



The co-op community that keeps the lights on

When a big storm knocks out power for you and your neighbors, there's a good chance help is already on the way.

That lightning-fast response comes from a combination of a centuries-old co-op tradition, an ingenious contract between electric cooperatives and lineworkers' spirit of dedication, pride and adventure.

When a power outage is caused by a severe natural disaster, the devastation can be more than Nobles Cooperative Electric (NCE) (18-28-12) can quickly repair on its own. We know that far too well from the ice storms we have experienced over the years. That's when other co-ops swoop in.

Perhaps you've seen them. They arrive in caravans of utility vehicles with military-like precision as part of a plan called a "Mutual Aid Agreement."

The origins of the Mutual Aid Agreement can be traced back to 1844, even before there were electric utilities, when the first formally organized cooperative created a set of operating principles that included "Cooperation Among Cooperatives."

When electric co-ops were formed in the 1930s, they used a handshake working arrangement to help each other

with repairs after severe storm damage. But in the early 1990s, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requested a more legalistic accounting for the aid it provided electric cooperatives after natural disasters.

So electric co-ops, represented by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), got together with FEMA and the organization for city-owned utilities, the American Public Power Association, and produced a stunningly short contract—it's exactly one page long. The contract says when one co-op goes to help another, it will charge reasonable rates for the crews and equipment.

The response to your power outage can start days before it even happens. Co-ops organize themselves under their own state associations, planning for how many line crews might be needed and where they will come from.

In addition to the careful planning and procedures, there's another secret ingredient to why co-ops come together in a crisis so effectively—the lineworkers. When they head out to a storm-ravaged area, it's with a serious kind of excitement as they get ready to use their skills for a cause they passionately believe in—restoring electricity.

Energy saving tip

Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy. Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load).

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.

Source: www.nrel.gov

Mark your calendar

Jan. 25 Electric bills due
Feb. 14 Happy Valentines Day!

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.





General Manager
Adam Tromblay



Electric vehicles have so many benefits— here's one you may not have heard of

This little lady celebrated her third birthday watching movies in the Tesla. Parked in the garage of course! According to Cody, NCE's metering/mapping coordinator and Lyra's dad, she enjoyed swimming, the park, pizza for lunch and supper, along with a movie in the "fancy car"!

2020 Year in review

Even though 2020 will always be remembered for the pandemic and its unique challenges, 2020 did have some positive impacts. Fantastic weather was enjoyed by our area farmers and line crews. NCE crews (9-9-17) were able to complete all the jobs in the work plan on time, along with energizing a new substation near Wilmont. It was probably one of the best construction seasons we have had in the last five years.

Some other notable accomplishments in 2020:

- Migration to new Sensus load controls
- Successful Grab-N-Go events in both counties
- An emailed newsletter to members
- Increased our voting percentage for elections
- Promoted our Living Green hydroponic gardening system and donated produce to area food shelves
- Completed the installation or replacement of 21.35 miles of line
- Retired over \$1 million in

capital credits to our members

- Member patronage was allocated to members in the amount of \$2,375,652
- Secured FEMA funding from the 2019 storm
- Converted and updated our automatic vehicle location system

2021 Opportunities

Following one of the most eventful years in living memory, our plan and hope is for a return to a normal schedule of events and activities in 2021. If we learned anything from 2020, it is to expect the unexpected.

Looking forward to the new year, we anticipate two board vacancies with two new board members, along

with a few staff changes. Here are more opportunities for the new year:

- Rebuild or update 23.75 miles of line in the construction work plan
- Introduce MyMeter to the membership which offers bill presentment, payments and outage messaging in one convenient location
- Offer a new member online energy assessment to lower energy usage and save money
- Create a pollinator site at the solar array near our main office

We have big plans for 2021, but our main objective continues to be serving you in the most efficient and courteous manner possible.

Stay warm and cozy, while saving money this winter

An Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) heating system is capable of providing 100% of a home's heating requirements by storing heat produced from electricity. ETS is an exceptional way to save money and stay warm. To qualify for a rebate and discounted energy rate, the primary heat source must be an electric boiler, brick storage room unit, brick storage electric furnace/boiler or slab storage. Rebates amount to \$50 per kW, while your energy rate will be reduced by 1.4 cents on your metered kilowatt-hours used to heat your home. ETS systems take advantage of off-peak electricity, which is charged at a lower rate since it is consumed during times when demand on the electrical grid is low. ETS heating systems must be on our off-peak program to qualify for the incentives. (539-38-167) For more information, contact Tracey at 507-372-7331.



**\$50 per kW
rebate on ETS
space heating**

January Auto Pay Winner: Galen Benton Take a minute to sign up for Auto Pay and you may win a \$25 credit on your electric bill. A winner is chosen each month.

ECO Act remains a top legislative priority in 2021

In 2007, Minnesota's Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) was established, creating goals for all utilities, including electric cooperatives, to reduce their annual electricity sales by 1.5% and to spend at least 1.5% of revenues to achieve this goal. NCE is proud that we've consistently met or exceeded these goals.

When CIP started, there were select energy efficient purchases that were incentivized including Energy Star® rated appliances and LED lighting. Some of these items were just making their entry into the marketplace, and it was a win-win to encourage co-op member-owners to use these new products. Thanks in part to CIP, we've (29-13-16) reached a point of saturation with many of the energy efficiency incentives introduced more than a decade ago and the electric power industry is the only segment of the economy that has exceeded its carbon reduction goals.

While CIP has been beneficial, it has become outdated, lacks an emphasis on innovation and doesn't support many advancements that have positive environmental impacts. To modernize the program, Minnesota's electric cooperatives, along with

other industry partners, drafted the Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) Act. This bill emphasizes total energy efficiency across many sectors including energy, transportation, agriculture and others to encourage diverse improvements. Under the ECO Act, the goal to reduce electricity use by 1.5% annually will remain intact. However, a portion of this may be achieved with efficient electrification programs such as incentivizing EVs. The 1.5% spending requirement would be eliminated unless the reduction in electricity use is not met.

NCE supports this bill because we believe it provides more long-term, sustainable benefits for our members. The benefits include:

- Allowing NCE more flexibility to meet our annual energy savings goals by enabling us to count electric vehicle incentives, electric storage water heaters and air source heat pumps toward part of the goal.
- Helping the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fostering a more resilient grid.
- Encouraging innovation by supporting continuously advancing technologies.

- Reducing members' total energy bills by eliminating the mandated 1.5% spending requirements, while providing better tools for reducing carbon.

We encourage our member-owners to join us in advocating for this legislative change by contacting the legislator in your area.

Rod Hamilton
277 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5373

Jim Hagedorn
1433 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-2472

Joe Schomacker
209 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5505

Michelle Fischbach
1237 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-2165

If you have questions, please give us a call. We are happy to discuss more details of the ECO Act with you.



Stay Comfortable.

A \$25 rebate is available for a Wi-Fi programmable thermostat

Space heating and cooling account for a large portion of the average home's energy use. A programmable or smart thermostat can help you control the temperature of your home and save energy.

2021 Residential rebates available:

- Replacement Energy Star refrigerator or freezer = \$75 (with recycling of old unit)
 - Electric Energy Star clothes dryer = \$25
 - Energy Star Dehumidifier = \$25
 - LED Home lighting = \$2 per bulb (max.)
 - LED Yard light = \$30
 - Electric water heater cost = \$300, plus tax (Marathon)
 - Ground Source Heat Pump = \$200 per ton
 - Air Source Heat Pump (installed by quality installer)
 - SEER 14.5 = \$480
 - SEER 15 = \$580
 - SEER 16 = \$630
 - Ductless Air Source Heat Pump = \$300 to \$500
 - ETS Space Heating (per kW) = \$50
- NCE has many **business and agricultural rebates** available. Contact Tracey at NCE for more information or visit our website at www.noblesce.coop/rebates. Applications and required forms must be submitted to be eligible for a rebate.

Country Cupboard

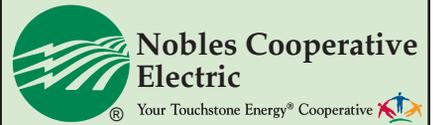
Banana Bread

**Elaine Ahlers
Worthington**

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Cream together: | | Mix and add to mixture: | |
| 1/4 c. soft butter | 1 c. sugar | 2 tsp. baking powder | 3 1/4 c. flour |
| 1/4 c. soft margarine | 3 eggs | 1 rounded tsp. baking soda | 3/4 tsp. salt |

Cream first 4 ingredients together. Mix dry ingredients and add to creamed mixture. Mash 4 or 5 ripe bananas and add to batter. Put all into two greased and floured 8x4x2 1/2" loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 45-50 minutes. Cover with foil and bake 10 minutes or until knife comes out clean. (Tent the foil)

Send your **slow cooker recipes** to Nobles Cooperative Electric, ATTN: Tracey, P.O. Box 788, Worthington, MN 56187-0788. Entries (3-27-50 COM) must include your name, address, telephone number and NCE location number. All entries must be received by January 25. The winning recipe will be featured in the next edition of *Current Matters* and the winner will receive a **\$10 credit** on their electric bill.



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Oct. 1 - April 30

24-Hour outage service

800-776-0517

Gopher State One-Call

800-252-1166 or 811

Electrical inspectors

Murray County
Randal Maha - 507-274-5261
Nobles County
Scott Preuss - 507-430-3652

General Manager

Adam Tromblay

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- Ronald Schwartau, President - 734-3052*
 - Lee York, V. President - 879-3497*
 - Cindy Hokeness, Sec./Treas. - 478-4965*
 - Jerry Beckering, Director - 227-4074*
 - Gary Clarke, Director - 605-201-1903
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Next Board Meeting

February 12, 2021

This cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

