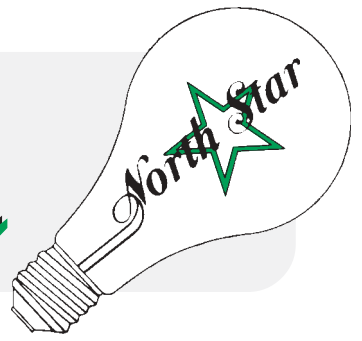


The

Enlightener



North Star
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



VOLUME 49 NUMBER 3

BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA

MARCH 2003



By Dan Hoskins
General Manager

A new idea

Your Cooperative is always concerned about some of the services that we provide...concerned about the efficiency of the service or the reliability. Maybe even the need for this or that particular service. Well, one of those services would be an after-hours call service for our members to report an electrical outage or emergency.

What this would entail is that there would be one number for our members to call in a power outage or emergency no matter where you live on our system. Right now, that convenience is not there. The process, as most of you well know, is for you, the member, to call one of the linemen in your area to report any trouble. But what happens if this gentleman is not home; you have to call another, and another, until you find one to report your trouble.

One number

Now, I understand that it isn't always as bad as that, but we have to use worse case scenarios. As professional and reliable that our linemen are, they have lives and families, also, and they may be gone at the moment you need them. (363-21-008-01 Michael A. Anderson) This new idea for one number would be a great service for you, our member.

How it could work

Let's see how this could possibly work. It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood, and you have friends and family over for birthday supper and cake. Unknown to you, there is a small bird about to come into contact with the energized line on top of the transformer. Pow! The fuse is gone and you're out of power. If you have a backup generator, then good for you, but if you're one of the 98 percent that doesn't, you'd better get on the phone, because the only light you have at the moment are the three candles burning on little Danny's cake.

Toll-free call

You call the toll-free number, and you will get a North Star representative on the other end of the phone right away, and they will have a few questions for you to answer so they can make the line crew, *which they contact*, aware of the situation. This one telephone call that you make will ensure you that someone will be on his way to that problem within a short time. Also, they will call you back to make sure your power has been restored. Danny can blow out the candles, and you can enjoy cake and ice cream under the bright lights!

Rebate on ETS units ends March 31, 2003

At their board meeting on January 2, the board of directors took action to remove the rebate incentive for ETS (Electric Thermal Storage) room units and ETS storage furnaces. The ETS rebate was incorporated in the "member only" selling price of these units. North Star will honor this price until March 31, 2003. Members with projects that will not be completed before this time, such as remodeling or building a new home, must pay for the unit or make loan arrangements with us before March 31 to qualify for the incentive.

The price of the units will increase about 15 percent on April 1. If you are thinking about installing an ETS unit, now is the time to do so.

(Continued on page 3)

The Enlightener

March 2003

Published monthly by

North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Baudette, MN 56623

Subscription 50¢/year for members;
\$1/year for non-members

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Steve Arnesen President
Gunder Hallan Vice President
Michael Hanson Secretary-Treasurer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Julian Brzoznowski,
James E. Palm, Bruce Polkinghorne,
Allan Nygaard, Randy Bergan, Mike Trueman
Wayne Haukaas Editor

TELEPHONE DURING OFFICE HOURS

Baudette 218-634-2202
Littlefork 218-278-6658
DirecTV questions 218-634-3322

If calling long distance, call toll-free

Baudette 888-634-2202
Littlefork 888-258-2008
DirecTV questions 877-634-3322
e-mail us at nsec@wiktel.com
Visit our Web site at
www.northstarelectric.coop

Write your account number here.
Put this by your telephone.

AFTER HOURS

Outage Reporting

BAUDETTE

Marty Mollberg 634-2208
Jim Levasseur 634-2870
Gary Hull 783-7431
Don Dostall 634-2330
Tim Pelach 634-1278
Steve Ellis 634-1162

LITTLEFORK

Bruce Petersen 278-4218
Todd Thydean 278-4713
Ronald Lee 278-4145
Allan Baumgartner 278-4462
Richard Grotberg 278-4224
Glen Marcotte 283-5772

AFTER HOURS

DBS TV Problems
1-888-207-6266

OFF-PEAK HEAT EMERGENCIES

Kevin Holen (Baudette) 634-3017
Wayne Haukaas (Baudette) 634-2829
Steve Polkinghorne (Littlefork) 278-4525

January 2003 Operating Report

Revenue (includes annual seasonal billing)	\$ 814,098
Cost of Power	\$ 396,101
Operation, Maintenance, Administration	\$ 143,673
Depreciation, Interest	\$ 107,192
Margin on Operations	\$ 167,132
Average use per Residential	2,575
Total kWhs Sold	14,283,700

Planning to build after the snow melts?



You'll need electricity on your site

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

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

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.

A New Idea

(Continued from page 1)

A new service

This service, coming soon, is one of the ideas that your North Star employees are coming up with to provide our members with another service convenience.

Customer appreciation


North Star Electric will be having two customer appreciation days coming in May. This will give you a chance to come to the respective North Star office of your choice to meet the employees and to ask questions concerning the line department, rates, load control, DirecTV or something new coming such as Wild Blue Internet Service. Whatever the reason, this is your chance to stop and talk with us.

But maybe you would just like to enjoy some coffee or a soda pop. I bet we can even find a hot dog cooking on one of our great electric grills and possibly throw in some potato chips. Thursday, May 1, we will be at the Littlefork office from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m., and on Friday, May 2, at the Baudette office from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. Heck, I even think that Ann or Wayne can come up with a door prize or two. No matter what, it would make for a great day just to have you stop by one of our offices and visit.

Well that's about all I have for now, so until next month, we wish you good health and stay safe.

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



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

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

ETS . . . low cost, all electric, off-peak heating

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

"A penny saved is a penny earned."

-Benjamin Franklin

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

Off-peak rate

Tired of the load control? Me too, but I'd still rather pay the low off-peak rate in exchange for the temporary inconvenience.

There are 3,413 Btu in one kWh of electricity (100 percent efficient). We get 82,440 Btu from one gallon of LP from our super-efficient (90 percent) LP backup furnace. With the new off-peak rate at 3.1 cents/kWh, each electricity penny buys 1101 Btu. At \$1.30/gallon of LP, each super-efficient LP penny buys us 634 Btu. (A standard LP furnace is 70 percent efficient; therefore that LP penny buys you 493 Btu.)

At our home, the LP backup works like it should – automatically and adequate – so the only “hardship” is the 10 percent of the time when we have to pay more for our LP Btu.

If your backup system needs some work to make it “automatic and adequate,” please contact our Member Services department. We offer loans and advice to help you get your heating system into shape so the nuisance is minimal. Our goal is to help you save money with little or no inconvenience.

At your service we remain. . .

Questions on load control?

Check it out on the Internet.

Minnkota's Web site:
www.minnkota.com

Click on the “Load Management” button and then the “North Star” button. This Web page contains load control plans, the current state of the load management system, the last 30 hours of control and the last switching cycle. For your specific load group number call our office. Please remember this is Minnkota's current estimate for controlling load. **Control plans can and do change several times each hour.**

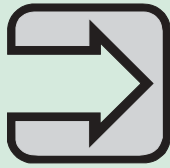
Combination electric grill & water smokers

Come in and check them out.

- Smokes, barbecues, roasts and steams.
- Electric heating element powers 1,650 watts for optimum cooking temperatures.
- Lift-off sectional body allows conversion to Electric Lock & Go Portable Grill.
- Two nickel-plated, easily removable cooking grids offer 380 square inches of total cooking surface. Allows cooking foods on two levels simultaneously.
- Moisture from water pan mixes with indirect heat from aromatic woods to baste food continuously during cooking.
- Easily removable 5½-quart water pan is porcelainized steel for long life and easy cleanup.



Only \$76.94



West End News

By Steve Ellis
Baudette District Operations Supervisor

The line crew is still working on annual line inspection, meter readings, equipment repairs and getting ready for the summer construction season.

Power Systems Engineering Inc. was here and staked the 3-phase 14.4 conversion job north of Williams. This job will be contracted out; it will be completed this summer.

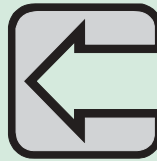
Our crews will be doing some of the work on the step-down banks and re-insulating some of the taps that will be converted to 14.4 also. We are also planning on a small tie line between the Sandy Shores and Birch Beach areas to better serve that area in times of line trouble. (673-26-021-02 Mary Eunice Holt) This should shorten some outage time and allow us to feed from more than one way.

If you are thinking of or planning any new construction this summer, it would be good to contact us as soon as your plans are formulated, so we can get your job ready to build when the weather turns to the better and the frost is out of the ground.

With all of the off-peak control that is occurring, we are busy upgrading transformers to serve members who still realize that it is the best deal around. Let's not forget that the off-peak program is there to save us all money, and that 90 percent of the time, we still have electric heat at a very low rate. Even if it were 50 percent of the time, it would still be saving you money. Until next time, be safe!

East End News

By Allan Baumgartner
Littlefork District Operations Supervisor



The cold weather just hasn't let up much going into the end of February. The crew changed out some poles and installed swamp anchors in some low areas that would be very difficult to get to in the summer.

We should have all the material for the 3.5-mile line rebuild to Kinmount by next week. Then, during March, we will need to concentrate our work-force on this project and some of the pole changeouts that are in tough spots to get at. Later, when the ground does soften up, we will have the meter reading and line inspection program to finish up.

North Itasca Co-op out of Big Fork came up on Feb. 7 with their radar machine and helped us locate and fix a fault we had on an underwater cable feeding Kabetogama Narrows. We also experienced an underground fault caused by frost, along with a couple individual outages in February.

Make plans to join us in June for our annual **POWER PLANT TOUR**



Watch for more
information
in our April issue of
The Enlightener

Great fun, great food,
great accommodations
and educational as well.

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.)



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

Highlights of the board of directors meeting

February 5, 2003

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on February 5, 2003. Detailed minutes are available at the Cooperative for member review. The next regular board meeting is tentatively set for April 2, 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 accept the minutes from the Safety Committee Meeting, to adjust electric and DirecTV rates, to amend board policy 5.63 to remove the self-insuring of the first day room-and-board deductible, to ratify Manager Hoskins signatures on FEMA documents to recover a portion of the losses associated with the June 2002 flood, to reappoint current delegates to Minnkota and Square Butte, and to authorize President Arnesen to execute director indemnification agreements.

Office report

Office Manager Ellis provided the year-end financial report, reviewed sales graphs, and commented on the seasonal billing, the RUS loan application, and receipt of the FEMA payment for a portion of flood damages.

Compliance and member services report

Manager of Compliance and Member Services Haukaas reported on

DirecTV issues, the satellite receiver equipment exchange program for subscribers' malfunctioning equipment, youth scholarship payouts, load control hours, increased interest in ETS units associated with the end of the sale prices on April 1st, contractor training, and ideas for the newsletter.

Management and operations report

General Manager Hoskins reported on progress to implement a single phone number for all members to report power outages, the Minnkota system managers' meeting, EnPower, load control, receipt of the IRS private letter ruling regarding tax treatment on income from DirecTV sales, the Operations Staff meeting, line loss, line crew activities, safety issues, truck repairs, and outages.

Board reports and other discussion

Doug Larson, Power Systems Engineering, reviewed the cost of service study and rate adjustment recommendations with the board. Comparisons to neighboring electric cooperatives' rates were also reviewed. Minnkota Delegate Brzoznowski reported on their recent board meeting. Director Arnesen complimented employees Pat Olson and Kevin Holen for noticing a kWh usage irregularity in the meter readings and detection/correction of the problem before it escalated to a larger problem.

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 March 6, we have had 367 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.



**Gopher
State
One Call**

It's the LAW

**CALL BEFORE
YOU DIG**

Minnesota Statewide One Call
Notification Center

1-800-252-1166

Satellite News

By Sue Williams

DirectTV FREEVIEW events for April

Tune to Channel #103

Tune to DIRECTV channel 103 and enjoy Peter Gabriel in concert, DIRECTV® FREEVIEW® Event, premiering April 4 and airing every weekend throughout April.

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!

Rates

By now, everyone should have received a letter from North Star in regard to our upcoming rate increase. (445-12-003-03 Chester/Kathy Lund) In case you missed it, most programming packages will increase by approximately \$2 per month, (some slightly more) effective March 18. If you have any questions in regard to the rate increase, please call our office and we will be happy to address them.

Frost and weather

With the current temperatures we are experiencing, it’s hard to “Think Spring.” However, March usually brings us some thawing temperatures and we want to remind anyone who has a satellite system mounted to a post or any other object other than the roof. Watch for frost heaves causing your equipment to go out of alignment, making possible realignment necessary.

We will also take this opportunity to remind you that you should check over your surge protection before spring approaches and replace any equipment that is not working properly. We have various models of surge protectors available at both offices – feel free to stop in or call today. Protect your investment!

FREE PREVIEW!!

April 4 – 6

Total Choice Premier Free Preview for all Total Choice Pkg. subscribers- Total Choice Premier is our biggest high-end package that includes **ALL** of the premium movie channels, such as HBO, STARZ!, Cinemax and Showtime, (channels 500-549), sports (605-654), and family oriented programming (200-377 range).

Don't forget to tune-in and see what you've been missing!

MOVIES, MOVIES, MOVIES!!

Win a free month OF MOVIES!!

Simply tune-in to the FREE preview of the Total Choice Premier Package between April 4 and 6. Clip and return the following slip telling us YOUR favorite movie channel, such as HBO, Cinemax, STARZ! or Showtime, along with your name, address and phone number. YOUR name may be drawn to win one of the following prizes: 1 lucky winner will receive a FREE month of Total Choice Premier Programming and 4 lucky winners will receive a FREE month of their favorite movie channel! Good Luck!



My favorite movie channel is: (circle one)

HBO Cinemax Showtime STARZ!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Entries may be dropped off or mailed to either office and must be received by May 5. One entry per household please.

NORTH STAR ELECTRIC'S DIRECTV PROGRAMMING PACKAGES

TOTAL CHOICE

\$31.99 /month

Over 110 Channels

202/203 CNN & CourtTV
 204 Headline News
 206/207 ESPN & ESPNNews
 208/209 ESPN Classics & ESPN 2
 229 Home and Garden TV
 231 Food Network
 232 Fine Living
 234 Shop At Home
 236 E! (Entertainment TV)
 240 Home Shopping Network
 242 USA Network
 244 Sci-Fi Channel
 245 TNT
 247 Superstation TBS
 248 FX
 249 Comedy Central
 251 Oxygen
 252/253 Lifetime & Lifetime Network
 254/255 Am. Movie Classics / PAX
 256 Turner Classic Movies
 258 FOX Movie Channel
 260 Women's Entertainment
 264/265 BBCA / A&E
 269/273 History Channel / Bravo
 276 National Geographic Channel
 277 Travel Channel
 278/279 Discovery Channel / Health
 280 The Learning Channel (TLC)
 282 Animal Planet
 290/291/292 Disney (East)-(West)-(TOON)
 296 Cartoon Network
 298 Noggin Network
 299/300 Nickelodeon (East/West)
 301/307 TV Land / WGN
 309 Game Show
 311/312 ABC Family Channel / Hallmark
 315/317 Trio & QVC
 325 The Nashville Network (TNN)
 327 Country Music TV
 329 Black Entertainment
 331/333 MTV / M2
 335/339 VH1/ Much Music
 350/351 C-Span / C-span2
 353/354 Bloomberg / TechTV
 355/356 CNBC & Microsoft NBC
 357 CNBS World
 358 CNN International
 360 Fox News Channel
 362 Weather Channel
 366/368 Newsworld / Health Network
 369 DayStar
 370 Shop NBC.com
 371 Church Channel
 372/373 Trinity / Word Net
 375/377 Link / PBS You
 402/404 Univision / Galavision
 550 Independent Film
 607 Speedvision
 608 Outdoor Life
 641 Midwest Sports Channel
 645 Fox Sports Rocky Mtn.
802-843 Music Choice Channels

OUTDOOR CHANNEL
\$1.99/month Channel # 606

TOTAL CHOICE PLUS

\$37.99 /month

Over 125 Channels

17 Channels added to
 Total Choice Package

230 Do It Yourself
 262 SoapNet
 266 Biography
 271 History Int'l
 284 Science Ch
 285 Civilization
 286 Home & Leisure
 287 Discovery Wings
 294 Discovery Kids
 295 PBS Kids
 297 Boomerang
 337 VH1 Classics
 809 Classic R&B
 814 New Wave
 815 Power Rock
 827 Americana
 832 Showtunes

TOTAL CHOICE PREMIER

\$85.99 /month

Over 180 Channels

**TOTAL CHOICE PLUS,
 HBO, STARZ,
 SHOWTIME, SPORTS
 & CINEMAX**

PREMIUM SERVICES:

HBO - 7 channels
 SHOWTIME - 9 channels
 CINEMAX - 3 channels
 STARZ! - 13 channels
 SPORTS - 27 channels

SELECT CHOICE

\$19.99 /month

Over 50 Channels

202 CNN
 203 CourtTV
 204 Headline News
 206 ESPN
 207 ESPNNews
 208/209 ESPN Classics/ESPN2
 229 Home & Garden TV
 234 Shop At Home
 236 E! (Entertainment)
 240 Home Shopping Network
 242 USA
 245 TNT
 247 Superstation TBS
 255 PAX TV
 265 A & E
 269 The History Channel
 278 The Discovery Channel
 280 The Learning Channel
 290/291Disney East & West
 296 The Cartoon Network
 299 Nickelodeon East
 300 Nickelodeon West
 311 ABC Family Channel
 317 QVC
 327 Country Music TV
 329 Black Entertainment
 331 Music television (MTV)
 335 VH1
 339 Much Music
 350/351 C-Span / C-Span 2
 353 Bloomberg Information TV
 355 CNBC
 356 Microsoft NBC
 360 Fox News
 362 The Weather Channel
 368 The Health Network
 370 Shop NBC.com
 372 Trinity
 373 Word Network
 375 Link
 377 PBS You

Music Choice: 5 Audio
 Channels Hit List, Jazz, Soft
 Rock, Classic Country, and Easy
 Listening

ECONOMY BASIC

\$17.44 /month

Over 25 Channels

202 CNN
 204 Headline News
 206 ESPN
 207 ESPNNews
 209 ESPN2
 234 Shop At Home
 240 Home Shopping
 242 USA Network
 245 TNT
 247 Superstation TBS
 256 Turner Classics
 265 A & E
 278 Discovery Channel
 290 Disney
 296 Cartoon Network
 311 ABC Family
 315 Trio
 317 QVC
 325 TNN
 327 Country Music TV
 335 VH1
 350 C-Span
 355 CNBC
 358 CNN International
 362 Weather Channel
 372 Trinity
 373 Word Network
 375 Link
 377 PBS You

NETWORK CHANNELS

ABC - 386/387
 NBC - 382/383
 CBS - 380/381
 PBS - 384
 FOX - 388
\$1.00 each per month
 FOX - 388/389
\$1.17 per month

ADD TO ANY CORE PACKAGE

PICK ONE \$12.00
 PICK TWO \$23.00
 PICK THREE \$33.00
 PICK FOUR \$41.00
 PICK FIVE \$48.00