



We are offering all North Star Electric members an exceptional summer opportunity that's fun for all ages. This year's power plant tour is three days, which will make the trip more relaxing.

The tour is scheduled for Monday through Wednesday, June 25-27. The first day, we will tour Minnkota Power's control center and diesel generating plant at Grand Forks, and then it's off to the beautiful Seven Seas Hotel & Waterpark in Mandan, N.D.

On the second day, we will visit the Milton R. Young Station near Center, N.D., where most of our electricity is generated. This will include a tour of the open pit mines, where machines strip

the coal and reclaim the land so it can once again be used for agriculture. This is where we will see the huge electric dragline, Liberty, with its 300-foot boom and 70-cubic-yard bucket, which is used to remove the overburden soil from the coal. Then, it's off to see the Garrison Dam and a tour of the hydroelectric plant. We will end our day by returning to the Seven Seas for supper.

On the third day, we will visit the Ashtabula Wind Energy Center near Lake Ashtabula, where some of our energy is

generated. The wind towers are 250 feet tall with 120-foot blades. After that, we're off to Grand Forks for lunch, and then back home.

Cost to members is just \$100 per person or \$175 per couple, which covers your cost of the bus, hotels, tours and meals. Members who have not been on this trip in the past are encouraged to go.

For further details, contact Wayne Haukaas at 634-2202 or 1-888-634-2202.

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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 canceled or if you should find that you cannot make the trip. We will send further details prior to departure. Return with check for \$100 per person or \$175 per couple to:

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

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

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

APRIL 2012

The Enlightener (USPS 024959), Vol. 57, No. 4 is published monthly by North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc., 441 St. Hwy 172 N.W., Baudette, MN 56623-0719. Subscription price \$1/year. Periodicals postage paid at Baudette, MN 56623. POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to The Enlightener, North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 719, Baudette, MN 56623-0719.

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e-mail us at nsec@wktel.com

Visit our website at

www.northstarelectric.coop

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.*

MEMBERS' CORNER

We added a section called members' corner. What we would like is for members to send in questions about your electric cooperative, and we will answer them for you. Please give us your name and a phone number in case we need to clarify the question, and send them to North Star Electric, PO Box 719, Baudette, MN, 56623, Attn: Wayne.

Highlights from the BOARDROOM

These are the highlights from the board of directors' Feb. 29 meeting. Board action this month was generally routine business.

Staff reports included the financial report, the effects of the mild weather, personnel, loan refinancing, load management, the power plant trips, scholarship testing, conflicts with the August board meeting date, safety training, 426,789 hours of work without a lost-time accident, annual review for conflicts of interest, policy

review and a detailed review of the annual RUS Form 7. They also heard reports from recent meetings.

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.

For sale by sealed bids

All listed items are sold as is. North Star Electric Co-op Inc. reserves the right to reject any or all bids. Items may be seen at North Star Electric Cooperative Inc. headquarters in Baudette, Minn.

Swisher 60" 13 hp I/C, OHC, electric start, finish cut pull behind mower.

Polaris 60" 14½ hp I/C, OHC, electric start, finish cut pull behind mower.

Bids must be in a sealed envelope with item listed on the outside. Bids will be accepted until April 30, 2012.

Member Appreciation Days

On Thursday, May 17, please join us at the Littlefork office from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., and on Friday, May 18, at the Baudette office from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. There will be refreshments with brats, chips and popcorn. Register for prizes, pick up balloons for the kids and watch an electrical safety demonstration.

ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked and helps protect you from injury and expense. Safe digging is no accident: always call 811 before you dig.

Visit call811.com for more information.

• • • • 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 and Koochiching counties:

Bob Orgon
10111 Roosevelt Rd. S.E.
Bemidji, MN 56601
Phone: (218) 556-3829
Fax: (218) 333-0451
7 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 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)



Dan Hoskins
General Manager

Manager's Report

March 17 was St. Patrick's Day and what a glorious day it was. As a matter of fact, I, along with my neighbor Kent, decided to hit the golf course for an early round. Now usually the course is covered with snow until about the middle or end of April, so golfing is out of the question. But, as we all know, this is a very special year and Mother Nature has been very good to us.

Anyway, as usual, the first couple of strokes at that little white ball were all but perfect. On the first swing, I sent that little white ball for a swim in the creek and the second ball was given the same fate. I turned to Kent and said, "Maybe this wasn't such a good idea, golfing in the middle of March!" But, I struggled on through No. one and then through Nos. 2 and 3 and things were picking up and I'm thinking, "All right, now we are looking like we belong here."

That is until No. 4! Now this hole is a 180-yard, par-3 and for you golfers, I thought I would hit a No. 7 trouble wood, just to play it safe. Well, the first drive off the tee box was a liner that hooked left really hard and cleared the highway, out of bounds! I thought to myself, "What the heck?" I wonder what that was all about; I didn't even swing hard. So I teed up another white gem and steadied myself, aiming a little right of the green and smack.

Now when you hit the ball sweet, it makes such a nice peaceful sound, and before my eyes can catch up to the flight of the ball, I'm thinking this is good. Until my eyes caught up with the ball and then I knew I was right. I hit that little white pearl about as sweet as you could and I watched as it carried higher and farther and straight....left....over the road! I even cleared the 3-phase overhead power line of North Star Electric. Argh!!

Oh well, we did finish the round, but enough about my golf game. However, that shot did remind me of something. With the early nice weather comes earlier-than-normal chores for a lot of us, which means we should talk about a few things concerning "power line safety" and other cautions. Our biggest concern is for our employees, our members and the general public. We try to remind you often of the dangers associated with our overhead and underground power lines, and I have written about these topics before, so consider this another reminder!

"Look Up," this means look for those overhead power lines that bring that wonderful product called electricity to you. A power line that has electricity flowing through it is very dangerous because you can't see the electricity, you can't smell it and most of the time you can't hear it, but it's there, and believe me, you don't want to touch it. Every member of your family should be made aware of the dangers of electricity and taught to respect it.

This spring or summer you or your neighbor or someone you know may be planning to put up an antenna or move a grain auger or other farm implement, trimming a tree, or maybe you or your neighbor plan to roof a building or any other type of work where you will have to stick objects into the air or climb onto an object. You must look around and recognize what is in that immediate vicinity.

I can tell you, for a fact, that many people would be alive today if they hadn't been so careless and had only taken the time to "Look Up." Here's a couple of reminders for you. Take that tree in the backyard that the kids or grandkids like to climb and there just happens to be a power line very close to it; before you know it, that young person has climbed up to the top of that tree to see how close they can get to those wires, and in an instant, everyone dear to that person has had their lives changed forever.

How about the roof on that storage building that you put up under the power line? Remember when you built it? It was about 40 degrees and no wind so the power line was up there a good 10 feet. But now you need a roof, and it is about 93 degrees with humidity and 10 mph wind blowing the conductor toward the peak of the roof. You've been working on this roof for about two hours, and boy, are your knees tired, so let's stand and stretch a little; oops, now your life and the lives of everyone who knows and loves you have been changed (664-19-008-02, Harvey Steinbach).

So, you see, accidents happen, and it only takes a split second to have the mind go blank, and boom, it's lights out, and believe me, from talking with some of the lucky survivors of an electrical shock, it's one experience you don't want.

Now, let's look at those other words, "Call Before You Dig." Not only is this law, but it's smart and it's safe. These words not only refer to our underground power lines, but also remember this one important reminder: there are other utilities under the ground such as gas lines, water lines, telephone lines, cable TV lines, sewer lines, fiber optic lines and so on. A map of your yard showing all these buried treasures is a very valuable document to add to your property folder for future reference.

Almost every member likes underground power lines because you can't see those ugly old poles; there are no wires to mess up the beautiful view of the sunset, the underground transformer is hidden under a fake well or behind a large patch of flowers or bushes, and we don't want those trees cut down, so put the line in underground. Whatever the case may be, underground, if people could afford it, would be the power line of choice.

But, you do have to remember that anytime you are going to dig in the yard, whether it is planting trees, digging in a

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Manager's Report

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fence post, digging up the broken water line, or anytime you decide to dig, call the Gopher State One Call number before you dig, and we will give you free locates of our underground power line facilities that are in the area of your digging. If the electric shock doesn't get you, the shock from the bill that I'm going to send you for repairs will. You see, it is not only a safety concern of ours, but it also costs money, and just like the sign says in the local dime store, "You break, you pay."

Call your electric cooperative with any information concerning power line hazards such as trees too close to the line, power lines going over a roof, low-hanging or downed wires, broken guy wires, sparking or arcing, washouts

concerning underground lines or whatever the case may be. If you notice anything out of the ordinary or something you have a question on, we are always available to talk with you and look the situation over. All we ask is that you keep yourself and everyone else safe and away from the potential hazard until we have been contacted and made necessary repairs.

So remember, in golf the warning for an errant shot headed for someone that could cause injury or damage is "foooooorrrre," but if you notice anything hazardous around your overhead power line or you need to do some digging of any kind, don't holler, just call; Gopher State One Call at **1-800-252-1166** for all underground locates, and to report an overhead power line situation, please call North Star Electric Cooperative at **888-634-2202** Baudette or **218-278-6658** Littlefork.

God bless you and our troops,
Dan

Beware of salespeople pitching energy savings from radiant barriers

The Minnesota Department of Commerce issued a consumer alert, encouraging Minnesota homeowners to think twice before installing radiant barriers in their attics. The Department's Division of Energy Resources has received reports of salespeople pitching radiant barrier products in flyers and at free dinners throughout Minnesota. The Commerce Department wants all local consumers to know that radiant barriers are not effective means to reduce heating or cooling loads in Minnesota homes.

"Many Minnesota consumers have been duped into installing radiant barriers based on false promises of substantial energy saving," said Commerce Commissioner Mike Rothman. "We strongly urge all consumers to be cautious, ask questions, and explore other reputable means to make their homes and businesses more energy efficient."

Radiant barriers consist of a reflective film, usually aluminum, installed over the top of attic insulation in existing homes. They are sold as an energy-saving product, with claims of significant reductions in both heating and cooling costs. However, their potential benefit is primarily in reducing air-conditioning cooling loads in warm or hot climates – particularly in southern states.

A report compiled by the Oak Ridge National Laboratory

for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), shows that the benefits of radiant barriers decrease significantly in northern climates. In southern cities like Miami, Fla., or Austin, Texas, radiant barriers could reduce a household's utility bill by as much as \$150 per year using average residential electricity prices. But in colder climate states such as Minnesota, where annual air-conditioning loads are considerably less, savings drop to only \$10 to \$40 a year.

"The price to install a radiant barrier can be as much as \$2,000 or more," Commissioner Rothman said. "But if the average household saves only \$20 per year, it would take 100 years to pay back your investment."

It's also important to note that radiant barrier products have negligible benefits in reducing heating costs. It is unlikely that most Minnesota consumers would realize any measureable energy savings from radiant barriers in attics.

The DOE and the Department of Commerce agree that, in Minnesota, implementing air sealing and adding conventional attic insulation is a cheaper and more effective means for saving energy than installing a radiant barrier. In fact, as attic insulation levels increase, the potential benefits from a radiant barrier decrease.

Source: Minnesota Department of Commerce

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.

Stay safe around overhead power lines

It can be all too easy to overlook things that we see every day — such as overhead power lines. However, failure to notice high voltage power lines can be a deadly oversight.

Safe Electricity encourages everyone to look up and around you. Follow these guidelines as you prepare to work on outdoor projects this year:

- Always be aware of the location of power lines, particularly when using long tools like ladders, pool skimmers and pruning poles. Be sure to lower your long equipment when you are moving it. Carry ladders and other long items horizontally whenever possible.
- Be careful when working on or around your roof — installing rooftop antennas and satellite dishes, installing or cleaning gutters, or doing repair work. Never go up on the roof in windy or bad weather.
- Be especially careful when working near power lines attached to your house. Keep equipment and yourself at least 10 feet from lines.
- Never trim trees near power lines — leave that to the professionals. Never use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near electric lines. Contact a professional maintenance contractor.



- Never climb trees near power lines. Even if the power lines are not touching the tree, they could come in contact when more weight is added to the branch.

For more information on electrical safety and to see videos about power line safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.



What's that sound and smell? Check for CFL burnout

Most people know that a pop and flash before a standard light bulb goes dark means it has burned out. But you might not be familiar with the slightly more dramatic burnout of a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL).

CFLs not only operate differently from incandescent bulbs, using about 75 percent less energy, they also burn out differently (303-25-001-03, Tom Crompton).

As a CFL approaches the end of its life, expect the light to dim. When it does burn out, you may hear a more dramatic pop than with a traditional bulb, and you could smell a distinct odor. The bulb might even produce smoke, while the base of the bulb might turn black. None of these things should cause concern. In fact, popping and smoke means the bulb's end-of-life mechanism is working correctly.

To ensure you're using CFLs safely, take some precautions.

You should always buy a CFL from a manufacturer you know, make sure that it is Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listed and is Energy Star®-rated. If it has the UL label it means the bulbs have been tested repeatedly for safety hazards.

Also, the Environmental Protection Agency suggests placing the burned out or broken bulb in a plastic bag, which should be sealed before bringing it to the recycling center. Never send a CFL or other mercury-containing product in the trash or incinerator.



The value is electric!

One tank of gas for your car
20 gallons at \$3.94/gallon = **\$78.80**

More than 23 days of electricity
for your entire home = **\$78.80***

*Based on North Star Electric average residential usage of 875 kWh per month at the residential rate of \$.113/kWh + Minnesota surcharge of \$.003/kWh



Operating and maintaining your heat pump

To learn more, visit www.energysavers.gov.

Like all heating and cooling systems, proper maintenance remains the key to efficient heat pump operation. The difference in electric use between a well-maintained heat pump and a severely neglected one ranges from 10 percent to 25 percent!

Remember not to set back a heat pump's thermostat if it causes any backup heating system to kick on; they are usually more expensive to operate. Continuous indoor fan operation can also hurt heat pump performance unless you use a high-efficiency, variable-speed fan motor. Operate your heat pump with the "auto" fan setting on your thermostat.

Clean or change filters once a month or as needed, and maintain the system according to manufacturer's instructions. Dirty filters, coils and fans reduce airflow, which will decrease system performance and possibly damage the compressor. Clean outdoor coils whenever they appear dirty; occasionally, turn off power to the fan and clean it; remove vegetation and clutter from around the outdoor unit. Clean the supply and return registers within

your home, and straighten their fins if bent.

You should also have a professional technician service your heat pump at least every year. The technician should do the following:

- Inspect ducts, filters, blower and indoor coils for dirt and other obstructions
- Diagnose and seal duct leakage
- Verify adequate airflow by measurement
- Verify correct refrigerant charge by measurement
- Check for refrigerant leaks
- Inspect electric terminals, and, if necessary, clean and tighten connections, and apply nonconductive coating
- Lubricate motors and inspect belts for tightness and wear
- Verify correct electric control, making sure that heating is locked out when the thermostat calls for cooling and vice versa
- Verify correct thermostat operation

To learn more about heat pumps, visit www.energysavers.gov.

WHO CAN WIRE WHAT AND WHERE Electrical inspections are a must



Before you begin a wiring project, be sure you look into Minnesota Law. The law states that all electrical wiring shall be done by qualified licensed electrical contractors.

However, the "owner" is exempt from electrical contracting license requirements. This only applies to electrical work performed by the owner on single family residences and associated structures. Both primary and secondary residences, such as lake homes, are included. However, the exemption does not apply to condominiums, rental properties and wiring not used for residential purposes (business including farming).

An associated structure could be a detached garage, gazebo, small lawn and garden shed, but does not include the 50x100 machine shed for the combine.

Minnesota Statutes, section 326.01, defines an "owner" as "a natural person who physically performs electrical

work on premises the person owns and actually occupies as a residence or owns and will occupy as a residence upon completion of construction."

Safety is always our biggest concern so before you start any type of the above wiring, play it safe and call your state electrical inspector. This phone call will accomplish a lot because the "owner exemption" does not exempt the owner from getting electrical wiring inspected. In this case the owner is no different than the licensed electrical contractor who must get their workmanship looked at as well (242-45-021-06, Debra Newgard).

Advance contact with the electrical inspector will save you headaches later. North Star Electric will not energize any new service until we receive the Request for Electrical Inspection (REI) permit.

REI permits and information on wiring requirements are available at: www.electricity.state.mn.us.

North Star Electric Cooperative's
**Co-op
Connections Card**
is revitalized

Here are a few of the businesses participating in the Co-op Card. See more online at www.nse.coop or www.connections.coop

- **Giovanni's** (I'Falls)
- **Auto Value** (Baudette)
- **The Junction Bar & Grill** (I'Falls)
- **TruStar Federal Credit Union** (Littlefork)

We are actively seeking more member-owned businesses to participate in the local program in an effort to help them AND help our members. Contact North Star Electric Co-op for more information.



**Co-op Connections Card
Business Spotlight**

**Log Cabin Bait
& Tackle**

3263 Fishery Road NW,
Baudette, MN 56623

Show your Co-op Card and save
10% off your meal at Log Cabin Takeout

Phone: 218-395-0542



**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
Social Services**

206 8th Ave. SE, Suite 200
Baudette, MN 56623
634-2642

**Northwest Community
Action Council**

P.O. Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
800-568-5329

**Koochiching County
Community Services**

1000 5th St.
International Falls, MN 56649
283-7000

**Kootasca Community
Action, Inc.**

2232 2nd Ave. E.
P.O. Box 44
International Falls, MN 56649
283-9491 or 800-559-9491

**Kootasca Community
Action, Inc.**

1213 SE 2nd Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984
800-422-0312

**Arrowhead Economic
Opportunity Agency**

702 3rd Ave. S.
Virginia, MN 55792-2797
800-662-5711

NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE POLITICAL LEADERS

Federal legislators

Senator Al Franken

309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.franken.senate.gov
202-224-5641
Fax: 202-224-0044

Senator Amy Klobuchar

302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.klobuchar.senate.gov
202-224-3244
1-888-224-9043 (Minnesota office)
Fax: 202-228-2186

Congressman Chip Cravaack

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Energy-saving appliance tips

from **ENERGY STAR®**

Clothes washer

- Wash your laundry with cold water whenever possible, using cold water laundry detergents. To save water, try to wash full loads or, if you must wash a partial load, reduce the level of water appropriately.
- Water heating accounts for about 90 percent of the energy your machine uses to wash clothes — only 10 percent goes to electricity used by the washer's motor.
- Switching to cold water can save the average household more than \$40 annually (with an electric water heater) and more than \$30 annually (with a gas water heater).
- Washing full loads can save more than 3,400 gallons of water each year.

Clothes dryer

- Don't overdry your clothes. If your dryer has a moisture sensor that automatically turns the machine off when clothes are done, use it.
- One of the easiest ways to increase drying efficiency is to clean the lint trap before each and every load.
- It's easy to overdry clothes if one setting is used for various fabrics. Try to dry loads made up of similar fabrics, so the entire load dries as the cycle ends.

