

The

Enlightener



North Star
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



VOLUME 49 NUMBER 4

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

APRIL 2004



Let's visit

By Dan Hoskins
General Manager

Load control is about finished for the winter, and as far as winter is concerned, I think maybe we are done with that, also; at least, this portion of it. Now watch Mother Nature throw a wrench into things; I figure that just before you receive this or about the time it hits your mailbox, winter will return for one last hurrah!

Construction schedule

Anyway, let's talk about what your Cooperative has on our construction schedule this year. When you read this, you may be able to recognize the project in your area. Now these projects are planned, but not cut in stone; they may be adjusted for one reason or another, or we may add a project for one reason or another, but we will try to complete most of them this construction season.

Over in the eastern portion of our system, we are looking at replacing some bad underground cable in the City of Big Falls. This project consists of 3-phase underground cable approximately 1,500 feet in length. We also have underground cable replacement scheduled for Grindstone Island. This is a stretch of old single-phase cable, approximately 3,000 feet in length, that has been giving us problems.

We have two areas of cable that are giving us fits, and we have scheduled those two areas for replacement also. One is a stretch of single-phase line approximately 3,000 feet long and located along County Road 82, which faulted this winter, and the other one is a stretch of single-phase

cable along County Road 119 (outer marker road) approximately 1,500 feet in length. This cable also faulted on us this winter. So if you live in or around these areas, you will more than likely see our crews in the near future, and this will, hopefully, correct some of the outage problems in those areas.

In the Baudette area, we are looking at two good-sized road upgrades. A road upgrade is when the county or state decides to improve our roadways, and we have power lines in the way. We then call them road moves, which means we have to move our lines. One of these locations is Roseau County Road 140, which consists of North Star moving

about 3.5 miles of single-phase overhead line and the other is at Graceton Beach and County Road 73, which will require North Star to move about 1.4 miles of single-phase overhead, and then in another area of the same road move, installing approximately half a mile of underground cable.

We are also replacing some bad underground cable in the western part of our system; the most significant stretch of line is a bad piece located along State Forest Road 2, which caused an outage this winter for about nine hours during one of our coldest days with a 75° below zero wind chill. (424-23-012-01 Harvey Kennedy) This piece of cable to be replaced is approximately 1,500 feet in length, and another short piece of underground cable, about 1,000 feet, will be added to secure a loop feed for those members.

Customer Appreciation Days

On Thursday, May 6, join us at the Littlefork office from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. and on Friday, May 7, at the Baudette office from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. There will be refreshments with hot dogs, chips and cotton candy, registration for prizes, balloons for the kids, and an electrical safety demonstration.

Providing great service

A tie line is also scheduled for the Sandy Shores and Birch Beach areas, which is also a continuation of our objective to provide our members with great service. This will be a single-phase underground line approximately 750 feet in length.

One other major maintenance item that we will be addressing this year is right-of-way clearing and spraying.

Continued on page 6

April 2004

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DirecTV® Problems
1-888-207-6266

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



February 2004
Operating Report

Revenue	\$ 836,648
Cost of Power	\$ 442,316
Operation, Maintenance, Administration	\$ 181,027
Depreciation, Interest	\$ 130,966
Margin on Operations	\$ 82,339
Average use per Residential	2,378
Total kWhs Sold	13,865,538

Please, no signs on poles

Fastening signs, posters and other objects to utility poles can create serious hazards for our line personnel. Sharp objects like nails, tacks, staples and barbed wire all present imminent 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 your 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 1-2 (Tuesday and Wednesday), 2004.

The tour will include a visit to 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 visit 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 bus will leave from North Star's new office building located just one mile north of Baudette on Hwy. 172 on June 1 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?

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.)

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.

North Star
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



Office notes

From Ann Ellis, Office Manager

“Business is a lot like a bicycle; you must keep it moving forward or it will start to wobble.” – Unknown

Thank you

So often, our energy and attention is focused on “problems” or routines, that it’s easy to take all of our wonderful, but quiet, members for granted. Sometimes we get a call from someone whose name we don’t recognize. This is good AND bad. GOOD, because it could mean that they haven’t created an association with things like late pay, missing meter readings, etc.; but BAD, because we haven’t had the opportunity to associate them with their contributions to the success of the Cooperative. I love the phone calls from our involved members who may read something in *The Enlightener* and call for clarification, or have a question about something and want to understand, or just have an idea they’d like to share. Your inputs are a tremendous opportunity for us to improve.

I believe that most of you members know the difference between your Cooperative electric business (non-profit and owned/controlled by those it serves) and an electric business owned by stockholders (for profit). And I believe that your understanding this has been key to your Cooperative’s success. You have a vested interest (your capital credits and future rates) in its success.

If you have the time to join us, we invite you to our Member Appreciation Days on May 6 at the Littlefork office and on May 7 at the Baudette office. (362-18-018-01 Dena Pieper) We’ll have electrically grilled hot dogs and fresh cotton candy, among other things, from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. Employees will be on hand to visit with you about anything on your mind. And this will be one of our opportunities to **thank you** all for everything you do to support North Star – the electric business YOU own.

At your service we remain. . .

Notice about Lloyd’s cleaner

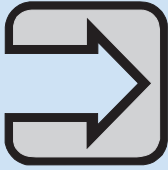
We’ve had some trouble with the clear plastic bottles of Lloyd’s cleaner leaking. They are finding random cases of the chemical breaking down the new clear plastic bottles after about six month’s time. They are sending us some new improved bottles that you may transfer the cleaner into; these may be picked up at either office. Until that time, you should place the clear Lloyd’s bottle in a bucket or some type of container, so that if it does leak, it will not do any damage.

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 that 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.

Our thanks to Federated Insurance for providing this safety checklist.



West End News

By Steve Ellis

Baudette District Operations Supervisor

Spring has returned for another year! With the weather turning nicer, the outdoor activities begin. Please remember that if you are doing any burning this spring, you must be careful not to burn the power poles in your path.

Kite fliers, look up! There may be overhead power lines above; fly your kites only in a safe open area with lots of open air space above.

We have a busy schedule this summer with line moves for Lake of the Woods and Roseau Counties, road rebuilds and four miles of line that we will be having a contractor rebuild on our feeder south out of the Pitt substation located south of Baudette.

Old poles that we replace will be offered to the landowners of the property where the poles are located. If there are unclaimed poles, these will be brought back to the pole yard and decked. We have a list of people who are waiting for used poles. If you are looking for some and want to be on the list, please let us know at the office.

We have plans to replace some more of the old 15-kV underground cables that have been causing problems for some of our members, as well as us. Some of these areas include south and west of Roosevelt, Marhula's addition, and a new tie line between Birch Beach and Sandy Shores.

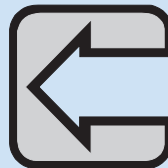
The new services have already started to come in at a pretty fast pace. If you are planning on a new service or have any other plans that require our services, it would be best if you could notify us as soon as you decide to go with your project. The sooner we know, the faster your service request can be completed.

With spring and summer comes the storm season. Remember, never touch downed wires, stay a safe distance from them, and keep others from getting near them. Contact us immediately at 218-634-2202 during working hours and at 634-2603 or 1-888-668-8243 after hours.

East End News

By Allan Baumgartner

Littlefork District Operations Supervisor



Our crews have been working on our annual Meter Reading/Line Inspection Program and are just finishing up in the Rainy Lake area now. This year, because of the deep snow, snowshoes and snowmobiles had to be used quite often to get all of our power lines inspected. We have a list of maintenance items to repair and a lot of road clearances our crews measured during the line inspection that we would like to improve.

We have two work plan items we have to get finished this summer, which are the new Rainy Lake feeder and one mile of 3-phase 4/0 underground installed and energized west of Pelland Junction. Along with these projects, we have new services to build into two new land development spots on Rainy Lake. (251-21-076-01 Steven E. Jordet) I've also received quite a few calls on new services from people who will be building new homes this summer.

If the conditions are right this spring, and you decide to burn grass around our poles, PLEASE either saturate the ground around them really good with water or burn around them individually prior to starting your grass fire. Each year, we have poles damaged due to grass fires that can easily be prevented with a little extra care. Thank you, in advance, for your concern!

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

March 10, 2004

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on March 10, 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 IPP (incremental pricing plan) commercial off-peak rate alternative and to acknowledge achievement of marketing goals.

Management and operations report

General Manager Hoskins reported on legislative visits, AMR (automated meter reading), remodeling the Littlefork office, line loss, annual meetings, strategic planning, director training, securing MREA's Mark Glaess as the Annual Meeting speaker, and a service request. He discussed the benefits of AMR that would offset costs in addition to providing improved customer service. He reported that several vendors will be making presentations to management, and if the savings outweigh the costs, he will bring a recommendation to the board for consideration. He also reported on Operations Department activities including new service requests, line rebuild south of the Pitt substation, two URD fault repairs, outages, safety & training, plans to hire two temporary summer apprentice linemen, IPP metering and data translation, transformer disposal, pole change outs, purchase of the radar URD fault locator, the bidding process, equipment and buildings.

Office report

Office Manager Ellis reported on financials, capital credit allocations on members' March bills, past due accounts, collections, remodeling at the Littlefork office, the rate increase, receipt of loan funds, data sharing between the billing and mapping data systems, on-line training, and human resources.

Compliance and member services report

Manager of Member Services Haukaas reported on load control hours, contractor training, WildBlue satellite Internet, DirecTV, and results from the Board Marketing Committee meeting. He also reported that it is still unclear if network feeds from the east and west coasts will continue to be available once local networks are offered, but he believes that once a network is offered locally, the waiver from the local station to receive that network from either coast will be revoked, meaning subscribers would have to have current equipment to pick up the local network.

Board reports and other Discussion

Minnkota Delegate Brzoznowski reported on their recent board meeting. He also reported that he did not wish to seek reappointment to the Minnkota board. Directors Arnesen and Bergan were appointed to the Minnkota and Square Butte boards. Director Brzoznowski was recognized for his many years of service on the Minnkota board.

Let's visit, *Continued from page 1*

Our crews will, more than likely, do the clearing but the right-of-way spraying will be contracted out to a licensed applicator. Although I don't have the exact locations, as of yet, we will contact each individual landowner affected prior to any spraying.

So, as you can see, we have a few projects lined up for the upcoming construction season. If you recognize any of the areas that we will be in and have any concerns, please call either the Littlefork office or the Baudette office, and one of our operation supervisors would be glad to discuss your concerns.

Open house

Now, then, on a different note, last month I told you that our springtime open houses were going to be coming up soon; well, we have those dates for you. Our open house at our Littlefork office will be Thursday, May 6, and then on Friday, May 7, the Baudette office will host an open house. Both of these open house events are scheduled from 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. each day.

I would recommend that you come out and give us a visit, and if you have questions that are just eating at you to get an answer for, this is the time! Our staff will be on hand to answer your questions. Oh, and speaking of eating, be sure to get some of our snacks that will be available such as hot dogs, pop, chips and more; oh, yeah, we are also having popcorn and cotton candy, so you might want to bring the children, too! So please feel welcome to come to either open house or both; we look forward to seeing you!

One more thing before I sign off. It seems that there has been a lot of controversy with our Pledge of Allegiance. I was raised on this every day of my childhood school years, and I don't believe it hurt me one way or the other; I am still proud to say it today, so here you go.

I Pledge Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible with Liberty and Justice for all.

God Bless you and Stay Safe.

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.

BLOCKBUSTER TICKET

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



Duluth & Fargo networks

We still do not have an exact date for their arrival yet, but we have been assured that they are doing their best to finish this work promptly. We are anticipating a May or June time frame. We have been told, however, that when available, we may have very little notice. As soon as WE know a date and what the channel numbers will be, we will make sure YOU know, also. So, stay tuned.

Victory Sports Network and MLB blackouts

As many Minnesotans are well aware, Victory Sports Network has purchased the distribution rights to many teams in the Minnesota region, including Minnesota Twins baseball, Golden Gopher men's basketball and several college hockey teams, just to name a few. Victory Sports Network, owned by Minnesota Twins owner Carl Pohlad, purchased the rights to these teams after the Fox Sports North (FSN) contract expired.

Most major cable companies (Time Warner, Charter Communications) and satellite providers, such as Echo Star and DirecTV, have not yet reached an agreement with Victory Sports due to the very high price that Victory is requesting. Victory has put misleading advertising out to subscribers to "call in and request Victory Sports" stating that it's available. However, unless and until both parties (Victory Sports and DirecTV) agree upon a fair price, and they sign an agreement, we cannot offer these services.

What does this mean to you, the subscriber? Unfortunately, with Victory Sports having sole distribution rights to these teams, no other network is able to offer them, meaning that even if you purchase the MLB or any other sports package, the teams mentioned above will be blacked out. Until a distribution agreement between Victory Sports and DirecTV is signed, ALL games carried by Victory Sports Network will be blacked out on DirecTV. We are hoping that an agreement will be reached soon so that all of you Minnesota Twins fans won't miss out on too much action!

High Definition receivers

We have had several customers inquire about HD (High Definition) TV; High Definition receivers are now available to us, and we can order them if you are interested. You must have a High Definition TV, and subscribe to the HD Package, to be able to receive the HD channels. Not all channels are available in high definition, and there is a monthly fee to obtain these channels. Call our office if you have questions in regard to HD receivers. **Note: HD receivers will NOT be part of North Star's free exchange program.**

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



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



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>

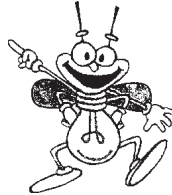
- Warranty & damaged equipment exchange program is available to all subscribers.
 - Must be a new DirecTV account & purchase programming from North Star Electric.
 - Must reside in USA & North Star Electric's DBS sales territory.
 - No free programming with second receiver. Additional receiver fee is \$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)

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 jobs, 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 who 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 Aug. 6, 2004, 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, each one

honoring someone who has survived the disease or remembering 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 more than \$1,500, 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, 2004. 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

