



Photo: Lisa Slaughter
November Calendar Photo
Contest Winner

NEWSLETTER

November 2024

EMPOWERING
communities

with innovative
and sustainable
energy solutions

FOR OVER
85
YEARS

Manager's Article *by Jenny Stryhn, General Manager*

Just like you are a member of Agralite Electric Cooperative, Agralite is a member of Basin Electric, East River Electric, Great River Energy and Western Area Power Administration. These Generation and Transmission providers (G&Ts) supply and transmit the power we distribute to you, our member-owners.

Electrical load continues to rise not only in our area, but nationally. The following factors create pressure on our G&Ts' rates:

- The need for additional generation to ensure reliability
- Ongoing and future investments in existing hydro dam facilities
- New transmission infrastructure developments and buildouts
- Efforts to reduce the carbon footprint to achieve 100% carbon-free energy by 2040

Basin Electric is investing close to \$8 billion dollars over the next ten years in transmission and generation assets to ensure reliable electricity for their members. Great River Energy is projected to spend approximately \$3.4 billion in the next ten years in transmission investments alone. With these significant investments in generation and transmission assets, these additional assets do not come without a cost. Agralite Electric Cooperative strives to maintain transparency with our members and will keep you updated on developments in the energy sector and challenges that effect the power industry. We appreciate your continued support in your electric cooperative.

Load Control Notifications

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

How to Set Up Load Control Notifications:

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

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

You can also download the SmartHub app and follow the steps above on your phone or tablet. **Our current load control notification system will no longer be active effective 1/1/25.** Please contact our office at 320-843-4150 if you have any questions.

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

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

 Like us on Facebook



Office Hours

8:00 am – 4:30 pm

Closed Nov. 11 – Veterans Day
Closed Nov. 28 & 29 – Thanksgiving
Cider & Cookies – Dec. 19 & 20



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 Jim Kozicky and Clay Van Horn for finding their account numbers in the September newsletter.

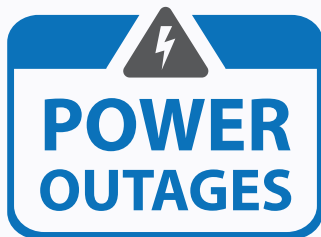
Energy Saving Tip:



Heading out of town during the holiday season? Remember to set your home to vacation mode.

Save energy while you're away by lowering your thermostat a few degrees or creating an "away" schedule with a smart or programmable thermostat. Newer water heaters include a vacation mode setting to help save on water heating costs, or you can simply lower the temperature manually. Small actions can also stack up to energy savings. Unplug devices that consume energy when they're not in use, including phone chargers, TVs, and gaming consoles.

Source: [energystar.gov](#)



Call Day or Night
1.888.884.3887

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

November Energy Payment is due December 20.*

*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

Stay Safe And Warm: Your Winter Home Readiness Guide

Preparing your home for winter involves several key steps to ensure safety, efficiency, and warmth. Below are some tips to help you prepare before the temperatures drop and a few ways to stay safe if a power outage leaves you snowbound.



Inspect Your Heating System

- Have your heating system professionally serviced.
- Replace air filters if needed.
- Ensure vents and radiators are unblocked for efficient heat distribution.

Prepare Pipes And Water Supply

- Insulate exposed pipes to prevent freezing.
- Drain and shut off outdoor faucets and irrigation systems.
- Know the location of your water shut-off valve in case of emergencies.

Maintain Smoke And Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Replace batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Test detectors to ensure they are functioning properly.

Prepare Your Home's Exterior

- Clear gutters and downspouts of leaves and debris to prevent ice dams.
- Trim trees and bushes away from the house to prevent damage from heavy snow.
- Ensure downspouts extend away from your home's foundation.
- Drain and store garden hoses to prevent freezing.
- Service and store outdoor equipment such as lawnmowers and trimmers.
- Gather winter tools such as snow shovels and ice melt.

Increase Home Energy Efficiency

- Seal gaps and cracks around windows and doors with weatherstripping or caulk.
- Set ceiling fans to rotate clockwise to circulate warm air.
- Lower your thermostat a few degrees to save on heating costs.

Stock Emergency Supplies

For power outages or severe weather, keep enough nonperishable food and water to last 72 hours. Experts suggest storing one gallon of water per person per day.

Include These Essentials In Your Emergency Kit:

- First-aid kit
 - Flashlights and batteries
 - Warm clothing and blankets
 - Phone chargers /backup charger sources
- Gather important documents, medical supplies/medicines, and medical records. Don't forget your pets. Have enough supplies for them as well.

What To Do If The Power Goes Out

Winter weather is unpredictable, with high winds, whiteouts, and ice storms. These conditions can cause hazardous roads and power outages.

[Article continues on page 3](#)



We're Grateful for Your Membership.

Our offices will be closed **Thursday, November 28,** and **Friday, November 29,** in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday. We are incredibly grateful for your membership as our team spends this special time with loved ones.

From our co-op family to yours, we hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Mark your calendars!

..... **JOIN US FOR**

Cider & Cookies

December 19 & 20



Stay Safe And Warm: Your Winter Home Readiness Guide *Continued*

If the electricity goes out due to a winter storm, you might be in for a prolonged power outage as crews work in the harsh weather to get the power back on. If this happens, contact your electrical utility as soon as you can so they know you have lost power.

Other Actions You Can Take To Stay Safe:

- Avoid travel. Stay inside and dress warmly in layered clothing.
- Place a draft block at the bottom of doors to minimize cold drafts.
- When using an alternative heat source, follow operating instructions, and be sure to ventilate properly. 883800
- Keep grills, camp stoves, and generators out of the house, basement and garage.
- Use a tarp and portable canopy to protect portable generator in damp or wet conditions.
- Move fuel-powered generators at least 20 feet away from the house.
- Keep a close eye on the temperature in your home. Infants and people over the age of 65 are often more susceptible to the cold. You may want to stay with friends or relatives or go to a shelter if you cannot keep your home warm.

For more information on keeping your family safe during and after a winter storm, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org).

COLD WEATHER RULE & ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NOTICE

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

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

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

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

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

Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50% of the state median income (\$58,793 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2025.

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

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

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



STAY SAFE On Winter Roads

Winter months bring snow, ice, and windy conditions, creating hazards for drivers. Always be prepared in case of an accident.

Before a winter storm

Perform seasonal maintenance on your car to ensure:

- The batteries are charged.
- The tires have sufficient tread.
- The spare tire is inflated.
- The jumper cables are in good condition.
- You have a winterized car emergency kit.
- Your windshield wipers work.
- Headlights, brakelights, and turn signals work.
- You have at least a half-full tank of gas.

Prevent frostbite and hypothermia

If you are stranded in your car after an accident, observe these precautions:

- Do not stay in one position for too long.
- Stay awake.
- Do not overexert yourself to avoid strain on your heart.
- Watch for signs such as change in skin color, numbness, shivering, slurred speech, loss of coordination or confusion.

Winter storm and power lines

Always treat sagging or downed power lines as energized and dangerous.

Keep at least 50 feet away from them.

- If your vehicle hits a power pole, stay inside.
- Contact 9-1-1 and wait for utility workers to shut off the power.
- If your vehicle is on fire, jump clear with feet together, avoiding contact with both the vehicle and ground simultaneously.
- Shuffle or "bunny hop" away from the vehicle, keeping feet together to prevent different electric currents through your body.
- Never drive over a downed powerline.



• COMMON **EXTENSION CORD** MISUSES TO AVOID •

EXTEND YOUR *Knowledge*

AVOID OVERLOADING EXTENSION CORDS

LIMIT DEVICES AND
ENSURE AMP RATINGS OF
DEVICE AND OUTLET MATCH.

STOP USING CORDS PERMANENTLY

ONLY USE EXTENSION
CORDS TEMPORARILY.
INSTALL OUTLETS FOR
LONG-TERM USE.

DON'T IGNORE THE THIRD PRONG

ALWAYS PLUG
GROUNDED CORDS
INTO GROUNDED
OUTLETS.

NEVER USE DAMAGED OR FRAYED CORDS

REPLACE DAMAGED CORDS
IMMEDIATELY TO AVOID FIRE OR
ELECTRICAL SHOCKS.

STOP RUNNING CORDS UNDER RUGS

KEEP CORDS EXPOSED TO
PREVENT OVERHEATING OR
INSULATION DAMAGE.

NEVER PLUG CORDS INTO EACH OTHER

USE ONE APPROPRIATELY
SIZED CORD INSTEAD OF
PLUGGING MULTIPLE CORDS
TOGETHER.

REFERENCES

[HTTPS://WWW.ESFI.ORG/EXTENSION-CORD-SAFETY-TIPS](https://www.esfi.org/extension-cord-safety-tips)

[HTTPS://WWW.STATEFARM.COM/SIMPLE-INSIGHTS/RESIDENCE/
EXTENSION-CORD-SAFETY-WHAT-TO-DO-AND-WHAT-TO-AVOID](https://www.statefarm.com/simple-insights/residence/extension-cord-safety-what-to-do-and-what-to-avoid)

[HTTPS://WWW.ESFI.ORG/REACHING-TO-SAFETY-
USE-EXTENSION-CORDS-PROPERLY/](https://www.esfi.org/reaching-to-safety-use-extension-cords-properly/)



November
2024

Is A Ductless Mini-Split System Right For Your Home?

How would you like a personalized comfort zone within your home? One where the temperature is customized to your liking and may be different than the temperature in the shared living areas or other rooms in the house. This flexibility and customization are precisely why mini-split systems, also known as ductless air-source heat pumps, and their energy efficiency aspects are so popular.

Let's unpack some mini-split basics and explore whether this type of system is a good choice for your home heating and cooling needs.

A mini-split system is a type of HVAC equipment used for heating and cooling, allowing you to control the temperature in individual rooms or spaces. Similar to central heating and cooling, mini-split systems have two main components—an outdoor compressor and an indoor air-handling unit(s). A narrow conduit links the indoor unit(s) to the outdoor compressor.

While central heating and cooling systems feature an indoor unit connected by long lengths of ductwork, mini-splits are typically ductless. This means energy is not lost traveling through long stretches of ductwork. Installing the air-handling unit in a desired room or area enables you to control the temperature more precisely, reducing energy consumption. That's because you're adjusting the temperature to a single room or space rather than the whole home.

Is A Mini-Split System Right For You?

Mini-split systems are a popular option in home additions, or to supplement heating and cooling in a space that may be furthest away from the main living area, such as a finished attic or basement. In these instances, it may not be feasible to install or extend the ductwork required in traditional central cooling and heating systems. In contrast, mini-splits are relatively easy to install requiring a small hole for the conduit connecting the indoor and outdoor units. Most systems can handle up to four indoor rooms or zones connected to one outdoor unit. Each of the zones can be customized because each includes a thermostat that enables you to heat or cool the space as needed, saving energy and money over time.

Cool Solutions

Mini-split systems bring additional benefits. They are quiet, improve indoor air quality, and are typically easy to install. 1385200 Many come with remotes to make temperature control even easier, and because of their smaller size, mini-split systems have many placement options for indoor and outdoor units.

One of the greatest benefits of mini-splits is that they typically have a higher SEER (seasonal energy efficiency ratio) rating than traditional central heating and cooling systems. The higher the unit's SEER rating, the more energy efficient it is.

Additional Considerations

However, according to the Department of Energy, "mini-splits cost about \$1,500 to \$2,000 per ton of cooling capacity. That's about 30% more than central systems (not including ductwork) and may cost twice as much as window units of similar capacity."

While the technology is improving and evolving, those in particularly colder climates may need a fuel backup to run a mini-split system. Aesthetics are another factor to consider, as some homeowners don't like the appearance of the indoor units, which are more visible than central air conditioning vents.

If you're considering an upgrade or additional heating and cooling equipment, talk to a qualified technician to learn if a ductless mini-split system could work for your home, and check out our rebates at www.agralite.coop.



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.

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 2024

Board Chairman Warren Rau called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., September 27, 2024. All members of the Board were present except Director Draeger. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Orders #567-570, and August Special Equipment 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 the groundbreaking ceremony that was held September 13th and showed pictures. 1299001 He discussed a donation request from the City of Sunburg to Operation Round Up for a Ferno Stretcher and Stair Chair. A discussion was held on utilizing CoBank Sharing Success to receive matching donation funds. The Board approved a \$3,500 donation from REDLG admin fees and to apply for CoBank Sharing Success matching funds.

Stephanie Wroblewski, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed margins for the month of August. She discussed patronage allocations and retirement payments received. She brought forth Resolution Authorizing the Amendment of the Retirement Security Plan RUS#: 24079-002 and the Board approved it. She discussed the Cold Weather Rule. She discussed quotes from two auditing firms and the Board selected Eide Bailly as Agralite's auditing firm for 2024-2027.

BE AN ENERGY EFFICIENCY MVP

Do you have what it takes to be the energy efficiency MVP (most valuable player) in your home? When you take proactive steps to save energy at home, you can help your family save on monthly energy bills *and* help the environment—that's a win-win!

Read the sentences below and unscramble the bolded letters to complete the energy efficiency tips. Check your work in the answer key.



1. Turn off **glhsit** when you leave a room.

2. Unplug smaller electronic devices like phone **reahgcsr** when you're not using them.

3. Reduce your **nesecr** time to save energy and spend more time outdoors.

4. Turn off the **reatw** while brushing your teeth.

5. Keep doors and **swdwnio** closed when your home's heating/cooling system is running.

6. When it's cold, wear an extra layer of **tohgncil** inside instead of adjusting the thermostat.

Answer Key: 1. lights 2. chargers 3. screen 4. water 5. windows 6. clothing

The financials were given by Stephanie 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 substation upgrades, the new building project, and Right of Way clearing.

Tom gave the safety report.

Board Policies 501-510 were reviewed and approved by the Board.

Director Gronseth will be the 2024 Mid-West Electric voting delegate. Jenny will be the alternate.

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

meetings she attended, including the MREA CEO Conference and NRECA Region Meeting. She discussed the GRE Manager's Meeting and GRE's projected transmission rate increase. She gave an update on the union negotiations and the Board approved both inside and outside union contracts.

Bob Sahr, Chris Studer, and Scott Shewey, Executives from East River Electric, joined the meeting to give a PowerPoint presentation and answer questions from Agralite staff and Board of Directors.

The October board meeting was set for the 31st.

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