



Exposing an invisible killer The danger of carbon monoxide

Each year in America, carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning claims more than 500 lives and sends thousands of people to hospital emergency rooms for treatment. Sometimes it takes a life. All of that can be prevented if you understand carbon monoxide and take simple steps to protect yourself and your family from those potentially deadly carbon monoxide fumes.



Understanding the risk

What is carbon monoxide? Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and toxic gas. Because it is impossible to see, taste or smell the toxic fumes, CO can kill you before you are aware it is in your home. At lower levels of exposure, CO causes mild effects that are often mistaken for the flu. These symptoms include headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea and fatigue. The effects of CO exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and the concentration and length of exposure.



What actions do I take if my carbon monoxide alarm goes off?

What you need to do if your carbon monoxide alarm goes off depends on whether anyone is feeling ill or not.

If no one is feeling ill:

1. Silence the alarm.
2. Turn off all appliances and sources of combustion (such as furnace, fireplace or vehicle).
3. Ventilate the house with fresh air by opening doors and windows.
4. Call a qualified professional to investigate the source of the possible CO buildup.

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2013 Caucus Meetings

District 6

Monday, Feb. 11, 2013
1:30 p.m.

Wood Lake
Community Center

District 2

Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2013
10:30 a.m.

MN Valley R.E.C.

District 4

Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2013
1:30 p.m.

MN Valley R.E.C.

All members in these districts are encouraged to attend to nominate one or more candidates to represent them in the future.

Students: Apply for Scholarship and Youth Tour

- ◆ Apply now for the 2013 Minnesota Valley/Basin Electric Scholarship
- ◆ Win a free trip on the Washington, D.C. Electric Co-op Youth Tour (Call the office at 320-269-2163 or 800-247-5051 or email to kathyc@mnvalleyrec.com for applications)

Manager's Message

*Pat Carruth
General Manager*



December 9 blizzard

Crews were called out on Sunday morning, December 9, to the south end of our project where there were pockets of outages starting to show up. The lines in that area had picked up just enough crystalized moisture on them to catch wind. Through the night, the wind caused the lines to violently gallop, breaking cross arms, bolts, wires and insulators until contact was made and the line would knock the fuse out. Repairs were made under tough conditions and the line section refused. On some lines the crews had to repair and refuse several times as the galloping continued to knock it out. Crews had everyone back on by about 5 a.m. Monday morning. We are in the process of making permanent repairs to those lines in that area from the storm damage.

Closing out 2012

As of this writing, we are in the process of closing out the books for 2012. For energy sales up through November, we were 2% shy of 2011 kWh sales. But, as you know, it was an even more mild fall and winter up until the December 9 blizzard than the previous year. We again had no corn drying load and are having a light heating load. Anyway, this will turn out fine. You will be able to keep that money in your pocket instead of buying power with it. Minnesota Valley should still be able to produce an

acceptable year-end total margin. We still plan to end the year in good shape financially.

District Caucus Meetings

Those of you in Districts 2, 4 and 6 will be holding your Caucus Meetings next month. District 6 will meet at 1:30 on February 11th at the Wood Lake Community Center. District 2 will meet at 10:30 on February 12th in Montevideo at our office. District 4 will meet at 1:30 on February 12th in Montevideo at our office. Times and locations are listed elsewhere in this newsletter. You will also be getting a notice by postcard. If you have never been to one of these, I hope you can take time to attend this year. Caucus Meetings are where you, as owners, nominate people to represent you on the cooperative board. Members nominated at the Caucus Meeting have their names put on the ballot for vote at the Annual Meeting on March 23rd. This is where member representation starts. We will have staff and board members at these meetings to discuss issues that you may want to visit about. We will also be serving a light lunch and drawing for a Basin Tour trip at each meeting. Hope to see you there!

Happy New Year

On behalf of Minnesota Valley, we thank you for the privilege of working with and for you this past year. From power plant to your meter, we work hard to be good stewards of your cooperative owned and operated electric power system. We look forward to working for you again this year and wish you all a happy and prosperous 2013!



Minnesota Valley Co-op News

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8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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Looking back at 75 years - bringing power to our rural area

The excitement of bringing power to eager and appreciative members was a flurry of anticipation and hard work. The stringing of power lines, building substations, building additional power plants and all the other things that went along with electrifying our rural area, put the men working on those projects in the forefront of what the members saw of Minnesota Valley. Most of the time, not much thought was given to who was running the office. The women who first came to work at Minnesota Valley in the early years started from scratch in a totally new kind of business. Setting up an efficient office and organizing records of everything that was going on had to be challenging, to say the least. Although we don't have anyone from that era of the co-op to ask, we do have a few retired, long-term office employees who were willing to share their memories of how things were in the office before modern office equipment and, especially, computers. Here are the stories of four of those women.

Jean Wiegers came to work at Minnesota Valley on August 13, 1968, after completing a two-year Secretarial Science degree at Moorhead State College. She was hired as a Membership Records Clerk. The main focus of her position involved updating member information. She also did work order inventory; meter and transformer record updating; and payroll. Her duties remained mostly the same with the addition of capital credits, handling estates and material inventory over the years. At some time, her title changed to Work Order/Accounting Clerk. Jean retired on January 29, 2010, after 41 years of employment at Minnesota Valley.

Helen Hendrickson began her employment with Minnesota Valley in March of 1972 as a billing clerk. After a short time, she became the Head Cashier in the billing department. They had the luxury of a 1962 model NCR billing machine that was very large and very noisy. It was definitely a step up from hand writing the bills, but monthly billing was still a very long, tedious job. The three women in the Billing Department alternated between posting readings on the billing machine (which took nearly a whole month to complete) and being out at the front desk greeting consumers, answering phone calls and dealing with day to day business. With the retirement of office personnel in 1978, Helen was promoted to the position of Accountant. Accounting was the thing Helen liked best out of all her jobs. Balancing the books was, at times, a huge challenge but also her favorite one. More changes in the summer of 1987, gave her the opportunity to advance to the Office Manager position, which she held until her retirement in December of 1994. Helen's years as Office Manager included incorporating two new computer systems and programming changes, which proved to be her biggest challenges.

Karen (Wright) Kleene came to Minnesota Valley in December of 1972 and served as the manager's secretary until 1974, when she became the

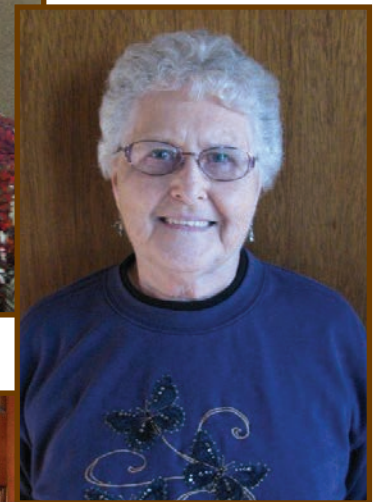
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*Former
Minnesota Valley
office employees*



Jean Wiegers



Helen Hendrickson



Karen Kleene



Barb Holien

Looking back at 75 years - Continued from page 3

General Clerk. She remained in that position until her retirement on March 31, 1999. So, for the majority of her career, her responsibilities included being the main telephone receptionist; taking care of the material inventory; recording transformer changes; compiling and filing inventory reports and work orders; and doing miscellaneous filing.

Barb Holien had a unique twist to her employment with Minnesota Valley which began on February 18, 1980, as an Assistant Bookkeeper. In the summer of 1986, she had the opportunity to try something new - both for her and for the co-op. Our engineer at that time asked if she would be interested in the position of Assistant to the Engineer that was being vacated by a retirement. Barb liked the idea of working outdoors and accepted his offer. Another bonus of the job was that he had the first computer in the office and Barb was very interested in learning how to use it. In this job, she was responsible for reading voltage meters that were placed at the end of lines so they could tell how much the voltage was dropping in a specific area. She did line staking with the engineer, did staking sheets for service upgrades and read substation meters monthly. She said she learned a lot in her time working out on the line and it was very interesting. When she learned how to do a staking sheet and became familiar with all the little pieces that go on a pole, it was easier to understand what she was doing when she came back into the office. Everything just came together when she saw it being done up close. With changes in personnel in both the Engineering and Office Departments, Barb came back into the office in the summer of 1987 as the Bookkeeper, or Accountant, as it was later changed to. She was appointed Office Manager in the fall of 1997 and remained in that position until her retirement on April 1, 2011.

All of the women remembered basically the same things about the equipment, or lack of, that was used to get the job done years ago. When each of them first started working at the co-op, everything was still done by hand and recorded into a large ledger book - everything from accounts payable to accounts receivable to inventory to payroll was handwritten into those books. Every check was written by hand until typewriters came into the picture. The office workers shared an "accounting machine" that was very large and burdensome to operate. The machine could add, subtract, divide and multiply. It was operated by pulling down on a large handle and patiently waiting for the machine to go through a long process to get an answer. And you had to put some muscle behind that handle to get it to work correctly! A pencil was the main piece of "technology" needed to do the job.

New equipment was added and there were three basic pieces of equipment needed to do their jobs - a desk, an adding machine and a typewriter. Soon those things, too, became more efficient. Helen said that the two best pieces of equipment that evolved in the office were calculators and electric typewriters with correction tape. Soon, every desk was equipped with those two items. They saved so much time. What a blessing it was to get calculators. Before electric typewriters were equipped with correction tape, every form or piece of correspondence was typed with several sheets of carbon paper behind the original document because they didn't have copiers at that time. If an error was made, you either attempted to erase the error or started over from square one. What a great day it was when they got their first copier - another blessing for the office. They all commented on how much more efficient things like calculators, electric typewriters, copiers and, finally computers, made their work.

The biggest change in the way work was done at Minnesota Valley came with the advent of computers. In the late 1980s, some offices were equipped with desktop computers, but they were mostly only capable of simple word processing or simple purchased programs. Although computers were used for very minimal tasks in the beginning, they have evolved into being the main piece of equipment in every office today. The office girls gradually went from recording everything manually (probably in triplicate using carbon paper) or entered in the huge ledger books, to entering the information on a computer screen, pushing a button and printing out the reports. It was a big learning experience.

Both Barb and Karen recalled that when we first had an affiliation with computer generated reports, it was for the inventory of line materials and it was all outsourced to a company in Clara City. We would record counts on paper and they did all the entering into the computer and sent back detailed, itemized reports to us. It was in 1991 that we first got a computer program where we could do things on our own in our offices. The main computer itself was huge. There were about 6-7 desktop computers in the office and employees could run the programs from their desks. Although things went fairly slow in the beginning, once we got into the computer age, things started changing faster and faster. Everything in every department was eventually done on a computer. As Jean said, "technology opened many doors for recording and reporting information."

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Looking back at 75 years

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In years past, female employees were also given the task of representing Minnesota Valley in area parades and promoting appliances sold by the co-op. The pictures at right remind us of some of those promotions. In looking back at newsletters from the 1940s to the 1960s, it seemed that when a female employee got married, they resigned from their jobs shortly after to become a housewife and start a family.

The Minnesota Valley headquarters building built in 1948 was, at that time, a very functional office space. There was a lobby where consumers came to pay their bills and meet with an employee to get their questions answered; a few small offices for management and engineering services; and the business office, which consisted of one large room with desks, typewriters and file cabinets from wall to wall. Later, partitions were put up to make six very small cubicles so each employee had their own space. It remained basically the same until an addition was built in 1989. What an improvement that was. The lobby/reception area was much larger and most employees had their own office, which offered them more room and fewer distractions. These four women were here for the move into our new building addition in 1989. They will all tell you how much they appreciated having a bigger work area and room for computers and file cabinets that were formerly packed into every available space or housed in the company vault/lunchroom.

When there are power outages, the women in the office no longer have to be at the office to answer phone calls since the calls are now taken by our answering service, the Cooperative Response Center (CRC). However, in the case of prolonged or extreme weather conditions, the phones are transferred back to the Minnesota Valley office and answered by employees.

There is now a computer on every desk. All the things that used to be done by hand are now entered into the computer and saved on the main server. It is so much easier to look up past information and printed reports are very easy to generate. Computers have, indeed, changed the way things are done in the co-op office - a dramatic change for office employees from how it was in the beginning years of Minnesota Valley. We respect the difficult task it must have been to get the office up and running in the first years of the co-op. We also respect the office employees who found their way through the many changes in the way tasks were accomplished over the years. Our hats are off to all past and present employees of Minnesota Valley who helped to make it the successful co-op it is today.



Karen (Wright) Kleene displays some of the electric appliances being sold and promoted by Minnesota Valley, for a newspaper ad in the mid 1970s.



Pictured above is Kay Erlandson Hoff who rode on a float in Montevideo's Fiesta Parade to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of REA (the Rural Electrification Administration). Kay worked at the co-op from 1957 to 1961.



Spot Your Number!

As of this writing, no one has identified their hidden number, but has until the end of December to do so. Keep looking each month - next time it could be you!

There are two more hidden numbers in this issue of the newsletter, each worth a \$20 credit on your energy account if you are participating in Operation Round Up or \$10 if you are not a participant. If you find your number in the newsletter, call the office at 320.269.2163 or 1.800.247.5051 by January 31, 2013.

It's easy to start contributing to Operation Round Up. Simply call the office at the numbers above or enclose a note with your next energy payment saying that you want to be added to the Operation Round Up list.



Member Services



Bob Walsh, Member Services Mgr.

A bit of Member Services nostalgia

With this being the 75th Anniversary celebration for Minnesota Valley, we figured the Member Services Department would give you a brief look back at its beginning. On December 12th, Kathy Christenson and Bob Walsh had the opportunity to visit with a former R.E.C. employee who began his employment in 1960 and worked for Minnesota Valley for two years. Wesley Sunvold stopped by our office while conducting some family business in Montevideo and visited about the past.

Wesley, a 1958 graduate of the University of Minnesota, was hired by Minnesota Valley in 1960 as what would turn out to be the very first Members Services employee. He was hired as a power use or farm services adviser. Wesley was a Sacred Heart native and his wife Ruth (Klefsaas) was originally from the Madison area. His agricultural education and rural background were a nice fit for the many tasks he performed for Minnesota Valley. Wesley said he did everything from writing the newsletter to helping farmers plan their new corn drying systems that were just starting to be introduced.

Wesley reminisced about many different things, but one story in particular stood out. When he was only about two weeks into his new job, a farmer near Canby who had just erected new chicken laying barns, was concerned that his chickens weren't laying any eggs. General Manager Eddie Lake told the farmer that he had the man for the job, and sent Wesley out to the farm. It turned out that the barn had a newly introduced lighting product called the fluorescent light bulb. He initially could not figure out

why the chickens would only want to fight and would not lay eggs. Wesley said that after much thought, the "light bulb" came on in his head and he figured out that the new lighting system was producing a light wavelength in the wrong color spectrum as compared to regular incandescent light bulbs. This put the chickens in more of a fighting mood than a laying mood. When different color spectrum fluorescent bulbs were installed, the chickens started to lay eggs. That was probably the first of many Member Services mysteries solved over the past 52 years of its existence.

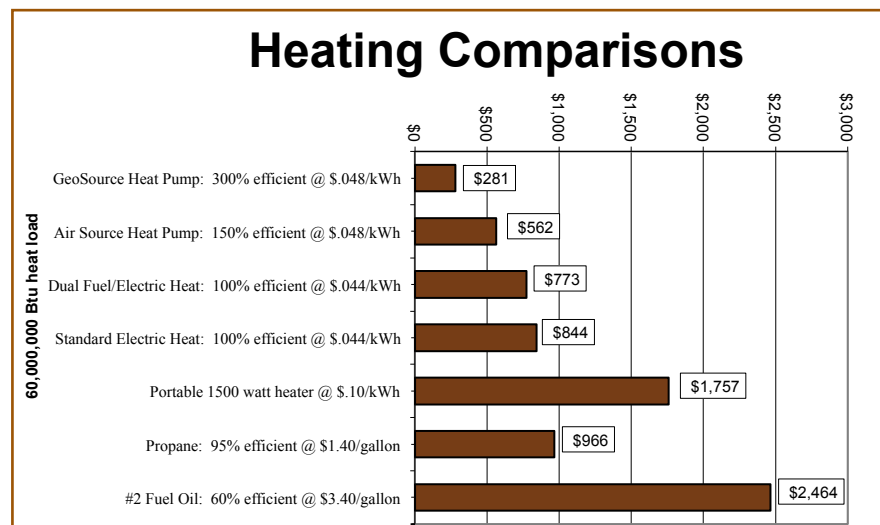
It was a pleasure visiting with Wesley, and we thank him for stopping in to share his memories with us.

New Heat Rates

If you are thinking about replacing your heating system, perhaps you have checked into the benefits of electric heat. Minnesota Valley will continue to offer Dual Fuel and Electric Heat Rates to our customers in 2013. We have had reduced rates for electric heat kWhs for the past 30 years. Electric heating rates are an excellent sales tool for electric heat applications and installations. The past instability of fossil fuel prices has brought about an increase of meter installations for our electric heat rates. Basin Electric has offered an Electric Heat Rate and a Dual Heat Rate to Minnesota Valley and we will continue to pass this rate on to you as an electric heat customer. The 2013 projected kWh sales will be approximately 18% of Minnesota Valley's annual energy sales, so it plays an important part of our total energy sales. Installation of electric heat and dual heat sub-meters are an indicator of how well our programs are working. At the end of 2012, we had over 2,300 members taking advantage of the added value of electric heat. In comparison with the heat rates Minnesota Valley is offering for 2013, the same amount of heating Btus would be equivalent to purchasing propane or fuel oil at approximately \$1.10 - \$1.20 per gallon.

Electric Heat Rates - Since 1988, Minnesota Valley has offered the Electric Heat Rate. The flexibility of this rate has allowed it to become a very popular program. Any amount of electric heat can be metered and no fossil fuel backup is required. The Electric Heat Rate will be at 4.8¢ per kWh for 2013.

Dual Heat Rate - The Dual Heat Rate makes it easy for members to install electric heat to complement their existing heating system and get on the Dual Heat Rate. Members who wish to use the Dual Heat Rate must have an electric heating system capable of heating 100% of their home. They must also have an automatic fossil fuel backup, but agree to use their electric system. The rate for Dual Heat Rate remains at 4.4¢ per kWh for 2013.



Engineering & Operations



*John Williamson
Mgr. of Engineering & Operations*

Well, that fluffy white stuff found us - and with a vengeance. The southern part of our system by Cottonwood had prolonged outages on the 9th of December due to strong winds. It doesn't take much ice on the power lines to change the dynamics, or shape, of the wire. When this happens, the force of the wind

flows across the wire in such a way that the wires began going up and down, which is called "galloping". It is something like what you see when waves flow across a body of water. When this wave hits the next point that doesn't move, or "whipping action", it causes destructive forces on the pole attachments and, after a period of time, will break them at their weakest point. This, in turn, eventually causes an outage if the wind continues to blow hard against the cross section of the wire.

Thanks for your patience anytime you are without power. Our crews were out in some terrible weather that evening getting the lights back on.

Other things we are doing right now includes replacing some older lines just south of Ortonville, making our annual line patrol inspections and doing year-end inventory.

On some cold winter day, take a little time to check out the cooperative website at www.mnvalleyrec.com to see what you think - lots of good information. D four zero three zero four

Stay safe this winter season doing whatever activities you enjoy and have a Happy New Year!



Extremely cold weather may affect the operation of the security light you rent from Minnesota Valley. When the temperature drops to minus 10 degrees or colder, you may experience a reduced brightness of the light or a complete failure. Usually, when the weather warms up, the light will work properly again and will not have to be replaced. C one twenty five zero four However, if your security light does not operate when the weather warms up, give Minnesota Valley a call at 320.269.2163 or 800.247.5051 and we will check it for you.

Remember - all light bulbs are not affected at the same temperature, so if your light is out and your neighbor's is still on, please bear with it through the cold spell and, hopefully, it will be back to normal in a day or two.

If you need added security for your home or business, you can rent a security light from Minnesota Valley at a low monthly rate. Give us a call to arrange for an installation or for more information.

COMPARATIVE REPORT

	<u>Jan.-Nov. '12</u>	<u>Jan.-Nov. '11</u>	<u>Jan.-Nov. '92</u>
kWhs purchased	185,834,074	190,181,501	116,679,255
kWhs sold	175,745,140	179,815,975	108,850,060
Cost of purchased power	\$8,563,605	\$8,020,899	\$4,171,305
Patronage capital margins	\$497,107	\$426,167	\$253,367
Reserve for taxes	\$294,915	\$163,329	\$194,259
Cost per kWh purchased	\$46.08 mills	\$42.17 mills	\$35.75 mills
	<u>Nov. 2012</u>	<u>Nov. 2011</u>	<u>Nov. 1992</u>
Total Plant	\$60,745,013	\$59,429,659	\$21,435,052
# Members receiving service	5,244	5,243	5,165
Average residential bill	\$159.51	\$147.76	\$170.67
Avg. res. kWh consumption	1,341 kWh	1,387 kWh	2,714 kWh
Avg. usage all consumers	3,153 kWh	3,095 kWh	3,080 kWh
KW Demand (Peak Load)	33,658KW	32,798KW	36,203KW





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Kathryn Christenson, Editor

Dangers of carbon monoxide - Continued from page 1

If illness is a factor:

1. Evacuate all occupants immediately.
2. Determine how many occupants are ill and determine their symptoms.
3. Call your local emergency number and when relaying information to the dispatcher, include the number of people feeling ill.
4. Do not re-enter the home without the approval of a fire department representative.
5. Call a qualified professional to repair the source of the CO.



Protect yourself and your family from CO poisoning

- ▼ Install at least one UL listed carbon monoxide alarm with an audible warning signal near the sleeping areas and outside individual bedrooms. Carbon monoxide alarms measure levels of CO over time and are designed to sound an alarm before an average, healthy adult would experience symptoms. It is very possible that you may not be experiencing symptoms when you hear the alarm. This does not mean that CO is not present.
- ▼ Have a qualified professional check all fuel burning appliances, furnaces, venting and chimney systems at least once a year.
- ▼ Never use your range or oven to help heat your home and never use a charcoal grill or hibachi in your home or garage.
- ▼ Never keep a car running in a garage. Even if the garage doors are open, normal circulation will not provide enough fresh air to reliably prevent a dangerous buildup of CO.
- ▼ When purchasing an existing home, have a qualified technician evaluate the integrity of the heating system and appliances, as well as the sealed spaces between the garage and house.

**A carbon monoxide detector installed
in your home can save the lives
of you and your family**

Know the symptoms of CO poisoning

Physical symptoms of CO poisoning vary depending on the amount of CO in the bloodstream. The higher the concentration, the greater the danger.

Mild Exposure

- * Slight headache * Fatigue
- * Nausea * Vomiting
- * Flu like symptoms

Medium Exposure

- * Severe headache * Confusion
- * Rapid heart rate * Dizziness

Severe Exposure

- * Unconsciousness * Convulsions
- * Cardiac Respiratory Failure
- * Death