



THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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MARCH 2022

2022 ANNUAL MEETING

All MLEC members are welcome!

We are excited to announce that our Annual Meeting is back to being an in-person event! Join us at the beautiful Minnesota National Golf Course for a free meal, lots of door prizes, and the most up-to-date information regarding your cooperative.

Members will hear from MLEC leadership and learn important information about the past year and what lies ahead for MLEC. Special guest speakers include Kristi Robinson, Director of Operations at Star Energy Services, along with Katie Hildenbrand and Karl Larsen of Architectural Resources, Inc. (the chosen architect for the new headquarters project).

Members in attendance will be put in a drawing for a variety of door prizes!

- **Roomba Robot Vacuum**
- **Electric DeWalt String Trimmer**
- **Apple iPad**
- **Gift Packages from MN Nat. Golf Course**
- **MLEC Bill Credits**
- **Various Gift Cards**

You could be the lucky winner!



WHEN: *Thursday, May 5th*

WHERE: *Minnesota National Golf Course* McGregor, MN

SCHEDULE:

Registration - 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Meal Served - 5:00 p.m.

Business Meeting - 5:45 p.m.

Receive an RTIC Tumbler as a free gift for attending!
(One per membership)



What's on the menu?

- Austin Blues BBQ pulled pork sandwich with pickles and cheddar cheese
- Potato salad, coleslaw, and baked beans
- Cash bar will be available!

SAVE ENERGY WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

Today, more Americans are working from home than ever before. More time spent at home means more energy used throughout the day. If you're punching the clock from home, there are small steps you can take to reduce your energy use and save on electric bills. Here are five easy ways to save energy when working from home.

1. Use a smart power strip.

Plugging in your most-used devices, like computers, monitors and routers, to a smart power strip ensures these devices aren't drawing power when they're not in use. Smart power strips also give you the option to select which devices should stay in "always on" mode.

2. Unplug your least-used equipment.

If your home office includes equipment like printers and scanners, you're probably not using these electronics every day. In this case, go ahead and unplug your least-used electronics and devices, since many of these draw energy even when they're not being used.

3. Choose ENERGY STAR®-certified office equipment.

If you're looking to purchase new equipment for your workspace, look for the ENERGY STAR® label to ensure you're getting the most energy efficient features. Computers, monitors, imaging equipment and other office electronics that receive the ENERGY STAR® rating include power management features to make saving energy easy, and most are designed to run cooler and last longer.

4. Flip the switch and use natural light instead.

It's still chilly out there, so take advantage of natural light and additional warmth from the sun. When you're working during the day, open blinds, curtains and other window coverings to let natural light in—and don't forget to turn off the lights to reduce energy use!

5. Lower the thermostat.

Home heating makes up a significant portion of your energy bills. Turn the thermostat down a couple degrees during the day to reduce energy use and save money. The Department of Energy recommends setting the thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler during winter months. You're more likely to stay focused and alert when it's cooler in your home, so all the more reason to mind the thermostat.

Working from home doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bills, and whether you're working remotely or not, these practical tips can help everyone reduce their energy use.

Contact MLEC if you have questions about your bills or want additional information about saving energy at home.



Questions or concerns?
MLEC's Board of Directors represent you!

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bwelty@mlecmmn.com
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Find minutes from
MLEC Board meetings at:
<http://www.mlecmmn.net>
under **My Co-op**

This newsletter is the voice of your tax and interest paying RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, an organization which was formed to supply you with low-cost, dependable electricity when other sources failed to do so.

Managing Editor: Kassie Peterson,
Communications Specialist

COGENERATION NOTICE

In compliance with Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative's (MLEC) adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, MLEC is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from co-generators and small power producers who satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. MLEC 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 MLEC Board of Directors. Interested members should contact MLEC at P.O. Box 230, Aitkin, MN, 56431 or call 218-927-2191 or 1-800-450-2191.



ARCHITECT CHOSEN FOR HEADQUARTERS PROJECT

Dear Member:

MLEC is proud to announce that we have chosen Architectural Resources, Inc. (ARI) as our architectural partner for the potential headquarters project. ARI has offices in both Hibbing and Duluth, and recently completed the new Lake Country Power service center in Cohasset.

We met with a variety of architectural firms, each bringing their own unique perspective and talents to our potential project. The biggest strength we felt ARI brought to the table, in addition to their experience in our exact project need, was their commitment to our members. Through the entire vetting process, ARI communicated to us how important it was that we get this right for the future of our cooperative – and our members.



Sarah Cron
CEO



Katie Hildenbrand

Katie is a Certified Interior Designer and the President of ARI. Katie has been in the Hibbing office for nearly 20 years, and in addition to interior design, her experience branches out to project management, construction administration, and facility planning. Katie understands the unique needs of a member-

owned organization, and why budgetary constraints are critical. She and her team are also sensitive to our employees' desires, respecting our future neighbors, and communicating all progress to our members.



Karl Larsen

Karl is a Principal and Registered Architect at ARI. Karl is in the Duluth office, and has experience in every type of project, from the smallest remodel to some of ARI's largest new construction builds. His expertise spans from creative design solutions to construction documentation, project management, and

construction administration. Karl and Katie have visited other cooperative facilities with our management team, carefully documenting the things we feel are critical in a modern, technology-friendly, community-centric building.

It is also important to note that ARI understands this project is not a slam dunk. In fact, it is far from over, and if the costs do not come in at a level that is realistic for our long-range financial forecast, the project will be put on hold or cancelled completely. Even with that uncertain outlook, ARI is fully committed to this project. Their team is putting in a significant amount of time, working cooperatively with MLEC to construct a building that will work for us, our members, and our 80-year plan.

After meeting with our management team and all employee groups, and touring several cooperative facilities, ARI will now work on putting together a building plan based on the information they gained from these meetings. The next steps will include vetting contractors, much like the process we used for vetting architectural firms, selecting a firm, and obtaining bids for the construction of the new facility. This is the next phase of the process that will change this from a "potential project" to a "building project", or an "on-hold project" if the costs are too high.

I appreciate your taking the time to follow all this information over the last 18 months. Please continue to watch the MLEC website, our Facebook page, and the Outlet newsletter for updated information. You can also stop by our Annual Meeting on May 5th to meet Katie and Karl in person.

We hope to see you there!

LET'S DISH

Thank you to Linda Distad of Aitkin for sharing this month's recipe.

SEND US YOUR RECIPES!

We'll credit your account **\$10.00** if it's printed in THE OUTLET

MAIL TO:

Kassie Peterson
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 230
Aitkin, MN 56431

OR E-MAIL:

kpeterson@mlecmn.com



HAM & CHEESE STUFFED MEATLOAF

1-2 lbs. hamburger
1 chopped onion
1 egg
1/2 cup oatmeal
Ketchup and mustard (may substitute with BBQ sauce)

Stuffing:
shredded ham (approx. 10 oz.)
shredded cheese

Mix together hamburger, onion, egg, oatmeal, ketchup, mustard, and season with salt and pepper to taste. On waxed paper, pat the meat mixture into a flat rectangle. Evenly spread the shredded ham and cheese on top of the flattened hamburger. Carefully roll up the meat. Seal all edges and ends. Place in a dish and bake at 350 degrees for approximately one hour. Enjoy!

MLEC FIBER HITS MILESTONE

On Wednesday, February 16th, MLEC Fiber reached a milestone when its 1000th customer connected to the network. Sandy and Doug Feltmann are a part of the Phase 5 fiber project that contains the west side of Farm Island Lake, runs east to Sunset Lake, then continues along Tame Fish Lake Road. With their new Internet service, the Feltmanns are excited to have fast and reliable service. They hope to explore streaming options and possibly save money by dropping their current television provider.

"Right now, about 1,800 customers are eligible for service," said Stacy Cluff, MLEC's Technology Manager. "We encourage people to see if MLEC Fiber is available to them and take advantage of having unbeatable speeds for a low monthly price."

For more information about MLEC Fiber Internet give our office a call at 218-429-0433 or visit www.mlecmn.net/fiber.



Sandy & Doug Feltmann

KEEP UTILITY POLES CLEAR

We need your help to keep our lineworkers safe!

Keeping utility poles and electrical equipment free of signs, flags, and other foreign objects helps keep the community powered and our line crews safe.

It may seem harmless, but nails, staples, or other fasteners in utility poles present safety hazards to workers who have to climb the poles to repair or maintain the equipment. Sharp objects in the pole can lead to lineworkers snagging or piercing holes in their protective equipment, such as the rubber gloves that are meant to insulate workers from high voltage. Hanging things from utility poles also presents dangers to the community, putting individuals at risk of making accidental contact with energized power lines.

Safety is our number one priority. This is a reminder to do your part by keeping utility poles clear.



OUTAGE?

Use SmartHub.

It's the most efficient way to report power outages. It's quick, easy, and goes straight into MLEC's dispatch center. No more searching for your account number and phone number to call in. Using the app, you can report an outage in a snap!

Visit www.mlecmn.net to sign up for SmartHub or download the app to your mobile device today!



Regular office hours are
Mon-Fri 8:00 to 4:30

927-2191 or
800-450-2191 (toll free)



48 hours before you dig
Dial 811 - Gopher State
One Call or log on to:
www.gopherstateonecall.org

Then contact a licensed electrician to locate your secondary wires.

MN Electrical Inspectors

Aitkin County &
South East Crow Wing County
Jeff Larson 320-227-3009

Northern Crow Wing County
Nathan Readle 218-537-8419

Mille Lacs County
Benjamin Husom 320-277-6277

Off-peak and dual fuel system consumers should call an electrician or heating contractor for service or repairs.

Find load control schedule at www.mlecmn.net under Quick Links.



Visit our website - www.mlecmn.net
E-mail us - mlec@mlecmn.net

WATER HEATER SAVINGS

One of the biggest energy users in your home is your water heater. There are ways we can help lower that usage, thereby lowering your overall energy bill. First, consider joining our off peak water heating program. Off peak water heating means you would have a separate meter and controls installed on your home for your water heater. This would allow the water heater to only draw electricity during times of low demand, such as overnight. A storage tank would then let you use the hot water all day. In turn you would get a lower kilowatthour rate of 5.35¢.

An added bonus is that right now there is a rebate of \$400 on a Marathon water heater, purchased from us, when you opt into the off peak water heating program. Marathon water heaters are already extremely efficient with 2.5 inches of Envirofoam® insulation in the tank, allowing only 5°F of heat loss in 24 hours. They are ultra-durable and backed by a lifetime warranty of no leaking, leaving you with fewer worries in the future.

Contact your Energy Service Team today at 218-429-0432 or 1-888-433-4279 to discuss our off peak water heating program & Marathon water heaters.

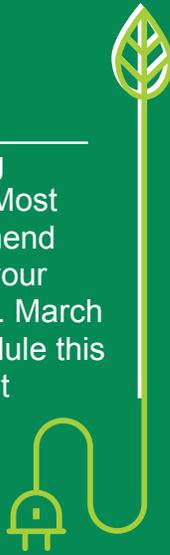


Energy Efficiency

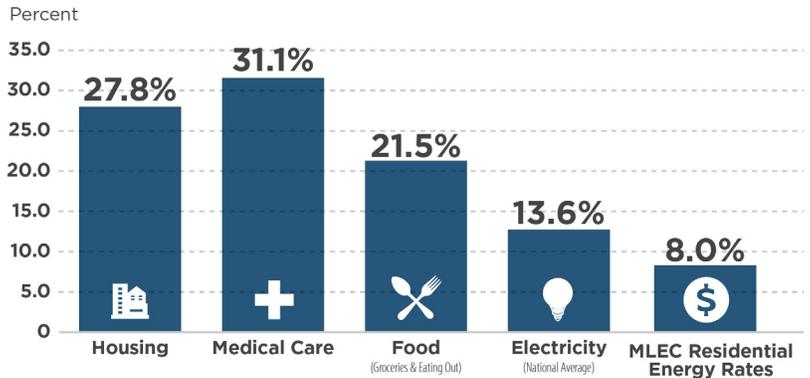
Tip of the Month

When was your cooling system last serviced? Most manufacturers recommend an annual tune up for your home's cooling system. March is a great time to schedule this service so you can beat the summer rush when the pros are busiest.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Average 10-Year Price Increase (2011-2021)



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index

Correction: The graph used in Sarah Cron's article titled "Future Financial Plans" printed in the February Outlet newsletter, contained an error in the graph headline. The correct graph and title is shown above.

GIFT CARD TRIVIA!

Correctly answer the question below for your chance to win a gift card from a local business within our service area. The answer can be found within this issue of The Outlet. You must be an MLEC member to participate. Be sure to include your name and service address! Entries must be received by **March 31st**.

MAIL TO:
Kassie Peterson
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 230
Aitkin, MN 56431

OR E-MAIL:
kpeterson@mlecmn.com

Fill in the blank:

Sharp objects in the pole can lead to lineworkers snagging or piercing holes in their protective equipment, such as the _____ that are meant to insulate workers from high voltage.

Name:

Address:

Congrats to Sindi Jensen of Plymouth, the January gift card trivia winner!

SPEEDS UP TO 1 Gbps

MLEC fiber
Powered by Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Learn more about MLEC Fiber and stay updated on expansion projects!
(218) 429-0433 • www.mlecmn.net/fiber

fast.

reliable.

local.