

# highline

MAY 2024

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF PEOPLE'S ENERGY COOPERATIVE

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# CEO MESSAGE

FROM MICHAEL J. HENKE, PRESIDENT & CEO

mhenke@peoplesenergy.coop

Next month, 14 lineworkers from Minnesota and Iowa will embark on a 2,800-mile journey that will improve lives of Guatemalan families for generations to come. The trip is part of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) International Program, which has been providing volunteers to illuminate villages and homes in impoverished countries around the world since 1962.

Our very own Eric Dessner, lead area lineworker, will join six other lineworkers from Minnesota cooperatives and seven from Iowa. Together they will string lines and hook up electricity to homes in two villages in the region of La Hortiga.

The villages are west of Guatemala City and are in the mountains at about 10,000 feet of elevation. The lineworkers will build several miles of line that will connect to the local municipal power company, which will take over the service once completed. After getting the distribution line built, they will install wires and circuits in the homes of villagers.

Eric is serving as a lead lineworker on this trip, along with Mike Berkenpas from North West REC in Orange City, Iowa. Both men traveled to the location in February to scout the work and determine the resources and materials needed to construct the line.

NRECA started international trips as a way to bring prosperity to those less fortunate around the

world. Since that time, they have turned the lights on for more than 160 million people in 48 countries, including countries in Africa, South America, Central America, and Asia. Teams assist with all stages of planning and executing electrification projects, promoting electric cooperative development, and empowering communities around the world.

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association, along with Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, is helping to organize the trip. You can find out more about the trip by visiting [mrea.org](http://mrea.org) and selecting "programs" from the menu. We also plan to share updates during the trip in June on our social media pages. When Eric returns, he'll share more about his experience in July's newsletter.

We are proud of Eric and the work he will do to bring electricity to a community in Guatemala. He truly embodies the spirit of the first cooperatives in America that wanted to bring the benefit of electricity to those who didn't have access. We thank Border States, a key vendor of ours, for financially supporting this trip and covering Eric's expenses.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Michael J. Henke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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



# MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

highline

Vol. 88 • Issue 5

PEC's Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on April 25. During the meeting, the following items were discussed: The dangers of distracted driving; a review of Annual Meeting expenses and feedback; PEC's property tax appeal case; IJJA grant application; vegetation management; front lobby open to the public; economic development opportunities; anti-harassment training; board roles and responsibilities training; quarterly financial update; update on strategic plan; and co-generation rate education.

## A quorum of directors was present, and the following actions were taken:

- ▶ Approved PCA credit of -0.376 mill for Legacy members for April usage billed in May.
- ▶ Approved PCA charge of 6.081 mill for SMEC members for April usage billed in May.
- ▶ Approved the allocation of \$294,207 in operating margins and \$1,004,582 of Dairyland capital credit allocations for Legacy members.
- ▶ Approved the allocation of \$1,423,257 in operating margins and \$194,853 in SMEC G&T capital credits allocations for SMEC members.
- ▶ Approved date of May 21, 2024, for the next MAC meeting.
- ▶ Approved fleet production spots for trucks.
- ▶ Approved up to \$30,000 for three PACE Grant system impact studies.

## MANAGEMENT

Michael J. Henke,  
*President/CEO*

Michelle Olson,  
*Director of  
Member Services*

Gwen Stevens,  
*Director of Cooperative  
Relations*

Dody Wubker, *CFO*

Cody Black,  
*Director of Engineering*

Nicholas Woetzel,  
*Director of Operations*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1:  
Jon Kroening, *Secretary*

DISTRICT 2:  
Jodie Tvedt, *Vice Chair*

DISTRICT 3:  
John Winter

DISTRICT 4:  
Tracy Lauritzen, *Treasurer*

DISTRICT 5:  
Jerry Wooner, *Board Chair*

DISTRICT 6:  
Art Friedrich,  
*Dairyland Director*

DISTRICT 7:  
Jeff Orth

Visit [peoplesenergy.coop](http://peoplesenergy.coop)  
for a listing of the areas  
covered by each district.

Business Hours:  
7:30 am – 4:00 pm, M–F

# DID YOU KNOW?

## Capital Credit Allocation was noted on your May Billing Statement

*As a member of People's Energy Cooperative, you benefit from the margins generated by the Cooperative. These margins come back to you in the form of capital credits.*

At the end of each calendar year, the Cooperative subtracts its operating expenses from the operating revenue collected to determine operating margins. These margins are then allocated, or assigned, to members' capital credit accounts based on the amount of energy they purchased (patronage). This typically happens in April and is reported on your May billing statement.

This year, the Board allocated \$2,916,899 in capital credits. It can be helpful to think of your capital credit account as being like a long-term savings account. This account is the accumulation of margins which have been allocated to you each year based on your patronage.

# \$30 SPOT YOUR NUMBER

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 15th of the next month at **(800) 214-2694** or [memberservices@peoplesenergy.coop](mailto:memberservices@peoplesenergy.coop) to receive a \$30 credit on your bill.

**Good luck in finding your account number!**



# Celebrating HR Professionals

One of the driving forces that makes People's Energy Cooperative such a great place to work is our dedicated Human Resources (HR) staff. Our HR Department works diligently to support employees and the Cooperative's efforts to establish and maintain employment practices, compensation policies, and training and development programs. These efforts enable the Cooperative to attract, engage, and retain highly qualified individuals who understand and accept cooperative philosophy.

To celebrate this important role, we recognize International HR Day every year on May 20. This is a day to shine the spotlight on the valuable role our HR professionals play in helping our organization succeed.

Thank you to our dedicated HR team!



**Tara Stockman**  
HR Manager



**Kari Harbaugh**  
HR Assistant

## Memorial Day

People's Energy Cooperative will be closed on Monday, May 27 to observe Memorial Day. If you have a power outage, please call (800) 214-2694 to report the problem.

We honor the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice serving our nation.

## 2024 Rate Increase

As a friendly reminder, members will see a rate increase, effective with May 1 energy use, on their June billing statements. We've been doing our best to communicate the rate increase through multiple channels to help members understand the impact of this change.

For a listing of the most common rate changes, frequently asked questions, and information on the 2024 Rate Increase we encourage members to visit [peoplesenergy.coop/rates](http://peoplesenergy.coop/rates).

# Vegetation Management Reminder

Carr's Tree Service and New Age Tree Service continue to work with us to execute our vegetation management plan for 2024. During the month of June, Carr's Tree Service will be working in portions of Farmington, Haverhill, Cascade, Oronoco, Highland, Watopa, and Glasgow townships. New Age Tree Service will be working during this time in portions of Eyota, Dover, Orion, Elmira, Oronoco, Farmington, and Zumbro townships.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Both companies also assist with the yearly herbicidal application in areas that were cleared two to three years ago. Postcards will be sent to members prior to each company arriving to spray in their area. Twenty-eight thousand thirty-six.





# Electrify Rochester

Are you considering going electric? Whether you are planning a home renovation or thinking about purchasing an electric vehicle, we hope you join us at this FREE, low-pressure event to learn more about how you can electrify your home or business. Experts, vendors, and residents will be on hand to help you understand how to bring your electrification or sustainability project to life.

## ELECTRIFY ⚡ ROCHESTER EXPO 2024

**When:** Saturday, July 6, 2024 from 8 AM to 2 PM

**Where:** Crawford Hall at Graham Park in Rochester

Visit [www.electrifyrochester.com](http://www.electrifyrochester.com) for more details.



## Minnesota's E-Bike Rebate Program

Minnesota's Electric-Assisted Bicycle Rebate (e-bike rebate) is designed to reduce the cost for residents to purchase a new e-bike at eligible retailers starting July 1, 2024. Residents can receive a discount of up to \$1,500 on a qualifying e-bike. The discount is 50-75% of a buyer's qualifying expenses, depending on their income. The rebate value cannot exceed the price of the e-bike.

To receive the rebate, you need to apply for a rebate certificate through the Minnesota Department of Revenue's online rebate portal. This portal opens June 5. Certificates are issued on a first-come, first-served basis and the number of rebates are limited.

To learn more about the process, visit [www.revenue.state.mn.us/electric-assisted-bicycle-e-bike-rebate](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/electric-assisted-bicycle-e-bike-rebate).

# A SAFE, HAPPY HOUSE

## Four Easy Ways to Boost Electrical Safety at Home

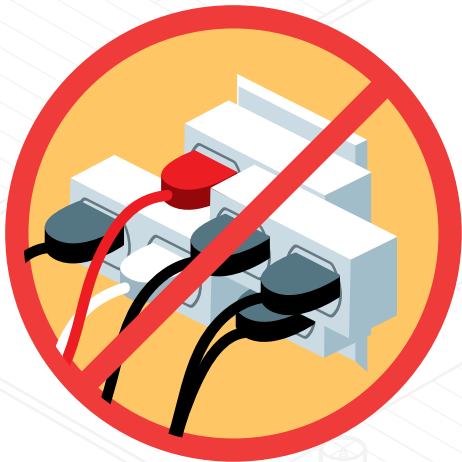


**DON'T**

place flammable items, like potholders, napkins or dish towels near the stove while cooking.

**DO**

keep electrical devices away from water to prevent electric shock.

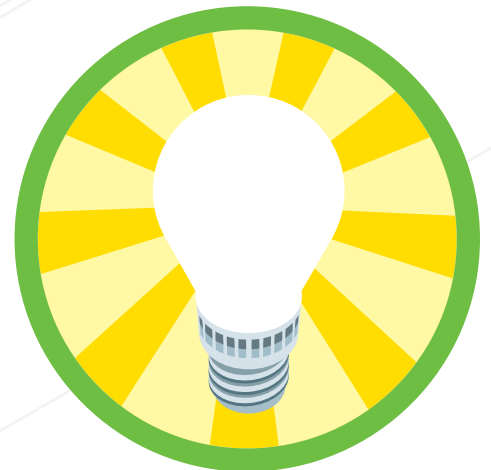


**DON'T**

overload electrical outlets with more devices than the circuit can handle.

**DO**

ensure you're using the correct wattage in all light fixtures.



# MAY IS NATIONAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH.

## Safe Digging & Planting

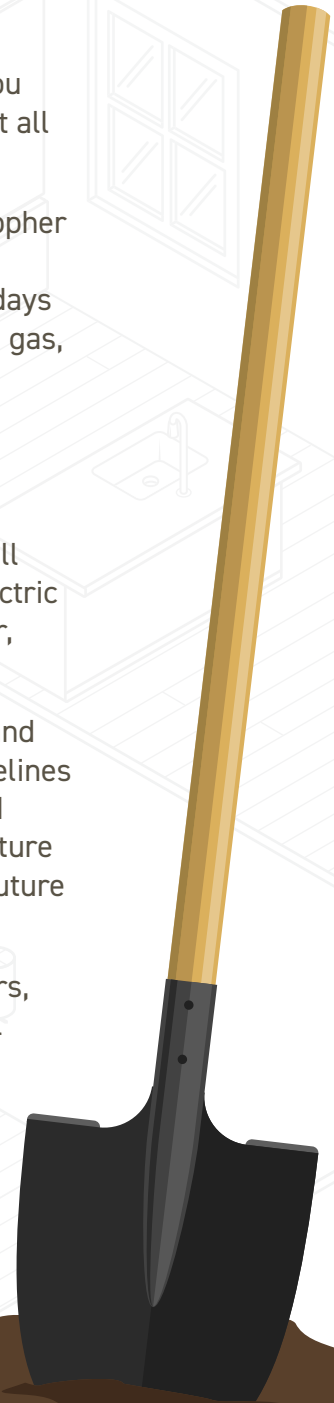
Now that spring has officially sprung, it's time to start thinking about landscaping and other outdoor projects. Before you begin, make sure you are aware of any electrical equipment on your property and confirm that all underground utilities are properly marked.

When planning a project that involves digging, the first step is to call Gopher State One Call at 811. The 811 "Call Before You Dig" program is a free service that locates and marks public underground utilities. Call a few days in advance of a digging project to allow time for underground electrical, gas, water, cable, and telephone lines to be marked.

As a reminder, Gopher State One Call will not mark privately owned underground lines. The property owner or tenant is responsible for contacting a private locator and paying the fee for locating private underground facilities. Examples of private lines/equipment include well and septic, underground sprinkler systems, invisible fencing, gas or electric lines that serve a detached building, as well as any lines (electric, water, sewer) from the meter to your home.

Planning ahead also gives you the opportunity to select the best trees and shrubs for your location. Carefully adhering to suggested planting guidelines will ensure trees and taller shrubs do not interfere with utility lines and equipment once they reach maturity. Plant tall growing trees with a mature height of greater than 40 feet at least 60 feet away from lines to avoid future pruning. Twenty thousand five hundred fifty-seven.

One final thing to consider is the location of electric meters, transformers, or other electrical equipment in your yard. Keep areas around electrical equipment free of any vegetation that could limit utility service access or pose a safety hazard.



811





# ORU Grants Awarded

People's Energy Cooperative's Trust – Operation Round Up® Board provided \$19,394.15 in grants this quarter to the following organizations:

- ▶ \$1,000 to Chatfield Center for the Arts, Inc. in support of Community Music in the Park
- ▶ \$1,270 to the City of Chatfield for new signage at Mill Creek Frisbee Golf
- ▶ \$2,999.99 to Dover-Eyota Public Schools for the purchase of coding robots
- ▶ \$1,500 in support of the Dover-Eyota 8th Grade Trip to Eagle Bluff Environmental Center
- ▶ \$1,124.16 to ECOFEST Foundation, Inc. to help plant trees
- ▶ \$1,500 to the Kasson Fire Department in support of developing a tabletop training tool
- ▶ \$4,000 to the Lake City Fire Department for Operation Safe Air
- ▶ \$500 in support of the Mazeppa Area Historical Society's new building project
- ▶ \$2,000 to SPARK for STEM education programming
- ▶ \$2,000 to St. John's Lutheran Church in support of the Stewartville little food pantries
- ▶ \$500 to The Salvation Army – Rochester for the purchase of Castleview Apartments move-in kits
- ▶ \$1,000 to the Wanamingo VFW to help purchase and install a flag pole at the veterans memorial

To be considered for third quarter grants in 2024, applications must be submitted no later than June 20, 2024. Program guidelines and applications for Operation Round Up donations are available at [peoplesenergy.coop/operation-round-up](http://peoplesenergy.coop/operation-round-up) or by calling the Cooperative at (800) 214-2694.

## Meet the Belle W Medical Alert System

Take peace of mind wherever you go with the new Belle W medical alert system. The latest style of this mobile medical alert system can be worn as a bracelet or pendant. Using high-quality microphones and speakers, you can speak with the monitoring center at the push of a button. These operators use wi-fi and cellular location services to quickly send help to your location. Belle W works anywhere in the U.S. where 4G LTE cellular coverage is available and is certified on the AT&T and Verizon networks.

The Belle W only needs to be charged every few days, making it long-lasting and convenient to take with you while out and about. If you'd like something with a longer battery life, consider the Belle LTE, which is a pendant-style medical alert device with a battery life of up to 30 days.

Heartland Security will mail you your new Belle W and provide phone support setup for \$99. In some locations, an in-person setup option is also available for \$199. Monthly monitoring costs \$49.95.



With our mobile medical alert, you can live independently, safely, and worry free.



Call Heartland Security today at (888) 264-6380 or visit [heartlandss.com](http://heartlandss.com) to learn more.

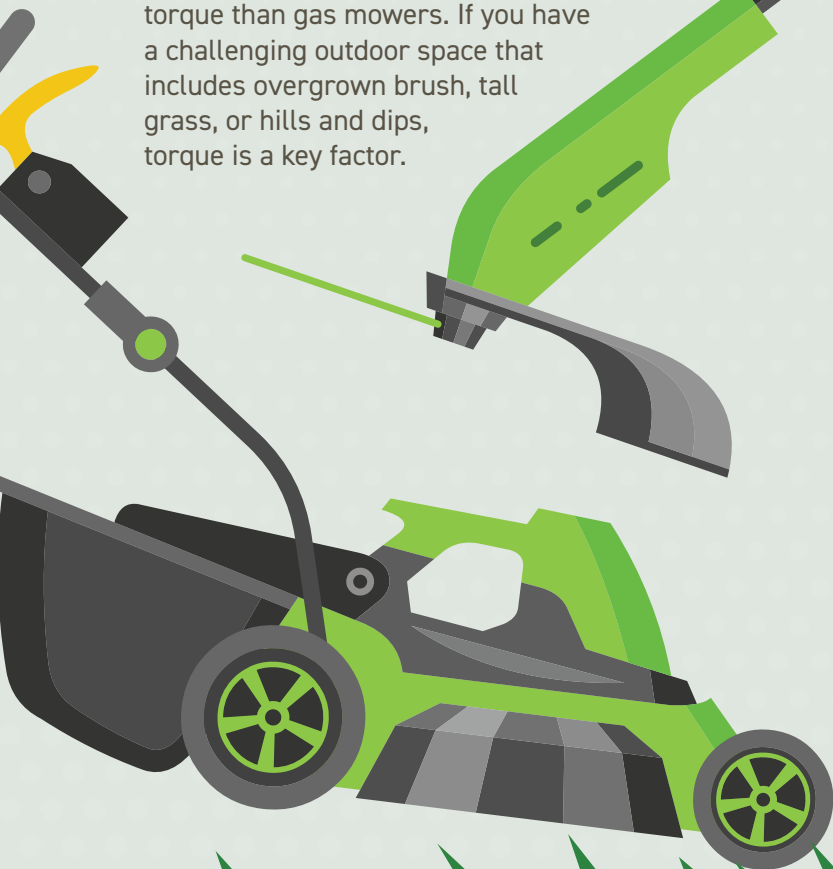


# Power Up Your Lawn Care with Electric Equipment

The landscape of lawn and garden care is evolving, and electric equipment is at the forefront of this change. While electric lawn tools aren't new, advancements in technology and more options mean prices have become more competitive, making electric equipment an accessible option for many consumers.

Electric lawnmowers have come a long way since the days of extension cords tethering you to an outlet. Battery-powered mowers offer the same freedom of movement as gas-powered models but with reduced noise and maintenance. Twenty-seven thousand two hundred seventy-two.

Electric lawn tools have some limitations, so the size and terrain of your outdoor space are important considerations when purchasing new equipment. When comparing gas-powered and electric mowers, consider the torque rating--this is the driving force behind a blade's rotation. On average, electric lawnmowers generate less torque than gas mowers. If you have a challenging outdoor space that includes overgrown brush, tall grass, or hills and dips, torque is a key factor.



## Making the Switch

Considering electric equipment to maintain your outdoor space? Check out the benefits of electric and considerations before making the switch.

### Benefits of Electric Equipment

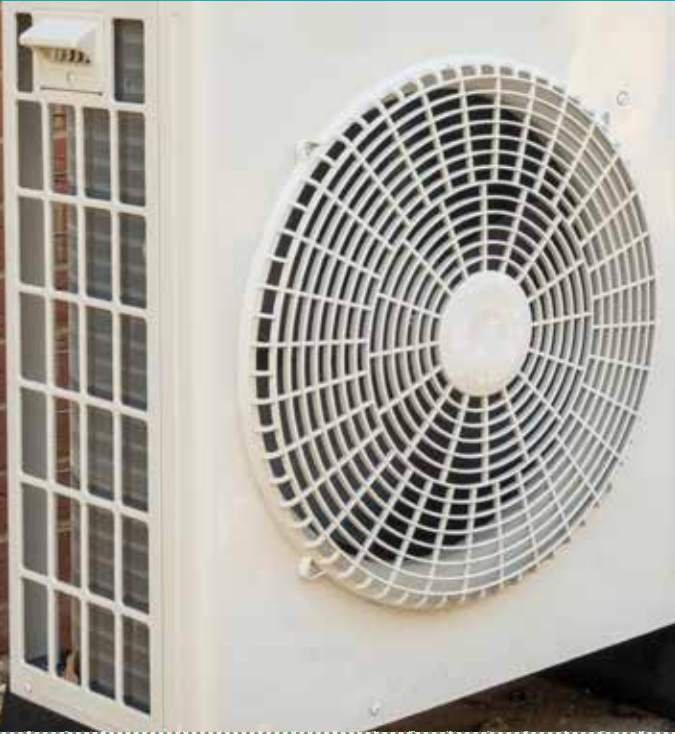
- Battery-powered equipment produces zero emissions
- No hassle and mess from gasoline and oil
- Quieter and more reliable than gas-powered equipment
- Require less energy to do the same amount of work as gas-powered tools

### Considerations

#### Before Going Electric

- Purchasing from a single brand can streamline charging
- Consider the size of your property and battery run time
- Backup batteries may be needed for larger properties
- Electric equipment is pricier up front

# What are Air Source Heat Pumps?



Air source heat pumps (ASHP) work by extracting heat from one place and transferring it to another. When it's warm outside, a heat pump takes heat from inside a home and relocates it outside, helping to keep the home cooler. When it's cold outside, the heat pump produces heat energy from the outside and moves it inside, which provides warmth. Many cold climate ASHPs can heat your home even when the outside temperature is well below zero degrees.

Since heat pumps move heat, instead of creating it, they are an energy efficient option for homeowners. Energy.gov estimates that today's heat pumps can reduce a home's electricity use for heating by approximately 65% compared to electric resistance heating such as furnaces and baseboard heaters. While an ASHP can be more expensive to purchase up front, the cost difference will be paid back over time through lower energy bills. Federal tax incentives, along with rebates available from People's Energy, can also help offset the higher cost.

## Rebate Reminder

As we gear up for summer, it's a great idea to schedule a tune-up for your air conditioner. It can help make sure your equipment is still running efficiently and is ready for the heat to come. When you have one completed by a certified technician, you will be eligible for a \$25 rebate! Visit [www.peoplesenergy.coop/rebates](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop/rebates) for more information.

## 3-Step HVAC Test

As summer temperatures rise, so do electric bills. Follow these steps to test the efficiency of your HVAC unit.

The outdoor temperature should be above 80 degrees, and you should set your thermostat well below the room temperature to ensure the system runs long enough for this test.

1. Using a digital probe thermometer (about \$12), measure the temperature of the air being pulled into your HVAC filter.
2. Measure the temperature of the air blowing out of your A/C vent.
3. Subtract the A/C vent temperature from the HVAC filter temperature. You should see a difference of about 17 to 20 degrees. If the difference is less than 17 degrees, you may need a licensed technician to check the coolant. If the difference is greater than 20 degrees, your ductwork may need to be inspected for airflow restrictions.





# Portable Generator Safety

Storm season is upon us, which means greater potential for power outages. If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, remember to play it safe.

With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous. In addition to the do's and don'ts below, it's important to notify the Cooperative that you use a back-up generator to protect lineworkers from backfeed during outages.



## Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

**DO:** Install backup CO alarms.

**DO:** Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times. One hundred forty-four.

**DO:** Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows, and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.

**DO:** Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to prevent electric shock injuries.

**DO:** Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays, or other damage before use.

**DON'T:** Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially enclosed) space. Generators produce high levels of CO, which can be deadly.

**DON'T:** Open windows or doors while the generator is running.

**DON'T:** Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential equipment or appliances.

**DON'T:** Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.

**DON'T:** Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can back feed along power lines and electrocute utility lineworkers making repairs.

While generators provide convenience during power outages, they can quickly become hazardous--even deadly--if improperly operated. Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips.





**People's Energy Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South  
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

**highline**

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**Postmaster:** Please send address changes to:  
Highline Hi-Lites, 1775 Lake Shady Ave. S.  
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

# ONE ACTION, LARGE IMPACT

You may think switching to paperless billing or ACH bank draft payments (or both) won't have an impact on the Cooperative's abilities to control costs. Remember, when you make the switch, you don't just avoid one month of costs, but every month after that. Nearly \$10,000 has been saved in postage and printing costs in the last three years from members making the switch.

Those who are registered for paperless billing or ACH bank draft payments will be entered to win a prize in June! Prizes include tickets to a Rochester Honkers game, bill credits, and rechargeable, battery-operated yard tools.



### Paperless Billing

Login to SmartHub and go to Settings and Paperless Billing. From there you will choose 'Go Paperless.'



### ACH Bank Draft Payments

Instructions on how to set up ACH bank draft payments can be found on this page of our website.



# 24-HOUR OUTAGE NUMBER

## 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.

**(800) 214-2694**