


The Enlightener



North Star
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

VOLUME 49 NUMBER 8

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

AUGUST 2003

Getting ready Now is the time to prepare for next season's load control

Cold, blustery days. Below zero temperatures. A warm, cozy house.

As summertime settles in across the Minnkota Power Cooperative service region, thoughts of winter are probably not on the minds of off-peak electric heating members. But now is the time to begin preparations for next winter's load control season.

"North Star Electric encourages all of our off-peak members to have a reliable, automatic dual fuel heating system in place and ready for use," says Wayne Haukaas, manager of compliance and member services. "This makes the switch to your backup system relatively transparent when load control occurs."

System checklist

To ensure your total comfort next winter, consider the following questions concerning your backup heating system:

1. Is your system sized appropriately to heat your entire home or business?
2. Does it maintain an adequate comfort level?

3. Is it reliable?
4. Is it fully automatic?

Another important action off-peak members can take this summer is to have their propane or fuel oil tank filled during the "off season." Prices for fuels such as propane and fuel oil typically rise as demand increases during the wintertime, escalating home heating costs. (675-06-001-02 Melvin Kittelson) To avoid having to pay these high winter fuel prices, off-peak members should remember to check the summertime fill prices and get their tanks filled before the beginning of the heating season.

Future predictions

The weather in the Upper Midwest and future wholesale power market prices are two big unknowns that could cause control hours to exceed 400 hours per heating season in the coming years, according to Al Tschepen, vice president of Planning and System Operations for Minnkota.

Due to a number of factors influencing the price and availability of power in the wholesale marketplace, Minnkota controlled the off-peak systems a total of 407 hours last winter, more than twice the previous high set in the winter of 2000-01. However, even with the increased control hours the electric portion of the off-peak systems supplied 86 percent of the members' heating needs.

(Continued on page 8)



Introducing North Star Electric's Lightning Bugs, an American Cancer Society Relay for Life team: front row, Denise Noga, Pat Olson, Sharon Hoskins, Shelley Scribner, Norma Anderson and Katie Scribner; back row, Betty Jo Berg, Lynette Dostall, Dan Hoskins, Walt Scribner and Ann Ellis. This year, the team raised more than \$1,400 for cancer research.



Ann Ellis and Norma Anderson started the Lightning Bugs all night walk.



General manager Dan Hoskins and Walt Scribner relax before it's their turn to walk.



**North Star Electric
offices will be closed
Sept. 1 for Labor Day.**

The Enlightener

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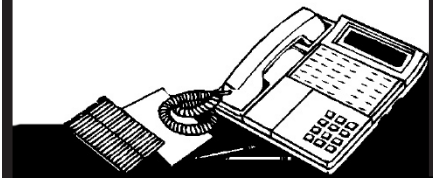
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AFTER HOURS

DirecTV® Problems
1-888-207-6266

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



June 2003 Operating Report

Revenue	\$ 538,673
Cost of Power	\$ 254,102
Operation, Maintenance, Administration	\$ 139,492
Depreciation, Interest	\$ 121,559
Margin on Operations	\$ 23,520
Average use per Residential	809
Total kWhs Sold	5,855,724

Are All Of These Benefits Built Into Your Current Heating System?

- Low Operating Costs
- Safety
- Comfort
- Reliability
- Clean
- Convenient
- 100% Efficient
- Stable Prices
- Maintenance Free
- Easy To Operate



Contact Us Today
to find out how ETS can provide you with these benefits and reduce your heating bills!

Baudette
Wayne or Kevin 634-2202
Littlefork
Steve 278-6658

If not, then Electric
Thermal Storage
(ETS) is for you!

ETS low cost, all electric, off-peak heating

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.



By Dan Hoskins
General Manager

Electricity is a good deal

What is electricity? Electricity is the kind of energy (the thing that makes things move or work) associated with the movement of electrons. You see, everything is made of small particles called atoms. (In fact, they're so small, you can't even see them with a microscope! A piece of writing paper is about one million atoms thick.) Within an atom are even tinier particles called protons, which carry a positive charge, and electrons, which have a negative charge. In some atoms, electrons are loosely attached and move from one atom to the next. This movement creates electricity.

Electricity is such an outstanding product, and we use it for almost everything. You know, North Star Electric Cooperative started serving members over 60 years ago by building lines to our rural areas. The purpose of the rural electric cooperatives was to see to it that all rural people had electricity or basically serve the areas or people that no other companies would build to. Well, little did anyone realize at the time how much we would end up depending on electricity.

Just look around and count the devices that operate with electricity. I suppose some of the items you would count would be your refrigerator, freezer, stove, oven, microwave, dishwasher, coffee pot, toaster, clock, crockpot, radio, TV, VCR, DVD player, video games, stereo, garbage disposal, electric skillet, blow dryer, curling iron, lights, heat, air conditioning, humidifier, ceiling fan, garage door opener, iron, computer and many more.

What a great commodity we have! It's clean, efficient, economical, reliable (most of the time; well, you know Mother Nature and different things happen) and the best part, it's affordable. For the uses that we get out of electricity and the convenience of it, we get a heck of a deal.

So, I wonder where we would be if a fellow by the name of Ben would not have gone to that open area in June of 1752 during a storm and decided to fly a kite with a key to prove that lightning was really a stream of electrified air known today as plasma. (Clara Ostlund 404-07-001-08) I think we would be advanced, but I don't think we would have advanced as quickly as we have.

So, for now, turn the radio up or

turn on the TV for the news or just read a book under the steady light of your lamp; whatever you choose, remember North Star Electric Cooperative is here for you and providing you with the best darn product anywhere.

One other thing: Our annual meeting will be held in Littlefork this year on Friday, October 10, 2003, so mark your calendars.

Stay safe and God Bless.

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. This past heating season, we had 407 hours. The years of 20 to 40 hours of control are gone. In the future, you can expect 400 hours or more 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 an 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



Office notes

From Ann Ellis, Office Manager

“As long as one keeps searching, the answers come.”
—Joan Baez

High-speed Internet via satellite

Not too long ago we had many members who had to pay long distance charges while they were connected to a dial-up Internet connection. This has improved, but now North Star has the opportunity to participate in offering **high-speed Internet service** (see WildBlue below) at prices comparable to DSL and cable modems. However, before we make a choice to participate, we need your help to make the best informed decision. We need to know your needs.

Please take a quick moment to fill out the enclosed survey and let us know if you think that the Cooperative should participate. Your input drives our decisions because this business belongs to you, the members.

WildBlue

That’s the name of the new Ka band satellite technology that will be used to give rural America affordable access to high-speed Internet service. It’s what we’ve been waiting for:

- An “always-on” connection to the Internet through wireless satellite connectivity
- Download speeds up to 3 Mbps and 50 times faster than a 56k dial-up connection
- Available virtually everywhere in the continental U.S. – no discrimination against less densely populated, rural areas
- One dish solution – receives both WildBlue high-speed Internet and DirecTV
- Available in the fall of 2004
- Estimated pricing at \$299 for the installed equipment and a monthly fee of about \$49
- No need for a phone line, so that second line you have for your dial-up connection can be disconnected

High-speed Internet becomes more important every day to surviving rural communities. The question we have for you is, will you want to buy it from the Cooperative you own, or someone else. Please complete the survey and return it. We thank you for your help.

\$50 drawing for survey participants

Return the enclosed survey by Sept. 9 and become eligible for a random drawing for a \$50 electric bill credit!

Capital credit refund – check or bill credit

The board of directors has authorized a \$432,866 payment of capital credits. We will be applying this retirement to September electric bills, unless you let us know by Sept. 5 that you would prefer a check in October. The bill credit is the cost-effective way for us to get your payment to you, but we understand that some people have special circumstances, or just plain preferences, that make a check a better choice for them.

Director elections

At the Oct. 10 annual meeting, members in Districts 8 and 9 will be electing their representation on the board of directors. Incumbent directors are Gunder Hallan and Julian Brzoznowski. As the bylaws state, each district has their own Nominating Committee:

District 8: Wayne Meyers (chairman), James Jonson, John L. Rasmussen, and Lenwood Pettis

District 9: Val S. Cook (chairman), Cletus Shoen, Mike Wurst, and Arly Trelstad

These committee members have the duty of finding two qualified candidates for the Oct. 10 election. They will have this task completed before the Sept. 3 board meeting. If you, or someone you know, is interested in running for the director position, please contact a committee member in your district. Your district number is printed on your monthly electric bill.

Free food

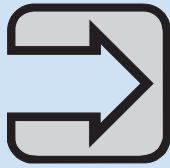
I’d hoped the subtitle would pique your interest! For those of you who have never attended an annual meeting, we serve a free dinner, plus prizes, entertainment and information. This month we are putting out the word to organizations and individuals that we are accepting bids for this Co-op sponsored dinner. If you’d like to give us a bid, please give me a call to discuss the menu.

And don’t forget to send in that survey form!!!!

At your service we remain. . .

Annual meeting dinner bids being sought

If you are interested in providing a bid to serve the dinner for our annual meeting at Littlefork Oct. 10, please contact Ann Ellis at 1-888-634-2202 before Sept. 10.



West End News

By Steve Ellis

Baudette District Operations Supervisor

Where has the summer gone? It's time to enjoy the last of the summer and the beginning of fall.

Our crews have had a busy summer building new services and upgrading others.

We have also had our share of storms again this summer. In July, we had some straight-line winds in the Clementson area, which knocked out power to the area and left our wires in the Rapid River just upstream from the Rapids. The crew could be seen the next morning in a boat, fishing for wires. After finding the broken wires and replacing a broken pole, things were returned to normal. (Dan/Patricia Bower 242-25-009-05) This is just an example of some of the things the linemen go through to restore your power after an outage. It is not as simple as going out to simply turn the switch back on. These men work day and night in all kinds of weather to keep the power running to your home and business.

Lakes States has been spraying in the Williams and Warroad areas. This is a very effective method of right-of-way management to help keep our cost of power to you as low as possible.

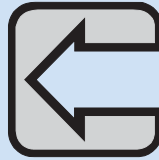
Until next time, stay safe!

After-hours outage number: 634-2603 or toll-free 1-888-6outage.

East End News

By Allan Baumgartner

Littlefork District Operations Supervisor



After having a pretty good first half of the year as far as outages go, July hit our system pretty hard with high winds and lightning on July 2. Our crews put over 90 splices into our conductors that night and into the morning of July 3. They did a great job restoring power from the Lindford Road (Co. Rd. 1), all the way to Ash Lake. We had more outages in July than we had from January to the end of June, which is typical for our area. I want to thank our members for their patience during that time, as some of them were out of power 14-16 hours.

New services continue to come in this year, some of them are pretty long and require quite a bit of construction to complete. We also changed out some rock poles up on Rainy Lake that were rejected, so the telephone company could change out damaged cable that was attached to them. No chance of getting a truck into any of them.

We have a tie-line and two cable replacements out on Rainy Lake to get done in August after things settle down a little. It has definitely been a very busy summer.



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

Northern Minnesota District Fair Prize Winners *(Littlefork)*

Grand prize winner
Deluxe cart grill
Art Marklund

2nd prize winner
Lock-N-Go grill
Wilbur Tilander

Nightly Drawing
Surge Protector
Judy Lilja Jr.
Morgan Supinski
James Rasmussen

Highlights of the board of directors meeting

July 2, 2003

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on July 2, 2003. Detailed minutes are available at the Cooperative for member review. The next regular board meeting is tentatively set for Sept. 3, 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 approve the amendment to the Minnkota wholesale power contract, to reimburse Director Hallan for his engineering work on the easement acquisition for the mini-substation near International Falls, to hold the 2003 annual meeting on Friday, Oct. 10, at the Littlefork/Big Falls school, to adjust Manager Hoskins' salary, and to adopt new and changed board policies 5.24-Cooperative Drivers, 3.23-Firearms, 5.16-Nepotism, and 3.13-Safety, Reliability, and Service Quality.

Management and operations report

General Manager Hoskins reported on anticipated improvements in line loss, Operations Department reports, personnel on disability, outages, and securing a lifetime easement to locate a mini-substation in the International Falls area.

Office report

Office Manager Ellis provided the

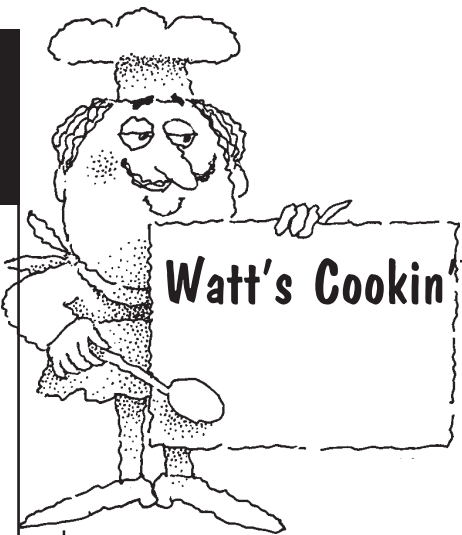
financial report and commented on the effect of uncontrolled air conditioning on the wholesale power bill, DBS YTD margins, the 3.5 FTE (full-time equivalent) jobs created in North Star's area to operate our DirecTV business, annual meeting items, bank fees, and calls resulting from the brochure sent out announcing the upcoming availability of Duluth network station(s) via DirecTV.

Compliance and member services report

Manager of Member Services Haukaas reported on the number of subscribers who have called to be placed on the DirecTV LIL (local into local networks) conversion list, possibly contracting these conversions, Echostar's (DISH network) directive to disconnect several hundred thousand of their subscribers' distant network signals, and information about NRTC and WildBlue satellite Internet service.

Board reports and other discussion

Minnkota Delegate Brzoznowski reported on the monthly Minnkota board meeting. Annual meeting gifts and speaker(s), board district boundaries/member counts, and availability of high-speed Internet service to our area were discussed.



Scandinavian Whole Wheat Muffins

1 cup whole wheat flour
1 cup unbleached white flour
½ tsp. salt (I omit)
1 tbsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
½ cup brown sugar
1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts or pecans
1 cup buttermilk (or 1 tbsp. vinegar in 1 cup sweet milk)
2 beaten eggs
⅓ cup butter, melted (I use homemade crabapple sauce)

Mix together flours, salt, baking powder, soda and sugar in a large bowl. Stir in nuts. In another bowl, combine buttermilk, beaten eggs and melted butter. Pour into a well in center of dry ingredients. Stir until moistened. Spoon into greased muffin cups and bake. (375° for about 18 minutes)

I always add raisins and usually wheat germ and/or flax. I also always double the recipe.

Submitted by: Lucile Landby
Warroad, Minn.

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

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

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



Local network programming update...

Wow! We have received many calls (and continue to daily), from our DBS subscribers in Koochiching and St. Louis counties, requesting equipment upgrades to get the upcoming Duluth networks! Those of you in the Lake of the Woods and Roseau counties will receive Fargo as your local network at a later date. We have no con-

firmation yet of when that will be, but we do encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to upgrade your equipment so that you are ready when Fargo becomes available to you in the future. If you haven't called us yet to upgrade YOUR equipment, please do so as soon as possible! There has never been a better time to get the latest, up-to-date equipment at such LOW prices!

We are anxiously awaiting the arrival of these local networks to our area! This has been a long time coming and will sure be worth the wait! The time frame that they are shooting for is approximately Dec. 2003, for the availability of the local NBC/KBJR network. We are hoping, of course, that ABC and CBS won't be too terribly far behind, but have no confirmation of time frames from them. Please, keep in mind that the approximate date of December, that they are hoping for, is just that – approximate. It may be sooner, possibly a little longer. These things take a lot of time and money to complete and we want to extend our sincere thanks to NBC/KBJR for their efforts in this project. I think we will all agree that it is definitely going to be worth the wait to

have LOCAL news, weather and sports! If you have a rooftop antenna and are able to pick up an adequate signal, you may decide you don't need the upgrade. If you do not upgrade your equipment, be assured you will still continue to receive all your same great DirecTV programming – with the exception of the local channels.

Equipment fees for this cost-share program are:

- Only \$49.99 – to exchange both antenna and receiver
- Only \$29.99 – to exchange just the antenna

Monthly network fees are expected to be the same – at our low price of just \$1.00 per month per network!

For those of you who have already phoned in and are on our list to be upgraded, our contractor is in the area and you should be contacted very soon – if you haven't been already by the time this reaches you. Keep in mind, once the local channels are up and running, the east and west coast feeds for that particular channel will no longer be available to you. For now, it will be just the NBC east/west coast feeds that will be dropped. We are confident that it will be worth it to be without the second showing of NBC programming, to receive it locally. You will be instructed as to what channel number to move to for receiving the local channels at a later date as we aren't aware at this time what channel number it will be...*so stay tuned!*

So what are you waiting for? Don't delay! Call our office today!

Freeview events for September

Tune to DIRECTV channel #103 and enjoy Neil Young in Concert premiering Aug. 29 and Sarah Brightman in Concert, premiering Sept. 5, DIRECTV FREEVIEW Events, and airing every weekend through September. Also enjoy The Making of *The Lord of the Rings*:

The Two Towers Special, premiering Sept. 26, a DIRECTV FREEVIEW Event, airing every weekend throughout October. We are proud to present these concerts to you – at no additional charge – as our way of saying, “Thanks for allowing us to serve you!”

NFL Sunday Ticket

It's not too late to order NFL Sunday Ticket! We want to remind you however, the NFL Sunday Ticket Package is non-refundable and cannot be cancelled once the season starts. Call us today, so you don't miss out on the excitement!

A network for and about rural America!

RFD-TV, the nation's first 24-hour television network with educational and informational programming targeting rural America, has been added to the DIRECTV programming lineup! Channel #379 can be viewed once you have upgraded your DBS satellite equipment to the new style multi-satellite dish antenna – the same style that is used for receiving local networks. There is no additional charge to you for this channel – it is FREE, as long as you have the above mentioned equipment to receive it. You can then enjoy programs such as Horses on RFD-TV, Rural News, Classic Tractors, Farm Bureau Today, Traditional & Ethnic Music and Rural Youth.

BLOCKBUSTER TICKET

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

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!

RCA Satellite System & Phase 3 Antenna

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

Installed for only \$49.99

(Save over \$350 from our regular price.)

ADD UP YOUR SAVINGS:	VALUE	SALE
**RCA System-Antenna	\$259.00	\$ 49.99
Basic Installation	95.00	FREE
Surge Protector	20.00	FREE
1 Month Total Choice Plus	37.99	FREE
	<u>\$411.99</u>	<u>\$ 49.99</u>

- 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 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 \$139

(Free basic installation & programming is only \$1.95 a month)

Getting ready (Continued from page 1)

“Contrary to some rumors and misinformation, Minnkota does not control loads to sell the power on the open market,” Tschepen emphasizes. “We control off-peak loads only to avoid buying high-priced energy.”

Looking ahead, the price projections for natural gas indicate even sharper heating fuel price increases in the 2003-2004 winter season. Because natural gas fuels much of the region's new generation facilities, less economical wholesale electricity will be available for Minnkota to purchase during peak usage periods, causing off-peak control to be required frequently.

Two choices available

“Off-peak members who may be concerned about future load control hours basically have two choices,” says Haukaas. “The first is to do nothing and hope for warmer winters and less load control. This is a risky choice, though, since cold winters are common to the region and future load control periods will likely lengthen as the regional electric energy market tightens.”

A second and much wiser choice, according to Haukaas, is for off-peak members to make sure they have a fully automatic, reliable backup heating system in place and ready

to provide heat to every part of their home or business.

“With a good backup heating system that is properly installed and maintained, there will be no difference in comfort level experienced by the off-peak member when the backup heating system is called on to operate,” says Haukaas. “And it's important to remember that a blend of primary off-peak electric heat with a fuel oil, propane or natural gas backup heating system is still significantly less expensive than heating with straight fuel oil, propane or natural gas.”

If you have any questions concerning North Star's off-peak heating program, please call our member service department.



Gopher State One Call

It's the LAW

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Minnesota Statewide One Call
Notification Center

1-800-252-1166