



Photo: Virginia Sondrol, September Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

September 2024

New Headquarters Update *by Jenny Stryhn, General Manager*

As the cooperative has been finalizing the design documents of a new headquarter facility with our architect earlier this summer, Agralite sent out a Request for Proposal (RFP), which is in the best interest of the cooperative, to maintain cost competitiveness.

This RFP was sent to multiple contractors for firm qualifications and proposed cost estimates based on the design development documentation. From there, Agralite received five qualified proposals that met our requirements and time frames.

After a review of those proposals, Agralite selected three of those top contractors for in-person interviews, which were held at Agralite's facility in June. The interview process included the leadership team from the Agralite Board of Directors, staff from the Agralite leadership team, and members from our architect firm. All contractors that submitted proposals also submitted cost estimates.

After completing the interview process and reviewing cost estimates and project timelines, the Board of Directors unanimously selected Gardner Builders to be our Construction Manager on the project. This project will be utilizing many local contractors in our West Central Minnesota footprint. The total cost of the new facility is \$16 million.

We plan to begin site preparation in the next few weeks. Our construction window is anticipated to last around 12 months. While it will be tight on our current footprint during construction, Agralite will continue operations and service to our membership as usual, with some minor adjustments made internally.

We will continue to provide you with relevant updates on this project in our monthly newsletter

and on our website where we will have a dedicated tab where you can review our past communications, frequently asked questions, and much more. 1697000

If you have any questions, please call our office during normal business hours. We appreciate your continued support and interest in your electric cooperative.



EMPOWERING

communities with innovative, sustainable energy solutions

FOR OVER

80
YEARS

CONTENTS

Page 1 ► New Headquarters Update

Page 2 ► Beyond The Plug: Load-serving Transmission, Go Above And Beyond For A Safe Harvest, Find Your Account Number And Win, Energy Saving Tip

Page 3 ► Go Above And Beyond For A Safe Harvest Cont., 5 Tips For A Safe Harvest, 2025 Calendar Photo Contest


Page 4 ► Beyond Opening The Box: Take Steps To Operate A Generator Safely, \$500 Rebate For Residential Standby Systems, What Is A Transfer Switch?

Page 5 ► More Than A Few Cans Of Soup..., Your Electric Cooperative Needs Your Help

Page 6 ► Board Meeting Minutes, Preparedness Month Word Search

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
(Beginning September 3)
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 Danny Chase and Kevin Beyer for finding their account numbers in the July newsletter.

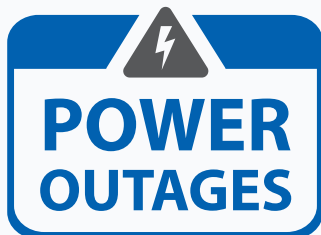
Energy Saving Tip:

Now is the time to schedule annual maintenance for your home's heating system.



During the fall months, HVAC technicians are typically less busy, making this an excellent time for maintenance and any necessary repairs before the winter months.

A qualified technician can clean filters, check for leaks, and ensure all system components are working efficiently to keep your home cozy and warm when the temperatures drop. 1183500



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.

Beyond The Plug: Load-serving Transmission

While the local distribution grid carries electricity to homes, farms, and businesses, the electric system has additional infrastructure to deliver more energy over longer distances.

Great River Energy, a wholesale power supplier to Agralite Electric Cooperative, owns and operates transmission lines that operate at higher voltages and carry power from sources such as power plants and wind farms throughout Minnesota.

Transmission lines that carry large amounts of power to communities are referred to as "load-serving" transmission lines. These medium-sized power lines deliver power at voltages between 34.5 kilovolts (kV) and 115 kV.

Most homes are served voltages that are a thousand times less (e.g., 115 volts) and make up most of the electric transmission system. Great River Energy owns and operates more than 3,000 miles of transmission lines at these voltages.

Load-serving transmission is an important key to helping deliver reliable energy to your community all day, every day.

THREE LEVELS OF TRANSMISSION

<p><small>BIG, STRONG, SERVES THE MARKET</small></p> <h3>REGIONAL TRANSMISSION</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transports bulk electricity across the region at high voltages • Usually supported on tall metal towers • Often 230-kV and up 	<p><small>MEDIUM SIZED, CONNECTS COMMUNITIES</small></p> <h3>LOCAL TRANSMISSION</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transmission lines that deliver electricity to the communities we serve • Generally supported by wooden poles • Often 41.6 to 115-kV 	<p><small>SMALLER, CONNECTS HOMES, FARMS AND BUSINESSES</small></p> <h3>DISTRIBUTION</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers lower-voltage electricity to homes, farms, and businesses over a shorter distance • Generally supported by wooden poles • In certain situations, distribution lines are buried underground • Often 35-kV and under
---	---	--

Go Above And Beyond For A Safe Harvest

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height, and extensions make them particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused, and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

[Article continues on page 3](#)



360° Awareness

You can significantly reduce the risk of accidents by increasing your awareness of your surroundings. This means considering the areas above, below, and around you while you plan your equipment routes. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings, and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. If you plan to install new grain bins or you're concerned about the proximity of power lines to existing grain bins, contact Agralite Electric Cooperative.

Smart Harvest Safety Tips

To ensure a safe harvest season, *SafeElectricity.org* recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- Exercise caution near power lines. Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines. Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.
- Lower equipment extensions, portable augers, or elevators before moving or transporting equipment. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles, or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes, and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty, or dirty.
- Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path. Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- Avoid using metal poles inside bins. Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- Hire qualified electricians. Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same time. 1131900 Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

5 Tips for a Safe Harvest

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures. Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents.

1. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
2. Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
3. Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
4. Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
5. Keep first aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.



Back By Popular Demand!

Agralite is seeking local photographs for our 2025 calendar contest. Photos should be of a landscape, natural element, or interesting view from within the Agralite service territory. We want you to share the diversity and wonder of our local landscape.

Photo entries are limited to Agralite members and must be submitted by **October 4th, 2024**.

Digital photos only. You must specify the subject of the photo and where it was taken. Please include your contact information, account number, phone number, and address in your submission.

Selected photos will receive a \$15 bill credit. Cover photo will receive a \$30 bill credit. Photos will be selected by Agralite employees. Please limit 5 photo submissions per member - 1 winning photo per member.

Submit Your Photos To:
mchevalier@agralite.com

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.



Residential Standby Generator Systems

Save Money on Your Energy Usage By Allowing Aqualite to Control During Peak Demand Time

- Intelligently powers your whole house
- Automatically starts when the power goes out
- Runs on LP or natural gas
- Sold and maintained by Aqualite
- Briggs & Stratton - The Power Experts™



Call us at (320) 843-4150

\$500 REBATE

to all members that enroll in the Interruptible Generator Program after February 1, 2024

Beyond Opening The Box: Take Steps To Operate A Generator Safely

When the electricity goes out, your initial thought might be to run to the local hardware or big box store to buy a generator. However, using a generator should not be taken lightly. It can be dangerous, and even life-threatening, if used incorrectly. 1555101 There are several steps you should take before ever starting one up.

But First, Homework

Before purchasing a generator, first research the best option for your home and budget. The second and more important step is to educate yourself on how to use one safely. Homeowners can choose from two types of generators: standby and portable. Standby generators are installed directly into the home's electrical system and are typically powered by natural gas or propane. These generators start automatically when the power goes out. A portable generator is usually gas powered and powers appliances by plugging them into it. Your generator should have more output than the wattage of the electronics plugged into it so it can create the extra electricity it takes for the initial power surge. Be sure nothing is plugged into the generator when turning it on.

Safety Tips

When you refuel a portable generator, make sure the engine is cool. Keep children and pets away from it, as it could burn them. Generators pose electrical risks, especially when operated during inclement weather. Use a generator only when necessary during wet conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure and on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it.

Generators Can Be Deadly

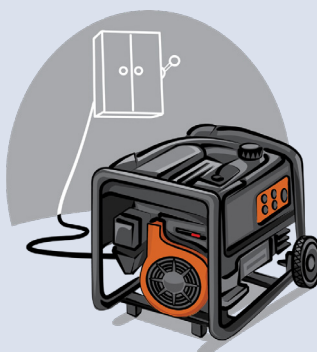
Carbon monoxide fumes emitted by the gasoline engine on the generator can be deadly. Always operate your portable generator outdoors, at least 20 feet from your home. Misusing a portable generator or standby generator that is not installed correctly (*or does not meet the electrical code*) can cause backfeed, and puts others in danger. Backfeed occurs when a generator feeds electricity back through a home's electrical system and meter into the power lines. To avoid this dangerous scenario, standby generators should have a transfer switch installed by a licensed professional. Do not plug a portable generator directly into a home outlet or electrical system. Instead, use a properly-rated extension cord to plug appliances into an outlet on the generator.

When Not In Use

Operate your generator once a month for 10 minutes to ensure it is running properly. Keep your generator well-maintained and follow all manufacturer's instructions. Have a standby generator installed in an easily accessible, weatherproof area.

For more electrical safety information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

What is a **TRANSFER SWITCH**?



A transfer or throw switch is an essential mechanism that safely shuts off power to the electrical grid before backup power is used. This switch is sometimes referred to as a double-throw switch, as it controls two separate circuits.

The switch's job is to safely transfer power from its primary source to a backup power source, enabling users to maintain power during an outage. It works by connecting a generator to your home's main circuits to provide backup power.

Properly installed transfer switches are essential because they prevent dangerous backfeed into the power grid, which endangers utility workers and others.

Make sure your permanent generator and switch are installed according to code and working properly. Never plug a portable generator into a wall outlet, as this can cause backfeed.

Learn more at:



MORE THAN A FEW CANS OF SOUP...

WHICH FOODS ARE IN YOUR EMERGENCY KIT?



THE FOOD IN YOUR EMERGENCY KIT SHOULD:

- Have a long storage life.
- Require little or no cooking, water or refrigeration.
- Include nourishment for infants and toddlers if applicable.
- Meet special dietary needs.
- Include the needs of pets if you have them.

WATER AND PREP ITEMS

Include in your supplies:

- One gallon of water per person per day to last at least three days.
- A manual can opener and cooking supplies.
- Indoor warming methods, such as chafing dishes and fondue pots.

EMERGENCY STASH

Plan for several days' worth of food for each person in your household. Edible items could include:

- Canned meats, fruits and vegetables.
- Grains, such as crackers and multigrain cereals.
- Protein or fruit bars.
- Dried fruit.
- Peanut butter.
- Canned soups, meats and beans.
- Powdered milk.
- Dried meat/jerky.
- Oatmeal or breakfast bars.

BE PREPARED TO KEEP THOSE YOU LOVE SAFE, NOURISHED, AND HYDRATED DURING AN EMERGENCY.

YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE NEEDS

YOUR HELP



Agralite Electric Cooperative works hard to provide safe, reliable, and convenient electric power for you and your family. We also provide programs to help you use energy efficiently.

To help us plan for the future and determine what programs will benefit you most, your cooperative needs your help.

This fall, we will be conducting a survey of our residential consumers. If you receive a survey, please help us by taking a few minutes to complete it.

Your answers are very important, so please respond as best as possible and return it promptly. A postage-paid return envelope is included for your convenience. The survey will also be available to complete online.



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 July 2024

Board Chairman Warren Rau called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., July 25, 2024. All members of the Board were present. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Order #565, and June 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 member survey, issues with load control text messages, and Agralite's logo. He discussed community involvement including the Hancock 4th of July parade, Benson Kid Day parade, and Kerkhoven Town and Country Days parade that Agralite participated in.

Stephanie Wroblewski, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed margins for the month of June. She discussed GRE contributions to Operation Round Up and the 2023 KRTA.

The financials were given by Stephanie with a PowerPoint presentation.

Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on the activities of his department for the month. He discussed line crew projects and outages for the month. He discussed the new Hodges substation. He stated that Carr's Tree Service is about 2/3 done trimming trees in Swift County. He discussed a recent storm that took down seven poles near Danvers.

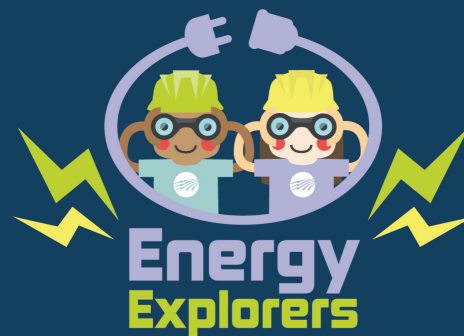
Tom gave the safety report.

PREPAREDNESS MONTH WORD SEARCH

Did you know September is National Preparedness Month? There are several ways you and your family can be prepared for an emergency.

Read the tips below, then find and circle the bolded words in the puzzle.

(Use the word bank as a guide.)



PREPAREDNESS TIPS:

Keep a list of emergency **phone numbers** in a location that's easy to find.

Learn about different types of **emergency alerts** and understand what they mean.

Make an emergency **kit** that includes items like flashlights, batteries, water, non-perishable food and a First Aid Kit.

Designate a **safe area** in your home in the event of a severe storm. This should be an area in the center of the home, away from windows.

Make sure **smoke alarms** are installed on every floor of your home and outside bedrooms. Test alarms every month to ensure they're working properly.



WORD BANK: phone numbers, emergency, alerts, kit, safe area, smoke alarms

Board Policies 401-409 were reviewed and approved by the Board.

Jenny showed the 2024 Unclaimed Capital Credit list.

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed a potential Basin rate increase. She discussed East River Class D membership and the Director Seat Resolution and the Board approved them. She discussed the opening for the GRE Transmission Committee seat. Director Thomson will join the committee beginning in September. She discussed GRE strategic planning, NRTC Smart Grid Technology Planning, and the WAPA rate review. She discussed upcoming labor union negotiations. The Board made a motion to hire Bob Halagan for the negotiations. Directors Nelson, Draeger, and Rau will be on the negotiating committee. She discussed the headquarters facility project

and strategic planning.

Jenny discussed a REED application for Mini Sota Children's Museum and the Board approved it.

Director Rau will be the voting delegate at the NRECA Regional Meeting. Jenny will be the alternate.

Director Zierke will be the voting delegate at the Basin Annual Meeting. Director Rau will be the alternate.

A roundtable discussion was held on topics including an East River Board Meeting review by Director Hufford, the headquarters facility project, and self-generation.

The August board meeting was set for the 29th.

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