

The

Enlightener



North Star
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



VOLUME 49 NUMBER 3

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

MARCH 2004



Outages

By Dan Hoskins
General Manager

Now, that is a word that no one likes to hear! Outages cost everyone time, money and inconvenience among other things, but it is something that we have to possibly deal with day in and day out. We have had a little trouble this winter, but for most parts, it has been good.

The problem with outages is that they come at the most inopportune times. You may be baking a delicious meal in the oven or taking a shower, how about sleeping and no battery backup in your alarm clock, so now you're late for work! It's a number of things, and as members, 99 percent of us are not prepared for an outage, unless you are one of the 1 percent that either has a generator, and you have prepared yourself for an outage or you have other means of dealing with an outage, North Star isn't your favorite company at this time.

But while our crews are thinking about you and the quickest way to get the power on, are we thinking of our linemen and their families? It may be something similar to what I just said except they have to go to work! They may have to get up from that meal or get up and leave their children's activities right when their child's part comes on, and how about the outage at 2:30 a.m. and it's 30 below zero;

the lineman goes to work, and the wife sits and wonders or worries until he returns. No, trust me, outages are not good for anyone, but with your help and patience and the dedication and professionalism of our crews, we can make those outages work a whole lot better.

If you're out of power, call in right away, so we can get a crew dispatched to your area. Be sure to check your breakers prior to calling in, and tell whoever you talk to that you have checked all of your breakers, and also let him know if you noticed anything unusual, heard any unusual noises or loud bangs or saw anything out of the ordinary. (654-24-010-01 Mark Holm) Give the dispatcher the time that you noticed the power was out, and let him know if you have heard from any of your neighbors and whether or not they have power. Also, if you have any concerns about how long you will be out of power, just ask the dispatcher for a callback, and someone should get back to you.

Depending on the weather and time of day, some of you get worried about the refrigerator or freezer thawing out. I can tell you from personal experience that if you don't keep

opening and closing the door on the appliance, the appliance will stay cold much longer.

Outages come in all sizes and problems. What I mean by that is that with the technology nowadays, such as computers, clocks, microwaves and many other electronic devices, all it takes is a blink of an eye, and things start to happen to those electronic devices that we would rather not have had happen. Then there is the extended outage which is usually caused by Mother Nature when she is at her best. But no matter what, an outage is an outage, and an outage is a problem.

Like I said earlier, outages cost money and the employees at North Star are always trying to save money. That's why, when we have an outage,

Continued on page 3

Electrical Outages

After office hours	634-2603
	1-888-668-8243
During office hours	
Baudette	634-2202
Littlefork	278-6658

DBS after hours	1-888-207-6266
During office hours	
Baudette	634-3322
Littlefork	278-6658

The Enlightener

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DirecTV® Problems
1-888-207-6266

January 2004 Operating Report

Revenue	\$ 914,904
Cost of Power	\$ 429,984
Operation, Maintenance, Administration	\$ 164,528
Depreciation, Interest	\$ 120,584
Margin on Operations	\$ 199,808
Average use per Residential	2,647
Total kWhs Sold	15,127,520

Planning to build after the snow melts?

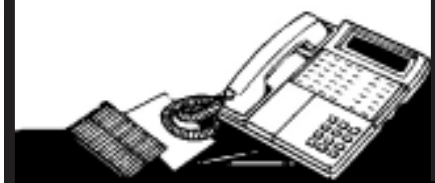


You'll need
electricity on
your site

Call North Star
Electric Co-op
now to make
arrangements.

Baudette 218-634-2202 or 888-634-2202
Littlefork 218-278-6658 or 888-258-2008

**Electrical
After-Hours
Emergencies
1-888-6OUTAGE
(1-888-668-8243)
634-2603**



WE NEED YOUR METER READING!

Please read your meter on or as near the 25th of EACH month as possible. We must have your reading by the 5th of the next month to avoid an estimated bill. If a bill consecutively estimates two times, the crew will read the meter and a \$15 fee will be added to the account.

— Please Note —

Bills that are past due will be charged a 1.5 percent late payment fee. Bills that are 30 days past due will also be charged a \$2 delinquent notice fee.

we first find the problem, and then repair it to get the electricity back on for you and your neighbors; then we look at two different alternatives..... the economics of the possibility of replacement and try to determine an approximate cost for replacement, or continue to repair the existing line to

save more money and, hopefully, things will straighten out. More than likely, if we have had numerous problems with a particular line, things won't straighten out, so therefore, we replace the line.

So you see, outages are not man's best friend; you don't care for them,

and we don't care for them, but it is a part of using and distributing electricity.

On an informational note, please watch for the April *Enlightener* for the dates and times of North Star Electric's Open Houses.

God Bless our Troops and Stay Safe....

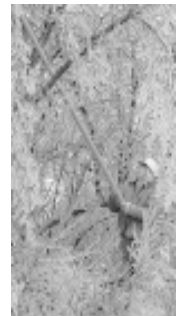
CURRENT ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

State law requires that every new electrical installation in any construction, remodeling, replacement or repair shall file a certificate for inspection with the State Board of Electricity and be inspected by a Minnesota electrical inspector.

■ *Koochiching and St. Louis counties:*
Lee Herseth
10078 Gappa Road
Ray, MN 56669
Phone: (218) 875-3028
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

■ *Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties:*
Laurence Otto
60426 County Road 12
Warroad, MN 56763
Phone: (218) 386-2299
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

*Neither rain,
nor snow,
nor the dark
of night . . .*



How does a co-op decide which electric lines to fix first?

When an outage occurs, restoring electrical power is often a complicated process. Damage done by wind, ice or other bad weather usually occurs at several points in the distribution system. The idea is to get the power back on for everyone in the most efficient manner.

When a widespread outage occurs, the first location the repair crew checks is the substation.

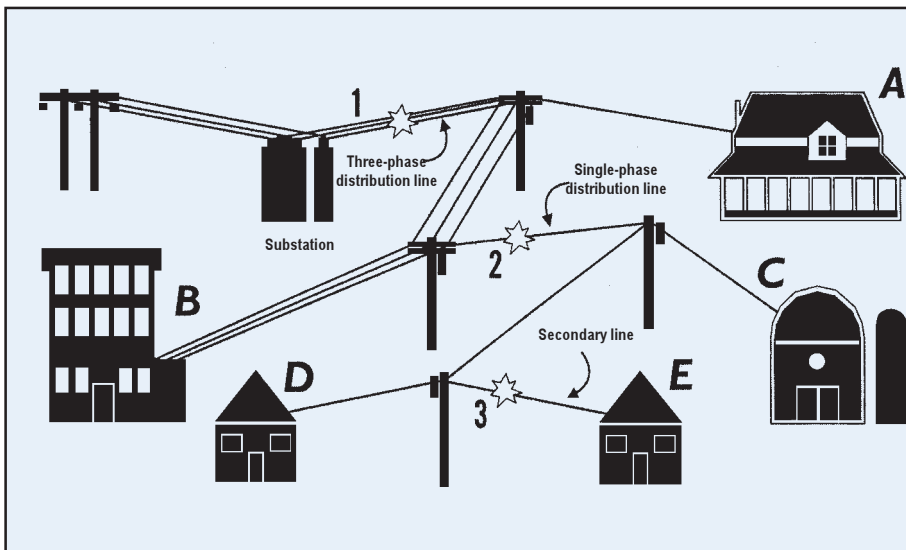
Linemen then work their way out on the main distribution line, restoring service to the main feeder lines, then lines serving groups of homes and finally individual members.

Fixing the power at an individual home first is useless if the main line is dead. No electricity would flow into the home anyway. By repairing the main line first, many more people would have their power restored.

Electric co-op line workers are trained to deal with any power emergency. But there's one thing that can't be taught: dedication. Dedication to duty is a quality line workers are born with. That's why you'll see them in a driving storm repairing downed power lines. That's why your power is restored in the middle of the night.

That's why they decided to be line workers in the first place. And they expect no special awards or recognition.

It's reward enough for them to know your family is safe and warm – regardless of the weather.



The diagram at left shows that Step 1 would be repairing the main distribution line from the substation. Because there is no additional damage leading to buildings A or B, this would automatically restore their power. In Step 2, the problem with the tap line leading off the main line would be cleared up. This would restore power to buildings C and D. After the high voltage lines are repaired, power to individual members (house E in the diagram) would be restored (Step 3). The entire system would then be in good working order.



Office notes

From Ann Ellis, Office Manager

"I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." –Booker T. Washington

Electricity at cost?

You betcha. As your non-profit cooperative, anything left over at the end of the year goes back to the members. This year we are spreading \$620,347 to the capital credit accounts of over 5,200 members. If you purchased electricity from North Star Electric Cooperative in 2003, a share of that money is yours. Your piece of that pie is equal to 7.8 percent of your electricity purchases last year. It accumulates in your capital credit account and is your ownership (equity) in this business.

And yes, we make payments. Almost every fall, the board approves one. (242-24-002-02 Mabel Svitak) Last year, the retirement (payment) was \$431,646. Most payments were made in the form of credits on the September electric bills.

So what does that mean to you personally? Check out this month's billing statement to see what your share of the 2003 margins (profits) is and how much you've accumulated in your capital credit account(s). This is your personal ownership of this business...owned by those it serves.

At your service we remain. . .

Energy tip:

Compact fluorescents save money and energy

ENERGY STAR labeled light bulbs, or compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), are up to 75 percent more efficient than standard incandescent light bulbs, give off the same light output and last up to 10 times longer.

CFLs have changed a lot in recent years. They are available in various sizes to fit almost any lamp, chandelier or other light fixture, including dimmable and motion detector fixtures. The bulb's appearance ranges from a globe shape to two slender tubes twisted like a coil.

"You'll find the quality of light is equal to that of incandescents," said Phil Smith, energy specialist. "And there is no hum or noise that is sometimes associated with older tube-shaped fluorescent lights."

CFLs emit the same amount of



light as standard bulbs, but because they use significantly less energy than incandescent bulbs, they have lower wattage ratings than people are accustomed to purchasing. For example, a 15 watt CFL replaces a 60 watt incandescent bulb, an 18 to 20 watt CFL replaces a 75 watt bulb and a 25 to 28 watt CFL bulb replaces a 100 watt bulb.

While all CFLs use less energy than incandescent light bulbs, it is a good idea to watch for the ENERGY STAR symbol when shopping around.

The potential savings on energy bills is significant. The typical household spends about 10 to 15 percent of its electrical bill, an average of \$110 a year, on lighting.

Source: Minnesota Department of Commerce

Off-Peak Loan Program for Automatic Backup Systems

If your off-peak backup heating system is in need of repair or replacement, we may be able to help.

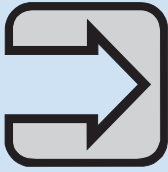
North Star Electric will lend up to \$2,500 for upgrading members' existing off-peak backup systems when the following terms and conditions are met:

1. On approved credit.
2. \$2,500 maximum.
3. 6 percent interest.
4. 1 to 3-year term.
5. Payment will be added to existing electric bill (\$25 minimum per month).
6. \$35 filing fee.
7. Must be existing off-peak member.
8. Automatic backup system only (no wood or manual systems).
9. Must furnish sales receipt from contractor or vendor.
10. Job must be completed before loan is approved for payment by member services department.
11. Outstanding loan balance at termination of service is due in full.

Parents of high school seniors

Are you aware of North Star Electric's Knowledge Scholarship? To qualify, the parent/guardian must be a member of North Star Electric, and your child must take a short test about your cooperative that provides electricity and DirecTV to your home. North Star Electric will be awarding five scholarships, one for \$1,000 and four for \$400, plus a chance to win one of eight \$50 cash awards for scoring over 50 percent on the test.

Most of the test answers will be included in the six pages of study material that North Star provides. A couple hours of study time could pay off with a \$1,000 scholarship. Last year only 44 students took the test. Check with your high school guidance counselor for details.



West End News

By Steve Ellis
Baudette District Operations Supervisor

It is good to see the signs of spring around us with the cold and the snow on their way out for another six or seven months at least. The crews have finished the annual line inspection and meter readings for this year; they will be out repairing problems found on that inspection.

The 50-year-old and older poles have almost all been changed out except for the ones that have underground wires on them; these will be done as soon as the frost is out of the ground. We will also be cutting and spraying rights-of-way in the Baudette and Williams areas.

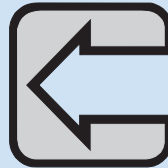
The spring and summer of 2004 looks to be a busy time for us. Two of the projects we will be working on include a 4-mile V-phase line upgrade to new conductor and poles on a section of line out of our Pitt substation located south of Baudette starting at the intersection of County Road #1 and County Road #3 going south to County Road #5 and a line move on County Road #4 north of Graceton from County Road #8 to County Road #20. This job is in the Graceton Beach area to the Morris Point area. Lake of the Woods County will be rebuilding this road.

Also, in Roseau County, we will be moving approximately 2.5 miles of line to make way for a road improvement on County Road #34 (formerly 140). This road runs east and west from the end of Lake of the Woods County Road #8 to State Highway #11 just east of Swift.

Spring also brings with it new service requests, and they are already starting to come into my office. If you are planning on a new service or need an upgrade, it is never too early to get this process started.

East End News

By Allan Baumgartner
Littlefork District Operations Supervisor



The crews changed out some old power poles earlier this month, and in most cases, we increased our line clearances over all roads and highways. This winter, as our crews work on their annual meter reading/line inspection, they are also measuring all of our line clearances over county and state roads and highways. This spring, we will start to work on getting all low clearances moved up to 19+ feet above roadbeds.

We will also have quite a few rejected poles and 50-year-old poles that won't be able to be changed out until summer due to the fact that they either have underground wires attached to them or, as in many cases, they are set in rock.

This summer, our primary goal will be to replace problem underground cables. We have four underground lines that faulted out or had outages on them this winter that will be on the top of our changeout list. The bad cables all have a past history of problems during the winter because of the frost, so in many cases, relocating the new cables is a necessity. We will also change out the underwater cable that feeds Grindstone Island and Rainy Lake.

Over the years, we have put in a lot of work upgrading and improving our overhead lines and rights-of-way as our underground lines got older and older. Last year, for the first time, we changed out several old 175 mil cables on both the east and west districts; this work needs to continue for the next several years until the 175 mil cables are replaced, just as the 50-year-old poles are.

Problems paying your electric bill?

Energy assistance may be available!

If you are receiving a low income or suffering from a temporary financial shortfall, the following agencies may be able to assist you with your electric bill. We urge you to contact them immediately to avoid disconnection if you feel you are eligible for aid.

- **Lake of the Woods County Community Services**
P.O. Box G-0200
Baudette, MN 56623
Phone: 634-2642
- **Northwest Community Action Council**
P.O. Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
Phone: 1-800-568-5329
- **Koochiching County Community Services**
1000 5th St.
International Falls, MN 56649
Phone: 283-7000
- **Kootasca Community Action, Inc.**
2232 2nd Ave. E.
P.O. Box 44
International Falls, MN 56649
Phone: 283-9491 or 1-800-559-9491
- **Kootasca Community Action, Inc.**
1213 SE 2nd Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984
Phone: 1-800-422-0312
- **Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency**
702 3rd Ave. S.
Virginia, MN 55792-2797
Phone: 1-800-662-5711

Gopher State One Call



It's the LAW

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Minnesota Statewide One Call
Notification Center

1-800-252-1166

Highlights of the board of directors meeting

February 4, 2004

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on February 4, 2004. Detailed minutes are available at the Cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are held the first Wednesday of every month. If you wish to speak with the board or have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda, please contact Manager Dan Hoskins at least one week in advance to be included on the agenda.

All directors were present. They acted upon usual, routine business. **In addition, they voted to approve the recommended retail rate increase that will recover only the increased cost of wholesale power from Minnkota Power Cooperative.** To transfer the grandfathered accounts with water heaters metered through the off-peak meter from a metered incentive to the flat ECC credit, to adjust the DirecTV rates leaving most at \$2.00 less than the national price, to approve the transfer of 2003 Operating and Non-Operating Margins to members' capital credit accounts, to select October 8, 2004, at the Lake of the Woods School for the Annual Meeting, and to approve the amended resolution accepting the Power Requirements Study.

Management and Operations Report

General Manager Hoskins reported on Minnkota's wholesale rate increase, load management, new attorney orientation, strategic planning options, directors' training, DirecTV rates, seasonal bills, line

loss, generator issues at the school, changes planned for the Littlefork office building, donation requests, pole changeouts, outages, equipment, crew training, federal limitations on hours of service for North Star's linemen because of their CDL drivers' licenses, Call Before You Dig meetings planned, and the new mini-sub feeding Rainy Lake.

Office Report

Office Manager Ellis provided the year-end financial report and full review of the RUS form 7.

Compliance and Member Services Report

Manager of Member Services Haukaas reported on load control hours, moving some loads to less control with a higher rate, IPP (incremental pricing plan) metering on participating large power accounts, DBS equipment upgrades in preparation for availability of Duluth and Fargo networks this summer, the overhead doors at the Baudette shop, and the upcoming Board Marketing Committee meeting.

Board Reports and Other Discussion

Minnkota Delegate Brzoznowski reported on their recent board meeting. Directors Hanson and Brzoznowski asked about any updates on the launch of WildBlue satellite Internet. (557-03-001-03 Robert D. Davis) The board expressed their wishes to make it clear to the membership that the increase in North Star's retail rates is to offset only the increase in wholesale rates.

Make plans to join us on June 1&2 for our annual **POWER PLANT TOUR**



Watch for more information in our April issue of *The Enlightener*
Great fun, great food, great accommodations and educational as well.

North Star
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Share a favorite recipe with your North Country neighbors!

Send to:
North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Attn: The Enlightener
P.O. Box 719
Baudette, MN 56623



Tune into Channels 200, 201 or 500 to get all the latest updates about equipment, DirecTV movies, pay-per-view events and more!

Equipment problems?

If you are having problems with your DirecTV system, please give us a call. We are here to help you.

If your existing system quits working properly, we have an exchange program where we will exchange your unit with one of ours at little or no cost to you. Please call one of our offices for more details.

Duluth & Fargo Networks

Would you like the good news or the bad news first? Well, we will start with the good news, which is that we have confirmation from the following Duluth networks: ABC, NBC and FOX. Also, in the Fargo viewing area, CBS, NBC and FOX have committed. This does not mean that we may not get the other local networks; it simply means that these are the ones that have signed agreements so far. The bad news is that we will be waiting a little longer than we had hoped to receive local networks. Surprised? Not really. Like anything else worth waiting for, we will have to be patient a bit longer. I do not have an exact date yet, but we have been assured that they are doing their best to finish this work promptly. As soon as WE know a date, we will make sure YOU also know the date. So, stay tuned...

New Package available March 1

Total Choice Limited, available March 1, will be replacing the Select Choice Package for \$31.99 per month. It will feature the same programming as Select Choice with the addition of six channels. Those are America's Store, Comedy Central, Lifetime, Lifetime Movies, Travel Channel and Turner Classic Movies. Select Choice will no longer be available to any new subscriber. Existing Select Choice subscribers will not be affected at this time – their package will remain as is; however, we have been told that they may be migrated over to the new package sometime next year.

Spring Special

RCA Satellite System & Phase 3 Antenna

(Antenna for local programming - when available)

Installed for only \$49.99

<u>ADD UP YOUR SAVINGS:</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>SALE</u>
RCA System-Antenna	\$259.00	\$ 49.99
Basic Installation	95.00	FREE
Surge Protector	20.00	FREE
1 Month Total Choice Plus	39.99	FREE
	<u>\$413.99</u>	<u>\$ 49.99</u>

- Warranty & damaged equipment exchange program is available to all subscribers.
 - Must be a new DirecTV account & purchase programming from North Star Electric.
 - Must reside in USA & North Star Electric's DBS sales territory.
 - No free programming with second receiver. Additional receiver fee is \$2.99/mo.
 - Activation fees are charged per unit - \$10 NSEC members & \$20 non-members.
 - All sports channels, pay-per-view & additional receivers require a telephone connection.
 - 1-year commitment to Total Choice or higher programming package required.
- If you downgrade or terminate programming during the 1-year commitment, \$100 will be charged to you.

ADDITIONAL RECEIVERS ONLY \$49.99
(Installation is extra & Programming is only \$2.99 a month)

Join the harvest

The *Infinity Wind Energy* program was developed by our power supplier, Minnkota Power Cooperative, to bring wind-generated electricity to customers of the associated distribution systems in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota.

Presently, two 900-kilowatt, commercial-scale wind turbines are producing wind energy for customers enrolled in the program. One turbine is located six miles east of Valley City, N.D., along I-94 and the other three miles east of Petersburg, N.D., along Hwy. 2.

To date, hundreds of customers across the region have made the decision to purchase blocks of wind-generated electricity through the *Infinity* program. Today, we're inviting you to join us, and others, to help harvest the energy of the wind.



Yes! I want to join with others and participate in the *Infinity Wind Energy* program.

Please indicate the number of 100 kilowatt-hour *Infinity Wind Energy* blocks you wish to purchase each month. Each 100 kilowatt-hour *Infinity Wind Energy* block costs an additional \$1.50 per month.

- 1 block (100 kilowatt-hours per month), \$1.50/mo.
- 2 blocks (200 kilowatt-hours per month), \$3/mo.
- 3 blocks (300 kilowatt-hours per month), \$4.50/mo.
- 4 blocks (400 kilowatt-hours per month), \$6/mo.
- 5 blocks (500 kilowatt-hours per month), \$7.50/mo.
- Other – Please specify the total number of 100 kilowatt-hour *Infinity Wind Energy* blocks you wish to purchase per month _____, \$_____/mo.

If you require assistance in determining the number of wind power blocks you wish to purchase, call North Star Electric Cooperative at 218-634-2202 or 888-634-2202. We will be happy to assist you.

Name _____

Address _____

Daytime phone _____ Best time to call _____

Evening phone _____ Best time to call _____

Account number (located on your bill) _____

E-mail address (optional) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

I understand that my commitment is for one year and will continue on an annual basis until I notify you in writing to end my participation in the *Infinity* program.