

CURRENT MATTERS

February 2024



Nobles Cooperative Electric

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

HOW EXTREME WEATHER IMPACTS RELIABILITY

When outdoor temperatures drop, our electricity use increases. That's because we're doing more activities inside, and our heating systems are running more often to counteract the cold outdoor temperatures. And, we all tend to use electricity at the same times - in the morning and early evenings - which equals a lot of strain on the electric grid.

At Nobles Cooperative Electric, we work closely with our local generation and transmission provider, Great River Energy, in resource and infrastructure planning to ensure you have power whenever you flip a switch. However, during peak times of use, we need to consider the national grid as well.

During peak demand, when more electricity is needed simultaneously across the country, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply. We take proactive steps to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather. We also plan for system maintenance, disaster response time, (19-3-29) grid modernization efforts and disaster response planning; but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.

Check out some great energy saving tips:

Choose the lowest comfortable thermostat setting possible and reduce it by several degrees when you can. This helps your heating system run longer and compensate for the difference between the thermostat and outdoor temperatures.

- Pro tip: Use caulk and weather stripping to seal air leaks around windows and exterior doors. Air drafts and leaks make your heating system work harder than necessary.

Use major appliances such as dishwashers, ovens and dryers at different times.

- Pro tip: Start the dishwasher before you go to bed and use smaller countertop appliances, such as slow cookers and air fryers, to save energy.

Ensure your heating system is running efficiently by performing regular maintenance and insulating your home properly.

- Pro tip: Check your furnace filter regularly to see if it is clogged or dirty. Replace it as needed.

ENERGY SAVING TIP

Area rugs are an affordable and easy way to make hard-surface floors warmer during winter. Natural fiber rugs made of wool and plush textures provide maximum insulation. Place them where extra warmth is needed and enhance your home's aesthetic.

Whenever possible, use cold water to reduce the cost of heating water.

- Pro tip: Setting your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees can help you save energy, and also prevent mineral buildup and corrosion in your pipes and water heater.

Unplug devices when not in use to eliminate unnecessary energy use. Even when turned off, electronics in standby mode consume energy.

- Pro tip: Plug devices into a power strip so you can turn them all off at once with the push of a button.

In winter weather, energy demand increases, and it's essential we all adopt energy-saving habits to save money and keep the power grid dependable. This contributes to the resilience of the local community, ensuring warmth and connectivity for everyone.



FEBRUARY AUTO PAY WINNER - LORNA KRUGER

Take a minute to sign up for Auto Pay and you may win a \$25 bill credit. A winner is chosen each month.

FIND YOUR LOCATION NUMBER AND WIN A \$10 CREDIT

If you find your location number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) in this issue, you will receive a \$10 credit.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Feb. 19 Presidents' Day
 Feb. 29 Electric Bills Due
 Mar. 10... Daylight Savings Time Starts



Adam Tromblay, General Manager

TIPS TO STAY WARM AND SAVE ENERGY THIS WINTER

Colder weather can increase energy use and bills since heating accounts for the highest wintertime energy consumption in most homes. The amount of energy used to heat your home depends on your equipment, how you use it and the efficiency of your home's shell - the building components that separate the indoors from the outdoors.

It's important to know how your home is heated so you can make informed decisions on your energy use. It also helps you prepare for upcoming bills and avoid surprises that impact your budget. A forced-air furnace is the most common type of heating system and is fueled by natural gas, propane, oil or electricity. Heat pumps are growing in popularity and available for forced-air systems. If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty. Ductless heat pumps, or mini-splits, boilers, radiant heat, baseboard heaters and electric resistance heaters are other common heating system types.

"The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow."

If you don't know what type of system you have, find the model number of your equipment and look it up online. You'll find information about the kind of system, how efficiently it operates and recommendations for servicing it, which can improve system efficiency.

We use energy to make our homes comfortable. The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. The closer your home's temperature is to the outdoor temperature, the less energy is used.

The U.S. Department of Energy recommends a thermostat setting of 68 degrees in the winter while you are awake and lower when you are asleep or away from home. Keep in mind that setting the temperature too low can cause pipes to freeze or moisture issues in some geographic locations.

Adding an additional layer of clothing, slippers (37-35-55) or a hat can keep you comfortable in a cooler home.

Do you use electric resistance space heaters to heat a room or small section of your home? If so, you may see an increase on your electric bill.

For example, let's say you use a 1,500-watt electric space heater to warm your living room while you watch TV or read a book. Operating that space heater for two hours a day at the U.S. average electricity rate of about 16 cents per kilowatt-hour will cost you about \$15 a month. Operating that same space heater for 12 hours a day will cost you about \$90 a month.

If you choose to use space heaters, use them safely. Keep them 3 feet away from anything flammable, do not leave them unattended and plug them directly into the outlet, not an extension cord or power strip.

Cold, windy winter days are the perfect time to find opportunities for air sealing. Rattling doors or moving curtains can indicate air leakage. Air leakage can occur where two different materials come together, like drywall and trim work. Cracked plaster and gaps in drywall can also cause drafts. Sealing the gaps saves energy and improves comfort.

As outdoor temperatures dip this winter, take a few proactive steps to maintain comfort in your home and keep your energy bill in check.

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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) e-mail: program.intake@usda.gov.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

ELLSWORTH LOCKER - CHAPA FAMILY



Nobles Cooperative
Electric

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Kathy Chapa, Jeff McNuss, Dana Kruse, Tyler Chapa and Brian Chapa

INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBER-FOCUSED ARTICLE SERIES: MEET THE CHAPAS OF ELLSWORTH

We're excited to kick off our new series of articles that shine a spotlight on our members.

First up, we introduce the Chapa family from Ellsworth, best known for the famous Ellsworth Locker business that has been in operation for over a century and has been under the Chapa family's ownership for 41 years.

Brian started working at the locker in high school. When it was put up for sale in 1982, he bought it at the young age of 19. Two years later, he married Kathy and they have since dedicated themselves to building their family business.

When they started, they made only four types of sausages. Today, they have a repertoire of over 141 recipes, including 38 varieties of brats, over 30 flavors of beef sticks and many types of bacon, ham and other flavors in their fridge.

Since 1989, they (532-39-040) have been participating in the Minnesota Meat Processors Convention and have been submitting their products for state competitions, which cover Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota.

They have won every year except one, which they couldn't attend. The family has earned nearly 120 awards, with 10 from a single year alone!

Though they primarily work with beef and pork, they occasionally process buffalo or lamb. However, they have stopped processing deer in recent years due to their busy schedule.

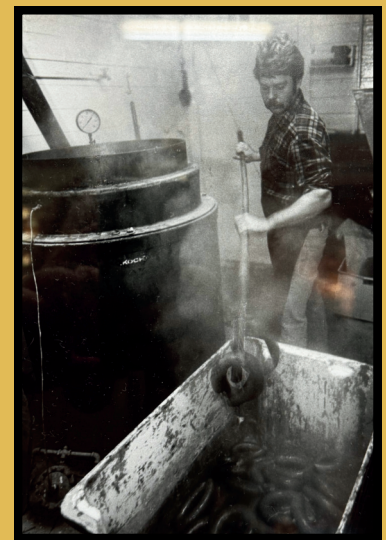
Throughout the years, their business has faced numerous challenges, particularly in the form of regulations, which they have learned to accept. Kathy says, "We've come a long way from stuffing sausage by hand, as we now have vacuum stuffers, smokers, computers and larger freezers." They have installed a three-phase generator as a backup to keep everything up and running during storms. They take care to check temperatures daily, even in the midst of blizzards!

Tyler, one of the Chapas' children, started volunteering for odd jobs at the locker as early as eight years old. He preferred spending time with his mom and dad at the shop instead of going to daycare! He continues to work side by side with his family to this day.

Did you know that Brian was initially pursuing a career as an electrician before acquiring the locker? We're happy he found his true passion to create amazing products instead!

On a separate note, make sure to try the Honey BBQ meat sticks. They're a family favorite!

BRIAN IN THE EARLY YEARS!



ELLSWORTH LOCKER

317 S Broadway Street
Ellsworth, Minnesota
507-967-2544



NOBLES COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC GRANTS MURRAY COUNTY CENTRAL LIVING GREEN HYDROPONIC GARDENING SYSTEM

The Nobles Cooperative Electric Board encourages our staff to think outside the box and explore new ways to benefit our membership and our communities. In fact, we have a dedicated line item on our board agenda each month called "Innovative Solutions."

During a member services meeting back in 2019, Members Services Manager, Tracey Haberman visited a GroShed and was immediately inspired. After bringing the idea back to Adam and the board, we received our first model in December of that same year. Thanks to generous grants from Great River Energy (\$5,000) and Southwest Health and Human Services (\$3,000), we were able to make our vision a reality. When COVID-19 started to disrupt our supply chain, we were grateful to have our shed to grow fresh produce and help provide for our community.

The system practically runs itself with a constant temperature of 72 degrees. LED lights above the plants and tubes below or injected in the pots keep the plants adequately supplied with enough artificial sunlight and water to meet their growing requirement. Several varieties of lettuce, cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes are grown hydroponically. Plants are much less susceptible to disease, pests and mildews.

Nobles Cooperative Electric was the first electric cooperative to own a hydroponic food producing shed from GroShed.

In 2023, we decided to donate the GroShed to support a local school district and we reached out to all the schools in our service area. After receiving proposals, we decided to donate it to Murray County Central School, which expressed a strong interest in incorporating it into its existing greenhouse program.



The hydroponic gardening system, is an 8-by-12-foot shed equipped to grow vegetables all year despite frigid temperatures in the winter.

The Murray County Central School District is excited for this new opportunity to provide a new learning platform for students. The agriculture (8-33-68) and science departments will enhance their curriculum and help students apply theoretical concepts taught in class, while providing fresh produce for the school to serve in their food service programs.






Nobles Cooperative
Electric

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

2024 RATE ADJUSTMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

RATE ADJUSTMENT EFFECTIVE MAY 2024					
Rate	Description	Current Service Charge	2024 Service Charge	Current Energy Charge	2024 Energy Charge
1	Residential	\$ 37	\$ 41	\$ 0.075	\$ 0.080
2	Three-phase <75 kVa	\$ 67	\$ 71	\$ 0.075	\$ 0.080
4	Three-phase >75 kVa	\$ 70	\$ 74	\$ 0.057	\$ 0.062

WHEN DOES THIS RATE ADJUSTMENT GO INTO EFFECT?

The changes will take effect on May 1, 2024. You will notice these changes on the bill that you receive on June 15, 2024.

ARE THE RATE CHANGES NECESSARY?

We are facing inflationary pressures just as you, our members, are seeing. Unfortunately, the cost of running and maintaining the electric system has increased. After careful consideration, the rate adjustment was approved by the board at the December 2023 Board Meeting. This rate adjustment is essential so can we remain financially stable, while continuing to provide reliable electricity to our members. It is important to note that Nobles Cooperative Electric's rates are very competitive and remain one of the lowest in the state.

HOW MUCH WILL MY BILL INCREASE?

The overall membership will see the service charge increase by \$4 and the energy charge increase by **only half of a cent in every rate class** (for example for residential Rate Class 1: 7.5 cents to 8 cents).

WHAT IS THE SERVICE CHARGE?

The service charge is each member's share of the fixed costs designed to cover the costs to deliver and maintain the distribution system regardless of the amount of energy used. These fixed costs include items such as poles, wires, transformers, meters, construction (22-66-52) and other services associated with providing electric service.

WHAT IS THE KILOWATT-HOUR (ENERGY) CHARGE?

The energy rate represents the cost associated with wholesale power including energy, transmission, substation and capacity charges which are charged based on the amount of electricity used

IT IS TIME TO APPLY FOR AN OPERATION ROUND UP® GRANT

Electric cooperatives offer Operation Round Up, a charitable program that provides financial assistance to local nonprofit organizations and community projects. The program supports various initiatives such as replenishing food supplies, purchasing equipment for emergency response services and helping disadvantaged children and senior citizens.

To apply for a grant or to learn more, visit our website.



← **APPLY NOW!**

Deadline to apply
Friday, March 1, 2024

www.noblesce.coop/operation-round-up

RATES WORTH *Celebrating*

Nobles Cooperative Electric **\$112**

Minnesota **\$143**

National **\$150**

*Monthly bill based on 1,000 kilowatt-hours in 2022

MANAGE YOUR ACCOUNT WITH MYMETER



<https://mymeter.noblesce.coop/Home/ExternalCreateAccount>

BEST BETS FOR

Winter Savings

Energy consumption spikes during winter months as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid by conserving during peak energy times. Reducing energy use will also help lower your energy bills.

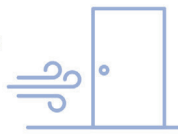
UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE

Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.



ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS

Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.



USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER

Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before you go to bed.



MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT

Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.

LOWER THE THERMOSTAT

Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).



Nobles Cooperative Electric

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION

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Monday through Friday

Oct. 1 - April 30

24-HOUR OUTAGE SERVICE

800-776-0517

GOPHER STATE ONE-CALL

800-252-1166 or 811

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Nobles and Murray County

Luke Pieske

507-316-8664

GENERAL MANAGER

Adam Tromblay

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Lee York, V. President - 879-3497*

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Timothy Bickett, Director - 605-670-5294

Gary Clarke, Director - 605-201-1903

David Dorpinghaus, Director - 605-695-7816*

*Telephone prefix 507

NEXT BOARD MEETING

March 23, 2024

This cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Country Cupboard

OVERNIGHT BLUEBERRY FRENCH TOAST

FRENCH TOAST CASSEROLE

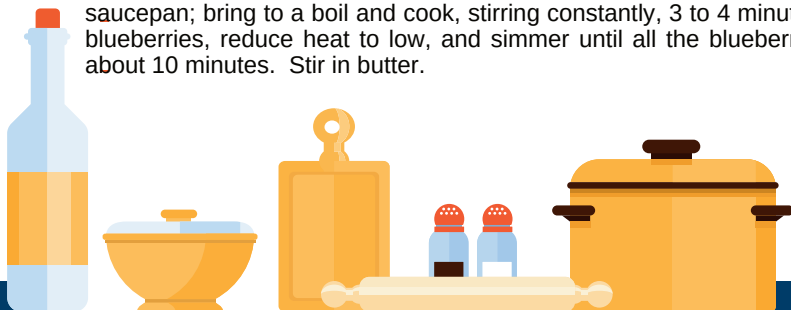
- 12 slices day-old bread, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- 12 large eggs, beaten
- 2 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup maple syrup

BLUEBERRY SAUCE

- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- 1 tablespoon butter

DIRECTIONS:

1. Grease a 9x13 baking dish. Arrange half of the bread cubes in the dish and top with cream cheese cubes. Sprinkle blueberries over the cream cheese, then top with remaining bread cubes.
2. Whisk eggs, milk, vanilla extract, and syrup together in a large bowl until well combined; pour over the bread cubes. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
3. Remove the casserole from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake casserole, covered for 30 minutes. Uncover, and continue baking until the center is firm and the surface is lightly browned, about 25 to 30 minutes.
4. Prepare blueberry sauce: Mix sugar, water and cornstarch in a medium saucepan; bring to a boil and cook, stirring constantly, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in blueberries, reduce heat to low, and simmer until all the blueberries burst, about 10 minutes. Stir in butter.



Want your recipe featured?

Do you have a delicious **BREAD RECIPE** that you're willing to share? Send it to Nobles Cooperative Electric, ATTN: Tracey, P.O. Box 788, Worthington, MN 56187, and be sure to include your name, address, telephone number and NCE location number. All entries must be received by February 25th. The winning recipe will be featured in the next edition of Current Matters, and the lucky winner will receive a \$10 credit toward their electric bill.