

The

# Enlightener



North Star  
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



VOLUME 51 NUMBER 8

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

August 2006

## ABCs of dorm room safety

If your child's home-away-from-home is a college dorm room this fall, there are a few things you should know. The National Fire Protection Association estimates that nearly 1,600 fires a year occur in U.S. dorm rooms and fraternity and sorority houses. Older wiring, ill-suited to handle the electrical load from laptops, refrigerators, microwaves, TVs, audio equipment and other appliances students use, may well be part of the problem.

The Leviton Institute offers some advice to help parents and college-bound kids engage in safe electrical practices while away at school. Even better, if you're planning a visit to the campus, make sure your child is informed on the

safe use of electricity in the dorm. Start by conducting a visual inspection of the dorm room or suite, making sure to check the following areas:

### Don't overload circuits

Next to candles and cigarettes, overloaded circuits are the second leading cause of campus fires. If an appliance cord or outlet feels hot, the appliance should be disconnected immediately. Let your child know to report any outlets that are damaged, or that no longer grip plugs properly, to the campus housing staff immediately.

### Power strips and adapters

Most college dorms are equipped with an insufficient number of outlets. To compensate for this, students frequently use power strips or adapters to add more connections. These ramp up the load requirement and can overload the electrical system. Only power strips with an over-current protector (cir-



cuit breaker), which automatically shuts off if too much current is being drawn, should be used. To protect electronics like computers, printers and audio equipment from damaging spikes and surges, these devices should be plugged into a surge strip.

### Extension cords

Use only extension cords with the UL label. These have undergone rigorous safety testing and can be purchased with confidence. Keep in mind that extension cords are designed for temporary use only and should never be used for permanent connections or to provide power to other extension cords. Also, they should never be run under rugs or furniture.

### Appliances

Toasters, microwaves, hot plates, coffee makers and electric irons should never be situated near bedding, books, draperies or clothing.

**North Star  
Electric offices  
will be closed  
Monday, Sept. 4,  
for Labor Day.**

**LABOR DAY**



*Continued on page 5*



## East End News

*By Allan Baumgartner*

*Littlefork District Operations Supervisor*

Our crews have been busy building new services, upgrading services and taking care of our July outages through the summer heat. We are most likely on track to out-do the services and upgrades from the past several years, but I hope not the out-ages! The last two years have been nasty in that department.

Once again, and very important, if you notice wires sagging, poles leaning or guy lines down, slack or loose, please stay away from them, and call this problem into the Baudette or Littlefork offices right away. New services and upgrades will be put on hold until those problems are fixed.

We have several large jobs scheduled to complete in our next four-year work plan, along with a budget, which we are looking at very closely. Some of the jobs we feel can be put on hold; some

cannot. (James Piekarski 675-06-029-01) Right-of-way work is one area that must be done for both safety and outages.

Replacing bad underground cable is another project that must be done despite the high cost of wire, fuel and equipment. Excessive outages on these lines also cost us, along with the inconvenience to our members. In the long run, we will eventually have to replace the bad cables, anyway. Building, for the future can be put on hold for a while, but as time goes by, that work will have to be completed before the load on the power lines becomes too great. Sometimes, the future arrives sooner than expected!

One word of caution: If you're working around or near overhead power lines, always be aware of the location of the wires, poles, guy lines, etc. Every year, we seem to get poles broken off by machinery of some type. It's costly and dangerous.

## Northern Minnesota and Lake of the Woods FAIR PRIZE WINNERS

### Grand Prize Winner

*25" Sony Energy Star® TV*  
Leesa Palm

### First Prize Winners

*Deluxe Cart Grills*  
Shirley Haglund  
Inga Kaivola

### Second Prize Winners

*Lock-N-Go Grills*  
Luann Pedersen  
Myrna Jonson



Leesa Palm was the Grand Prize winner of the 25" Sony TV at this year's fairs. Pictured from left to right are Simon, Tony, Leesa and Clara Palm.

### Kids Drawings

*\$25 Gift Certificates*  
Grant Erickson  
Logan Conner

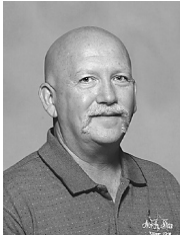
### Nightly Drawings

*Surge Protectors*  
Sunny Dorow  
Tom Dinndorf  
Judith Crompton  
Roger Sindelir  
Lex Jones  
Delores Boorman  
Teresa Sims

## 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



By Dan Hoskins  
General Manager

# Tighten up your home, winter is on its way

I would like to take you on a short virtual tour of a home and, maybe, give you some ideas of what to look for, and possibly do. Then, if you have further questions, you can call our Member Service Department, and they will be glad to answer your questions.

Ok, let's walk through the front door. How does the threshold look? Is there rubber on the bottom of the door? How about the trim around the door or the how the door fits. Is it tight? If any of these are missing or off, or the door has a noticeable gap, it could lead to heat loss in the winter or air-conditioned air in the summer. Now, here is the first of many "Did you Knows" for you; did you know that about 11 percent of the air infiltration comes and goes through our doors?

How about those floors, walls and ceilings? Let's walk through and take a look at them. Are they in good shape? Do we have enough insulation? What's the R value of the insulation in your home? We live in the Number 1 insulation zone in the United States, and if your home doesn't have the insulation it needs, maybe you should look at adding some. Here ya go; did you know that 31 percent of the infiltration of the air comes and goes through our floors, walls and ceilings? Thirty-one percent, that's almost one-third of all air moving in and out of the house.

So, now, as we walk through your home, let's look at those nice south-ern-exposure windows. These are

great in the winter because they let in that solar heat that helps with the heating bill, but the summer sun also brings in a lot of heat, so shut those shades in the heat of the day. That way, the air conditioner doesn't have to work so hard. What's that, the windows on the west and north walls? Well, those windows, as well as all your windows, need to be tight so they don't let in that nasty old winter wind, which makes the furnace run more in the winter and let the heat out. So, let's check all the windows to make sure that they are of the U-rating and are sealed. Did you know that 10 percent of the infiltration of the air comes and goes around the windows.

Well, that takes care of the structure of the house. Let's look at some other things that you could do. For instance, that electric water heater; here are just a few tips for you. Check the water faucets to make sure that they do not drip when they are supposed to be off. That uses a lot of water. You can also insulate your water lines and your water heater. These insulation moves will save you money. Some other ideas: Lower the thermostat; 115 degrees F. should provide you with comfortable hot water. Try draining about a quart of water from your water heater to see if there are any sediments in it. These can build up and lower the efficiency of your water heater.

Now, let's look at the heating source for your home. First of all, if you have a fireplace, make sure that if you are not using it keep the damper closed. An open damper is like a 48-inch window wide open. If

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# Highlights of the board of directors meeting

July 5, 2006

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on July 5, 2006.

All directors were present. They acted upon usual, routine business. In addition, they voted to leave the unclaimed capital credits paid to the Littlefork/Big Falls school, that were to fund an educational field trip to the power plants in North Dakota this spring, but ask that these funds be dedicated to taking this trip in the near future. The board also approved the Nominating Committees.

Reports included information on the financials, kWh sales, implementation of cost-saving measures, computer equipment, load control, the first meeting of the Operation Round Up board, the Co-op Connection Cards, the IPP plan for commercial off-peak members, upcoming county fairs, advertising focuses, the CIP (Conservation Improvement Program), annual meeting prizes for members, the upcoming strategic planning meeting, planned area informational meetings in August, the October Annual Meeting, new services, lot developments, measures to extend the life of underground cable, outages, safety, progress of the AMR (automated meter reading) project, the fleet, and URD plowing projects being contracted out.

Discussions included the

vacancy in District 8 and plans to survey the membership to see if reducing the size of the board, to save costs, would be desirable by the members. If the survey indicates that a nine-member board is still desirable, the directors will immediately advertise the opening in the *Enlightener* and fill the vacancy. They also heard reports from Minnkota and Square Butte board delegates and a report from the North Itasca Annual Meeting.

Detailed minutes are available at the Cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally 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.

## AMR update

Is the box on your payment stub, where you normally write in your meter reading, filled in with the words, "Co-op Reads"? If yes, our AMR (automated meter reading) project has indicated that we can now read that meter for you.

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you never use your fireplace, plug and close off the chimney. Here are two for one. Did you know that 14 percent of the infiltration of the air comes and goes through the fireplace and 2 percent of air infiltration comes and goes through your electrical outlets?

Now, let's look at the ductwork in the house. This network of tubes and sheet metal is generally hidden in the floors or ceilings, and you know what they say, "out of sight, out of mind." Well, these avenues of hot air and cool air are subject to leaks, and sometimes, need to be insulated. So, if you are checking things out, be sure to look over this part of your home as well.

So, now, I am going to give you a "three-fer." Did you know that 15 percent of the infiltration of the air comes and goes through your duct work, and 13 percent of air infiltration comes and goes through your plumbing penetrations. And one more, if you have fans and/or vents, there is approximately 4 percent of the air flow going and coming around them!

So, there you have it! These are just some ways that should help you cut down on your energy use, which will save you money in the long run. (Matthew Mollberg 362-19-005-02) There are many other cost-saving tips, and we can probably help you if you contact our Member Service Department.

Have a great Labor Day Holiday!

God Bless you and our troops,



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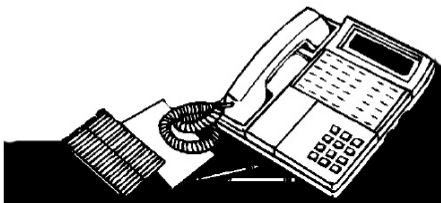
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These items can get hot enough to ignite clothing or paper. Keep appliances away from bathtubs and sinks. Water and electricity should never come in contact. Appliances, not in use, should be switched off. Do not use any appliance with a damaged or frayed cord. Adherence to the college's rules and guidelines on approved equipment is critical. If the college prohibits the use of certain appliances, it's because they pose a serious hazard. So make sure your child understands these rules.

### Halogen lamps

Halogen lamps can reach temperatures hot enough to ignite blankets or curtains and have been banned from most college campuses because they're unsafe. If they are permitted on your child's campus, they should be used with extreme caution. (Glen/Marlys Jaenicke 130-08-083-03) Make sure the lamp has a mesh guard that isolates the bulb and is also equipped with an automatic tip-over switch.

### Evacuation

Encourage your child to take on-campus fire drills seriously. Ask him or her about where the nearest exits are and whether or not they know evacuation procedures and escape plans. You won't always be there to watch out for your child, so send along a fire extinguisher and a smoke detector, if these devices are not available. You can add to your peace of mind!

## North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc. Mission Statement

*To improve the lives of our member-owners and community by responsibly providing electric energy and other beneficial services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance.*

## Gopher State One Call



It's the **LAW**  
**CALL BEFORE YOU DIG**  
Minnesota Statewide One Call  
Notification Center  
**1-800-252-1166**

## WE NEED YOUR METER READING

Please read your meter on or as near the 25<sup>th</sup> of EACH month as possible. We must have your reading by the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 \$5 delinquent notice fee.*

## Cold weather disconnects

Section 216B.097 was added to the Public Utilities Act effective Aug. 1, 1991. The law provides that cooperatives and municipal utilities cannot disconnect a residential consumer between Oct. 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heating source, provided that certain conditions are met.

The conditions include that the member must declare, on forms provided by the cooperative, an inability to pay, and the household income of the customer is less than 50 percent of the state median income. Another major change this winter is that any member who is receiving energy assistance is eligible. In addition, the customer's account must be current for the billing period immediately prior to Oct. 15, or in the alternative, the customer has entered into and is reasonably current, on a mutually acceptable payment schedule. Several agencies provide financial assistance to qualifying households. We urge you to check with them for details on available programs.

To avoid electric disconnection, arrangements for bill payment need to be made before the line crew is sent to collect. Do not disregard your bill. It is your responsibility. If you have financial difficulties, please contact our office to discuss payment arrangements.

## Trees and power lines:

### A dangerous duo

Trees can provide shade, beauty and fresh air around your home, but they can also be dangerous if planted too close to electrical power lines.

The experts at the Electrical Safety Foundations International (ESFI) and the American Public Power Association (APPA) say power outages can occur and dangerous electric shock hazards can develop if tree limbs touch electric wires or if branches fall on the utility lines. "Trees can also hinder utility repair work and recognition of a hazard," warned ESFI executive director Michael G. Clendenin. For that reason, ESFI and APPA recommend that only low-growing trees should be planted near overhead utility wires.

To prevent trees from interfering with power lines, ESFI recommends that homeowners call their electric utility or a tree trimming professional to prune even questionable tree limbs. Trimming trees near power lines can, itself, be very dangerous, and should be handled only by trained professionals. Also, tell your children not to climb trees that are close to power lines.

"It takes only 10 to 40 milliamps for serious injury and even death, to occur. Utility power lines carry thousands of volts, nearly ensuring death to the victim," added Clendenin.

## 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 Cooperative 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 our member services department.
11. Outstanding loan balance at termination of service is due in full.

### 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.

- *St. Louis county and Koochiching counties:*

**Bob Orgon**

10111 Roosevelt Rd. S.E.

Bemidji, MN 56601

Phone: (218) 556-3829

Fax: (218) 751-3535

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

- *Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties:*

**Scott Stenvik**

16409 State Hwy 1 N.W.

Thief River Falls, MN 56701

Phone: (218) 689-5406

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

