



Photo: Janae Olson, October Calendar Photo Contest Winner

# Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

October 2024

## New Headquarters Update *by Jenny Stryhn, General Manager*

The Agralite Electric Cooperative leadership team, employees, integral members of Gardner Builders, Mohagen Hansen Architecture, and CoBank gathered on Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, to celebrate the beginning of Agralite Electric Cooperative’s new headquarters project. Rep. Paul Anderson and Sen. Torrey Westrom were also in attendance.

Agralite Electric Cooperative is replacing its current 60-year-old headquarters with a new 63,000 square foot building and a larger, secured pole yard. “The additional space, as well as new work and storage areas, are needed to support the Cooperative’s growing fleet and operations now and far into the future”, Stryhn said. The new headquarters will feature infrastructure designed to improve operational efficiency and support advanced technologies. The projected cost of the project is \$16 million. Expected completion is in late 2025. The new facility will be located on the existing footprint west of the existing cooperative headquarters.

“This new building I feel represents the vision that the founders of Agralite Electric Cooperative had 80 years ago. That is, to bring a better standard of living to our rural community. With the help of our entire team, we believe we will have a building designed with both safety and efficiency in mind. It will represent the success and growth of your cooperative over the past 80 years, as well as the goals for the future to continue to bring you safe, reliable, and affordable electricity going forward. The added space for equipment storage and maintenance, as well as a more efficient office and meeting area, will enable us to continue to meet those goals.” - Warren Rau, Board President



For more information and updates throughout the construction process, visit our website at [www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop) and read our monthly newsletter. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call the Agralite Electric Cooperative office at 320-843-4150.

## EMPOWERING

communities with innovative, sustainable energy solutions

FOR OVER

80  
YEARS

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## Agralite Electric Co-op

We're member-owned!

320 US-12, Benson, MN  
(320) 843-4150  
1-800-950-8375  
[www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop)

 Like us on Facebook



### Office Hours

8:00 am – 4:30 pm



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

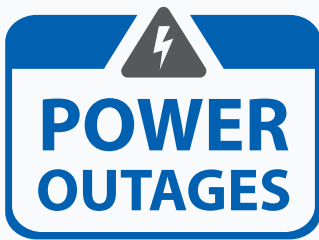
to Robert Simmonds for finding his account number in the August newsletter.

### Energy Saving Tip:

If you recently made or plan to make energy efficiency upgrades to your home, you may be eligible for federal tax credits.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 empowers homeowners to save up to \$3,000 annually to lower the upgrades by up to 30%. A few upgrades covered through the IRA include: new exterior doors, windows, insulation, heating/cooling equipment, and other major appliances. If you have completed or are considering an efficiency upgrade, visit [www.energystar.gov/federal-tax-credits](http://www.energystar.gov/federal-tax-credits) to learn if you qualify for tax credits.

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



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.



## A Fresh Look For Our Future: A New Brand For A New Building

Agralite Electric Cooperative is proud to announce the launch of our new logo and brand identity as part of the ongoing evolution of our cooperative. We have changed and grown over the years, and we are refreshing our brand to better reflect who we are. After careful consideration, we have chosen a new logo that intentionally clarifies the services we provide and honors our legacy while revitalizing our image as a modern and adaptable utility provider.

Agralite Electric Cooperative engaged a marketing firm that has a decade of experience in the utility industry, helping companies like ours tell their stories in a more creative, appealing, and effective way to help us with this rebrand.

We're excited to introduce our refreshed logo as part of a phased approach that aligns with the opening of our new building. This thoughtful rollout ensures a smooth transition without unnecessary disruption. During this process, you may notice a mix of the old and new logos on items from the Cooperative. This phased transition makes economic sense. By updating items as our current supplies run out, we can ensure financial responsibility, avoiding the costs of discarding perfectly useable materials. Rest assured, everything will fully align with our new branding by the time our new building opens.

Throughout the transition, we are committed to maintaining the quality and service you expect from us, even as we adopt our new brand identity. 848001 The culmination of this logo refresh will coincide with the grand opening of our new building, symbolizing a new chapter for Agralite Electric Cooperative.

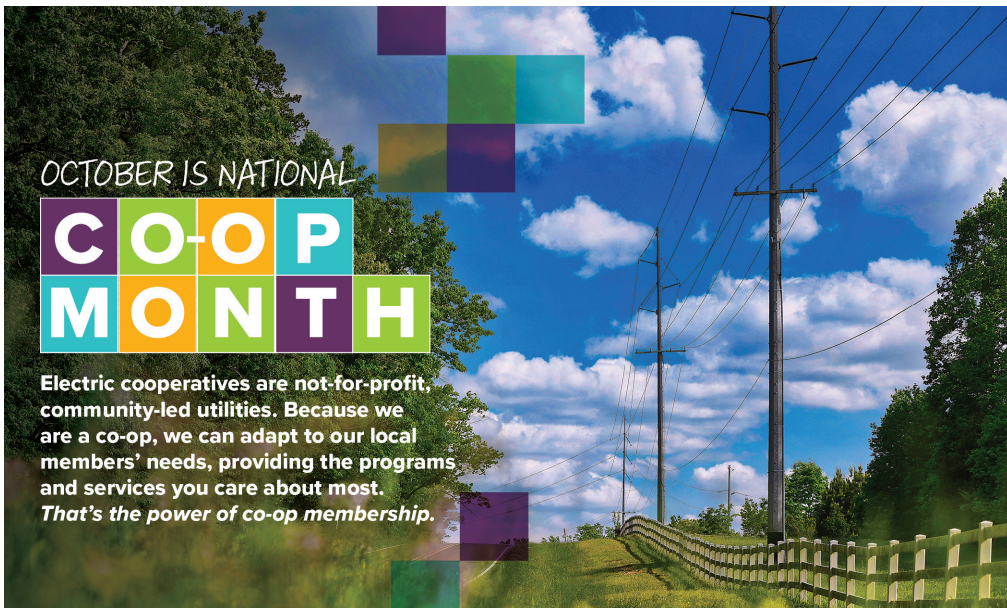
### 2024 Energy Tour

Twenty-four of Agralite's members, along with members from Meeker Cooperative, enjoyed a three-day luxury coach tour to North Dakota's coal country August 21-23. They saw how electric power is generated at a lignite coal plant, how a coal-gasification plant produces natural gas, and visited the North Dakota History Museum.

This fun and educational trip included a tour of these facilities:

- Basin Electric Power's Antelope Valley Power Station near Beulah, ND
- Great Plains Synfuels Plant
- Coteau Properties Freedom Coal Mine
- Garrison Dam Hydropower Generation Plant
- The North Dakota History Center
- Lewis & Clark Riverboat Dinner Cruise





## Co-ops Power Communities With Purpose

Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Some are based on geographical proximity. Some are based on shared interests or hobbies. Some communities can even be found in virtual spaces like social media groups. Regardless of where or how they are formed, communities can bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

Agralite Electric Cooperative is deeply committed to our consumer-members, and we're glad you are part of the electric cooperative community.

This month, more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. are celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all the aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses, but more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership. Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit utilities that are built by the communities they serve. For Agralite Electric Cooperative, our mission has always been to provide you with reliable power. We care about your quality of life, and because we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond the business of electricity, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because we live here, too. 1472900 That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects, youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives, and additional programs that make our community a better place to call home.

All co-ops, including Agralite Electric Cooperative, are guided by seven cooperative principles that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These seven principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities while remaining true to our purpose:

- 1 **Open and Voluntary Membership:** Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.
- 2 **Democratic Member Control:** Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Why? Because co-ops are created by the members, for the members.
- 3 **Members' Economic Participation:** Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. At Agralite Electric Cooperative, this happens through paying your energy bills.
- 4 **Autonomy and Independence:** Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.

*Article continues on page 4*

2024 **FARMFEST** *Grand Prize Winner!*

Congratulations to Randy Ascheman for winning an EGO cordless chainsaw at our Farmfest booth!



**Be Fire Prevention Smart**

**Don't overload electrical outlets.**

*Learn more about keeping your home safe at*

**SafeElectricity.org.**

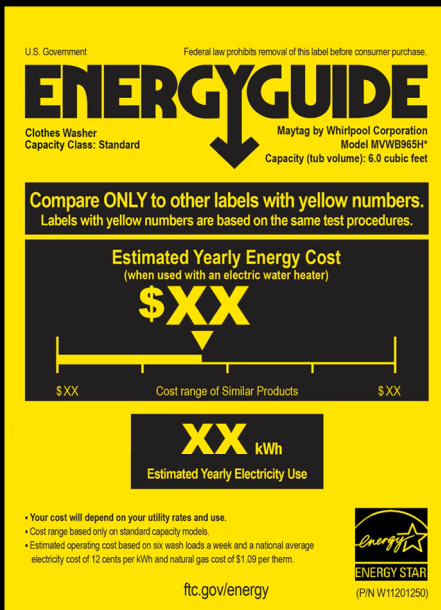


NATIONAL  
**FIRE**  
PREVENTION  
*week*

***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).

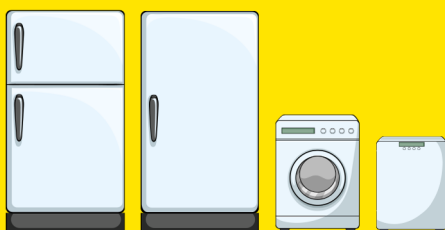
# KNOW THE DIFFERENCE



**A Yellow ENERGY GUIDE label does not indicate ENERGY STAR. It must have the ENERGY STAR logo.**



**Look for the ENERGY STAR logo as shown above to qualify for your appliance rebate!**



**Appliances eligible for rebates include: refrigerators, freezers, electric dryers, and dehumidifiers.**

Visit [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov) to see if your appliance qualifies.

## Co-ops Power Communities with Purpose *Continued*

- 5 Education, Training and Information:** Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.
- 6 Cooperation Among Cooperatives:** Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other out in times of need because we want other co-ops to thrive.
- 7 Concern for Community:** All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.

This October, as we celebrate National Co-op Month and the power of membership, we hope you will recognize the many aspects that set electric cooperatives apart. Our mission is reliable power. 984300 Our purpose is people—the local communities we're proud to serve.

## 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. 1357900
- 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**

## October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month.

Let's work together to build a safer digital world. Whether at home, work or school, we can increase our online safety with the following tips.

- 🔒 Recognize and report phishing attempts.
- 🔒 Use strong, unique passwords.
- 🔒 Enable multi-factor authentication.
- 🔒 Update software regularly.

### Cybersecurity Tips for a Safer Digital World

Did you know the average household with internet access owns about 17 connected devices? That figure covers a wide range of electronics, including smart phones, computers, streaming devices, smart speakers, home assistants, and more. Given our increasing reliance on internet-connected technologies, the likelihood of new cyber threats is ever-present.

Agralite Electric Cooperative is deeply committed to ensuring our local system is safe and secure. We routinely monitor and manage cyber risks, and we work together with other co-ops to share the latest advancements in cybersecurity measures that make us stronger. But you can help, too.

When we all work together to stay safe online, we lower the risk of cyber threats to our systems, online accounts, and sensitive data.

October is National Cybersecurity Month, and while good cyber hygiene should be practiced year-round, we'd like to share a few cybersecurity tips to help you bolster your online safety.

- **Learn how to spot and report phishing attempts.** Phishing occurs when criminals use phony emails, direct messages, or other types of digital communications that lure you to click a bad link or download a malicious attachment. If you receive a suspicious email or message that includes urgent language, offers that seem too good to be true, generic greetings, poor grammar, or an unusual sender address, it could be a phishing attempt. If you spot one, report it as soon as possible—and don't forget to block the sender. (If you receive a suspicious work email, report it to the appropriate IT contact. Suspicious messages that are delivered to your personal email or social media accounts can also be reported.)
- **Create strong, unique passwords.** When it comes to passwords, remember that length trumps complexity. Strong passwords contain at least 12 characters and include a mix of letters, numbers and symbols. Create unique passwords for each online account you manage and use phrases you can easily remember.
- **Enable multi-factor authentication when available.** Multi-factor authentication (also known as 2-factor authentication) adds an extra layer of security to your online accounts. 1662500 These extra security steps can include facial recognition, fingerprint access, or one-time codes sent to your email or phone.
- **Update software regularly.** Software and internet-connected devices, including personal computers, smartphones, and tablets, should always be current on updates to reduce the risk of infection from ransomware and malware. When possible, configure devices to automatically update or notify you when an update is available.

Let's all do our part to stay cyber smart and create a safer digital world for all. Visit [staysafeonline.org](http://staysafeonline.org) to learn about additional cybersecurity tips.

## TRICK OR TREAT

**DON'T LET AN ELECTRICAL MISHAP BE YOUR HALLOWEEN TRICK**

**As you ready your yard and porch for Halloween, make sure the decorations you plug in do not become hazardous. To avoid a Halloween scare, take these safety precautions:**

- Discard any decorations that have cracked or frayed cords or damaged plugs.
- Do not put any decorations on power poles, padmount transformers or any other electrical equipment.
- Use decorations that are endorsed by a reputable testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- If you are using extension cords outdoors, make sure they are rated for outdoor use.
- Secure all cords so they do not become tripping hazards.
- Plug all cords into circuits protected by GFCIs to prevent electrical shock.
- Do not use nails or tacks to hang lights or other electrical decor.
- Keep decorations away from flammable items like bales of hay, cornstalks or witch's brew.

**Have a safe and festive Halloween complete with safe tricks and tasty treats.**

Learn more at:  [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.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 - Vice President*

Andrea Thomson, Benson  
*District 6*

Warren Rau, Appleton  
*District 7 - President*

## MINUTES OF MEETING BOARD OF DIRECTORS August 2024

Board Chairman Warren Rau called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., August 29, 2024. All members of the Board were present. The agenda, minutes of the last meetings, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Order #566, and July 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 community involvement including the Ortonville Cornfest parade that Agralite participated in. He discussed the shared co-op booth at Farmfest and stated an Agralite member, Randy Ascheman, won the battery powered chainsaw. He discussed the North Dakota Energy Tour that 24 Agralite members went on. He discussed survey results from the new logo survey that employees completed. The winning logo was Logo Option B. A discussion was held about the logos and the Board voted to move forward with new logo option B.

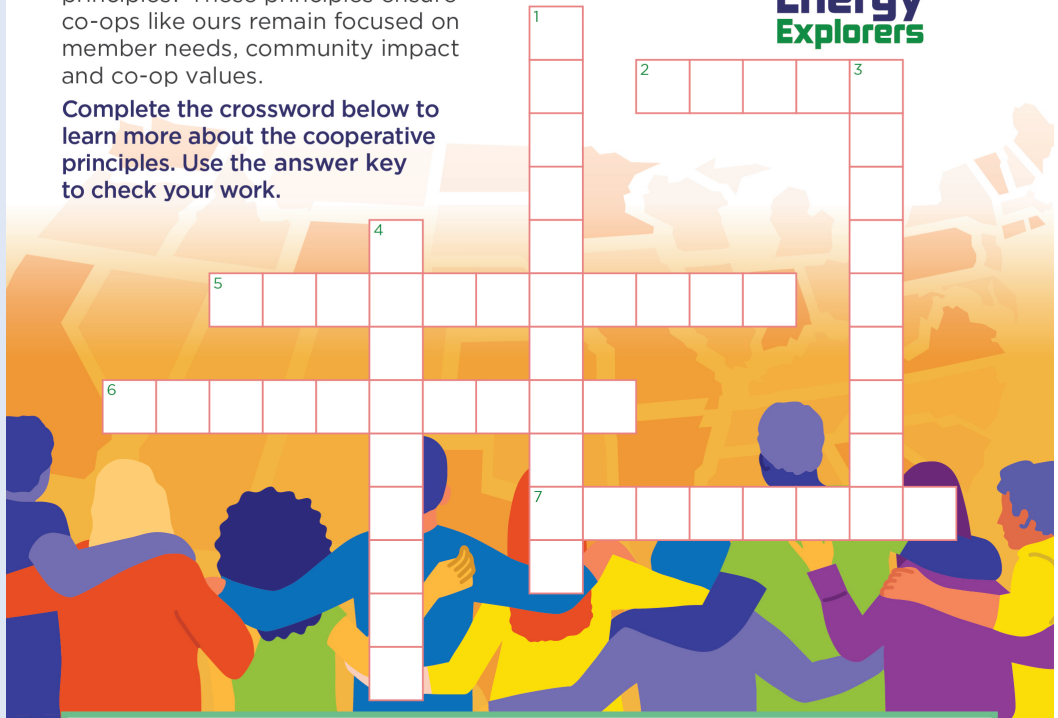
Jenny Stryhn reported on activities of the Finance department for the month. She discussed insurance renewal quotes. She brought forth 990 Tax Return Approval and the Board approved it. She brought forth CoBank Resolution authorizing the President, Secretary, General Manager, and Manager of Finance to obtain loans from CoBank and the Board approved it.

The financials were given by Jenny with a PowerPoint presentation. Jenny reported on activities of the Engineering & Operations department for the month. She discussed line crew projects and outages for the

## SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Did you know electric co-ops are guided by a set of seven cooperative principles? These principles ensure co-ops like ours remain focused on member needs, community impact and co-op values.

Complete the crossword below to learn more about the cooperative principles. Use the answer key to check your work.



### ACROSS

2. Cooperation Among Cooperatives: Co-ops \_\_\_\_\_ and learn from other co-ops.
5. Autonomy & Independence: Co-ops are \_\_\_\_\_ and can operate on their own.
6. Member Economic Participation: Members \_\_\_\_\_ money to ensure the co-op runs smoothly.
7. Open & Voluntary Membership: Co-op membership is open to \_\_\_\_\_.

### DOWN

1. Concern for Community: Co-ops give back to their local \_\_\_\_\_ to help them thrive and grow.
3. Education, Training & Information: Co-ops focus on \_\_\_\_\_ to ensure employees and members have the info they need.
4. Democratic Member Control: Members get to make \_\_\_\_\_ about the co-op.

**ANSWER KEY** 1 DOWN: DECISIONS 2 ACROSS: SHARE 3 DOWN: EDUCATION 4 DOWN: DECISIONS 5 ACROSS: INDEPENDENT 6 ACROSS: CONTRIBUTUTE 7 ACROSS: EVERYONE

month. She discussed the new Hodges substation. She discussed the new building project including removal of trees and clearing out the pole yard.

Jenny gave the safety report.

Board Policies 410-418 were reviewed and approved by the Board.

Jenny discussed the Mini Sota REDLG loan closing documents and the Board approved them.

Director Rau will be the 2024 CFC voting delegate. Jenny will be the alternate.

The 2024 CoBank Director Election was discussed. The Board voted to select J. Greg Schlafer.

Director Rau will be the 2024 RESCO voting delegate. Jenny will be the alternate.

Stephen Kowal, Attorney, joined the meeting to introduce himself as the new owner of Wilcox Law Office and to answer questions from the Board

and Jenny. After he left, the Board voted in favor of hiring him as Agralite's new Attorney to replace Don Wilcox who is retiring.

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed kwh sales. She discussed recent meetings she attended including the STAR board meeting, GRE special meeting, and the East River manager's meeting. She discussed Basin's proposed rate increase and the Basin Annual Meeting. She discussed union negotiations and gave an update on the new headquarters project.

A roundtable discussion was held on topics including data centers, the new headquarters project, renewables, solar storms, the Energy Issues Summit, and the Basin Annual Meeting.

The September board meeting was set for the 27th.

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