











WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

ABOUT CHANGES TO THE MINNESOTA COLD WEATHER RULE



If you have difficulty
paying your utility bills
during the winter months, it's
important that you understand
Minnesota's Cold Weather
Rule. The Minnesota Public
Utilities Commission set up
the Cold Weather Rule to
protect residential members
from being shut off if they are
unable to pay their bill in full.

This year, the cold weather protection period begins two weeks earlier and is extended two weeks later than recent years. This means that from October 1 through April 30, a utility may not disconnect utility service of a residential cooperative member if the disconnection affects the primary heat source of the dwelling, and ALL of the following criteria are met:

- 1. THE HOUSEHOLD INCOME of the Cooperative member is at or below 50 percent of the state median income. Income may be verified on forms provided by the Cooperative or by the local energy assistance provider.
- 2. A COOPERATIVE MEMBER ENTERS INTO AND MAKES timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- 3. A COOPERATIVE MEMBER RECEIVES, from the Cooperative, referrals to energy assistance programs, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the member's energy bills.

If you meet ALL conditions of the Cold Weather Rule, cannot pay your bill, and need protection from utility shut off; complete and mail the "Cold Weather Shut Off Protection" application with proper documentation to support income eligibility. You can find and print the application at peoplesenergy.coop/cold-weather-rule.

In addition, the Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is available. To learn more about EAP and understand how to apply for assistance, see the article on page four.

CEO MESSAGE

FROM MICHAEL J. HENKE, PRESIDENT & CEO



Market OKLa

mhenke@peoplesenergy.coop

Last year, our primary power provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative, established a goal to reduce their carbon dioxide (CO2) intensity rate by 50 percent and to generate 30 percent of its electricity from renewable resources by 2030.

To help achieve those goals they recently entered into a purchase agreement with Starwood Energy to acquire the RockGen Energy Center, a 503-megawatt (MW) natural gas-powered plant, in Cambridge, Wisconsin. The acquisition of this existing facility will help support reliability and the transistion to renewable energy resources as Dairyland continues to move toward a lower-carbon energy portfolio. Earlier this year, Dairyland retired its Genoa Station #3 coal-fired power plant.

Access to cost-effective and reliable energy is critical to us fulfilling our mission to provide reliable electricity at fair and reasonable prices to you, our member-owners. We know you trust that when you flip the switch, open the refrigerator door, or turn up your thermostat; the lights will turn on, your food will be cold, and your home will be warm.

You may be asking yourself why Dairyland's purchase of an existing gas plant is so important to the Cooperative. As mentioned, reliable and affordable electricity is our mission and it is what you have come

to expect. Electricity generated by the sun and wind is an important part of a diverse energy supply. However, these resources are unpredictable, which impacts reliability. Currently, the technology to store electricity isn't at a level needed to support a 100 percent renewable energy portfolio.

Until that technology exists, our power provider has to utilize practical and proven options that support our requirements while also keeping rates reasonable because you as a rate-payer ultimately pay that cost.

The acquisition of RockGen Energy Center helps bridge the divide between where we are today and the technology of tomorrow with an option that emits less CO2 than coal-fired plants. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, natural gas emits almost 50 percent less CO2 than coal. While it isn't perfect, it is a step in the right direction, and it will take time to cross the divide because it isn't as easy as flipping a switch.

As always, if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or the staff, we are here to serve you!

Sincerely, Michael J. Henke, President & CEO. (800) 214-2694

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 101:

If you are interested in learning more about the role of the Board of Directors or have interest in possibly running for the board seat in your district someday, we will be hosting an on-line informational meeting on Thursday, Oct. 28 at 12:00 noon.

Please RSVP no later than 4:00 pm on Tuesday, Oct. 26 so login information can be sent out in advance. Email rsvp@peoplesenergy.coop or call (507) 367-7054.



MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

highline

PEC's Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on August 26. During the meeting, the following items were discussed: canceled Member Meetings due to COVID-19; 1M solar field "go live" date was August 25, 2021; transmission project update; Member Advisory Committee recruitment; low employee COVID-19 cases; director compensation and expense reimbursement; director emergency contact forms; a review of meetings attended; and the video "Appraising and Compensating the CEO" was shown. A quorum of directors was present, and the following actions were taken:

- Approved a 4.700 mill power cost adjustment for legacy members for August usage billed in September.
- Approved Resolution 2021-002, Guarantor's Certificate of Resolutions and Incumbency, updating Heartland Security's line of credit quarantor's certificate.
- Approved rate revisions for Schedules G, CSR, and PA as presented to be effective September 1, 2021.

Vol. 85 • Issue 09

MANAGEMENT

Michael J. Henke, President/CEO

Patrick Nelson,

Director of Engineering and Operations

Michelle Olson,

Director of Member Services

Anthony Stern,

Chief Financial Officer

Gwen Stevens,

Director of Cooperative Relations

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1:

Joe Book

(507) 251-7148, jbook@ peoplesenergy.coop

DISTRICT 2:

Jodie Tvedt

(507) 218-2141, jtvedt@ peoplesenergy.coop

DISTRICT 3:

Robert Hoefs

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DISTRICT 4:

Tracy Lauritzen,

Secretary/Treasurer (507) 261-8740, tlauritzen@ peoplesenergy.coop

DISTRICT 5:

Jerry Wooner,

Board Chair (507) 259-7217, jwooner@ peoplesenergy.coop

DISTRICT 6:

Art Friedrich

Vice Chair (507) 951-0590, afriedrich@ peoplesenergy.coop

DISTRICT 7: Jeff Orth

(507) 254-6358, jorth@ peoplesenergy.coop

Visit peoplesenergy.coop for a listing of the areas covered by each district.

Business Hours:

7:30 am - 4:00 pm, M-F

QUESTION: "Can I be a candidate for

the Board of Directors?" - An often-asked question.

ANSWER: As a memberowned and governed not-for-profit organization, PEC depends on its members' active engagement for the health and success of the organization. A key role is serving on the Board of Directors, the governing body of the Cooperative that represents its members in policy and rate making among other duties. Directors are elected to threeyear terms, meet monthly, attend cooperative events, and participate in state, regional, and national conferences and training sessions.

The seats representing Districts 1 and 6 on the Cooperative's Board of Directors are up for election in 2022. Based on the Cooperative's Bylaws, residential members are eligible to serve if they:

- Are a member of and receive electrical service from the Cooperative at their homestead (for tax purposes) located within the geographical area of Districts 1 or 6.
- Are not employed or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative.
- · Have not been employed by the Cooperative in the five years prior to being elected.
- Are not a close relative of an incumbent director or an employee of the Cooperative at the time of election to the Board.

Interested? To learn more about the election process and be considered for nomination by the Nominating Committee, contact PEC Director of Cooperative Relations Gwen Stevens at (507) 367-7015 or gstevens@peoplesenergy.coop.

You can email your questions to memberrelations@peoplesrec.com or message us on Facebook. Your question may be in the next newsletter!

ENERGY **ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating/electricity costs and furnace repairs. A member's household income must be at or below 60% of the state annual median income (\$67,764 annually for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2022. To learn more or to apply for assistance:

- ► Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce's Energy Assistance website, https://mn.gov/commerce/ consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance, for more details and to access the application portal.
- Contact one of the EAP service providers listed below for additional information and assistance:
 - **SEMCAC**: Serving the counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Mower, Winona, Freeborn, Houston, and Steele. Toll Free: (800) 944-3281
 - Three Rivers Community Action, Inc.: Serving the counties of Olmsted and Wabasha. Toll Free: (800) 277-8418
- Reach out to one of these organizations for help:
 - Rochester Salvation Army HeatShare: Toll Free: (800) 288-3663
 - First Call For Help: 211





Congratulations to Mike Henke (President & CEO) and Gwen Stevens (Director of Cooperative Relations) for celebrating 10 years with PEC!

THANK YOU BOTH!

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

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The Jeremiah Program

Jeremiah Program, a national non-profit with a mission to disrupt the cycle of poverty for single mothers and their children two generations at a time, first came to Rochester a few years ago. In the summer of 2020, the Rochester

Campus opened, providing housing for

program participants.

This summer, Jeremiah Program Rochester -SE MN decided to offer summer programming for kids living on campus. Through its Operation Round Up program, People's Energy Cooperative provided Jeremiah Program with a \$2,500 grant to help pay for summer camps and other enrichment activities. The donation directly benefited 42 children.

Activity selection was directed by each individual family, with Jeremiah Program paying directly to the camp or organizer. Summer enrichment activities funded by the grant included everything from swimming lessons to ninja camp. The objective was to offer unique opportunities for children to learn, grow, and explore in new ways.

"The children have loved it!" comments Jeremiah Program Executive Director Ally Hanten Ebert. "Moms were really excited to be able to send their children to a camp that their kids picked out."

She continues, "One of our little girls loves all things princesses. She got the opportunity to go to Princess Camp for a week. She would come back home in her princess dress of the day and twirl down the hallways telling her mom all about her time at camp. Thank you for helping make this little girl's summer full of magic!"

According to Jeremiah Program, the pandemic has been devastating for the Rochester-SE MN community, particularly for families experiencing poverty. Children have missed out on vital educational and social opportunities. Many also faced added stress and

challenging transitions to distance learning. Investing in summer learning and out-of-school enrichment for children experiencing poverty can propel efforts to reduce educational disparities, and ensure all children excel academically, socially, and emotionally. Twenty-six thousand four hundred thirty-two.

"The pandemic has most impacted the feeling of connectedness amongst our families. Giving them the opportunity to go to camp helped our children and families feel more connected and engaged in the community. We thank People's Energy Cooperative for this opportunity and their continuing commitment to Southeast Minnesota families." - Ally Hanten Ebert, Jeremiah Program Executive Director



ABOUT JEREMIAH PROGRAM: Using a combination of quality early childhood education, childcare, a safe and affordable place to live, and empowerment and life skills training, the program has impacted the lives of more than 4,000 single mothers and their children since it was founded 20 years ago. For more information, visit: jeremiahprogram.org/rochester.

IS IT TIME TO CONSIDER A NEW **HEATER?**

Consider the advantages and benefits of an electric water heater:

- Easy to install, requiring no gas lines or exhaust flue
- Environmentally friendly and capable of using electricity generated from solar, wind, hydropower, and other renewable sources
- Lightweight and durable with superior corrosion resistance

Remember, PEC offers options to help you save money when purchasing a qualifying electric water heater!

- Rebates from \$150 to \$800 for a newly installed or replacement electric water heater
- Incentive rates when enrolled in a Dual Fuel or Off-Peak Energy Management Program
- Service repair reimbursements (up to \$300) over the life of the water heater

For more information, visit peoplesenergy.coop/waterheating-programs.



Energy AUDIT

CHECK OUT THIS OPPORTUNITY!

Are you a Minnesota Energy Resources customer AND a People's Energy Cooperative member? If you can answer "yes" to both questions, then you are eligible for a unique opportunity.

Minnesota Energy Resources and People's Energy Cooperative have partnered together and are scheduling appointments in Chatfield, Dover, Elgin, Eyota, Oronoco, Plainview, and Stewartville from October 19-21 for in-home, energy-saving audits.

An energy audit helps you identify sources of energy inefficiencies in your home and options to make it more energy efficient. This service is valued at over \$300, but you pay only \$50, and People's Energy Cooperative and Minnesota Energy Resources pay the rest! Your \$50 investment includes:

- ► A COMPREHENSIVE AUDIT of your home's energy use of both natural gas and electricity.
- ► **INFORMATION** on what energy-efficient improvements make the most sense for your home.
- ► A BLOWER DOOR TEST to determine where leaks are in your home.
- ► SAFETY TESTS that include combustion safety, depressurization, and carbon monoxide detection.
- ► A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW of all relevant rebate opportunities.

Again, to be eligible for this joint natural gas and electric residential audit, your home MUST be served by both Minnesota Energy Resources AND People's Energy Cooperative.

Schedule an audit by calling (800) 376-0517, or online at www.minnesotaenergyresources.com/audits.

Note: Minnesota Energy Resources and People's Energy Cooperative are committed to your health and safety. Our auditors follow CDC guidelines on COVID-19 to ensure safety for both you and the auditor.

an alternative way to support renewable energy

In 1998, Dairyland Power Cooperative, our primary power provider, developed Evergreen, a green power program that gives electric cooperative members the opportunity to voluntarily support the increased use of renewable energy sources without the burden of installing their own system. Since then, the program has grown and provides options to participate based on what best fits a member's situation or preferences:

EVERGREEN EVERYONE: Supports utilityscale renewable energy in increments of 100 kilowatt-hour (kWh) blocks for just \$1 per block per month (\$0.01 per kWh).

EVERGREEN EVERYDAY: Members enrolled in a storage strategy for their electric water heater receive up to four Evergreen blocks to help keep their water hot.

EVERGREEN EVERYWHERE: Members who charge an electric vehicle during off-peak hours can receive up to four Evergreen blocks.

EVERGREEN EVERYTHING: Members can choose to have 100 percent of their electricity use generated by renewable energy for \$1 per 100 kWh block. The average home uses around 1,000 kWh per month, which equals \$10 per month.

EVERGREEN FOR BUSINESS: Member businesses and government entities who use a minimum of 200 MWh annually can meet their green energy or sustainability goals for as low as \$120.

WHERE DOES EVERGREEN RENEWABLE **ENERGY COME FROM?** Each Evergreen block is tracked by our wholesale power provider Dairyland Power Cooperative. Dairyland's renewable energy comes from regional solar, wind, hydroelectric, and biogas generation resources.

AREN'T POWER PROVIDERS REQUIRED TO PRODUCE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLE ENERGY **RESOURCES?** Some states require a specific percentage of a utility's energy sales come from renewable energy sources. Energy produced through the Evergreen program is above and beyond those requirements.

HOW DO I KNOW I'M GETTING MY **ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLE**

ENERGY SOURCES? Generation facilities within our power provider's service territory send their power onto the power grid. The actual electricity that serves a home, farm, or business may or may not come from renewable sources. However, when members enroll in Evergreen, each member increases the amount of renewable energy flowing into the grid. The Evergreen renewable energy that you purchase will replace electricity that would have been generated by conventional fossil fuels. Thirtyone thousand five hundred fifty-four.

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN EVERGREEN?

Visit peoplesenergy.coop/evergreenrenewable-energy-program to get started.





A SMART EV CHARGER

If you are considering installing an EV charger at your home or business, don't forget that CHARGE™ branded smart chargers, when enrolled in an energy management program, are eligible for a \$1,000 rebate. People's proactively ordered these chargers but, like many other industries, charger manufacturers are experiencing delays in obtaining materials. Members who have ordered chargers will be notified as soon as we receive them.

To learn more about the CHARGE™ branded smart charger and other EV info, visit peoplesenergy.coop/ electricvehicles.



National Drive Electric Week

(September 25 - October 3) is a nationwide celebration to raise awareness of the many benefits of all-electric and plug-in hybrid cars, trucks, motorcycles, and more. With more than 40 models of EVs on the market and many more planned for the near future, it is more likely you will find one that meets your needs or wish list. Benefits of owning an EV include:

- Instant torque to quickly speed up and merge onto the freeway.
- ▶ \$1.24 per eGallon (U.S. average) Twentynine thousand three hundred thirteen.
- Latest technology such as driver assist lane tracking, emergency braking, and over-the-air updates.
- ► They require less expensive and less frequent maintenance.
- ▶ Better for the environment, even when accounting for their manufacturing carbon emissions and when using electricity from coal plants.
- ► Most EVs can go between 200 and 350 miles on a full charge, which is well over a typical daily commute, even in rural America.

To understand more about what it means to own an electric vehicle, we encourage you to check out peoplesenergy.coop/electric-vehicle-resources.

beat the peak together

As a member of People's Energy, you know how to make smart energy choices that help you save money. But did you know that WHEN you use electricity can be just as important as how much you use?

Throughout the day, energy use fluctuates based on consumer demand. Typically, most households use larger amounts of electricity in the morning when people are getting ready for their day, and in the evenings when they return home, cook dinner, wash clothes, and watch television.

"Peak" hours are when people are using more electricity at the same time. The cost for PEC to provide power is higher during these times because of the additional demand for electricity. By shifting some of your energy use to hours when demand is lower, also known as offpeak hours, you can help us keep rates stable and more affordable, saving you money on your energy bills in the long run. Here are three easy ways you can shift energy use to off-peak hours:

- ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT. During the upcoming winter months, lower the thermostat a few degrees during peak hours.
- WASH FULL LOADS OF CLOTHES in cold water during off-peak hours.
- RUN THE DISHWASHER RIGHT BEFORE you go to bed, or air-dry dishes by opening the dishwasher instead of the heated dry cycle.

If you're looking to do more, sign up for Power Down. During the winter and summer months, Power Down alerts participants when the Cooperative is experiencing an energy peak so they can voluntarily reduce their use of electricity. These peaks coincide with our "peak energy alerts" typically associated with our energy management programs.

For more information about Power Down and an easy online registration form, visit peoplesenergy.coop/ power-down-voluntary-load-reduction.



AUTHOR ABBY BERRY writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

Help Us Celebrate ENERGY EFFICIENCY DAY

October 6 may be Energy Efficiency Day, but the benefits of energy efficiency last year-round. Help us celebrate by participating in our first-ever Energy Efficiency #LifeHack contest. ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 6, submit your favorite life hack that doubles as an energy efficiency tip. You can enter by posting on our social media pages or emailing memberrelations@peoplesenergy.coop. After that, you'll be entered to win a standard residential home energy audit.

The only requirement is that you are a residential member of People's Energy Cooperative. Employees are not eligible to win. We look forward to adding some of your life hacks to our energy efficiency portfolio!



WE RECOGNIZE THAT IN FARMING,

many dangers are present with long and arduous workdays. It is important to remember that farming accidents related to electricity are possible, but in many cases preventable. Especially during the busy harvest season, be sure to take the following steps to decrease the chances of an electrical-related incident:

- USE CARE WHEN RAISING AUGERS or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- KEEP EQUIPMENT AT LEAST 10 FEET from power lines at all times, in all directions.
- ALWAYS LOWER EXTENSIONS to the lowest setting when moving loads.
- NEVER ATTEMPT TO MOVE A POWER LINE out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- IF YOUR EQUIPMENT DOES HIT A POWER LINE. do not leave the cab. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away, and wait for the utility crew to cut the power.

Although harvest season is a time filled with tight deadlines and heightened work stress, take the time to consider electrical safety. It could save your life or the lives of others.

Look UP and LIVE!

BE MINDFUL OF CLEARANCE

As the leaves start changing colors and temperatures drop, it's time to start packing away for winter. This fall, PEC would like to remind everyone to pay close attention to your surroundings and keep electrical safety top of mind.

While harvest safety is certainly important, the fall season can also bring an increased number of electrical safety incidents related to people packing away campers or other large equipment before winter. It can be all too easy to overlook things that we see every day – such as overhead power lines. However, failure to notice high voltage power lines can be a deadly oversight.

People's Energy Cooperative encourages everyone to "look up and live" this fall by first considering overhead power lines before moving large vehicles or other equipment. Always begin by surveying your surroundings and noting the location of overhead power lines. Keep equipment, and yourself, at least 10 feet from lines.

Maintaining safe distances from electrical equipment is important because accidents with electrical equipment are both dangerous and costly. Additional precautions need to be taken when using large equipment in the vicinity of electrical lines and equipment. Not doing so puts the operator at risk as well as the safety of those nearby.

For more on electrical safety and to see videos about power line safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.



Preparing for disasters is protecting everyone you love. Unfortunately, disasters and emergencies can happen at any time. Ready.gov has shared a few ways you can get started:

1) Make a Plan

Talk to your friends and family about how you will communicate before, during, and after a disaster. Make sure to update your plan based on the Centers for Disease Control recommendations due to COVID-19.

2) Build a Kit

Gather supplies that will last for several days after a disaster for everyone living in your home. Don't forget to consider the unique needs each person or pet may have in case you have to evacuate quickly. Update your kits and supplies based on recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control.

3) Prepare for Disasters

Limit the impacts that disasters have on you and your family. Know the risk of disasters in your area and check your insurance coverage. Learn how to make your home stronger in the face of storms and other common hazards and act fast if you receive a local warning or alert.

4) Teach Kids About Preparedness

Talk to your kids about preparing for emergencies and what to do in case you are separated. Reassure them by providing information about how they can get involved.

5) Download the FEMA App

Receive real-time alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations nationwide; locate open emergency shelters and disaster recovery centers in your area; connect with FEMA to register for disaster assistance online; and prepare for disasters with a customizable emergency kit checklist, emergency family plan, and reminder. Available on Android and iOs smartphones and tablets. Two thousand three hundred sixty-two.

Each September, we recognize National Preparedness Month to remind ourselves of different ways we can prepare to protect ourselves and our families.



1775 Lake Shady Avenue South Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT, SO DO WE

Call even if you think your neighbors have reported the outage. Leave one light on so you know when power has been restored. Have an emergency kit prepared.

(507) 367-7000 or (800) 214-2694



Each month, we hide four account numbers (without the last two digits) within the text of the newsletter. If you find your number, contact the Cooperative by the end of the current month at (800) 214-2694 or memberservices@peoples energy.coop to receive a \$30 credit on your bill.

GOOD LUCK IN FINDING YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER!

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT 2021

Carr's Tree Service and New Age Tree Service are working with us to execute our vegetation management program for annual line maintenance. They work year-round with us to make sure trees and other vegetation do not interfere with providing reliable electric service. During the month of October, Carr's Tree Service will be working in Rock Dell, Viola, and Elgin townships. New Age Tree Service will be working during this time in West Albany, Lake, and Gilford townships.

Our vegetation management policy is available at peoplesenergy.coop/vegetation-management. If you have any questions regarding their work, please contact the Cooperative by calling (800) 214-2694.





UPCOMING RATE CHANGE

This is a friendly reminder that the rate changes, effective with September 1 energy use, will appear on bills mailed in October. We've been doing our best to communicate the rate change through multiple channels for the last few months to help members understand what the changes are and why they were made.

For more detailed information, we encourage you to visit peoplesenergy.coop/rate-restructure. This page has information about the five-year rate restructuring plan, answers to frequently asked questions, and a listing of the most common rates.

LANDLORD AGREEMENT: If you own residential property within the Cooperative's service territory and you have a tenant who pays the electric bill, please ensure you have a landlord agreement on file. This helps facilitate management of the account when there is a transition in tenants. If you do not have one on file, it is available on our website. Visit peoplesenergy.coop and click on "Account Management Forms" under "Member Resources" on the front page. There, you will find a downloadable PDF which you can complete and return to the Cooperative.