



May 2020

# Newsline

THANK YOU!

*Blessings this  
Memorial Day*



## IN THIS ISSUE

Your Energy Portfolio  
Meter Exchanges Continue  
Modified Energy Assistance  
Technology Use in Storms

**BOARD MEETINGS** May 26 - 9:30 a.m. at Kettle River Service Center ■ June 30 - 9:30 a.m. at Mountain Iron Service Center

## Working through COVID-19 the cooperative way

As we all deal with the new realities brought on by COVID-19 (coronavirus), I want to assure you that your local electric cooperative is here to help. We have always had an emergency plan that has served us well in a variety of circumstances, from ice and snowstorms to high winds and tornadoes to flooding.

After the H1N1 flu outbreak in 2009, our staff updated its pandemic plan with a special emphasis on ensuring we can continue to provide reliable electric service.

We know that after a sufficient supply of food and water, electricity is the number-one thing you need to maintain some sense of normalcy as we hunker down on stay-at-home orders. With that in mind, keeping the power flowing is Job-1 for everyone involved in maintaining the electric cooperative system.

It starts with our wholesale power supplier, Great River Energy, which has taken measures to ensure its critical workforce is healthy and its power plants are functioning

as needed. It then extends to the 44 distribution cooperatives, including Lake Country Power, that deliver electricity across Minnesota. Since March, operations for the co-op has been a bit unusual and unique from the norm, but our commitment to service excellence remains the same.



By Greg  
**RANDA**  
LCP general  
manager

These are some of the steps we've taken to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. On

March 17, we closed our lobbies to the members, vendors and the public. Payments are still available to members through the onsite drop boxes, kiosks, SmartHub, phone options and regular mail. Another payment option is LCP Easy Pay, where your payments are automatically deducted from your checking or savings account on the due date each month. The program is convenient and free for co-op members - I'd encourage you to sign-up.

Many of our employees are working from home, with a small handful of employees working in the office. We have separated our line crews

from office employees and even from each other to limit possible spread of the virus. New routines are in place for contractors working on our system in order to keep them away from employees. Deliveries are being quarantined outside.

### For our line crews:

- The same two-man crews are working together at all times while also using the same trucks to avoid cross contamination.
- When possible, the two-man crews are separated even further by individually driving different trucks.
- Crews are assigned to work separate substations for social distancing, and once at the job site they continue to use social distancing from one another and co-op members.
- Crews are using rubber gloves. They also use disinfecting wipes to clean surfaces, including gas pumps.
- Warehouse personnel set equipment outside the building for line crews to pick up for their job assignments.
- Crews are going as far as to isolate themselves from family when family members have medical needs that could expose the linemen to a quarantine situation.
- Crews are making personal sacrifices to cancel trips, vacations, etc., to make sure they are available to work on members' behalf.

Our management team is in constant contact with the other electric cooperatives in Minnesota and with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association, which in turn is working closely with our national association and the state legislature. We are closely listening for recommendations from the federal government, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Minnesota Governor Walz.

Our employees are a hard-working group of individuals and they always shine during challenging times.

Our focus is on doing our part to keep your life as normal as possible throughout this situation and beyond. The cooperative way of doing business has brought us this far, and the cooperative way will help us through this crisis. ■

**HOLIDAY OBSERVED**

All LCP offices will be closed May 25 for Memorial Day. If you experience a power outage, use SmartHub to report the outage. Register for SmartHub at lakecountrypower.coop. Or call 800-421-9959, press 1.



# Where your electricity comes from

When you turn the lights on in your house, there's a large and diverse system of power generation facilities throughout the region that supply electricity to help keep your home bright.

Lake Country Power receives its wholesale electricity from Great River Energy, which carefully designs and maintains a diverse portfolio of power generation facilities and transmission resources in order to deliver reliable and affordable wholesale electricity to its 28 member-owner cooperatives in Minnesota.

Great River Energy's electricity comes from power

plants, multiple wind farms, hydroelectric facilities, solar installations and the Midwest energy market. The cooperative's power plants generate more than 2,800 megawatts of electricity, including coal-based plants that provide electricity 24/7 as well as flexible gas-fueled plants that typically run when demand for electricity is higher.

Renewable energy – including wind – represents



By Robert  
**BRUCKBAUER**  
District 5 Director

an important and growing part of Great River Energy's power supply portfolio. The 2007 Minnesota Legislature adopted a renewable energy standard requiring that at least 25 percent of electric utility annual energy sales come from renewable energy by 2025. Great River Energy met this standard of 25 percent renewable energy in 2017 – eight years ahead of the state's requirement.

Great River Energy voluntarily set a goal in 2018 to serve its all-requirements

member-owner cooperatives with energy that is 50% renewable by 2030 and is well on its way toward meeting this new goal. The co-op currently provides energy that is 30% renewable.

Great River Energy's portfolio is carefully crafted to be dependable at all times while keeping wholesale rates competitive. This, in turn, helps Lake Country Power keep the lights on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. ■

Bob Bruckbauer was elected by members in Lake Country Power District 5. He can be reached at 218-566-2436 and [bobbruckbauer@northlc.com](mailto:bobbruckbauer@northlc.com).

## Reaching the final stretch in meter exchanges

Meter exchanges are happening in 2020 for LCP members, despite a slight delay in April due to Minnesota's stay at home order. The majority of meters are being exchanged by Allegiant Energy Services, a contractor that does meter exchanges for other cooperatives and utilities as well.

Before members receive their new meter(s), a meter exchange letter will be mailed from Lake Country Power so you're aware that an Allegiant technician will soon be working at your property. Once at your property, they will knock on the door and then back up six-to-ten feet for social distancing measures.

To-date, more than 37,700 Aclara meters have been installed with more than 30,500 meters remaining to install this year. Allegiant technicians will work on completing the substations in LCP's Mountain Iron service area first, and then will begin work in the Kettle River service area.

**For the meters that have been installed, the benefits are encouraging:**

- The new meters are providing regular readings, which in turn is eliminating the need to estimate bills.
- The new meters are helping identify transformers with voltage issues so crews can repair the issue to improve electric quality.
- The new meters are helping improve the accuracy of LCP's mapping system.
- Outages are being detected by the new meters.
- Residential members enjoy seeing their energy use data in SmartHub.
- Commercial members are using SmartHub to better understand their energy use and loads in order to minimize demand charges.

"We have many examples where



we've been able to fix outages during normal business hours before members came home from work," said Ryan Ferguson, Sr. Engineer Metering & SCADA. "We've also found damaged masts caused by falling trees where we contacted members about, otherwise they wouldn't have known until they arrive at their cabins for the weekend."

For more information, visit [www.lakecountrypower.coop/advanced-metering-infrastructure](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop/advanced-metering-infrastructure). ■



# Tips for managing energy use during stay-at-home orders

If your family is at home more these days (working on computers, watching television, cooking, turning on lights, etc.), your electric bills may be higher than normal – especially the bill you'll receive this month which is based on April's energy use.

Families may need to be mindful of their energy use and consider adjusting certain habits to avoid higher costs.

Simple money-saving steps can help lower monthly electric bills without jeopardizing safety or comfort. For more

information on energy saving tips visit [touchstoneenergy.com/efficiency](http://touchstoneenergy.com/efficiency).

## Recommended energy saving tips include:

- **Program your thermostat to maximize energy savings.** Setting your thermostat one degree lower when heating or one degree higher when cooling can reduce energy use by up to 5 percent.
- **Do full loads of laundry and wash with cold water.** Using warm water instead of hot can cut a load's energy use in half and
- **Air dry dishes.** This step can cut your dishwasher's energy use by up to 50 percent.



using cold water will save even more.

- **Substitute LEDs for conventional light bulbs.** Lighting can amount to up to 12% of monthly energy use. LED bulbs can cut lighting costs by 75%.
- **Unplug appliances and electronics when not in use.** Small appliances and electronics use energy even when not in use. When powered on, game consoles, televisions and similar electronics are responsible for up to 12 percent of energy use. ■

# Energy assistance available for qualifying members

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the State of Minnesota has enacted changes to the Energy Assistance Program designed to help consumers pay utility bills.

"We understand the increased financial hardships facing families and businesses due to the economic impact of COVID-19," said LCP's Chief Financial Officer Mark Bakk. "There is help available

for those struggling with their utility bills. We encourage qualifying members to take advantage of the state's modified Energy Assistance Program which includes changes in the benefit eligibility criteria, an increased maximum benefit amount, and an application extension."

With changes to its Crisis Benefit Policy, the EAP is routing more funds to help

those facing disconnection or carrying unpaid past due balances. The deadline to apply is July 1, 2020.

The EAP serves households earning less than 50 percent of the state's median annual income (\$52,014 for a family of four). It helps low-income homeowners and renters with energy bills through grant money paid directly to their utility companies or heating fuel vendors.

The Department of Commerce especially encourages newly unemployed, households with young children, people with disabilities, veterans and seniors to apply.

Members needing assistance with utility bills can find details and valuable information on the DOC website at <https://mn.gov/commerce/> ■

ENERGY WISE MN



## WHETHER TEMPS RISE OR FALL, YOUR ENERGY BILL WILL STAY COOL.

Limited funds are available and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Rebate amounts and programs are subject to change without notice.

Air source heat pumps provide home cooling and supplemental heating, using 72% less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces.

Take advantage of our 2020 rebates when you install a qualifying, energy-saving central/ducted air source heat pump!

Air Source Heat Pump	2020 Rebates
SEER 16+	\$800
SEER 15	\$580
SEER 14.5	\$480

Call 800-421-9959 (press 6)  
or visit [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop)



# Technology comes through after a storm

This is the time of year when we never know what kind of weather will come our way. And even though electric cooperatives work hard to keep rights-of-way clear and reduce the risk of trees falling on power lines, when dangerous storms roll in, sometimes powerful winds can blow weakened trees and snap limbs into power lines and cause outages.

Now more than ever, Lake Country Power and its wholesale power supplier, Great River Energy, are using the power of technology to restore your energy as quickly as possible when there are power outages on the system. Here are three tools being used to keep your lights on:

1. A **system operations dashboard** shows Great River Energy's system operators in real-time when a line goes down and causes an outage. Knowing this information,

the system operator can isolate the area either remotely or by directing field crews to the proper location. Isolating the area allows the system operator to return power to more members as crews work to restore power to members who are primarily served by the downed line.

2. Another tool used by system operators and Lake Country Power is an **automatic vehicle locator**. This tool tracks crew vehicles and provides system operators with the exact location of all the field crews working on the system. By monitoring crew locations, system operators can determine who is closest and can assist in restoration the fastest.

3. **Unmanned aerial systems (UAS)** used by Great River Energy on its transmission lines can be used to check



equipment in high places and see in real-time where there may be damage on power lines and poles.

4. Lake Country Power's new **Aclara meters** include fault detection capabilities to let the co-op know when a member is offline from service.

Both Lake Country Power and Great River Energy continue to monitor technology innovations as the industry evolves to ensure the safest, most reliable electric service they can provide. ■

## Annual Cogeneration Notification to Membership

In compliance with Cooperative adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, Lake Country Power is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers whom satisfy the conditions as the qualifying facility. Lake Country Power is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales, and purchases are subject to resolution by the Cooperative. Interested members should contact Lake Country Power, 26039 Bear

Ridge Drive, Cohasset, MN 55721, or call 800-421-9959.

In compliance with Minnesota Statute 216B.1611, Lake Country Power is updating the technical requirements for distributed energy resource interconnections. The existing technical requirement document will be replaced with the Technical Interconnection and Interoperability Requirements (TIIR) and Technical Specification Manual (TSM). These new documents can be found after June 1, 2020, on [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop). These requirements become effective July 1, 2020, and all new DER systems and DER system additions applied for interconnection after July 1st will be required to meet these updated requirements.

## RECIPE CORNER MINI MONSTER COOKIES

From the Kitchen of:  
**Stephanie Kessler**  
Deer River

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup peanut butter
- ½ cup butter (soft/room temp.)
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup oats
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup mini chocolate chips

### DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, use a wooden spoon to combine peanut butter and the butter until blended. Add eggs, brown sugar and vanilla. Stir until blended. Add flour, oats, soda and salt. Stir well. Add mini chips. Stir well and drop onto ungreased cookie sheet using a large scoop – 1 T. size. Use the back of your wooden spoon to flatten the dough.

Bake at 350 degrees for 16 – 18 minutes until just set or barely browned. Once they hold their shape when tapped with a finger, take them out and let cook another 2 minutes on the cookie sheet. Then transfer to a cooling rack. Makes 28 cookies.

Submit your favorite recipe to Lake Country Power, Attn: Editor, 26039 Bear Ridge Drive, Cohasset, MN 55721, or e-mail [tzaun@lcp.coop](mailto:tzaun@lcp.coop). If your entry is drawn and printed in *Newsline*, you'll receive a \$5 credit on your electric bill. Entries must include name, address and phone number on a count.



# COVID-19 may influence your home energy usage

The kids are home all day – doing school online and other activities. Adults are working from home due to business need changes or you may have a college student who is living at home again and has to conduct online learning.

The daily activity in your once-quiet home is now changing due to recent world events. There are more people in the house which can create increased:

- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Laundry
- Showers and hot water usage
- Gaming activities
- Plugged in electronics of all kinds (computers, printers, monitors, iPads, iPhones, laptops, etc.)
- Use of space heaters, adding up to \$40 or more per month to bills
- Lights in multiple rooms

In addition, the electric bills you receive in the spring reflects energy usage during cooler time periods. Your electric bill normally reflects usage from the past 30 days.

## Tips to help you monitor energy usage:

- Monitor your usage with SmartHub, LCP's free tool for account management. SmartHub can help you take control of your electric account and give you the chance to focus on smart energy choices for your household.
- Check out all the various SmartHub features to manage your account. You can schedule payments, set up alerts, recurring payments, view billing history and see your current bill, along with statements from previous months if you want to compare costs. You can view your actual usage by the hour, day, month or year and see

how your usage is trending over time, which will allow you to take energy-efficiency steps to lower your bill.

Access SmartHub at [lakecountrypower.coop](http://lakecountrypower.coop) and download the app on your mobile device through an app store of your choice – it's a free app. SmartHub can be easily accessed on your computer, phone or tablet.

You may consider LCP's budget billing program that allows you to pay a determined average amount each month (recalculated twice a year in

March and August) to help predict and manage your electric bills. For additional payment options, visit [www.lakecountrypower.coop/billing-options](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop/billing-options).

LCP cares. Your co-op works with members when they have unexpected situations. Contact LCP if you feel you're unable to pay your bill. It is best to make payments to avoid a large balance accumulating, even if it's a customized payment arrangement. Call 800-421-9959, press 5. ■



## 4 COMMON CULPRITS OF ELECTRICAL FIRES

Outdated wiring and overloaded circuits are the most common causes of electrical fires.

Check the following areas of your home to ensure your home's electrical safety is up to par.



**1. Electrical outlets:** Faulty electrical outlets are a leading cause of home fires. As outlets age, so do the wires behind them that you can't see. Any loose, damaged or warm-to-the-touch outlets should be repaired or replaced.



**2. Electrical wiring:** Outdated wiring is another common cause of electrical fires. Frequently tripped breakers, flickering lights and burning smells are clear warning signs. If your home is more than 20 years old, it may not be able to handle today's increased power load. If you suspect your home's wiring is outdated, leave this one to the pros and contact a qualified electrician.



**3. Overloaded cords and outlets:** Extension cords are not permanent solutions. If your big-screen TV, home theater system and other electronics are plugged into one extension cord, it's time to call an electrician and install additional outlets.



**4. Old appliances:** Older appliances are more likely to have loose or damaged wiring, which means they're more likely to catch fire. Check older appliances for damage and determine if it's time to upgrade or replace. Also check to ensure you're using appliance-grade outlets. A qualified electrician can help with installation.



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

## Condensed Board Minutes

### January 28, 2020 • Regular Monthly Meeting

#### THE FOLLOWING REPORTS WERE GIVEN:

President Olson reported he forwarded several member conversations/concerns to General Manager Randa. He also stated several members expressed their appreciation for the capital credits received in December.

General Manager Randa gave updates about the Great River Energy member manager's meeting; Northland Connect operations and the \$56,000 dividend LCP received from Northland Connect for 2019; the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO conference; LCP district member meetings; and employee recognition.

#### THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:

Approved to elect District 5 Director Bruckbauer as a nominee position #1 for election as a director of Great River Energy, and District 7 Director Olson as nominee position #2.

Approved to appoint District 6 Director Kingsley as LCP's Great River Energy voting delegate, and District 4 Director Carlson as LCP's GRE voting alternate.

Approved a change to LCP's headquarters address in Policy 112 to Cohasset.

Approved revisions to Policy 419: Charges for custom work.

Approved the 2019 contract limit changes as presented.

Approved to award the 2020 construction storm contract to Highline Construction, and award the tree storm contract to Wright Tree Service, both being the lowest bidders. ■

**Editor's Note:** These board minutes have been condensed. A full copy of the board minutes can be read at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under "My Cooperative." You'll need to sign up for access if you haven't already. Or call 800-421-9959 for a printed copy.



#### ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

When the weather is nice, put your grill to use. During summer months, cooking outdoors is a great way to save energy and eliminate unwanted heat from cooking indoors.



► This picture earned a spot in the co-op calendar for May. Shelley Taylor took a photo of this Baltimore oriole in her yard.

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Directors are members of the cooperative and are elected to act in the best interests of the co-op with the same care that an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances.

Directors set policy, approve strategy and are charged with fiduciary responsibility of the cooperative. Directors do not oversee day-to-day LCP operations. Administration of maintenance, electric service and operations are the responsibility of employees and staff.

Members with questions or concerns about service, billing, outages or other service-related matters should call 1-800-421-9959.

### Newsline

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800-421-9959 • [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop)  
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## Comparative Operating Statement

Year-To-Date – February 2020

	2020	2019
Electric Operating Revenue	\$17,732,664	\$18,928,511
Cost of Purchased Power	9,681,178	10,496,500
Distribution Expense - Operations & Maintenance	1,940,731	1,697,533
Consumer Accounts Expense & Informational	681,472	788,586
Administrative and General Expense	1,274,330	1,130,571
Depreciation, Interest Expense and Other Deductions	2,182,614	2,201,618
<b>TOTAL ELECTRIC OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>15,760,326</b>	<b>16,314,807</b>
Net Electric Operating Margins	1,972,338	2,613,704
Non-Operating Margins	192,534	4,329
<b>TOTAL MARGINS BEFORE SUBSIDIARIES</b>	<b>2,164,872</b>	<b>2,618,033</b>
Net Income (Loss) from Subsidiaries	-	-
<b>TOTAL MARGINS</b>	<b>\$2,164,872</b>	<b>\$2,618,033</b>
<b>TOTAL KWH SOLD (YEAR-TO-DATE)</b>	<b>134,587,958</b>	<b>153,202,123</b>

**Editor's Note:** These financials are condensed. A complete set of financials can be viewed at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under "My Cooperative." You'll need to sign up for access if you haven't already. Or call 800-421-9959 for a copy.