



Photo: Karen Aslakson, November Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

November 2023

EMPOWERING

communities with
innovative, sustainable
energy solutions

FOR OVER

80 YEARS

Serving Up Savings by Jenny Stryhn, General Manager

The holiday season is just around the corner and soon, festive music will flood the airwaves, sparkling lights and decorations will adorn homes and businesses, and good tidings will abound. The holidays also bring a frenzy of decorating, cooking and family gatherings, and amid the hectic hustle and bustle, you may receive higher-than-usual energy bills.

Keeping this in mind, I thought this month would be a good time to remind Agralite members of a few programs and efficiency tips to help lower your monthly energy use.

Programs designed to help you save.

Winter months typically bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. Making minor, low-cost improvements, like weatherstripping exterior doors and caulking around old, drafty windows can make a positive impact on energy bills. Agralite also offers several special rates to those members who participate in our load management programs. By participating in load management, you not only get a lower rate for yourself, which can help you achieve greater savings, but you also help the entire cooperative by controlling wholesale power costs.



Our team is available to help, so I encourage you to give us a call if you'd like to learn about specific programs and services that can lower your bills.

Be festive without breaking the bank.

With holiday lights adorning our home for well over a month, make the switch to LEDs to save energy. LED holiday lights use 88% less energy than incandescent holiday lights. To put that into perspective, the Department of Energy estimates that with standard holiday decorations, LED lights typically increase energy bills by about \$5 to \$7. But with incandescent lights, energy bills will typically increase by \$33 or more. For homes that go above and beyond with incandescent holiday lighting (think Clark Griswold), energy bills could increase by as much as \$350. Beyond energy savings, LEDs provide additional benefits, such as being shock-resistant, shatterproof and cool to the touch, making them safer for the home.




You can also lower energy use by conveniently managing holiday lighting. Smart light timers can help you save energy by connecting to a smart phone app or voice assistant to program lights to turn on and off at set times. If you don't use smart home technology, you can still save energy by using traditional timers. [Article continues on page 2](#)

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

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

 Like us on Facebook



Office Hours
8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.

**CLOSED Nov. 10th,
Nov. 23rd & 24th**



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 MTM Farms & Robert Olson for finding their account numbers in the September newsletter.

Energy Saving Tip:



The holiday season is upon us, and that means we'll be using more energy in the kitchen. **1540000** When possible, cook with smaller countertop appliances like slow cookers, air fryers, and Instant Pots. They consume less energy.

When using the oven or stovetop, match the size of the pot to the heating element and place a lid over the pot while cooking. The food will cook faster and you will use less energy.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Serving Up Savings *continued*

Additional easy ways to save during the holiday season include turning off overhead lights and using your Christmas tree to illuminate your home. If you have a fireplace, remember to close the flue when you're not burning a fire to ensure heat doesn't escape through the chimney.

Cook up energy savings in the kitchen.

If you plan to have family and friends over this holiday season, you can cook up energy savings by using small countertop appliances like microwaves, air fryers, and slow cookers, when possible, as they use much less energy than the stovetop or oven.



When using the oven, bake multiple dishes at once for maximum efficiency. It takes just as much energy to cook one dish as it does to cook several. Turn the oven off a few minutes before the recipe's end time and allow the residual heat to finish baking the dish. Once the food is done, leave the stove door ajar to allow the residual heat to warm the room. When using the stove top, match the pan size to the burner to maximize the stove top's efficiency.

I hope a few of these tips will be helpful as we approach the holiday season. Remember, we're here to answer any questions you have about managing energy use or your monthly bills. With a little planning up front, you can find efficient ways to save on everything from holiday décor to your favorite soup recipes.

From your friends at Agralite Electric Cooperative, we hope you have a wonderful holiday season and thank you for your continued interest in your electric cooperative.



Stay Safe As You Go Over The River And Through The Woods This Holiday Season

The winter holiday season is a busy time of year for many of us. Along with putting out decorations and baking cookies, we often spend more time in our cars than usual because we're shopping for presents, traveling to family gatherings or attending holiday events. However, all that time in the car can also mean facing extreme weather conditions that can make safe driving difficult. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, winter weather conditions such as snow, sleet, and slush cause more than 550,000 traffic accidents each year, leading to approximately 138,000 injuries and 1,700 fatalities. 1362301

Along with risk of injury, possible damage to your vehicle, and plain inconvenience, collisions may also involve downed power lines or other electrical hazards. Unfortunately, when this happens, it adds another very significant danger to the mix that can cause severe shock, burns, or electrocution. Knowing what to do in this situation can save lives.

If you are in an accident involving a downed power line:

- Call 911, and tell the dispatcher a downed power line or other electrical equipment is involved in a collision. Power company personnel will be dispatched to the scene to de-energize the power.
- Put your window down and alert others not to approach the scene. They could be shocked or electrocuted if they walk or run over the energized area or touch anything that is energized.
- Never attempt to drive over a power line or through water, snow, or other debris that could be hiding one. There is no way to tell if a power line is energized, even if it is not sparking or buzzing.
- Do not exit the vehicle UNLESS the vehicle is on fire or you see smoke. The vehicle acts as an insulator that keeps you safe from stray electricity.
- If you MUST exit the vehicle, cross your arms across your chest, put your feet together, and make a clean jump from the vehicle. Then hop with feet together as far as you can— at least 50 feet away. Once a power line is in contact with a vehicle, the ground, or other objects, it energizes the area. The electrical current spreads to the vehicle and ground, and it ripples out. Each "ring" of the ripple represents a different voltage. Stepping from one voltage to the next can cause your body to become a path for electricity and electrocute you.
- If a power line is inside the vehicle due to damage or an open window, stay in the vehicle. DO NOT touch or try to move the wire. DO NOT attempt to use other objects to move it.
- If your vehicle collides with a pad-mounted transformer, which houses electrical equipment connected to underground power lines, the same safety precautions apply.

Keep your family safe while on the road this holiday season! For more information about safety around electricity, go to SafeElectricity.org.



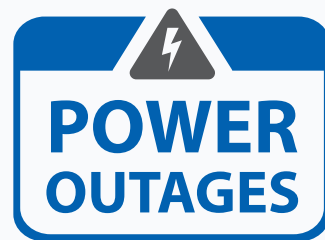
Dual Fuel Members:

Please Check Your Back-Up System



If you have a Dual Fuel heating system, now is the time to be sure your back-up heating system is prepared and that you have adequate fuel supply.

- Dual Fuel heating systems are usually controlled during periods of high demand (such as frigid winter mornings and evenings), but other factors such as high market cost can lead to load control as well.
- There can be up to 400 hours of control during the heating season. However, most winters the control has averaged less than 200 hours.
- Control events typically occur in the morning and evening hours in the winter for approximately 4 hours at a time.
- Participants should expect less than 40 control days this winter.



Call Day or Night
1.888.884.3887

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

October Energy Payment is due November 20.*

*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

AGRALITE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE GENERAL SERVICE RATES

As of January 1, 2024

General Single Phase

Service Charge	\$46.00
Energy Charge/kWh	11.60¢

General Multiphase

Service Charge	\$64.00
Energy Charge/kWh	11.60¢

Large Power - LP

Service Charge	\$90.00
Demand Charge/kW	\$10.75
Energy Charge/kWh	5.68¢

Large Power Service – LPS

Service Charge	\$120.00
Demand Charge/kW	\$26.84
Distribution Demand Charge/kW	\$4.25
Energy Charge/kWh	4.6¢

Irrigation

Service Charge 3-ph. (May – Sept.)	\$146.00
Service Charge 1-ph. (May – Sept.)	\$104.00
Uncontrolled Demand Charge/kW	\$28.30
Controlled Demand Charge/kW	\$10.50
Energy Charge/kWh	6.52¢
Energy Charge/kWh (non-summer)	11.60¢

Security Lights

Metered	\$7.50
Unmetered – 75 Watt LED	\$10.44

Interruptible Generation

Coincident kW, Jun-Jul-Aug	\$28.30
Coincident kW, Dec-Jan-Feb	\$19.65
Coincident kW, Others	\$15.15
Demand Penalty/kW/control	\$5.00
<200 kVA Service Charge	\$46.00
Energy Charge/kWh	8.02¢
>200 kVA Service Charge	\$110.00
Monthly Demand/kW	\$6.20
kWh	4.29¢

Service Charge for Load Management

\$2.50

Cycled Air Conditioning

kWh, summer/all other months	7.82¢/6.52¢
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Interruptible Heat/Peak Shave Water Heater

kWh, summer, (only heat)	11.60¢
kWh, summer, (AC, water heater)	7.82¢
kWh, all other months	6.52¢

Storage Water Heaters and Storage Heat

kWh, Jun-Jul-Aug	7.32¢
kWh, all other months	6.02¢

All rates subject to adjustment based on wholesale power costs.

Five Ways To Safeguard Your Home This Winter

As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles, and electrical items, the number of home fires tend to increase during winter months.



Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season:

- 1 Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly.** If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.
- 2 Inspect electrical cords.** We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, extension cords, or portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip.
- 3 Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips.** When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. 876700 For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.
- 4 Clean the fireplace to improve safety and efficiency.** There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.
- 5 Practice safety in the kitchen.** As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.

Agralite Electric Cooperative wants you and your family to stay safe during the winter season.

General Service Rate Increase

Agralite goes to great lengths to keep operating costs low, while increasing efficiencies. Unfortunately, Agralite is seeing increasing costs across our cooperative business being incurred. These costs include but are not limited to: wholesale power costs, long term interest rates, material and equipment costs, and other inflationary costs. Due to these challenges, the cooperative completed cost-of-service study through Power Systems Engineering. The study concluded that Agralite Electric Cooperative cannot continue to absorb these increasing costs. Agralite Electric Cooperative is set to have a rate adjustment effective January 1st, 2024. The Agralite Board of Directors took many factors into account when reviewing rates for the cooperative to ensure fair, equitable rates for all members, as well as to ensure the cooperative's overall financial stability. While the overall increase on rates is 4.1%, the exact change will depend on the energy use and rate classification of each member. While a rate increase is not an easy decision, these actions allow Agralite Electric Cooperative to continue to provide safe, reliable electric power to our membership into the future.

As always, if you have questions or concerns regarding this rate adjustment, give us a call during normal business hours at 320-843-4150 or visit www.agralite.coop.



Around Damaged POWER LINES

Energy Can Spread Like RIPPLES ON A POND

Storms and car accidents can damage energized power lines and padmount transformers (green boxes). The damage can cause energy to spread like ripples on a pond, causing:

Step potential, when a person walks from one voltage “ripple” to another and their feet experience a difference in voltage.

Touch potential, when someone touches something at one voltage and steps on or contacts something else at a different voltage.



Learn more at:

COLD WEATHER RULE & ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NOTICE

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

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

Minnesota’s Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects

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

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

Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50% of the state median income (\$58,793 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2024.

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

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

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

CURRENT AGRALITE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Draeger, Clinton
District 1

Jeff Hufford, Morris
District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer

Bennett Zierke, Hancock
District 3

Steve Nelson, Starbuck
District 4

Orvin Gronseth, Murdock
District 5 - Vice President

Andrea Thomson, Benson
District 6

Warren Rau, Appleton
District 7 - President

MINUTES OF MEETING BOARD OF DIRECTORS September 2023

Board Chairman Warren Rau called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., September 28, 2023. All members of the Board were present except Director Draeger, who joined by Zoom. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Order #549, Work Order #550, and Special Equipment for August were approved. 1275400

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month. He discussed community involvement and showed a list of 2024 area events. He discussed the Briggs generator program.

Ralph Martin, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed margins for the month of August. He discussed the Bank of the West to BMO conversion and CoBank. He brought Co-Op Credit Union signature cards for the Board officers to sign.

The financials were given by Ralph with a PowerPoint presentation.

Jenny Stryhn reported on activities of the Engineering and Operations Department for the month. She discussed line crew projects and outages for the month. She discussed right of way clearing and state disaster assistance.

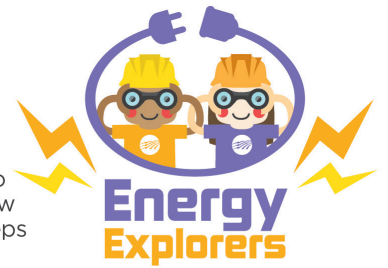
Jenny gave the safety report.

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

THE STEPS TO RESTORING POWER

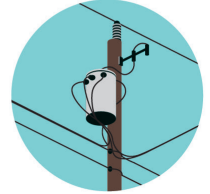
When the power goes out, line crews work hard to restore electricity as quickly and safely as possible. To ensure the process is done efficiently, line crews follow specific steps to restore power. Can you order the steps below to match how power is restored?

Hint: Check your work in the answer key.



STEP

Tap lines are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers that are either mounted on utility poles or placed on pads for underground electric service.



STEP

Distribution power lines are inspected. These are the lines you typically see on the side of the road that deliver power to communities.



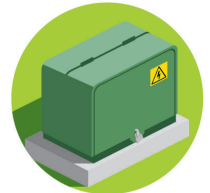
STEP

Large, high-voltage transmission lines are inspected for damage. These power lines deliver large amounts of electricity over great distances.



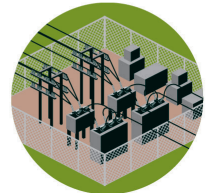
STEP

Service lines are inspected. These are the power lines that run **between the transformer and your home**.



STEP

Distribution substations are inspected. These facilities lower the voltage of power, then send power to distribution lines.



Answer Key: 4, 3, 1, 5, 2

discussed the MREA CEO Conference she attended. Jenny brought forth updates to Policy 605 Maintaining a Drug-free Workplace to conform to the new cannabis law and the Board approved it. She discussed other recent meetings she attended including the NRECA Region Meeting, REED meeting, GRE Managers Meeting, and STAR board meeting. She discussed a meeting with Engan and Associates and Breitbach Construction to discuss options with the headquarters facilities. She stated that Ralph Martin is resigning his position as Manager of Finance and his last day will be in December. She will advertise for the open position.

Director Gronseth will be the voting delegate at the 2023 Mid-West Annual Meeting and Director Zierke will be the alternate.

A roundtable discussion was held including discussion on CFC Solutions, East River Annual Meeting, and the NRECA Region Meeting.

The October board meeting was set for the 26th.

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