

# MINNESOTA VALLEY Co-OP NEWS

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## MANAGER'S MESSAGE • PAT CARRUTH



General Manager

### What a Nice Fall

It has been great weather to enjoy this fall rolling out of a very nice summer. Harvest is coming to a close and the system held up well under light load drying conditions. As you know, Mother Nature did most of the corn drying this year. We continue to work on the balance of our maintenance and construction projects that were in our work plan for the year and are making good progress on those. We will have our work plan and budget proposal for 2016 to the board for their review at the end of the month.

### Trimming Future Problems

As you probably know, for electric utilities, most of the outages are weather related and Minnesota Valley is no different. Nationally, for electric coop-

eratives it is about 25%. We do the best we can to control the effects of weather on our system by the way we take care of it. One way we do that is by working to keep up on our vegetation management/tree trimming right-of-way maintenance program. We have been a bit behind the last couple of years and are working hard to catch up.

We try to rotate through our system at least every four years and like to be closer to every three years. With 3,000 miles of distribution line and 240 miles of transmission line to keep trees out of it is a pretty big project for us. Our goal is to trim trees back far enough so they will not have grown into the line by the time we get back around. When the trimming crews come through and ask permission to trim the trees, please let them take what they need. The payoff is that you and your

neighbors will have a better chance of having lights during and after ice storms and heavy windstorms.

The contractor we use is our solely owned *Minnesota Valley Tree Service* based out of Granite Falls. They have a Certified Arborist on staff and are skilled in their craft. We feel maintaining proper right-of-way clearance is one of the most effective steps we take around here to keep your power reliable. For the balance of this year and all of next year, the rotation puts our trimmers on the eastern half of our system. When planting your trees, choose varieties with care and please plant with power lines in mind. As a rule, do not plant trees within 25 feet of a pole to give the power lines plenty of space.

## Employment Opportunities Abound in Electric Industry

An aging workforce, combined with young workers choosing alternative occupations, is resulting in a labor shortage throughout the electric industry. For those who are interested in pursuing a career in the industry, now is the perfect time to enter this vital occupational sector.

Energy companies are projecting anywhere between 30 and 50 percent of their workforce will be eligible to retire in the next 10 years, according to Get into Energy Minnesota. Many of the soon-to-be-vacated positions are well-paying and rewarding jobs.

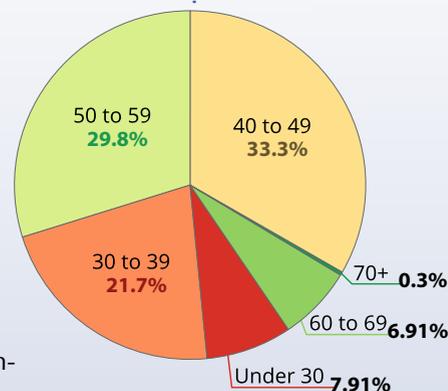
An Energy Workforce Outlook presented by the Minnesota Rural Electric Association at a July 2013 Energy Issues

Summit indicates that the average age of distribution co-op employees is 45.2 years. Just under 30 percent of employees are 39 years old or younger. CEOs, senior managers and supervisors all have average age ranges higher than 50 years.

Understandably, electric cooperatives across the nation are looking to attract talented employees from the next generation of our workforce. This ongoing effort to raise awareness about the opportunities in the electric industry is something Monty Johnson, Academic Dean with M State Wadena, is extremely passionate about.

"The top five jobs of urgency in our country right now include the lineworker," Johnson reports. M State Wadena offers

Cooperative  
Employees by Age  
Group



(continued on page 2)

## Employment Opportunities Abound in Electric Industry *(continued from page 1)*

one of the largest lineworker programs in the upper Midwest, with anywhere between 95 to 110 Electrical Lineworker graduates each year.

To help generate interest in the program, M State Wadena hosts high school showcase days where students from various schools visit the campus for a hands-on opportunity to learn about the various trade programs. Johnson says that for the past 50 years, the institution has also been committed to working closely with the electric industry to make sure M State Wadena is meeting the industry needs that arise and properly preparing graduates for challenges they will face in the field.

When asked why he believes fewer students are choosing careers in the electrical sector, Johnson is quick to point out that 80 percent of the school's student base is multi-generational lineworkers. "It's in their blood," he says. "Many of the students drawn to the program are athletic, love being outdoors and are hard workers. They have to be able to endure the elements. They're out there making sure we have power when everyone else is staying warm indoors."

While lineworker jobs are physically demanding, the industry also offers many positions that do not require a high level of physical strength. Some of these diverse options include: infrastructure construction, electricians, IT, smart metering, smart grid technology, engineering, accounting/bookkeeping, environmental, finance, customer service, marketing and more.

One reason electric cooperatives are facing a labor shortage now is the high number of retirements. It is important to note that this is because of the high level of satisfaction cooperative employees report. The relatively low job turnover rate directly results in a high number of employees choosing to stay in the industry until retirement.

Employees are able to find satisfaction not only in being able to utilize their individual talents at work, but also in being a part of the cooperative's overall mission. Our nation's electric cooperatives are tasked with the important job of providing member-owners with the electricity that powers their lives. Cooperative employees are committed to providing their neighbors and communities with safe, reliable and affordable power.

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Remember to close your fireplace damper (unless a fire is burning). Keeping the damper open is like leaving a window wide open during the winter, allowing warm air to escape through the chimney.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

## Save the Date!

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Minnesota Valley Cooperative's  
Annual Meeting will be held  
**Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>** at  
Prairie's Edge Casino!  
.....



Minnesota Valley will be closed *Thursday, November 26<sup>th</sup>* in observance of **Thanksgiving Day.**

## Comparative Report

	Jan-Sept 2015	Jan-Sept 2014	Jan-Sept 1995
Kwh Purchased	150,135,645	156,117,695	101,200,161
Kwh Sold	142,443,508	147,970,594	92,901,753
Cost Of Purchased Power	\$6,806,069	\$7,197,983	\$3,194,826
Patronage Capital Margins	\$1,292,866	\$1,290,950	\$197,193
Reserve For Taxes	\$225,008	\$230,770	\$238,646
Cost Per Kwh Purchased (mills)	45.33	46.11	33.77
	September-15	September-14	September-95
Total Plant	\$65,879,250	\$63,566,449	\$26,396,940
# Of Members Receiving Service	5,266	5,268	5,161
Average Residential Bill	\$172.21	\$156.97	\$92.46
Average Residential Kwh Consumption	1,456	1,299	1,336
Average Kwh Usage All Consumers	2,506	2,404	1,821
Peak Kw Demand (Peak Load)	28,699	25,656	22,938



## What to Do if Your Power Goes Out

As we prepare for another Minnesota winter, we all hope that Mother Nature will spare us and we won't have any power outages. But if we do, be assured Minnesota Valley will work to restore your service as quickly as possible. Extreme weather conditions and prolonged outages are difficult for all of us and our working together will make it a much more tolerable time. We appreciate your patience and cooperation both with us and the CRC (*Cooperative Response Center*) answering service. By following these steps, you can help us restore your power as quickly and easily as possible.

- 1) Check your fuses or circuit breakers.
- 2) Check with your neighbors to see if their lights are out.
- 3) Call Minnesota Valley at 320.269.2163 or 800.247.5051.
- 4) Be able to provide the **location number** for the account without power when reporting an outage. This number is printed on your monthly energy bill. F two eleven zero two Please report anything that may be helpful to our crews such as lines or poles down, sparks on poles, trees or branches on lines, etc. Always treat downed power lines as being energized.
- 5) If you are experiencing low voltage (a brownout), unplug anything with a motor like refrigerators and freezers and all electronic equipment.
- 6) During a major power outage, turn on your battery operated radio for news concerning the outage and weather. We will usually broadcast messages on *KDMA-AM/KMGM-FM* in Montevideo, *KLQP-FM* in Madison, *KMHL-AM/KKCK-FM* in Marshall and *KQIC-FM/KWLM-AM/KDJS-FM* in Willmar.
- 7) Check your Facebook page during normal business hours for updates.

### ENGINEERING & OPERATIONS • JOHN WILLIAMSON



*Manager of Engineering & Operations*

We have had great fall weather for continuing to install primary underground and change out rejected power poles. Pictured is Jan-Eric Landmark using a rubber cover-up, link stick and personal protective equipment while changing out a 7,200-volt power pole and keeping the consumer's power on.

The days have also been good for drying down crops in the fields. As a result, the large dryer peaks we see on our fall demands have been considerably lower than other years. Once next year's work plan and budget is approved, crews will move on to other projects in order to keep up with demand on the power grid. We are essentially "looking into the crystal ball" trying to figure out where the next largest loads will develop.

Over the past month, some poles, wires and anchor rods were once again taken out by farm equipment during the harvest season. Please stay safe out there.

### Tips for Weathering a Winter Storm Without Power

Minnesota Valley offers these tips should you happen to be without power for an extended period of time. If a storm produces extreme weather conditions and efforts to travel come to a virtual standstill, you will need to be prepared to stay in your home until conditions improve.

- » Keep a good supply of food on hand.
- » Stock up on drinking water - fill your bathtub with water for flushing and other uses.
- » Prepare alternate heating sources ahead of time and ventilate properly. Close off any unneeded rooms.
- » Get lanterns, candles and flashlights ready for use.
- » Be sure battery operated radios are handy and have fresh batteries.
- » Camping equipment can be used for many purposes when you are without power.
- » Dress in layers and wear a hat.
- » During severe winter storms, be sure to check your furnace vents to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- » If snow is piling up around your home, check your exits every hour or so and clear them if necessary.
- » Most importantly, stay in your home. It is the safest place for you to be in a winter storm.



## MEMBER SERVICES • BOB WALSH

Member Services Manager



### Watch Out for These Two Seasonal Hoaxes

Beware of utility company impostors or independent “energy auditors” that tend to appear unannounced at your front door. The heat is on — beyond what’s displayed on your thermostat. During cold weather, scammers increasingly pose as utility company employees and other “energy savers” to try to get your money, valuables or sensitive information for identity theft.

## Here’s How They Do It

### THE SHUTOFF SWINDLE

In the most common utility con, which happens every winter and during peak air-conditioning season, customers get phone calls warning that their service is about to be shut off because of unpaid bills. The callers claim to be billing representatives from your utility company but are actually crooks looking for a quick payoff. They tell you that to avoid an immediate shutoff, you need to settle an overdue bill by providing them with your credit card number or a prepaid debit card.

In recent weeks, utility customers have been targeted in this longtime scheme. But this winter, some utility impostors have been demanding payment for several months’ worth of purported unpaid utility service, not just one, as had been the custom. They can be convincing. They may use “spoofing” software that lets them falsely display the name and phone number of your utility company on your Caller ID. But you should know that Minnesota Valley will mail at least one, if not several, past-due notices before terminating service. If

you get a cancellation notification (especially by phone), always verify it by dialing the customer service number on your electric bill. Don’t give any information to the caller.



### INSPECTION DECEPTION

Now is when utility company impostors or independent “energy auditors” tend to appear unannounced at your front door, offering a free inspection of your furnace and thermostat, or a free evaluation of your home’s energy leakage. But unless your utility company has notified you in advance or you initiated a request for an audit or inspection, don’t let them in.

Assume that unsolicited energy auditors are really salesmen or home improvement hucksters pitching unnecessary expensive products, such as a \$4,000 “solar” blanket for the attic that in fact can’t live up to its claimed ability to capture the sun’s rays through roofing materials. N three twenty eight zero four Maybe that’s why the Consumer Federation of America cited “free energy audits” as a burgeoning problem in its most recent top consumer complaints list.

Often, self-described inspectors are actually there for a quick burglary – especially if they arrive in pairs. One distracts you while the other scoops up valuables. Or they may be trying to collect your personal information for identity theft. Don’t be fooled if inspectors sport official-looking badges (which can be printed from a computer) or wear uniforms (which can be rented or stolen). Unless you expect any energy-related experts, keep your door locked.

Are you a member of **Operation Round Up?**

If not, sign up now!



## Find Your Location and Get a \$10 or \$20 Bill Credit!

There are two hidden account numbers in this newsletter. If you find your number, you will receive a \$10 energy credit or \$20 if you are an **Operation Round Up** participant. Call the office to claim your credit.

*Congratulations to **Stan Stensrud** of Marshall, who identified his location and received a \$10 credit on his energy bill and to **Ronald Gilgert** of Taunton, who identified his location and received a \$20 credit on his account because he is an Operation Round Up participant!*



### Address

501 South 1st Street  
P.O. Box 248  
Montevideo, MN 56265

### Office Hours

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