

Volts & Jolts

Published monthly for the members of Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.
SERVING THE FOUR-COUNTY AREA OF MARSHALL, PENNINGTON, RED LAKE AND POLK
and a portion of the lands of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa

RL
EEC

SEPTEMBER 2021



Hard hats and
fire helmets

Pages 4 - 5

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Steve Conely Manager of Electric System Operations
Kelli Brateng. Manager of Member Services

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Phone: (218) 253-2168
Toll-Free: 1-800-245-6068
Fax: (218) 253-2630



AFTER HOURS/OUTAGE CALLS 218-253-2200

Website: www.redlakeelectric.com
Email: info@redlakeelectric.com

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG 1-800-252-1166 or 811

MINNESOTA STATE ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

Pennington and Marshall Counties:

Ronald Ditsch – 218-779-6758

Red Lake and Polk Counties:

George Stage – 701-306-3511

Any time you or an electrician does wiring or other electrical work at your home or farm, Minnesota state law requires a state wiring inspector to conduct a proper inspection of the work. A rough-in inspection must be made before any wiring is covered. A final inspection is also required. Please visit www.dli.mn.gov for more information. The inspectors can be reached weekday mornings between 7 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Red Lake Electric Cooperative to enhance the quality of life for people of our service area by safely and consistently providing quality electric service and other valued services while holding our employees, our community and our environment in high regard.



Affordable Electricity Powers Quality of Life

by Stephanie Johnson

Most of us use electricity, either directly or indirectly, at almost all times. Because electricity is so abundant and available with the simple flip of a switch, it's easy to take it for granted.

According to the Energy Information Agency (EIA), the typical U.S. household now uses more air conditioning, appliances and consumer electronics than ever before. The average home also contains 10 or more internet-connected devices. Considering everything that is powered by electricity, it's no wonder we occasionally might wince at our monthly bill. But keep in mind, it's no longer just the "light bill."

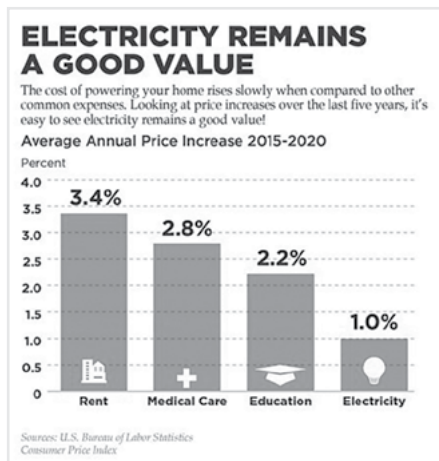
Electricity powers our quality of life. From the infrastructure of your home (appliances, water heater and HVAC system) to charging your smartphones, computers, TV and Wi-Fi router, your energy bill covers so much more than lighting.

Today, there is more demand for electricity than at any time (30742 Jessica A Hanson) in history. At home, in schools and business, and in commercial sectors such as transportation, the need for electricity is increasing.

Typically when demand goes up, so too does the price, as is the case with most goods or services, like cable or even your favorite specialty coffee.

However, that's not true with (20417 Bradley R Benke) electricity. Let's take a look at how the value of electricity compares to other common expenses.

Over the last five years, the cost of rent increased 3.4%; medical care increased 2.8%; and education increased 2.2%. But the cost of electricity only increased 1%. Considering all the ways we depend on electricity, it still remains a great value.



So, the next time you're enjoying your favorite podcast, TV series or movie, consider the value of electricity and how it enhances your quality of life.

We care about you, the members we serve, and understand that electricity is more than a commodity — it's a necessity. That's why Red Lake Electric Cooperative will continue working hard to power your life, reliably and affordably.

Energy Efficiency Incentives

Great rebates and incentives are available to help you upgrade your heating and cooling system, water heater and electric vehicle chargers. Not sure where to start? Check out our rebate list below for heating and cooling options. Contact Red Lake Electric Cooperative for expert advice on improving your home's energy performance.

Electric Heating Rebates

Must be on off-peak

Electric plenum heaters

Easily converts your existing fossil fuel furnace into a dual-fuel heating system. You are able to use the most efficient, cost-effective heating source – fossil fuel or electricity – at any time.

Rebate of \$50 per kilowatt (kW)

Electric thermal storage heaters

Draws electricity during off-peak hours when it is cheaper. Heat is stored in specially designed bricks to provide comfort 24 hours a day.

Rebate of \$60 per kW

Air-source heat pumps (including mini-split ductless option)

Works just like a central air conditioner in the summer. In the fall and winter, they provide super-efficient supplemental heat.

Up to 16 SEER: Rebate of \$300 per ton
17 SEER or greater: Rebate of \$500 per ton

Geothermal heat pumps

Provides the highest efficiency for space heating and cooling available today. The system transfers heat to and from the earth using only small amounts of electricity.

Closed loop: Rebate of \$400 per ton
Open loop: Rebate of \$200 per ton

Electric underfloor boiler

A popular off-peak option because the system transfers heat consistently across the floor to reach people and objects, providing both comfort and efficiency. Applications include electric boiler with hydronic tubing.

Rebate of \$50 per kW

Other electric heating systems

Options include electric baseboards, cove heaters, electric floor cable, mats and more.

Rebate of \$25 per kW

Electric Water Heater Rebates

Must be on off-peak

100 gallon or greater

\$350 rebate

56-99 gallon

\$300 rebate

55 gallon or less

\$150 rebate

Bonus rebates:

Add \$250 if converting from natural gas or propane.

Add \$100 for new building construction.

Electric Vehicle Charger Rebates

240V Level 2 Charger

Must be on off-peak

Electric vehicle or hybrid

\$50 per kW

Commercial – Forklifts, Zambonis, etc.

\$50 per kW

All equipment must be new and installed on Red Lake Electric Cooperative's system.

Equipment must be installed on RLEC's off-peak program.

Contact Member Services for more details!

218-253-2168

Cowboy Queso

1 lb. ground beef

1 Tbsp. dried onion flakes

1 (15oz) can chili beans, undrained

1 (15oz) can black beans, rinsed and drained

1 (10oz) can Rotel

1 cup frozen corn, thawed

½ cup milk

1 Tbsp. chili powder

½ tsp. oregano

½ tsp. hot sauce (i.e; Franks)

¼ tsp. garlic powder

¼ tsp. cumin

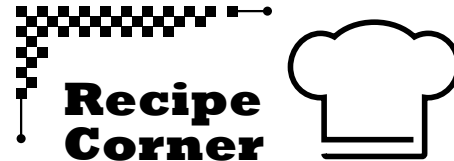
16oz Velveeta, cubed

Slow Cooker Directions:

1. In large skillet, cook ground beef until no longer pink. Drain fat.
2. Place cooked beef in slow cooker. Add remaining ingredients and stir. Cook on LOW for 2 to 3 hours, until cheese is melted.
3. Serve with chips.

Microwave Directions:

1. In large skillet, cook ground beef until no longer pink. Drain fat.
2. Place beef in large microwave safe bowl. Add remaining ingredients. Microwave on HIGH for 4 minutes, stir. Microwave on HIGH for an additional 4 minutes, stir. Continue microwaving in 1 to 2 minute intervals until cheese is melted and dip is thoroughly heated.
3. Serve immediately with chips.



Submit your recipes to be published in *Volts & Jolts*. Email to info@redlakeelectric.com or mail to: Red Lake Electric Cooperative, PO Box 430, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750-0430.



Operation Round Up® grant applications due Tuesday, September 21

Organizations involved in community projects and charities are encouraged to apply for funds from Operation Round Up® at this time. Completed grant applications are due in the Red Lake Electric Cooperative (RLEC) office by Tuesday, Sept. 21.



HARD HATS AND FIRE HELMETS

Red Lake Electric Cooperative boasts six employees on the local volunteer fire department

At the tail end of a hot and crispy summer, a small group of Red Lake Electric Cooperative (RLEC) lineworkers was hitting the dusty fields southwest of Red Lake Falls, Minn. The task of the day was to move a line of power poles farther from a farmer's crops and closer to the rural road ditch.

For that particular crew, ditch work was becoming a recurring theme – from moving wires to cigarette fires.

"This year it seems like those calls happen a lot," said RLEC journeyman lineworker Jordon Gervais.

"It's just so dry," RLEC operations manager Steve Conely responded. "We typically get about 25 total fire calls per year."

Conely leads the RLEC crew in more ways than one. In addition to his role as operations manager, he also serves as the assistant fire chief of the Red Lake Falls Volunteer Fire Department, which includes a total of six RLEC employees on the volunteer roster.

That's right. The co-op makes up a quarter of the local fire team.

"What I've heard is linemen and people in this industry are good at being on call, and they're good at making difficult choices," Conely said. "That makes them good firemen."

Conely and Gervais are joined on the fire team by journeyman lineworkers Darcy Cardinal, Sam Pahlen and Brett Knott, as well as RLEC engineering technician Chris Knott. The six were led to the fire department by different paths, at different times in their lives. But the same idea brought them to the fire hall.

"I see it as, it's a small community. We're not just one thing. Sam, he assists with youth hockey," Cardinal said, gesturing to Pahlen in the bucket truck, "and I'm a hockey coach. We don't have the numbers for a lot of people to do just one thing."

"If you want a good, strong community, you have to be a part of it. That may not be the reason we all started, but as you do it, you see more community benefits."

Steve Conely

RLEC Operations Manager | Red Lake Falls Volunteer Fire Dept. Assistant Fire Chief

HISTORY OF HEROISM

This isn't RLEC's first cohort of community caretakers. When Conely was hired in 2001, there were already three co-op employees on the fire squad. He began volunteering soon after.

In the Red Lake Falls fire hall, chatting with his fellow firefighters, he glanced over his shoulder at the photo gallery of bygone fire crews. "The generation

before us, it was the line foremen, in that first go-around, back in the '40s," he said.

"One of the initial Red Lake board directors was my Great-Grandpa, and he was on the fire department in the '30s, I think," Chris Knott added.

The tradition of service bridges eras and connects families in Red Lake Falls. Cardinal's father and brother, as well as Gervais' grandfather and uncle, were also involved in the fire department, and three of the current co-op volunteers are cousins.

"It goes along with how you've grown up and how you're taught," Conely said, noting that all six grew up in or near Red Lake Falls. "If your parents stopped and helped somebody alongside the road back in the day, you probably still do that today."

"I just wanted to do it, and you pretty much know everyone in the department," Pahlen said. "They had an opening, and I asked to join."

Pahlen joined the fire department the same day as Gervais eight years ago – two years after (22973 Gene Kalinowski) they started at the co-op together. Between the six men, there are approximately 60 years of collective service to the fire department. When you add that to the time they've spent with each other at work over the years, you would think they'd grow tired of one other.

Not the case.

"It's kind of funny – we actually do things AFTER this all together," Gervais said. In fact, five of them were hitting the golf course later that night. "We're kind of a family at work, so when you come here to the fire hall, you know who you're dealing with. You get to learn each other so well that we kind of know what each other is thinking."

"They really understand each other," Conely said. "This group recently responded to a fatal car accident, and our fire chief commented on how well these guys worked together through that, through a terrible situation."

Other members of the fire department recognize that lineworkers (30290 Patrick L Thompson) come equipped with additional skills and insight. They're the first ones to disconnect power during a house fire and they're familiar with the adrenaline rush of having limited time to fix a dangerous problem. The urge to serve isn't reserved to Red Lake Falls. Nearly every co-op in the Minnkota Power Cooperative system contains at least one firefighter or first responder, and many have multiple.

RLEC leaders see what their team is capable of. Conely says management has always been supportive of his crew's dual role, and none of the current volunteers plan on returning their fire helmets anytime soon.

"If you want a good, strong community, you have to be a part of it," he said. "That may not be the reason we all started, but as you do it, you see more community benefits."



RLEC's Steve Conely chats with his fire team



Pictured (left to right): Darcy Cardinal, Steve Conely, Brett Knott, Chris Knott, Sam Pahlen and Jordon Gervais

Need help to pay your electric bill? Help is only a phone call away!

Red Lake Electric is prepared to work with members who are in need of assistance paying their electric bills. For more information about the Cold Weather Rule, call Red Lake Electric Cooperative or see MN Statutes, Chapter 216B, which governs disconnection policies of residential heating sources from Oct. 1 through April 30. Here are some common questions:

Can my heat be shut off in the winter?

YES, unless you take steps under the Cold Weather Rule (CWR) to protect yourself. You must contact Red Lake Electric Cooperative (23256 Virginia Anderson) to apply for protection from having your heat shut off. This is true for all residential customers, including senior citizens and families with young children.

FEDERAL/STATE ENERGY ASSISTANCE

If you need help paying your electric utility bill, you may qualify for state or federal fuel assistance. For complete qualification and application information, contact your local county welfare or community/citizen's action council listed below. These organizations may also provide budget counseling.

Inter-County Community Council
Oklee, MN
Serves East Polk, Pennington and Red Lake counties
218-796-5144
Toll-free: 1-888-778-4008
Fax: 833-792-1046

Northwest Community Action
Badger, MN
Serves East Marshall County
218-528-3258
Toll-free: 1-800-568-5329
Fax: 218-528-3259

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council
Crookston, MN
Serves West Polk County and West Marshall County
218-281-9080
Toll-free: 1-866-264-3729
Fax: 218-281-0705

Red Lake Community Action Agency
Red Lake, MN
Serves Beltrami County
218-679-1880
Fax: 218-679-4291

Will you disconnect me without my knowledge?

NO. RLEC will give you a "Disconnection Notice" on your electric bill. This will state the amount you need to pay as well as the date by which (26687 Scott B Salvhus) you must contact RLEC to avoid disconnection. If you do not contact us by the disconnection date, we will make a courtesy phone call reminding you to make your payment.

How can I keep my heat on or get reconnected if I am already shut off?

You must make and keep a payment plan with Red Lake Electric Cooperative. The payments don't have to be the same amount each month. RLEC will work with you to make suitable arrangements to help you keep your electricity. Once arrangements are made, you must contact Red Lake Electric Cooperative if you are unable to make a payment or your service may be shut off.

When I contact RLEC to apply for the CWR, what happens?

- You will make a CWR payment plan, which you must keep to be protected.
- If you and the utility cannot agree on a payment plan, you have 10 days to appeal to the Public Utilities Commission.
- The Commission will help you set up a payment plan.
- Your service will stay on during the appeal process.

What happens if I can't make my payments as planned?

If you can't make your payments, call RLEC *immediately* to make a new

CWR payment plan. If you do not make your payments, your service may be shut off.

What if I need help reading or understanding notices from my utility?

- The CWR has a "Third-Party Notice" option.
- If you would like help applying for the CWR, you may arrange for another person to get a copy of any disconnection notices or other important information at the same time you receive it. This may be a friend, family member or anyone who is willing to help you understand the notices or set up a CWR payment plan. This person is not responsible for paying your bill. They are only agreeing to help you understand notices from Red Lake Electric Cooperative.

How do I sign up for Third-Party Notices?

Call Red Lake Electric for a sign-up form. The form must be filled out and signed by both you and the person you want to be notified and mailed back to the utility.

Are military personnel subject to a shutoff?

Minnesota law protects a residential customer if a member of the household has been issued orders into active duty, for deployment or a change in duty station if they are unable to pay their electric bill. You must call Red Lake Electric to set up a payment plan. For more information see MN Statutes, Chapter 325E.028 (Utility Payment Arrangements for Military Personnel).



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Energy used for cooling and heating your home makes up the largest portion of your monthly energy bills. By combining regular equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings, you can save about 30% on your energy bills while helping our environment.

Source: *energy.gov*

YIELD A SAFE HARVEST



BE AWARE OF THE LOCATION OF ALL POWER LINES AND POLES BEFORE MOVING LARGE EQUIPMENT.



KEEP EVERY PART OF YOUR MACHINERY 10 FEET AWAY FROM POWER LINES IN EVERY DIRECTION.



ALWAYS LOWER AN AUGER BEFORE MOVING IT – EVEN IF IT'S ONLY A FEW FEET.

Celebrate National Drive Electric Week

Sept. 25 - Oct. 3

Join Red Lake Electric Cooperative and electric vehicle (EV) enthusiasts around the country as we mark **National Drive Electric Week (NDEW)** this September! If you've been curious about the power and promise of EVs in our region, now's the time to take the drive.

NOTICE OF NAMES

Hidden within the text of the articles of this issue of *Volts & Jolts* are the names and account numbers of some Red Lake Electric Cooperative members. They will appear within the articles in parentheses as such (9999999.99 Willie Ray Member). If you find your name and account number, clip it out and send it with your next payment. You will be credited with \$5 on your electric bill.

DRIVING THE DIALOGUE ON GRID RELIABILITY

With grid challenges coming into focus, our local power leaders are working to chart a path forward.

In the wake of devastating outage events over the past year – from a heatwave that crippled California’s electric grid to a February deep freeze that left Texas without power for days – leaders of Minnkota Power Cooperative (Red Lake Electric’s wholesale power provider) have been communicating the importance of grid reliability and resiliency with the nation’s top regulators and policymakers. As the electric utility sector navigates one of its most transformational periods, questions remain on how ambitious environmental goals may affect affordable and dependable service.

“It is an exciting time for our industry, but it can also be daunting,” Mac McLennan, Minnkota president and CEO, told members of the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy during a June 23 hearing. “We all want to push for it to be a better product – more reliable, more resilient, affordable for every household and

as clean as possible. To reach these goals, we need to work together.”

About 42% of Minnkota’s generation capacity comes from carbon-free sources such as wind and hydropower. Although Minnkota (25042 Susan Harmoning) has added a significant amount of renewable energy, coal remains a critical resource to ensure reliability.

Regional energy leaders, policymakers and regulators discussed lessons learned from recent national outage events during the Midwest Energy Summit on June 8 in Fargo, where McLennan participated in a panel focused on multi-state grid reliability.

Minnkota participates in the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) market, where renewables currently account for about 10% to 12% of the grid’s resources. MISO Executive Director of External Affairs Brian Tulloh said challenges begin to emerge as that percentage increases.

“We begin to see, at above about 30% renewable energy penetration, significant stability issues in the grid,” Tulloh said, referencing MISO’s Renewable Integration Impact Assessment.

Minnkota also recognizes the need to make reductions in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The cooperative and its members are currently evaluating Project Tundra – an effort to install carbon capture technology at the coal-based Milton R. Young Station near Bismarck, N.D.

Stacey Dahl, Minnkota senior manager of external affairs, provided an overview of Project Tundra during a June 3 meeting with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michael Regan. Regan said the Biden administration (24152 Deonne Bakken) has a “positive viewpoint” of carbon capture technology.

“There’s no doubt there’s huge potential,” he said of carbon capture during his visit.

