



THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

VOLUME 51
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BILLING MADE EASY

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative understands how busy life can get. Whether working, running kids to activities, spending time with family, or running errands, it can be easy to forget to make a payment. Luckily, MLEC offers many ways to pay your bill, so you can use what is the most convenient and works the best for your lifestyle!



BILL PAYMENT OPTIONS:

Pay Online - Log in to view your bill electronically through the SmartHub site or the mobile app. You may authorize payment from your checking account or Visa/Mastercard.

Quick Pay - Do you want to make a quick, one-time online payment without logging into your SmartHub account? All you need is the account number and the first five letters of the primary member's last name. If you choose to allow another person to make a payment on your account by this method, please be advised they will be able to see your current balance or past due balance, but no other account information.

Auto Pay Program - Sign up for recurring payments through SmartHub using your bank account or a Visa/Mastercard. Simply sign-in or register for SmartHub to get started. Once you log in to SmartHub, choose Auto Pay Program under the Billing & Payments tab. After adding an account, the total bill amount will be withdrawn from your payment method on the due date each month. The program is ideal for travelers and snowbirds and assures your good credit rating with MLEC.

Pay by Phone - Make payments by phone with your credit/debit card or checking account using our automated phone system. This service is available 24/7. Just call 855-385-9813 and follow the step-by-step instructions.

Pay by Mail - Please allow mail time for payment to be received before the due date. Please call the billing team if additional time is needed. Mail billing remittance to:

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 811
Albert Lea, MN 56007-0811

Pay in Person - Drop off your payment at our office located at 36559 US Highway 169, Aitkin, MN, 56431.

Questions? Call MLEC at 218-429-0430 or 877-634-4314 or visit www.mlecmn.net



THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Air source heat pumps are a safe and efficient home solution!

A smarter solution is available for members seeking to more efficiently heat and cool their home year-round: air source heat pumps (ASHPs).

ASHPs provide a safe, environmentally-friendly solution for home comfort conditioning as well. They don't use an open flame or create products of combustion – such as carbon monoxide and other emissions – so there is no need for venting, and their extended equipment life means less pollution associated with discarding old units or parts and manufacturing their replacements.

Able to deliver hyper-efficient home heating and air conditioning, ASHPs help members realize savings in energy consumption as well as cost. You can save up to 30% on your home cooling expenses by using an Air-Source Heat Pump instead of other conventional air conditioning units. They are also 200-400% more efficient when it comes to home heating. This is possible because it uses advanced technology to transfer more energy than it consumes.

The warmth provided by ASHP technology is superior in quality compared to conventional furnaces. The heat distributed by an ASHP is distributed more evenly and holds its moisture better, resulting in more natural, comfortable warmth.

For a limited time if installed in June, July or August, you can double your rebates on ducted air source heat pumps when installed by a qualified contractor and put on our dual fuel program.

Air Source Heat Pump	Regular Rebate	Promo Rebate
SEER 14.5	\$480	\$960
SEER 15	\$580	\$1,160
SEER 16	\$630	\$1,260

* Ductless ASHP rebates are \$750

*Limited funds are available and awarded on a first-come, first-service basis. Rebate amount and programs are subject to change without notice. Low interest financing is available for qualified members. Mini-split ductless air source heat pumps do not qualify for the double rebate.

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

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Find minutes from
MLEC Board meetings at:
<http://www.mlecmn.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

**Questions? Contact our Energy Services Team
at 218-429-0432 or 888-433-4279.**



BRIGHT SPOTS ON THE HORIZON

Dear Member:

Last month, I painted a dim picture of the things happening in MLEC's first quarter. We are now in our third month of navigating the COVID – 19 crisis; and, while we still need to be pragmatic, we are finally starting to see some bright spots on the horizon. Internal cost containments, sound business decisions, and safe work practices have all helped MLEC start its second quarter off on the right foot.

In May, I also talked about the strength of our community and how we would get through this crisis together. Recently, I had the rare pleasure of taking a phone call from a member indicating their desire to pay it forward — wanting to pay electric bills for some MLEC members that were in a tougher financial position than herself. A gracious gift that exemplifies how united our community really is.

Our wholesale power provider, Great River Energy (GRE), has announced their plans to phase out Coal Creek Station, their last remaining coal asset. GRE will transform its portfolio of power supply resources by adding significant renewable energy and exploring critical grid-scale battery technology, all while significantly reducing member-owner wholesale power costs. In addition, GRE's power supply resources will become more than 95% carbon dioxide-free.

In fact, GRE plans to purchase more than 1,100 megawatts (MW) from new wind energy projects. This amounts to a more than \$1.2 billion investment in the Midwest's abundant clean energy resources. Their renewable capacity is projected to grow from approximately 660 MW in 2020 to more than 1,760 MW by the end of 2023.

“GRE will transform its portfolio of power supply resources by adding significant renewable energy and exploring critical grid-scale battery technology, all while significantly reducing member-owner wholesale power costs. In addition, GRE's power supply resources will become more than 95% carbon dioxide-free.”

Coal Creek Station has been a critical part of GRE's power supply portfolio since 1979, but in recent years it has lost value compared to other generation alternatives. While they are still willing to consider opportunities to sell the facility, GRE plans to shut down both units of Coal Creek Station during the second half of 2022. As I consider the environmental and financial benefits these new opportunities offer MLEC and our sister distribution cooperatives, I want to acknowledge the hardship closing Coal Creek Station will have on its 260 employees and the town of Underwood, North Dakota. To assist local communities during the upcoming transition, GRE plans to make voluntary annual payments of the local government share of the plant's taxes for five years after the plant closure.

When asked about this decision, GRE's President and Chief Executive Officer David Saggau had this to say, “We are building a power supply portfolio that will serve our member-owner cooperatives for decades. We are taking advantage of



Sarah Cron
CEO

cost-competitive renewables and reliable access to market energy while fostering innovation as the technology of our industry evolves.”

Great River Energy is also working with Form Energy, a battery storage technology developer based in Somerville, Massachusetts, on a first-of-its-kind demonstration of Form's unique long-duration storage technology. The battery project will be a 1 MW, grid-connected storage system capable of delivering its rated power continuously for 150 hours, far longer than the four-hour usage period common among lithium ion batteries. Long-duration storage will help maintain grid reliability in the future during extreme conditions, such as a heat wave or polar vortex. The battery system will be located in Cambridge, Minnesota, and is planned to be completed in late 2023.

COVID – 19 is still here, and we are all still facing our challenges and frustration. MLEC will continue with our preparedness planning, member assistance, and community support. We will also look forward to the bright spots on the horizon, trying to find some “normal” in our lives.

LET'S DISH

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, P.O. Box 230
Aitkin, MN 56431

OR E-MAIL:

kpeterson@mlecmn.com



Thank you to Katie Berndt of Dayton for sharing this month's recipe.

RHUBARB CAKE

1/2 cup butter or margarine	1 tsp baking soda
1 1/2 cups brown sugar	3/4 cup buttermilk
1 egg	1 tsp vanilla
2 cups all purpose flour	2 cups cut-up rhubarb
1/2 tsp salt	

Cream together butter, brown sugar, and egg. Add flour, salt, and baking soda (combined) alternately with the buttermilk. Stir in vanilla and rhubarb. Pour into greased 9 x 9 inch pan or a 9 x 13 inch pan depending on desired cake thickness. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until tests done. You may sprinkle 1/2 cup sugar and 1 tsp cinnamon on top of the batter before baking. Serve with ice cream or whipped cream. Enjoy!

MLEC fiber

Powered by Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

MLEC is bringing Fiber-to-the-Home Internet to more members! We are expanding our MLEC Fiber Internet network and beginning construction on our new projects soon. Sign up to guarantee service to your home!

CONTACT US FOR MORE DETAILS!

Call MLEC at (218) 429-0433 or visit online at www.mlecmn.net/fiber

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG



Underground power lines are just as dangerous as overhead power lines. Avoid serious injury and property damage by calling 811 before you dig to have underground facilities marked. Call Gopher State One Call or 811 at least two business days prior to a dig. Dial 811 or 1-800-252-1166 during business hours (6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. April 1st - October 31st). This service is free for homeowners. Minnesota state law requires you call. If you damage a line, you will be financially responsible for repairs.

5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Always call 8-1-1 first, because you never know what's below. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:

Source: call811.com

1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before you start.



2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for a response to your request. Affected utilities will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.



3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded by comparing the markers to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. They are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project.



STANDBY GENERATORS

Reliability is of upmost importance at MLEC. However, we sometimes experience outages due to a variety of causes, such as weather, animals, or damaged power lines from digging or car crashes. For most members, being without power is merely an inconvenience, but for others, continuity of service is very important. For this reason, we offer a standby generator program that is ideal for members with a home business, sump pump, medical needs, or simply desire to always have the comfort and conveniences that electricity provides.

MLEC is now offering Briggs and Stratton standby generators. When the power goes out, the generator automatically takes over. All generators are professionally installed and serviced by MLEC and come with a 10 year parts and labor warranty.

Call MLEC for more information or a price quote at 218-429-0432.



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
Mike Wenzel 218/270-2265

Northern Crow Wing County
Bradley Rasmussen 218/543-1023

Mille Lacs County
Tim Emery 320-692-4104

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



Thank you!

At Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative, we want to express our gratitude and appreciation for frontline, essential workers, and volunteers. Thank you for all you do to keep us safe and healthy in these unprecedented times.

We can do this together!

First Quarter Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Comparative Operating Statement

for the Quarter Ending March 31, 2019 & March 31, 2020

	2019	2020
OPERATING REVENUE	7,568,549	7,016,929
COST OF PURCHASED POWER	4,532,129	4,054,889
DISTRIBUTION EXPENSE-OPERATION	249,767	373,807
DISTRIBUTION EXPENSE-MAINTENANCE	483,124	707,193
CUSTOMER ACCOUNTS EXPENSE	212,387	227,206
CUSTOMER SERVICE AND INFORMATIONAL EXPENSE	137,730	165,005
ADMINISTRATIVE AND GENERAL EXPENSE	443,664	444,266
TOTAL OPERATING COSTS	1,526,672	1,917,477
TOTAL OPERATIONS EXPENSE	6,058,801	5,972,366
DEPRECIATION	494,444	588,821
TAX EXPENSE	1,330	1,330
INTEREST ON LONG TERM DEBT	349,728	360,441
INTEREST EXPENSE-OTHER	1,666	868
OTHER DEDUCTION	176	-
TOTAL COST OF ELECTRIC SERVICE	6,906,145	6,923,826
OPERATING MARGINS	662,404	93,103
NON OPERATING MARGINS-INTEREST	61,652	37,589
NON OPERATING MARGINS-OTHER	(9,840)	(35,744)
GENERATION & TRANSMISSION CAPITAL CREDITS	-	-
OTHER CAPITAL CREDITS	78,776	83,394
NET MARGINS	792,992	178,342

REPORTING OUTAGES

Update your contact information!

The technology we use for communication can change every day, even at your house. Are you using a cell phone? A landline phone? Both? MLEC wants to keep up with you. 24/7 - we have a system to get the power back on...with up-to-date information, you can make it go faster.

When you report an outage after hours, your phone number is a critical step in restoring power. Our automated system can identify your service by the number you are calling from (if it matches the number(s) listed on your account). Please let us know the numbers you would most likely use to call in an outage and we'll update your account.

Name _____

Service Address _____

Account Number _____

Phone #1 _____
Identify where the call comes from: cell residence business

Phone #2 _____
Identify where the call comes from: cell residence business

COMPLETE AND RETURN TO:

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative, P.O. Box 230, Aitkin, MN 56431 or, return with your next payment.

SIGN UP TODAY! Call our office at
218-429-0433 or 800-497-5310



NOW UP TO
30
Mbps

Unlimited data plans
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about anywhere

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OUR OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED
FRIDAY, JULY 3RD
HAVE A SAFE & HAPPY HOLIDAY!

SYSTEM-WIDE METER UPGRADE

MLEC is in the process of making a substantial investment in infrastructure, building one of the most technologically advanced power control systems. MLEC plans to implement an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) and install a meter data management system (MDMS) throughout 2020. The new meters will improve reliability and give you more tools and opportunities to manage and save energy.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

(218) 927-2191 • (800) 450-2191 • www.mlecmm.net