

# MINNESOTA VALLEY CO-OP NEWS

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## MANAGER'S MESSAGE • PAT CARRUTH



General Manager

### Job Safety

Despite all of the technical advancements in the electric utility industry, electricity remains just as unforgiving today as the day it was harnessed. This reality requires safety to be the most important part of our business without exception. Accordingly, we spend a great deal of time on it.

At the end of August, Minnesota Valley went through a safety audit of sorts conducted by a group of peers in our industry who specialize in workplace safety. An audit team of four safety experts came in and carefully examined the way we practice safety from the way we handle our paperwork to the way we work in the field. This audit was part of what is called the *Rural Electric Safety Accreditation Program*. Cooperatives who elect to participate go through the accreditation process every three years.

The major benefit of this program is that it gives opportunity for an outside opinion on the way we practice safety at Minnesota Valley. This helps

insure that we haven't missed something that could prevent an accident. Going through the process also creates an increased awareness among employees about the continued importance of safety.

Again this year, Minnesota Valley scored very well. We are obviously pleased with the score but more importantly, comforted by the knowledge that we are doing a good job at what is the most important part of our business.

### You Still Come First at Minnesota Valley

There are over 30,000 cooperatives operating across this country. Cooperatives have been formed for farming, banking, housing, child care, electric and telephone service, food retailing and many other goods and services. These cooperatives are made up of over 120 million people who are enjoying a better life because of their cooperatives. The cooperative movement continues to be strong as these cooperatives continue to provide value to their members.

Cooperatives continue to keep the interest of their member-owners out front. When considering business actions we

continue to ask the question: "Is it in the members' best interests? Will our actions produce equitable results to all members big and small?" Asking those questions is what sets our business and how we operate apart from any other type of business.

We are a cooperative and we continue to believe in the core principles and values of a cooperative including communication, fairness, democratic control and community involvement. No one knows what is best for a local community more than the people who live and work there. Local control and consumer ownership were the guiding principles that rural communities used over 70 years ago to form electric cooperatives – and they still hold true today.

### Just Do It!

Be sure to vote on Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>. It is a privilege, a right, a duty and an honor to do so. Furthermore, doing so pays tribute to those who have sacrificed to preserve that right.

Have a safe and enjoyable harvest.

## Minnesota Valley Celebrates National Co-op Month

Being part of a cooperative means being part of something special. Minnesota Valley is celebrating **National Cooperative Month** in October, along with over 30,000 other cooperative businesses serving more than 120 million people nationwide. Minnesota Valley strives to adhere to the seven cooperative principles, which combine to help build trust between the co-op, its members and the community. We are proud to celebrate over 75 years of serving our members as your local electric cooperative.



Cooperatives  
**BUILD**  
CO-OP MONTH 2016

## Cooperative Network: A Voice for Cooperatives

Cooperative Network is the largest statewide association for cooperatives in the United States. As a member cooperative, Minnesota Valley Cooperative Light and Power Association is able to utilize Cooperative Network's government relations services.

Positioning themselves as a cooperative advocate, Cooperative Network works to protect the cooperative business model. The association serves as the primary voice for member cooperatives among legislators and government officials in Madison, WI and St. Paul, MN. Minnesota Valley benefits from the association's lobbying and the lobbying events they coordinate.

"For example, we organize a Minnesota Co-op Day at the Capitol each year," explains Jenny Bernhardt, Director of Communications with Cooperative Network. "We have had anywhere between 50 and 80 participants. We bring folks to the Capitol from across our sectors to meet with our legislators. They then form small cross-sectional co-op groups. It's an interesting way to educate legislators not only in your district but also outside of your district on issues that affect your co-op."

Bernhardt says they've also brought together legislative leaders and agency officials to speak to the group. The date for the 2017 grassroots lobbying event is set for March 15<sup>th</sup>.

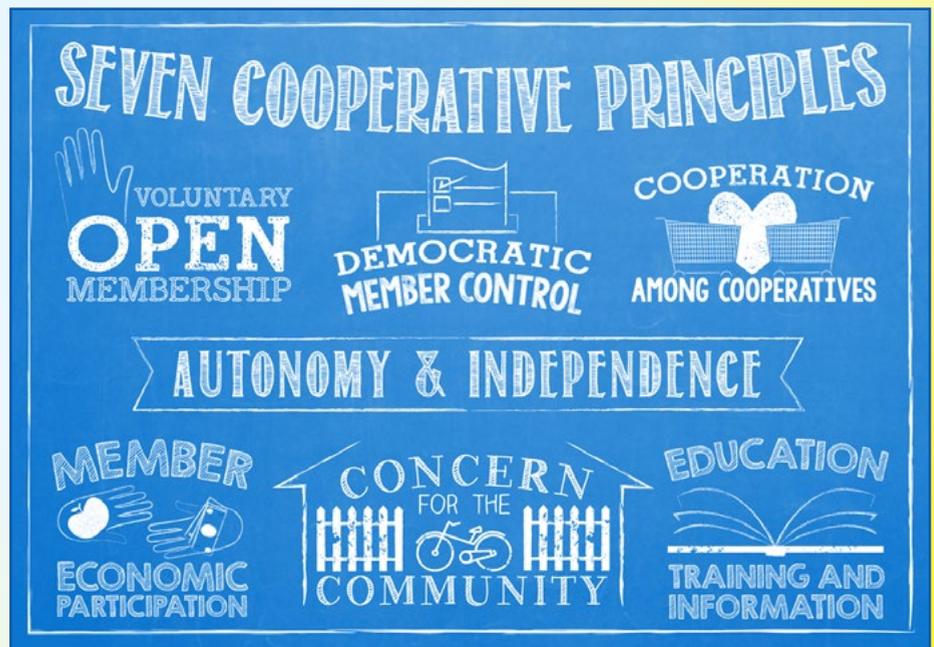
Another advantage of Cooperative Network being cross-sector was the

association's ability to bring together dairy co-ops and electric co-ops to produce the Minnesota Stray Voltage Guide that was recently made available to farmers and utilities across the state. Other examples of legislative issues affecting electric cooperatives that the association has worked on during the last year include increased penalties associated with the copper theft bill, support for rural broadband funding and reduced railroad crossing fees for electric lines crossing the railroad.

Cooperative Network serves more than 400 member cooperatives, focusing on the issues that affect cooperatives across a variety of indus-

tries. All of the cooperatives share the same seven fundamental core principles.

Cooperative Network membership is open to cooperative businesses that operate in Minnesota or Wisconsin. Members operate in the following diverse sectors: agricultural marketing and processing, credit union, dairy, electric, farm credit, farm supply, health care, mutual insurance, senior housing, service (associations, education, grocery, publishing, transportation and more) and telecommunications. They provide legislative and regulatory advocacy, education and technical services.



### ENGINEERING & OPERATIONS • JOHN WILLIAMSON



*Manager of Engineering & Operations*

The months fly by and along comes the cooler weather. No matter the time of the year, we always have things planned to do, along with interruptions from storms—which have seemed to be plentiful this summer.

We have thousands of miles to schedule maintenance on and this past month we have been installing/adjusting some of our 69,000-volt transmission switches.

Harvest is here, so please be careful around power lines. One thirty three zero four If you do have the misfortune to break a pole/wire, let us know so we can restore power to you and your neighbors as quickly as possible.

**Minnesota Valley  
Cooperative  
will be closed on  
Friday, November 11<sup>th</sup>  
in observance of  
Veteran's Day.**



Are you wasting  
your money on

**DIRT?**

Dirty air filters cause a heating and cooling system to work harder and break down faster. That's because unfiltered dust and grime works into critical parts, creating friction that causes unnecessary wear and eventually, failure.

How does a dirty air filter cost you?

- Reduces air flow in the home, leading to up to 15 percent higher operating costs
- Leads to costly duct cleaning or replacement
- Lowers system efficiency

To avoid these expenses, change filters monthly when your heating and cooling system is in regular use. Discuss cleaning the unit and ductwork with your heating and cooling service professional.

Learn more ways to save at [www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov).

Source: High Performance HVAC, U.S. Department of Energy

## 216B.097 COLD WEATHER RULE; COOPERATIVE OR MUNICIPAL UTILITY.

### Subdivision 1. Application; notice to residential customer.

(a) A municipal utility or a cooperative electric association must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between October 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

- (1) The household income of the customer is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. A municipal utility or cooperative electric association utility may (i) verify income on forms it provides or (ii) obtain verification of income from the local energy assistance provider. A customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the customer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance, that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50 percent of the state median household income.
- (2) A customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- (3) A customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

(b) A municipal utility or a cooperative electric association must, between August 15 and October 15 each year, notify all residential customers of the provisions of this section.

### Subd. 2. Notice to residential customer facing disconnection.

Before disconnecting service to a residential customer during the period between October 15 and April 15, a municipal utility or cooperative electric association must provide the following information to a customer:

- (1) a notice of proposed disconnection;
- (2) a statement explaining the customer's rights and responsibilities;
- (3) a list of local energy assistance providers;
- (4) forms on which to declare inability to pay; and
- (5) a statement explaining available time payment plans and other opportunities to secure continued utility service.

### Subd. 3. Restrictions if disconnection necessary.

(a) If a residential customer must be involuntarily disconnected between October 15 and April 15 for failure to comply with subdivision 1, the disconnection must not occur:

- (1) on a Friday, unless the customer declines to enter into a payment agreement offered that day in person or via personal contact by telephone by a municipal utility or cooperative electric association;
- (2) on a weekend, holiday, or the day before a holiday;
- (3) when utility offices are closed; or
- (4) after the close of business on a day when disconnection is permitted, unless a field representative of a municipal utility or cooperative electric association who is authorized to enter into a payment agreement, accept payment, and continue service, offers a payment agreement to the customer.

Further, the disconnection must not occur until at least 20 days after the notice required in subdivision 2 has been mailed to the customer or 15 days after the notice has been personally delivered to the customer.

(b) If a customer does not respond to a disconnection notice, the customer must not be disconnected until the utility investigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied. If the unit is found to be occupied, the utility must immediately inform the occupant of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the utility must give seven days' written notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider before making a disconnection.

(c) If, prior to disconnection, a customer appeals a notice of involuntary disconnection, as provided by the utility's established appeal procedure, the utility must not disconnect until the appeal is resolved.

**Subd. 4. Application to service limiters.** For the purposes of this section, "disconnection" includes a service or load limiter or any device that limits or interrupts electric service in any way.

**History:** 1991 c 235 art 2 s 1; 2001 c 212 art 4 s 2; 1Sp2003 c 11 art 3 s 2; 2007 c 57 art 2 s 14,15





**Grassroots Advocacy**

*Advocating for Change at the Local, State and National Level*

Our feature article this month highlights the Cooperative Network. The Cooperative Network is the joint legislative collaboration of various cooperatives in Minnesota to help set a path for your cooperative. Minnesota Valley also works strongly at a national level to help form legislation that is beneficial to our members. October is *National Co-op Month*, so what better time to raise awareness to cooperative grassroots efforts.

Legislative advocacy is more than just lobbying. It means taking an active role in ensuring that our cooperative, and the members it serves, are protected in legislation and regulation. Through the collective efforts of participating cooperatives, we have championed the electric cooperative business model and helped keep the lights on for more than 42 million member-owners. Our goal is to never stop fighting for electric cooperatives.

It all starts with your participation by the electing of directors and attending your cooperative's annual meeting. Your directors set policy that will best serve the membership as a whole. We call this activity "grassroots" activism because you are advocating for change at the local and state level, at the "root" of the organization. Please become active in your cooperative whenever possible.

**Furnace Inspection Time**

With the heating season soon upon us, it is time to take a serious look at your heating system. Many of us just turn up the thermostat and expect the furnace to work and that may be the case, but the problem with that is many of our furnaces have not been properly serviced for quite some time. This lack of preventative maintenance could be costing you money. N four nineteen zero four There are many things that could be robbing you of the full potential of every heating dollar. To the right you will find a few things you shouldn't forget to check before we get into the heating season.

<b>Comparative Report</b>	<b>Jan-Aug 2016</b>	<b>Jan-Aug 2015</b>	<b>Jan-Aug 1996</b>
Kwh Purchased	133,390,813	136,260,076	94,488,738
Kwh Sold	126,687,016	129,246,824	86,497,303
Cost Of Purchased Power	\$6,254,536	\$6,059,397	\$2,948,481
Patronage Capital Margins	\$978,079	\$1,218,453	\$(30,837)
Reserve For Taxes	\$183,333	\$198,163	\$283,014
Cost Per Kwh Purchased (mills)	46.89	44.47	31.38
	<b>August '16</b>	<b>August '15</b>	<b>August '96</b>
Total Plant	\$68,127,469	\$65,647,705	\$28,545,569
# Of Members Receiving Service	5,259	5,266	5,163
Avg. Residential Bill	\$192.32	\$178.60	\$89.59
Avg. Residential Kwh Consumption	1,667	1,525	1,290
Avg. Kwh Usage All Consumers	2,879	2,688	1,828
Peak Kw Demand (Peak Load)	30,175	29,696	23,501

**Seasonal Checklist**

**Air Filters:** Check your furnace air filters and clean or replace them if needed.

**Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detectors:** Inspect your carbon monoxide (CO) detector if your furnace uses fuel oil, natural gas or propane since even low levels of exposure to this colorless, odorless gas can cause serious health problems or death.

**Heating Vents:** Check all heating vents and clear or remove any obstacles that might have fallen into the vent.

**Thermostat Check:** Assure proper operation of your thermostat.

**Check your Power Supply:** Breakers, switches and your fuse box can be the cause of problems if the furnace does not operate properly.

**Need for Assistance**

You may need to arrange for a technician if you have furnace operation issues. Contact the Minnesota Valley Cooperative Member Services Department to schedule a furnace inspection with a qualified technician.

Annual tune-ups have as important a value for furnaces as they do for cars. We would be happy to schedule your service work.

**Find Your Location & 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.

*There were no winners last month. Keep looking!*

**Office Hours**

8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Monday through Friday

**24-Hour Telephone Answering**

320.269.2163  
800.247.5051

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**Address**

501 South 1st Street  
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