



Cover Photo: Karen DeMorett, October Calendar Photo Contest Winner

# Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

October 2021

## EMPOWERING

communities with  
innovative, sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

# 75 YEARS

## It's A Matter Of Co-op Principles

ACE Hardware, State Farm, REI, Land O'Lakes and Agralite Electric Cooperative all share something in common: we're all cooperatives.

We may be in different industries, but we all share a passion for serving our members and helping our communities to thrive. In fact, all cooperatives adhere to the same set of seven principles that reflect our core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater community good. October is National Co-op Month, so this is the perfect time to reflect on these principles that have stood the test of time but also provide a framework for the future. Let's take a look at the first three cooperative principles.

### Voluntary and Open Membership

Just like all co-ops, Agralite Electric Cooperative was created out of necessity to meet a need that would have been otherwise unmet in our community. So in 1939, a group of neighbors banded together and organized our electric co-op so everyone in our community could benefit. For a modest membership fee to the co-op, any farmer could get electricity brought to his farm. Neighbors came together to tackle a problem that they all had but couldn't solve alone. They worked together for the benefit of the whole community, and the newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in our community.

While this history may be forgotten, key parts of that heritage remain the focus on our mission and serving the greater good. In this, we include everyone to improve the quality of life and economic opportunity for the entire community. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

### Democratic Member Control

Our co-op is well-suited to meet the needs of our members because we are locally governed. Each member gets a voice and a vote in how the co-op is run, and each voice and vote are equal. Agralite Electric Cooperative's leadership team and employees live right here in the community. Our board of directors, who helps set long-term priorities for the co-op, also live locally on co-op lines. 1320100 These board members have been elected by neighbors just like you. We know our members have a valuable perspective, and that's why we continually seek your input and encourage you to weigh in on important co-op issues and participate in co-op elections. Our close connection to this community ensures we get a first-hand perspective on members' priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments.

*Article Continues On Page 2*

## CONTENTS

Page 1 ► It's A Matter Of Co-op Principles

Page 2 ► It's A Matter Of Co-op Principles Cont'd, Manager's Article, Find Your Account Number And Win, Energy Tip

Page 3 ► Manager's Article Cont'd, Get Familiar With Cyber Basics, Password Dos and Don'ts, Don't Sacrifice Safety For Speed During Harvest

Page 4 ► Get Familiar With Cyber Basics Cont'd, Load Management Equipment Updates

Page 5 ► Cold Weather Rule & Energy Assistance Program Notice, Electricity Remains A Good Value, Top Nine Energy Vampires

Page 6 ► Board Members, August 2021 Board Meeting Minutes, Seven Cooperative Principles Coloring Sheet

## 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



## Winter Hours

8:00 – 4:30 starting Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>



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 David Schmidt and Arthur Miles for finding their account numbers in the August newsletter!

### Energy Saving Tip:



**Old, uninsulated and improperly installed exterior doors can waste energy and money.**

Shut the door on wasted energy by weather stripping and sealing all exterior doors. If you have an old exterior door, consider replacing it with a newer, energy efficient model.

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

## It's A Matter Of Co-op Principles *Continued*

### Members' Economic Participation

As a utility, our mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to our members. But as a co-op, we are also motivated by service to the community, rather than profits. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of Agralite Electric Cooperative. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for co-op programs, initiatives, capital investments and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

Because we are guided by seven cooperative principles, it's not just about dollars—it's about opportunity for all and being fair when engaging with our members. The cooperative way is a values-based business model.

Agralite Electric Cooperative is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. We view our role as a catalyst for good and making our corner of the world a better place. And, by the way, that sums up the seventh co-op principle, "concern for community".



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

As I write this article at the end of August, rain has finally started to arrive! Much of the area has received 2 to 3 inches over the past several days and the forecast is showing a chance of rain for the next few days. Unfortunately, the rain also came with severe weather this past weekend with strong winds, lightning, and hail in parts of the service area. The line crews worked to restore power to several areas across the system that experienced power outages this past week. It has been a hot dry summer and though the rain has arrived late, it is still a welcome sight to help replenish the land.

This past week, the Agralite board met for the regular board meeting. I am able to report that the cooperative is having a very strong year, both in energy sales and also very strong margins year to date. Agralite has been fortunate to add new loads to the system that help increase energy sales. Also, this summer has seen record sales to irrigation accounts. Year to date for 2021, the sales to irrigation accounts are 15% ahead of any other year for the cooperative in irrigation sales.

In addition to the strong energy sales, the cooperative has very strong margins year to date. Through the month of July, the operating margins, or margins generated by the sale of electricity, were \$1,493,796. The strong margins the cooperative is experiencing is largely due to the load management programs the cooperative offers and many of our member-owners participate in. As a result of the load management programs the membership participates in, the cooperative is able to significantly reduce the demand component of the wholesale power costs the cooperative pays. Through July of this year, I estimate the load control program the cooperative uses has saved \$1,413,029 in demand charges for the member owners of the cooperative. I want to express my appreciation to all those who participate in the variety of programs the cooperative offers.



## Manager's Article *Continued*

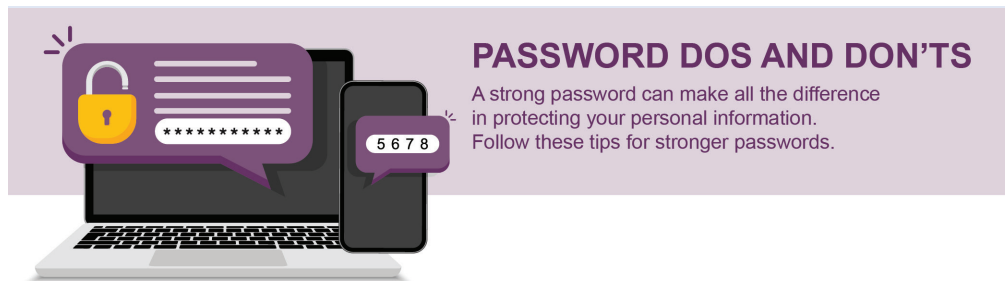
During the recent board meeting, the board of directors heard a presentation by the architect and general contractor the cooperative has hired to do an evaluation of the existing headquarter facilities. As I have mentioned in prior articles, the cooperative has hired an architectural firm to help determine the future needs of the cooperative's headquarter facilities. The current building was constructed in the early 1960's. Today's equipment the cooperative uses to construct and maintain the electric lines that serve our members has outgrown the 1960's vintage building. The architect is evaluating an addition to the existing facility, renovating the offices in the building to better utilize the existing space, bringing the current facility to current code requirements, and relocating one to the existing outbuildings at the cooperative. One key item that will need to be addressed if the existing facility is remodeled would be the fire suppression code requirements. The entire facility would need to be brought to the current fire code. This would involve installing a sprinkler system throughout the building and installing a water holding tank with backup power to a fire pump. The architect is also comparing the addition and remodeling to a possible entire new facility. As the board and staff review and consider the future facility needs of the cooperative, I will keep you, our member-owners posted as information becomes available. **Please have a safe harvest season!**



## Get Familiar With Cyber Basics

### October Is Cybersecurity Awareness Month

At a time when we are more connected than ever, being "cyber smart" is of the utmost importance. This year has already seen more than a fair share of cyber attacks and breaches, including the high-profile attacks on the Colonial Pipeline and other critical infrastructure. 590501 Furthermore, as has been underlined by these recent breaches, cyber attacks are becoming more sophisticated with more evolved bad actors cropping up each day. Luckily, there are several steps that we can take on a daily basis to mitigate risks and stay one step ahead of malefactors.



### PASSWORD DOS AND DON'TS

A strong password can make all the difference in protecting your personal information. Follow these tips for stronger passwords.

#### DO:

- Change the manufacturer's Wi-Fi password on your router.
- Use two-factor authentication.
- Use unique phrases (like lyrics to your favorite song) to remember passwords.

#### DON'T:

- Don't use common words or numbers like "password" or "1234."
- Don't use personal details like your date of birth in a password.
- Don't use the same password for multiple accounts.

**October is  
Cybersecurity  
Awareness Month.**

Do Your Part. #BeCyberSmart

## Don't Sacrifice Safety For Speed During Harvest

For many farmers, the harvest season is a flurry of activity with long hours and little rest. The pressure to harvest as much as possible — in combination with fatigue and looming deadlines — can result in too little attention being paid to potential hazards. Safe practices should never be compromised for the sake of speed. Doing so could potentially end in tragedy.

Farmers and agricultural workers have dangerous occupations. One of the causes of injury and death in the agricultural industry is electrocution. Of those injuries, overhead power lines are the most common cause of electrocution.

**If you are a farm operator or worker, be aware of the location of power lines and keep the following safety guidelines in mind during the harvest season:**

- Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines. 1122100
- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines — at all times, in all directions.
- Inspect the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Always remember to lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- If a power line is sagging or low, call the local utility immediately.
- If your equipment does hit a power line do not leave the cab. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away, and wait for the utility crew to cut the power.

The only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire, which is very rare. However, if this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

To help ensure a safe harvest, stay alert for power lines, exercise caution, and always put safety first.

**If you or someone you know would like more information on electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safepower.org).**

## Load Management Equipment Updates

Approximately 3,500 members participate in load management programs that allow Agralite to cycle their air conditioner, water heater, electric heat or some other load for a period of time on high demand days. Because of this, Agralite has the ability to control up to 40% of its peak load on the hottest summer days. Overall, these programs help Agralite manage our retail power costs to our members. For participating in these peak-reducing programs, members receive a reduced electric rate.

Our current load management system is obsolete and is no longer supported by our vendor. We are currently in the process of updating all of our load management meters and load control switches over the next couple of years. The impact of the installation is minimal, however we will need to enter your home to gain access to the equipment.

### Some of the benefits of this new load management equipment includes:

- More efficient power distribution, helping us keep costs down for members
- Improved power quality (fewer spikes, blinks, and surges)
- More information about your power use so that we know how much load shed capabilities we have
- Better detection of load shed

We will be in touch with you to schedule a time that we can get into your home and do this work. Please make sure we have your current contact information on file. As with any electrical work that is performed in the state of Minnesota, we have to file for inspection on each of these units with the Department of Labor and Industry. A state electrical inspector will then come out and take a look at the work that has been done to make sure that everything is safe and meets the current NEC.

### Electrical Inspectors in our area:

- Pope County: Josh and Wally Kath
- Stevens and Big Stone Counties: Brandon Lennox
- Swift County: Bruce Haugen

## Get Familiar With Cyber Basics *Continued*

*Here are a few quick tips:*

### Enable Multi-factor Authentication.

Multi-factor authentication (MFA) adds that necessary second check to verify your identity when logging in to one of your accounts. By requiring multiple methods of authentication, your account is further protected from being compromised, even if a bad actor hijacks your password. In this way, MFAs make it more difficult for password cracking tools to enable attackers to break into accounts.

### Use Strong Passphrases/Password Manager.

This may seem obvious, but all too often securing strong passphrases/password managers is overlooked. People spending more time online during the pandemic has certainly contributed to more bad actors prowling for accounts to attack. Using long, complex and unique passwords is a good way to stop your account from being hacked, and an easy way of keeping track and remembering your passwords is by using a password manager.

### Perform Software Updates.

When a device prompts that it's time to update the software, it may be tempting to simply click postpone, and ignore the message. However, having the latest security software, web browser, and operating system on devices is one of the best defenses against online threats. So, don't wait - update.

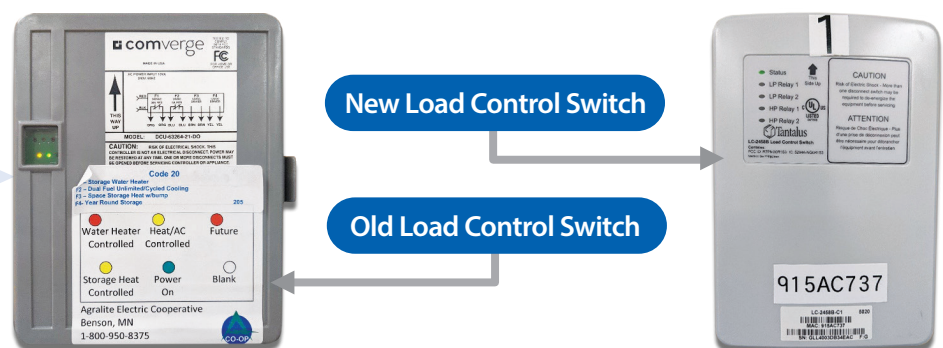
### Do Your Research.

Common sense is a crucial part of maintaining good online hygiene, and an intuitive step to stay safe online is to do some research before downloading anything new you are downloading to your device, such as apps. Before downloading any new learning app on your device, make sure that it's safe by checking who created the app, what the user reviews say, and if there are any articles published online about the app's privacy and security features.

### Check Your Settings.

Be diligent to double check your privacy and security settings and be aware who can access your documents. This extends from Google docs, to Zoom calls, and beyond. For meetings on Zoom, for example, create passwords so only those invited to the session can attend, and restrict who can share their screen or files with the rest of the attendees.

Being cyber smart and maintaining stellar online hygiene is the best way to protect yourself and others from cyber attacks. No single tip is foolproof but taken together they can make a real difference for taking control of your online presence. Following these tips is also easy, and free. By taking preventive measures and making a habit of practicing online safety, you can decrease your odds of being hacked exponentially - and prevent lost time and money, as well as annoyance.





## 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 60% 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 60% of the state median income (\$67,764 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2022.

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

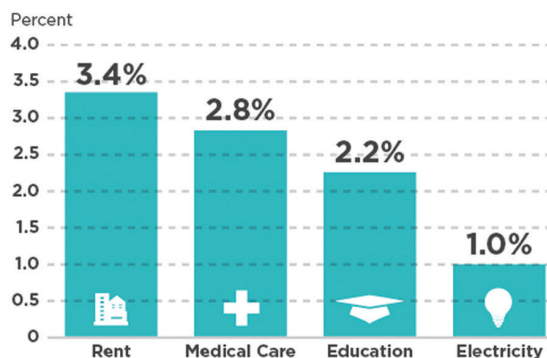
- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website, <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>, for more details and to access the application portal.
- Contact your county EAP service provider for additional information and assistance.
- Agralite Electric 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

## ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

When you look at price increases of common expenses over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value!

Average Annual Price Increase 2015-2020

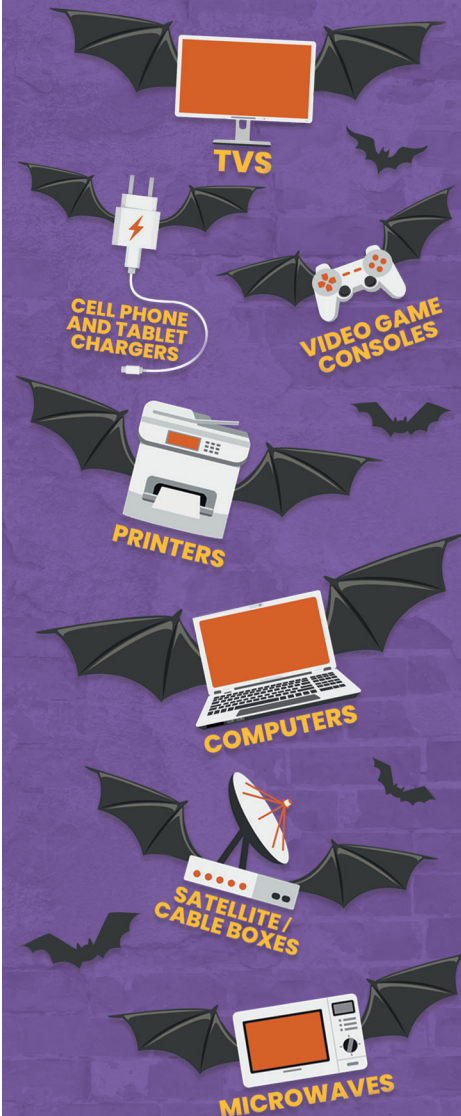


Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index

## Top Nine Energy Vampires

### Are Home Electronics & Appliances Draining Your Energy?

If you collect your spare change in a jar, all those coins add up over time, usually to a larger amount than you expect. Small amounts of consumed energy throughout your home add up as well, so plug "energy vampires" into a smart power strip that detects dormant devices or unplug items when not in use, especially those with illuminated controls.



Safe **LEARN MORE:**  
Electricity.org®

## 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 2021

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., August 26, 2021. All members of the Board were present except Director Nelson. 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 a discussion was held. He stated that an all-time kw peak was set August 17th. He discussed the Brigg's generator program.

Kory Johnson reported on activities of the Finance department for the month. He discussed capital credits and the 2020 KRTA. He stated that Lisa Bredeson, Customer Service Representative, decided to pursue a new career opportunity and the open position will be advertised. 1177300

Kory brought forth Work Order #513 and Special Equipment July 2021 and the Board approved them.

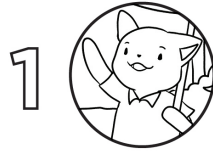
The financials were given by Kory with a PowerPoint presentation.

Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed line crew projects, recent outages, and blinking lights. He stated that Tree Story began trimming trees in Big Stone County.

Tom gave the safety report.

Director Thomson discussed an application for a donation to the Lake Hazel Church/Cemetery Association. A discussion was held. The request was tabled until the September board meeting.

# SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES



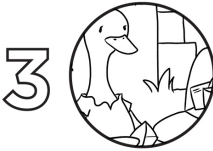
1

Open and  
Voluntary  
Membership



2

Democratic  
Member  
Control



3

Members'  
Economic  
Participation



4

Autonomy  
and  
Independence



5

Education,  
Training and  
Information



6

Cooperation  
Among  
Cooperatives



7

Concern for  
Community

Did you know all co-ops use the same set of seven principles to guide their work?

***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).

Check out our Updated Website! [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop)

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed East River's load levels and the recent meetings he attended. He gave an update on GRE.

Engan and Associates and Breitbach Construction joined the meeting to give a PowerPoint presentation and answer questions concerning the possible building project for the cooperative.

Kory discussed the dissolution of Agro Software Holdings, LLC and the Board

approved Resolution Granting Consent for the Dissolution of Argo Software Holdings, LLC, a Minnesota Limited Liability Company.

The Board voted to nominate Robert (Mac) McLennan for the CoBank board seat.

The September board meeting was set for the 30th. The November board meeting was set for the 24th.

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