



Photo: Cindy Walsh, October Calendar Photo Contest Winner

# Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

October 2022

## EMPOWERING

communities with  
innovative, sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

# 75 YEARS

### Sow Seeds of Caution to Reap Safe Harvest

Harvest season is one of the busiest times of year for farmers – and among the most dangerous. Before taking to the fields, Agralite urges farm workers to be aware of potential electrical hazards and take safe steps to avoid tragedy. Take note of the following tips to keep your harvest season productive and safe.

- **Install ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs)** to help prevent electric shock in areas that are exposed to weather and may potentially become wet. GFCIs should also be on outlets where electric tools are used.
- **Examine all wiring and machinery regularly.** Ensure that everything is grounded and working properly.
- **Always check the weather forecast and never operate machinery when there is a risk for lightning.** Make sure you're accounting for adverse weather conditions and dedicating extra space for safety.
- **Before working in the field, check the height of farm machinery and note the location of overhead power lines.** Plan your route to avoid them. Keep equipment far away from lines, at least 10 feet in all directions – below, above and to the sides. Use caution with ladders, poles and other extended machinery.



During harvest season a few years ago, a father and son were killed when working on their family farm in Jordan, Minnesota. According to officials, the men were lifting a farm auger when strong wind resulted in contact with an overhead power line.

If contact is made between farming equipment and overhead lines, it's almost always best to stay in the cab. Warn others to stay away and call 9-1-1 to alert the utility and emergency services. Do not get off the equipment unless there is a fire or imminent risk of fire.

In that rare case, the proper action would be to jump – not step – free and clear from the equipment landing with feet together. Do not touch the equipment and ground at the same time. Hop as far away as possible, as electricity radiates outward.

*Agralite would like to wish everyone a safe and successful harvest season this year!*

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### Agralite Electric Co-op

*We're member-owned!*

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1-800-950-8375  
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.

### Energy Saving Tip:



**With winter weather on the way, now is the time to seal drafty windows.**

If you can see daylight around a window frame or if you can rattle a window (movement means possible leaks), the window likely needs to be sealed.

Most window leaks can be sealed with caulk or weatherstripping, which can come in a variety of compounds and materials.

Visit [www.energy.gov/energy\\_saver](http://www.energy.gov/energy_saver) to learn how and where to seal air leaks.

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



## Call Day or Night 1.888.884.3887

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

September Energy Payment is due October 20.\*

\*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

### Manager's Article by Kory Johnson

Shortly after graduating from North Dakota State University, I began a new job with Agralite Cooperative Electric on August 16th of 1983. This was in a new town, a new state, and a start of a long career with the electric cooperatives that has spanned over 39 years. After spending a number of years with Agralite in the engineering and operations side, I moved on to other cooperatives in Iowa and Minnesota. In 2008, I received a phone call from Ray Millett, the former manager at Agralite and the person who hired me in 1983, asking if I would be interested in returning to Agralite as the next General Manager. After discussions with my family, I decided to apply for the job. On April 1st of 2008, I began the next and final phase of my career as General Manager of Agralite Electric Cooperative. And now, after 14 years, I have decided it is time for me to end my career in the electric cooperative family and enter the ranks of the retiree. It is my intention to retire in December of this year.

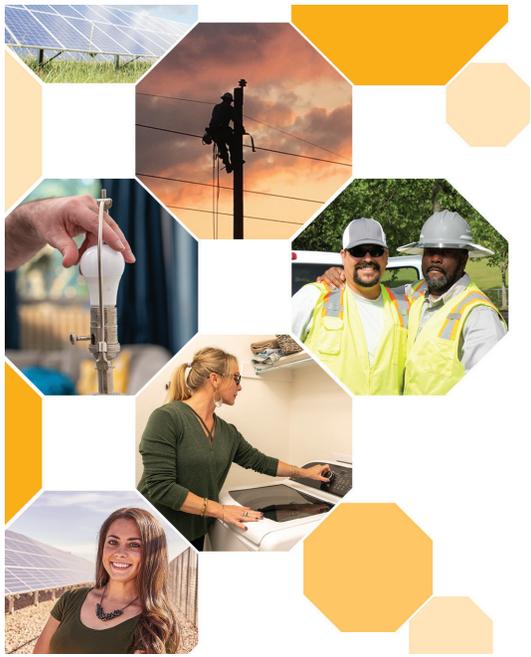
So, what piqued my interest in working for an electric cooperative all those years ago? The first real impression an electric cooperative made on me was January of 1976. A three-day blizzard with temperatures well below zero knocked out power to our family farm. Late in the evening of the third night without electric power, we saw headlights coming down the drive and a spot light shining up to illuminate the electric line serving our farm. The bucket truck turned around in the yard and headed down the road. A short time later the lights came back on and the furnace kicked in and we had heat and lights. During my college years following that, I would visit our local cooperative to learn more about the cooperative. I am appreciative to Merle Holden, the General Manager of Sheyenne Valley Electric, for taking time to visit with me to help me understand more what an electric cooperative is.

It truly has been a privilege to work for electric cooperatives for the past 39 years. This has been a great career and I appreciate the many people I have had the privilege to interact with over the years. I would like to say thank you to our members who have supported the cooperative over the years, the employees who work hard to provide reliable, affordable electric service to our members, and lastly to the board of directors who have entrusted me as leader of this great organization. Thank you!

Now to focus on the remaining time as the General Manager of Agralite. After discussions with the staff and board, the cooperative has begun a rate study. The electric rates for the cooperative have been constant since the last rate change in January of 2017. In reviewing costs affecting the cooperative, it was determined that changes may be necessary in the rates. The cooperative is seeing the cost of wholesale power creeping up over the past 6 years, transmission costs have increased over 25%, cost of materials used to serve our members have increased as well as labor costs, fuel costs, and the cost of equipment. The cooperative will use an outside firm to study the monthly facility charge, the energy charges, and the demand charges for the different rate classes. Agralite will also evaluate the rates for the load management programs the cooperative offers. The most recent cost of service study will be used to allocate costs to the different rate classes. The goal of the cooperative during the rate study is to ensure rates fairly reflect the cost of serving the different rate classes and load management programs. More information will be shared as the rate study process continues.

As summer comes to an end and fall arrives, I want to remind everyone to have a safe fall and harvest season. I would remind farm workers to keep an eye out for power poles, underground enclosures, and overhead power lines as you work in the fields and around the bin sites. Please take time to review farm safety with your family and hired help during the harvest season. Also, a reminder to everyone that during the harvest season there is slow moving farm equipment on the roads.

Please stay safe and have a great fall!



# Focused on YOU.

Electric cooperatives were created to serve their members. Because we're a co-op, we're able to adapt to our community's unique needs. That's the power of co-op membership.

## OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

### Celebrating Membership by Jonathan Messner

#### October is National Co-op Month

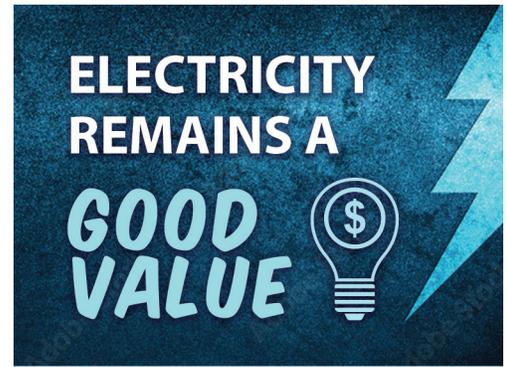
Fall is a busy time, and October is a particularly eventful month with school, community and sports activities in full swing. It's also when all cooperatives celebrate National Co-op Month.

When I say Agralite celebrates Co-op Month, it really means we are celebrating you! After all, our co-op wouldn't exist without you, our members. Our core business purpose is to serve as your electricity provider, but the larger mission of the co-op is to help make our corner of the world a better place. "Concern for community" is one of seven guiding principles that all co-ops share. Similar to how our wires run through our service territory, our concern for community flows through all of our decisions—because being a co-op means being a responsible partner and good neighbor. Agralite works to help our community thrive through initiatives led by our employees and local board that's comprised of neighbors who live right here in our community. Because we're local, we understand our community's unique needs and strive to help meet them.

We're proud to support local youth through our scholarship programs. With your help, we offer our Operation Round Up program to provide assistance to our community's most vulnerable. We partner with and support area food banks and other charitable organizations such as the back pack programs offered through each of our area school districts. The word "cooperative" is close to "cooperation," meaning people working together towards a common goal—mutually benefiting one another and the larger community. That's the essence of the cooperative spirit. Our employees and member-elected board members are invested in the community in which we live and serve.

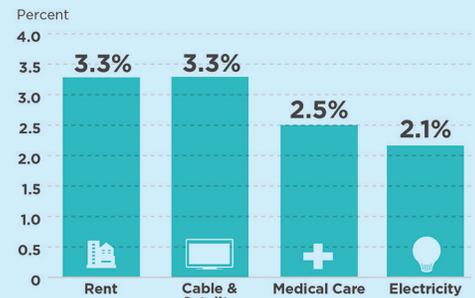
Above all, as a co-op we put our members' priorities first. As your trusted energy partner, we know that saving energy and money is important to you. 988004 That's why we have numerous programs in place to help, including off peak and dual fuel programs. We want to empower you to manage energy use at home. If you haven't already, I encourage you take a moment and download our app, Smart Hub. Through the app, you can conveniently monitor and manage your energy use. And we're of course here to help, so give us a call if you have questions about your energy bills.

Agralite is continuously examining ways to operate more efficiently while continuing to provide the highest level of friendly, reliable service you expect and deserve. After all, we're your local co-op. We were built by the members we serve.



### AVERAGE ANNUAL PRICE INCREASE 2016 - 2021

The cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common expenses. Looking at price increases over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value.



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index



### 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).

# Dress Up With Care For HALLOWEEN

When dressing up your little ones (or yourself), keep these safety tips in mind:

-  Always wear costumes that are labeled flame resistant.
-  Wear bright, reflective costumes or add strips of reflective tape to improve visibility.
-  Do not wear decorative (colored) contact lenses unless you have seen an eyecare professional.
-  Wear makeup and hats rather than costume masks that can obscure or obstruct your vision.
-  Test the makeup you plan to use in advance for a possible allergy.



## Four Ways to Boost Your Cyber Hygiene

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month

In today's digital world, cyberattacks are unfortunately nothing new. Cyber criminals can attack on a multitude of levels, from large-scale attacks targeting corporations to smaller phishing attacks aimed to gain an individual's personal information.

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, but good cyber hygiene should be practiced year-round. This year's theme is "See Yourself in Cyber" – because we all have a part to play in cybersecurity. When we hear about massive data breaches, it can feel overwhelming and lead us to think we're powerless as individuals to stop cyber criminals.

The truth is, there are several practical steps we can take to safeguard our devices and data. Here are four easy ways to boost your cyber hygiene:

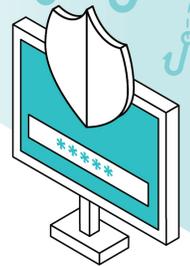
- 1** Enable multi-factor authentication. Also known as two-step verification, multi-factor authentication adds a second step when logging into an account (to prove you're really you), which greatly increases the security of the account. This second step could include an extra PIN, answering an extra security question, a code received via email or a secure token. Regardless of the type of authentication, this additional step makes it twice as hard for cyber criminals to access your account. Not every account offers multi-factor authentication, but it's becoming increasingly popular and should be utilized when available.
- 2** Use strong passwords and a password manager. Remember, passwords are the "keys" to your personal home online. Your passwords should always be long, unique and complex. Create passwords using at least 12 characters, never reuse passwords for multiple accounts and use a combination of upper- and lower-case letters, numbers and special characters. If you have a lot of accounts, consider using a password manager to store them easily and securely in one place.
- 3** Update software. It may seem obvious, but regularly updating software is one of the easiest ways to keep your personal information secure. Most companies provide automatic updates and will send reminders so you can easily install the update. 1298900 If you're not receiving automatic software updates, set a reminder to do so quarterly. Be aware that some cyber criminals will send fake updates; these typically appear as a pop-up window when visiting a website. Use good judgement and always think before you click.
- 4** Recognize and report phishing attacks. Don't take the bait when cyber criminals go phishing. The signs of a phishing attack can be subtle, so take the extra time to thoroughly inspect emails. Most phishing emails include offers that are too good to be true, an urgent or alarming tone, misspellings and poorly-crafted language, ambiguous greetings, strange requests or an email address that doesn't match the company it's coming from. Most platforms like Outlook, Gmail and Mac Mail allow users to report phishing emails. If you suspect a phishing attempt, take an extra minute to report it.

## See Yourself in Cyber.

October is Cybersecurity  
Awareness Month

Improve your cyber  
hygiene by doing  
these four things:

1. Enable multi-factor authentication
2. Use strong passwords and a password manager
3. Update software regularly
4. Recognize and report phishing attacks



Cyber criminals are here to stay, but when we all take a risk-based approach to our cyber behavior, we're creating a safer internet for all.

Visit [www.staysafeonline.org](http://www.staysafeonline.org) for additional cybersecurity tips.

# FIRE SAFETY MONTH

In 1922, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) named the second week of October Fire Prevention Week to commemorate the 1871 Great Chicago Fire. The NFPA later expanded its efforts to include the whole month of October to establish National Fire Prevention Month. During Fire Prevention Month, fire departments play an important role in providing education to their communities and encouraging parents and loved ones to practice fire prevention and safety throughout their whole house.



Having smoke and carbon monoxide detectors that are functioning installed throughout the entire house is the first line of defense for fire prevention. Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are working around the clock to keep the whole family safe and provide an early alert in the event of an emergency. Practice an escape route with the whole family that includes a meeting place for everyone and two ways to get out of the house.



## Protect Your House & Family

Fire Prevention Month is a great time to educate and talk with your whole family about fire safety. Make time to take the precautionary steps to prevent fires:

- Change the batteries or upgrading to 10-year sealed battery alarms
- Test alarms
- Practice how to use a fire extinguisher
- Plan and practice your escape route

-  **SMOKE ALARM**  
One on every level and in every bedroom
-  **CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM**  
One on every level and in every bedroom
-  **FIRE EXTINGUISHER**  
One on every level, plus kitchen and garage



## Did You Know?

-  3 out of every 5 home fire deaths happen in homes without working smoke alarms.
-  Less than 50% of homeowners have an escape plan.
-  Carbon monoxide (CO) is the #1 cause of accidental poisoning.
-  60% of consumers do not test their smoke and CO alarms monthly.
-  47% of people report having CO alarms.
-  Unattended cooking is the #1 cause of house fires.

Remember  
**PASS**  
To Use An  
Extinguisher



**PULL** the pin.  
**AIM** low at the base of the fire.  
**SQUEEZE** the handle slowly.  
**SWEEP** the nozzle side to side.



## 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 August 2022

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 9:30 a.m., August 25th, 2022. All members of the Board were present except Director Draeger who joined by Zoom.

There was a motion and second for the board to go into executive session. The board discussed succession planning. The board returned to regular session. 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, market prices and billing peaks. He discussed the Brigg's generator program. He reported on ALM project updates.

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's margins for the month of July. She discussed power costs for the month and sales. She stated that the severe weather request from the week of May 30th received a federal declaration. She discussed a CFC financing opportunity and the Board approved it. She brought forth Resolution of the Board of Directors Authorizing the Amendment of The Retirement Security Plans and the Board approved it.

Jenny brought forth Work Order #528 and Special Equipment July 2022 and the Board approved them.



## ENERGY VAMPIRES WORD SCRAMBLE

Energy vampires could be lurking in your home! These are electronic devices that consume energy even when they're not being used.

Unscramble the **bolded** words to identify common energy vampires. Check your work in the answer key below.

 When you're finished playing that new video game, unplug your **eagm oncloes**.

 Tell your parents to unplug the **efcfeo kmrea** when they're finished brewing.

 When you're done watching your favorite show, unplug the **seotnivile**.

 If your phone is juiced up, unplug your **nophe rahrgce**.

*Answer Key: game console, coffee maker, television, phone charger*

665800 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 the May 30th storm was declared a federal disaster, and spoke on a FEMA meeting he attended.

Tom gave the safety report.

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed Load Management and the infrastructure package. He discussed a visit from WAPA.

Director Rau will be the Voting Delegate at the Federated region meeting and the RESCO annual meeting.

Director Gronseth will be the Voting Delegate at the GRE special meeting. Kory Johnson will be the alternate.

The September board meeting was set for the 29th.

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