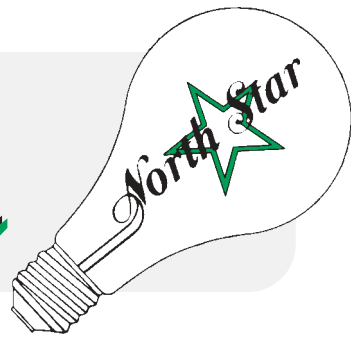



The *Enlightener*



**North Star
Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

VOLUME 49 NUMBER 4

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

APRIL 2003



*By Dan Hoskins
General Manager*

Freedom

I would like to visit with you about a couple things that I feel are important, Freedom and Respect. Although I do understand the business at hand is our Cooperative, I am like everyone else at this time of unrest; a lot of my thoughts and prayers are with the war in Iraq. We watch the news reports, read the papers, and get updates on our radios while driving, so it's not easy to visit with anyone without talking about the war.

I would like to ask you to keep the people of our Armed Forces in your thoughts and prayers, and hopefully, by the time this reaches you, the conflict is over. These people are over there doing what many, many, many people before them have done – fight for freedom. Reflect back on the wars our country has been in and you will find they all had one common goal – to ensure Freedom for the people, either ours' or someone else's.

I do realize we have protesters of this war, because I can't think of anybody that likes war plus this Free Country lets them protest. But since we are in this battle to Free the Iraqi people and ensure the possible safety and Freedom of our country, as well as others, I would think of nothing but total support for our service men and women.

As Americans, we sometimes take for granted our rights, privileges and

Freedom, plus we easily tend to forget what got us here, of course, until something happens. Oh, yeah, there are times when we think we are not Free because of the many laws or ordinances that we have, but as a society, we have created this need. (362-28-028-06 John/Linda Ofstead) But if you look around, there isn't any other place in this world that I would choose to live, but in the United States of America.

So if you get a chance, let our service people overseas, or at home, know how much you appreciate them. Send them a letter, a card or any piece of mail, or if you are lucky enough to see one of them in passing when they return home, just reach out, shake their hand and tell them thanks.

There have been many soldiers before them that have done their part in making this country the way it is, and a lot of them gave the ultimate price in doing so. We, here at North Star Electric, would like to thank all those veterans who have served our country so we can live where we are. We fly the flag here at North Star Electric, day in and day out, and it is out of respect to the many men and women who served and fought in the Armed Forces, both past and present, but most of all because we can!

God Bless you and God Bless America.

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



Customer Appreciation Days

On Thursday, May 1, join us at the Littlefork office from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. and on Friday, May 2, at the Baudette office from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m. There will be refreshments with hot dogs and chips, registration for prizes, balloons for the kids, and an electrical safety demonstration.



One of the attractions will be creating safety IDs for your children, including fingerprinting.

April 2003

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Baudette, MN 56623

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**If calling long distance,
call toll-free**

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Littlefork 888-258-2008
DirecTV questions 877-634-3322
e-mail us at nsec@wiktel.com
Visit our Web site at
www.northstarelectric.coop

AFTER HOURS

DBSTV Problems
1-888-207-6266

**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.

State Electrical Inspectors:

- *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
408 Washington Ave. West, Apt. 101
Karlstad, MN 56732
Phone: (218) 436-2588
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

February 2003
Operating Report

Revenue (includes annual seasonal billing)	\$ 774,936
Cost of Power	\$ 408,703
Operation, Maintenance, Administration	\$ 180,762
Depreciation, Interest	\$ 117,829
Margin on Operations	\$ 67,642
Average use per Residential	2,464
Total kWhs Sold	13,890,618

Please, no signs on poles

Fastening signs, posters and other objects to utility poles can create serious hazards for line personnel. Sharp objects like nails, tacks, staples and barbed wire all present eminent dangers for co-op line crews who climb poles all hours of the day and night and in the worst of conditions.



If a lineman's hooks cut out while he is climbing, his injuries could be much more severe if an arm or leg catches a nail or other object tacked to the pole. A lineman's hooks can cut out due to contact with any foreign object on the pole. Sharp objects not only compound a fall, but can also puncture rubber gloves and other safety equipment, making linemen vulnerable to electrocution. Also, when linemen have to remove objects

from poles in order to climb during an outage, this makes power restoration that much longer.

Please think of the safety of the line crews and refrain from attaching signs or other objects to the co-op's poles.

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.

Garrison Dam-Center Plant Tour

Two fun-filled days

Join us in
air-conditioned
comfort

**Only
\$50**



North Star Electric Co-op is planning a bus tour to North Dakota on June 2-3 (Monday and Tuesday), 2003.

The tour will visit the hydroelectric plant at Garrison Dam on Lake Sakakawea on the first day. Participants will stay at the beautiful Seven Seas Motel in Mandan, N.D. The second day they will get to see the Milton R. Young

Station at Center, N.D., where most of the electricity we use is generated. This will also include a tour of the open pit coal mines where huge machines strip the coal and reclaim the land so it can once again be used for agriculture.

The tour will leave from North Star's new office building located just one mile north of Baudette on Hwy. 172 on June 2 at 6 a.m. The tour is open to all North Star members and their spouses. Members from the east end of our service area may board the bus at Rogers Corner or make arrangements to be picked up at some point along the route.

The cost for the tour will be \$50 per person. This includes transportation on a 47-passenger, air-conditioned bus, lodging, meals and lunches.

For further details, contact Wayne Haukaas at 634-2202 or 888-634-2202.

Please use the handy registration form below.

Please print names of participants the way you would like them to appear on your name tags. Your deposit will be refunded if the tour is cancelled or if you should find that you cannot make the trip for some unforeseen reason. We will send further details prior to departure. Return with check for \$50 per person to:

North Star Electric Co-op
P.O. Box 719 • Baudette, MN 56623

Name _____
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Zip _____
Phone No. _____

Room Preference: Smoking Non-smoking

Have you enjoyed this trip in the past? No/Yes If yes, what year? _____

Help Keep Your Lights On



Careless ditch burning can destroy utility poles and junction boxes, leading to unnecessary power outages. Pole damage ranges from surface charring to destruction, and may cost landowners anywhere from \$2,000 on up, depending on the location of the pole and the severity of the damage.

Please use extreme caution when burning around our electrical equipment, and always tend to a fire once it is lit. Let's all do our part to keep the lights on and costs down.



Power quality service

For only \$4.95 per month, North Star will install surge protection in your home. This includes a meter base unit, an 8-outlet surge strip and a cube receptacle. For more information, call Wayne today at:

Baudette 218-634-2202

Toll-Free 888-634-2202



Office notes

From Ann Ellis, Office Manager

“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”

–Will Rogers

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

Outage reporting phone number

Gone are the days when you had to phone linemen at home so you could report that your power was off. Now you call one number, 634-2603 (or if calling long distance, call toll-free to 1-888-6OUTAGE / 1-888-668-8243). Your call will be answered 24 hours a day by a dispatcher. This number should be used for all after-hours emergencies, including off-peak heat emergencies. A fridge magnet is enclosed for your convenience.

If you have after-hours DirecTV questions, the number to call is 1-888-207-6266.

My bill is so high!

Looking at the 8 inches of snow outside my window today reminds me of how quickly things can change. By the time you get this, the snow will be (should be) long gone, and maybe you’ll be doing some yard work. So when you open this envelope and see your bill, you’ll wonder how it could be so high when it’s spring. Just remember that this bill is for your electricity used between Feb. (brrrrr) 25 and March 25 (remember the snow). (373-10-022-02 Vyron/Barbara Hoftiezer) The upper-right corner of your bill has your last 13 months of kWh usage so you can compare this bill to last year’s; although now that I’ve read our meters, I can see that we used quite a bit more electricity this March compared to last year. So maybe I should have a talk with Mother Nature?

Welcome home, snowbirds

We welcome back the “snowbirds” who are returning to the northland. If you’re one of them and haven’t contacted Pat in the Billing Department with your meter reading, don’t forget to let her know that you’re back.

Member appreciation days

We hope you can join us between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. at the Littlefork office on May 1 or at the Baudette office on May 2. We’ll be happy to answer your questions, have a good visit, and serve you refreshments.

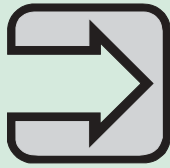
At your service we remain. . .



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 just 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 46 students took the test. If your child missed the informational meetings which were held April 22, 23 and 24, it’s not too late. We left extra informational packets with the guidance counselors at your school. The dates of the test are April 28 at Indus and Warroad; April 29 at Lake of the Woods and International Falls; and April 30 at Littlefork/Big Falls and Orr.



West End News

By Steve Ellis

Baudette District Operations Supervisor

May is National Electrical Safety Month. Always take care when working around electrical wires outside, as well as inside, your home. Teach your children the dangers of electricity, and keep them from playing around electrical equipment, such as transformers and substations, and keep them from climbing trees that are near overhead electrical wires. Flying kites near electrical lines is a very dangerous game; find an open unobstructed field somewhere, instead, and stay alive.

With spring here, some of you will be out cleaning yards and burning debris and fields. Please watch fires closely; burned poles are expensive to replace.

The crews have completed our annual line inspection and meter readings. We will be out on the system doing repairs that have been identified during this process.

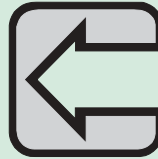
It looks to be a busy construction season ahead for us with new service requests, several underground cable replacements, the new 14.4 conversion north of Williams, and hopefully, fewer storms this year.

I would also like to mention the new after-hours outage number which is 634-2603 or toll-free at 1-888-6OUTAGE.

East End News

By Allan Baumgartner

Littlefork District Operations Supervisor



Our crew has been working quite a bit lately at the Kinmount area, rebuilding a 3.5 mile section of our power line that feeds south to Ash Lake. We have a little more than half of the new poles in and about a third of the new wire installed. The weather switched around on us very fast this spring. We are hoping the frost will hold out until we get most of our work done.

When it does soften up too much for most construction work, our crews will get back to our Annual Meter Reading/Line Inspection Program. (555-18-001-04 Lenwood Pettis) From the looks of things, we have plenty of work left to do in this area.


We had three outages in March, one of them was the Green Forest Plant near Littlefork, caused by a fire. We got the plant hooked back up last week after some electrical work was finished by an electrician.

May is Safety Month

Keep your family safe by using this checklist to go through your home. Conduct a thorough inspection and make a list of the following:

1. Test your smoke alarm. If you do not have one, install one immediately.
2. Test your carbon monoxide detector. If you do not have one, install one immediately.
3. Make sure your emergency numbers are posted by the phones in your home and outbuildings.
4. Feel your switch plates to see if any of them are warm or hot.
5. Check your outlets to see if the electrical plug is loose or if there are sparks when you insert the plug.
6. Check all of your cords (lamps, extension, etc.) to make sure the cords are not cracked, frayed or covered by rugs or furniture.
7. Make sure the watts on your light bulbs do not exceed the watts listed on that socket (lamps, ceilings, etc.).
8. See if your electrical appliances are away from water, hot surfaces and have enough air circulation.
9. Note any areas of your home or outbuildings which have dimming or flickering of lights.
10. Note any arcs, sparks, sizzling or buzzing sounds from your electrical system.
11. Note any hot or burning smells, which seem to come from electrical sources.
12. Note repeated blowing of fuses or circuit breakers.
13. Halogen lamps should be away from all fabrics, combustible materials, high traffic areas where they could be tipped, children's rooms, and areas where they could be easily left on by accident. Halogen lamps should never be left on while unattended by an adult. Be sure to read the safety tips because the bulbs are so hot.



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Our thanks to Federated Insurance for providing this safety checklist.

Highlights of the board of directors meeting

March 12, 2003

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on March 12, 2003. Detailed minutes are available at the Cooperative for member review. The next regular board meeting is tentatively set for May 7, 2003. 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 delete board policy 2.17 which will now give members the choice between low-cost/controlled off-peak heat, or regular-priced/non-controlled electric heat, to approve the transfer of margins to members' capital credits, and to approve the dinner expense to meet our area legislators in St. Paul.

Management and operations report

General Manager Hoskins reported on progress to implement a single phone number for all members to report power outages, his optimism about the NRTC/Minnesota Broadcasters' meeting he will attend regarding local or state network television services for our subscribers, the upcoming Customer Appreciation Days, meeting with area legislators, truck repairs and purchase, and wind power. He also updated

the board on Operations Department activities including an underwater cable fault, other URD cable faults, and personnel.

Office report

Office Manager Ellis provided the financial report, commented on the rate adjustment, the cooperative logo, and the Web page, and reviewed the RUS form 7 with the board.

Compliance and member services report

Manager of Compliance and Member Services Haukaas reported on DirecTV issues, DIRECWAY satellite Internet, the upcoming WildBlue Ka-band Satellite Internet anticipated first quarter 2004, off-peak load control hours, power plant maintenance scheduling, newsletter pricing, and the Center bus tour, and asked the Marketing Committee to select a date to meet.

Board reports and other discussion

Minnkota Delegate Brzoznowski reported on their recent meeting, and attendees at recent training/meetings gave reports.

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.

From 1977 to 2000, we had an average of 34 hours of control per heating season. Last year, we had only 22 hours of control; the year before, we had 177 hours. This year, as of April 7, we have had 404 hours. The years of 20 to 40 hours of control are gone. In the future, you can expect 200 to 500 hours per heating season.

You must have a reliable backup heating system.

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.

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



Gopher State One Call

It's the LAW

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Minnesota Statewide One Call Notification Center

1-800-252-1166

DirectTV FREEVIEW events for May

Tune to Channel #103

Tune to DIRECTV channel 103 and enjoy Styx and REO Speedwagon in concert and Coldplay in concert, DIRECTV® FREEVIEW® Event, premiering May 2 and airing every weekend throughout May.

We are proud to present this concert to you – at no additional charge – as our way of saying . . .

“Thanks for allowing us to serve you!”

**DIRECWAY
Satellite High-Speed
Internet Systems
Available at North Star Electric
Call our office for details**

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.

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

BLOCKBUSTER TICKET

– only on DIRECTV
Movies ONLY \$3.99
when you order by remote!

Local-into-local networks update

The million dollar question we are asked so often, “When will local networks be available to us?” This is such an important issue to all of our DirecTV subscribers. It has been an ongoing concern. In fact, North Star’s General Manager, Dan Hoskins, recently attended meetings in Minneapolis on this very subject and plans to continue to communicate with the Duluth stations to try to resolve these important issues.

The newest update

DirecTV recently announced its local-into-local launch plans for December 2003. Duluth, Minn, is listed as one of the 36 markets that will receive spot-beam technology to bring local (Duluth) networks to Koochiching and St. Louis counties. That is GREAT news! So far, NBC/KBJR, is the only Duluth station that has invested the necessary dollars to become digital, which is required for the spot-beam technology. Hopefully, the other Duluth stations will see this as a wonderful opportunity to bring their local services to Koochiching and St. Louis counties and invest the dollars needed to make their channels available to us. So...stay tuned and we will keep you updated on the local-into-local networks situation.

P-3 to P-4 card changeout to begin in April

DirecTV recently announced its plans to begin the next access card changeout. All subscribers who have a P-3 access card, (dark blue card, football player shown and a number 3 in a yellow triangle) will be receiving a new one. Although the process of card mailing will begin in April, it will take several months to complete – so if you don’t get your card in April, just continue to watch the mail so that you don’t accidentally throw it out, as they sometimes resemble junk mail. If you begin to receive an on-screen message regarding changing your access card and you received a new one in the mail, complete the instructions to change it out as soon as possible to prevent any programming interruption. If you begin to get an on-screen message and you have NOT received a new card, please call our office right away.

Discovery Civilization name change

Please note that Discovery Civilization, channel 285, has changed its name to Discovery Times Channel, (DTMS), effective March 24.

WildBlue Ka-band Satellite Internet

WildBlue, the Ka-band Satellite Internet service, is currently planned to be available during the first quarter of 2004. It is said to be considerably faster and much less expensive than the DirecWay systems. The equipment costs are expected to be around \$300-\$400 and monthly service fees may possibly be as low as \$40. The plan for a second satellite launching for this service is already in the works! They are expecting this to be a very popular item and want to keep ahead of the growing demand by having plenty of satellite space available for this service. We are very excited to be a part of this and will keep you informed throughout the coming year with current and up-to-date information about WildBlue.

Free Cinemax Preview!

May 9-12

Tune in to channels 512-514

RCA Satellite System & Phase 3 Antenna

(Capable of 4 receivers & local programming – when available)

Installed for only \$99.00

(Save over \$300.00 from our regular price.)

<u>ADD UP YOUR SAVINGS:</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>SALE</u>
**RCA System-Antenna	\$259.00	\$ 99.00
Basic Installation	95.00	FREE
Surge Protector	20.00	FREE
1 Month Total Choice Plus	<u>37.99</u>	<u>FREE</u>
	\$411.99	\$ 99.00

- Warranty & damaged equipment exchange program is available to all subscribers.
- **1-year commitment to Total Choice or larger programming package.
- Must be a new DirecTV account & purchase programming from North Star Electric.
- Must reside in USA & North Star Electric's DBS sales territory.
- Activation fees are charged per unit- \$10.00 NSEC members & \$20.00 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, \$40.00 will be charged to you.

ADDITIONAL RECEIVERS ONLY \$149.00
(Free Basic Installation & Programming is only \$1.95 a month)

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

North Star Electric's Lightning Bugs

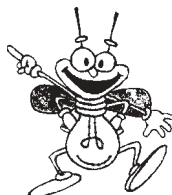
Every month in the *Enlightener* we would like to profile an employee or give you a little information on some of the things that the employees are doing. While all of our employees are very dedicated to their job, their after hours work sometimes goes unnoticed.

What are the NSEC Lightning Bugs, you ask? It is a group of employees, spouses and family members that have come together to help raise money for the research, education, advocacy and service to cancer patients through the American Cancer Society, with aspirations of the cure.

The American Cancer Society's "Relay for Life" is a 12-18 hour celebration on August 1, 2003, in honor of those lives that have been touched by cancer. Our job as Lightning Bugs is to raise money for this cause that in turn will help combat it. The highlight of the evening is the lighting of the luminaries, in which

each one is in honor of someone that has survived the disease or to remember the loved ones who have lost their battle to cancer.

This disease, at one time or another, either through family or in person, has touched most or all of our employees. So far our group has nine



team members and growing. Last year, we raised over \$1,000 and this year we would like to double that.

So attached you will see some donation slips. If you would like to donate to the American Cancer Society and do so in memory of someone who has lost a courageous battle to cancer or in honor of someone who has kicked cancer's butt, just fill out one or as many as you would like to fill out, and send \$5 with each one of the slips to North Star Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 719, Baudette, MN 56623 by July 25, 2003. Please make sure all checks are made out to the American Cancer Society.

Thank you, in advance, and together we will beat this disease.

in Memory of or In Honor of

NAME _____

DONATED BY _____

BAG COMPLETED

in Memory of or In Honor of

NAME _____

DONATED BY _____

BAG COMPLETED

