ensure continuous adherence to industry best practices.
- Requesting job briefings from employers and other crew members before starting a job or when environmental conditions change.
- Properly wearing approved personal protective equipment, including fall protection equipment when needed.
- Complying with material handling and mechanical equipment requirements.
- Working with a second line-clearance tree trimmer within voice range.
- Determining the voltages of lines before work begins or assuming that the line is operating at the highest possible voltage if it is not possible to determine voltage.
- Ensuring body parts and any ladders, platforms or aerial devices being used remain outside the minimum approach distance from any energized equipment.
- Using only insulated tools and equipment to remove branches and limbs that are in contact with, or are within the minimum approach distance of, energized lines or equipment.
- Determining if weather conditions are no longer safe to work in, such as the presence of high winds, ice, thunder or lightning that would make the work hazardous.
- Beginning work on storm restoration efforts in the aftermath of a storm if they have been trained in the special hazards involved with this type of work.

Please contact Agralite if you have any questions about line-clearance tree trimmers or tree trimming near power lines. [For information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.](http://SafeElectricity.org)



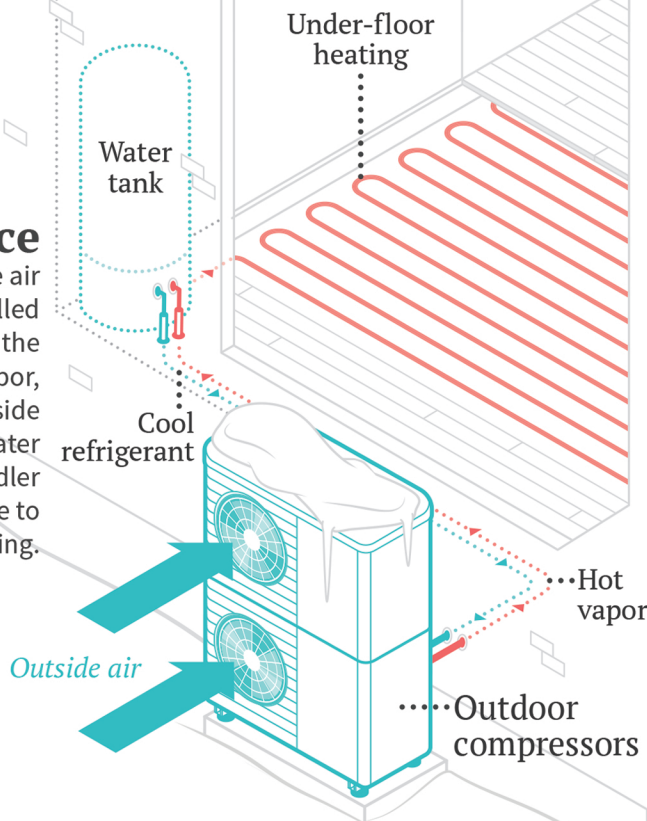


# Heat Pumps

Widening consumer understanding of beneficial electrification is creating a groundswell of interest in everything from electric vehicles to induction stoves. Among the appliances getting particular attention are heat pumps, which can efficiently condition a space by transferring heat or cold from the air or ground. They're not a new technology, but recent advances have made them even more efficient, versatile and easier to install. Here's a look at the three primary heat pump types and how they're used.

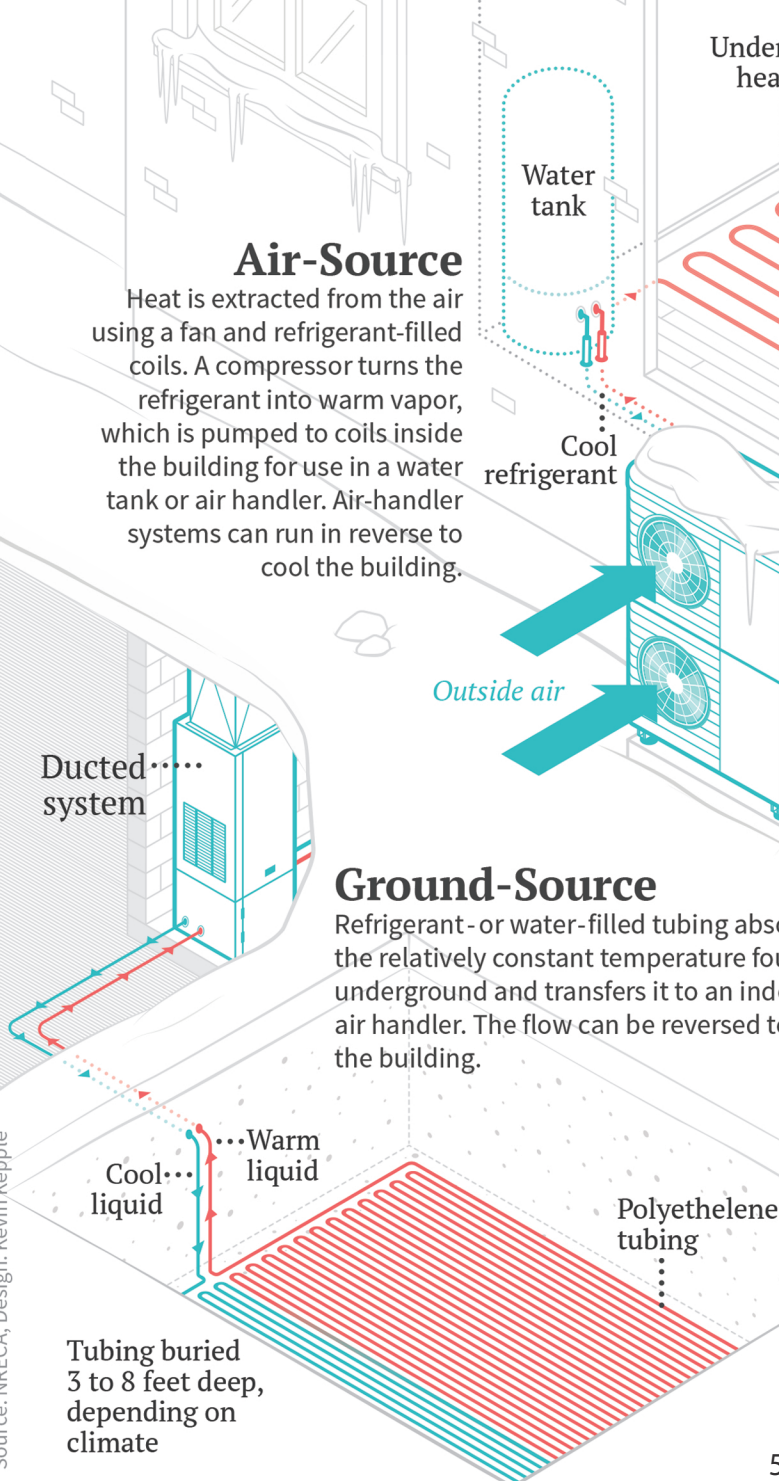
## Air-Source

Heat is extracted from the air using a fan and refrigerant-filled coils. A compressor turns the refrigerant into warm vapor, which is pumped to coils inside the building for use in a water tank or air handler. Air-handler systems can run in reverse to cool the building.

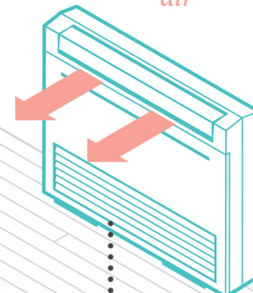
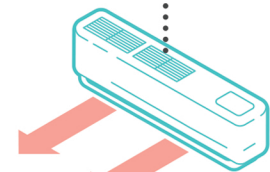


## Ground-Source

Refrigerant- or water-filled tubing absorbs the relatively constant temperature found underground and transfers it to an indoor air handler. The flow can be reversed to cool the building.

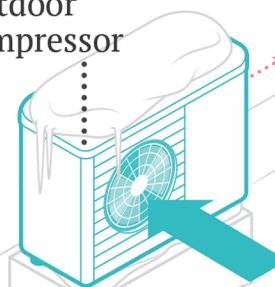


Wall-mounted indoor unit



Floor-mounted indoor unit

Outdoor compressor



Hot vapor

Outside air

## Mini-Split

Air-source heat pump system that works with small indoor condenser units to heat or cool. Good for homes that don't already have ductwork.

## 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 January 2023

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., January 26, 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 #535, Work Order #536, Work Order #537, and Work Order #538 were approved.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month. He discussed Voices for Cooperative Power. He stated that Clark McDonald's last day was the end of December and he is hiring for a Journeyman Electrician. He discussed fuel reimbursement for the generator accounts.

Ralph Martin, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed preliminary margins for the month of December. He discussed FEMA, GRE excess margin refund, and patronage earnings. 487701 He stated that Allison Geerdes was hired for the Customer Service Representative opening and her first day will be February 2nd. He discussed the 2022-year end audit.

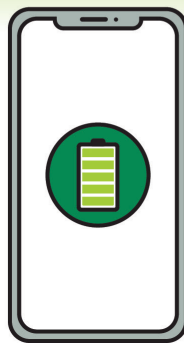
The financials were given by Ralph with a PowerPoint presentation.

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

## ELECTRONICS EFFICIENCY WORD SEARCH

Did you know there are ways you can reduce your electronics energy use?  
Read the energy-saving tips below, then find and circle the **bolded words** in the puzzle.





- Use a **power strip** with an on/off switch when powering multiple electronics to easily manage energy use.
- For devices that require **batteries**, use **rechargeable** ones, which are more cost-effective and environmentally friendly.

- **Unplug** electronic products that consume energy even when they're not in use, like **phone chargers**.
- Use the sleep or **power management** mode on your **computer** to save on energy costs.



bid requirements and the long lead time. He showed failing cut-outs and a discussion was held.

Tom gave the safety report.

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed the recent meetings that she attended, her meeting with the City of Benson, the carbon-free by 2040 bill, and GRE/WAPA capacity replacements. She brought forth Policy 526 Service Recognition and the Board approved it.

Policy 126 Remote Participation in Meetings of the Board of Directors was discussed and the Board approved it.

Policy 127 Director's Code of Ethics and Conduct was discussed and the Board approved it.

Director Draeger will be the voting delegate at the NRECA meeting at the MREA Annual Meeting and Director Zierke will be the alternate.

Director Zierke will be the voting delegate at the NRECA Annual Meeting and Director Thomson will be the alternate.

The February board meeting was set for the 23rd.

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