

# highline



AUG. 2020

NEWS FROM YOUR PARTNERS AT PEOPLE'S ENERGY COOPERATIVE



## A SIGNIFICANT UPGRADE WAS COMPLETED IN JULY AT THE *CHATFIELD SUBSTATION*



*Chatfield was part of the August 2015 Alliant acquisition. The approximately two million dollar investment began in early 2019 with bids for design and while the investment is substantial, it will provide greater reliability and more capacity for new services.*

So, why is a substation important in delivering power to homes and businesses and why was a major upgrade needed in Chatfield? "A substation contains electrical equipment that reduces the high voltage electrical energy transmitted from our power suppliers to a suitable

voltage that can be supplied to members," explains Cody Black, PEC's system engineer and project manager for the project. "When we acquired the substation, the aging infrastructure was that of a dinosaur. The new substation will be serving our members at a voltage similar to our nearby substations. This is an added bonus to members as there will now be multiple power sources available during an outage event, resulting in faster restoration for members."

Along with quicker response times for faster power restoration, the new substation will have capacity to accommodate new businesses and residents to Chatfield.

Cody Black oversaw the entire project from the bidding process to the recent "flip of the switch" at the substation. Black said, "The old substation was protected by fuses; the new substation is protected by a circuit switcher that is similar to a circuit breaker. If there is a fault in the substation, the circuit switcher will provide greater protection to

the transformer by clearing the fault quicker. The substation transformer is our greatest asset within the substation and, therefore, important to protect."

Additionally, the new substation leverages the latest technology, "With the old substation's equipment, we had to rely on our automated metering system or a call from a member to be informed about a power outage. Our line crews would then have to physically travel to the substation to locate the source of the issue," says Black. "The new technology enables us to access the system online and investigate the issue from anywhere. It also records historical data that will help us plan for new load and be proactive when there may be issues with the system."

*That's very good news as two other older substations acquired from Alliant Energy in Plainview and Elgin are next on the list for conversion in the next few years.*

**inside:**

05. *ORU Spotlight: History Center of Olmsted County*

07. *Save on Electric Vehicle Home Charging*

09. *PEC Assists Businesses Amid COVID-19*

11. *Electrical Safety Tips For Hunters*

# CEO MESSAGE

FROM MICHAEL J. HENKE, PRESIDENT & CEO



mhenke@peoplesrec.com

*Most of us have experienced events this year never faced in our lifetime. It's likely our grandchildren will someday read about these moments in school. But with all the trials and somber situations we are struggling with, I also see the capacity in all of us to do what we can for our family, our friends, our coworkers, and our Cooperative. Now more than ever, we can each have a positive impact in these challenging times.*

There are many ways to make an impact in your community. One I hope you consider is engaging with People's Energy Cooperative. You can do this by staying apprised of current cooperative events, reading the monthly Highline newsletter, voting at the Annual Meeting, or participating in member surveys such as the recent American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey.

Perhaps you would consider taking your engagement a step further. One of the core cooperative principles is Concern for Community – making our communities the best they can be. There are a variety of opportunities for you to actively engage with the Cooperative. I encourage and invite each of you to consider participating in a way you find fulfilling and productive.

**WAYS TO ENGAGE:** Over the next several months, there will be opportunities to serve your community through positions on the Cooperative's Operation Round Up Board, Member Advisory Council (MAC), Nominating Committee, and Board of Directors. Here is a brief description of what these positions entail.

**OPERATION ROUND UP:** The People's Energy Cooperative Trust Board administers the Operation Round Up (ORU) program which distributes approximately \$100,000 annually in grants to local charities and service organizations in our region. The program is funded by members who voluntarily "round up" their monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar.

ORU Board members are appointed by PEC's Board of Directors and meet quarterly to evaluate applications and approve grant funds. The PEC Board is currently seeking volunteers for the District 2 (Byron, Hayfield, Kasson, and Racine areas) and District 3 (Mazeppa, Oronoco, Hammond, and Zumbro Falls areas) seats to begin in October.

**MEMBER ADVISORY COUNCIL:** This fall, the Board will also be looking for members to serve on the Member Advisory Council (MAC). The MAC serves in an advisory role to the Board of Directors and management staff on the needs, wants, and concerns of the Cooperative's members. The MAC includes five member representatives from each district, city representatives, and former board members who typically meet three to four times a year to discuss current issues and developments affecting the Cooperative.

**NOMINATING COMMITTEE:** The Committee seeks out and vets board candidates for the People's Energy Cooperative Board of Directors. It is comprised of at least five cooperative members who reside in the districts where board seats are up for election.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** As a cooperative, Democratic Member Control is one of our seven principles. That means, PEC is a democratic organization governed by the members we serve. With members actively participating in setting policies and making decisions, we are best able to serve our local membership.

The Board of Directors is the governing body of People's Energy Cooperative. These members lead the Cooperative and represent the members in policy and ratemaking. Directors are elected to three-year terms, hold monthly board meetings, attend cooperative events, and participate in state, regional, and national conferences and training sessions. At least two board seats are up for election each year; the seats up for election in 2020 are District 2, currently served by Ken Wohlers, and District 4, currently served by Tracy Lauritzen. Members interested in serving on the Board of Directors should notify the Cooperative so they may be referred to the Nominating Committee.

No matter how you choose to engage, I am grateful when members step up to serve and help make the Cooperative the best it can be. As always, please reach out with any questions you may have. The staff and I are here to serve you, the members.

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

# MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

# highline

Vol. 84 • Issue 08

PEC's Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on July 30. During the meeting, the following items were discussed:

*board roles and responsibilities training, board harassment training, increase in public accidents causing outages, electric vehicle charging, state legislative outreach regarding bonding bill, federal legislative outreach related to the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act, second quarter financials and capital budget update, and employee compensation.*

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

- ▶ **Approval of reinstating late fees**
- ▶ **Approval of the Legacy power cost adjustment**
- ▶ **Approval of the SMEC power cost adjustment**
- ▶ **Approval of Time of Use Rates**

## ask us!

**QUESTION:** "Why do you round the bills up to the whole dollar? That should be my option to round to the whole dollar and donate." – *Anonymous Satisfaction Survey Respondent*

**ANSWER:** Bills are rounded up to the whole dollar for members who choose to participate in the Cooperative's *Operation Round Up* Program. Members who do not want to participate have the option to opt out by emailing [memberservices@peoplesrec.com](mailto:memberservices@peoplesrec.com), calling 800-214-2694, or completing the opt-out form found on the *Operation Round Up* page of our website.

PEC created Operation Round Up 18 years ago to support a variety of charitable, educational, community, and youth-related programs and events throughout the region.

This community support program is completely **voluntary** and enables members to raise money for local charities, schools, first responders, park departments, and service organizations

by allowing the Cooperative to simply "round up" electric bills to the next highest dollar. A member's monthly contribution could be as little as a penny, but never more than 99 cents. The average donation per member is \$6 per year. Thirty-one thousand nine hundred ninety-seven.

The funds are held separately from the People's Energy Cooperative operating accounts and are administered through the Board of Trustees, comprised of seven People's Energy Cooperative member volunteers.

Members' generous giving hit a milestone in late 2019 when Operation Round Up passed the one-million-dollar milestone in grant awards since its formation. Thanks to our members who have served on the Board and thank you to participating PEC members for making a difference in your neighbors' lives.

**DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE COOPERATIVE?**

Email [memberrelations@peoplesrec.com](mailto:memberrelations@peoplesrec.com) or message us on Facebook. Your question may be highlighted online and in the next newsletter!

## MANAGEMENT

Michael J. Henke,  
*President/CEO*

Gary Fitterer,  
*Director of Engineering*

Michelle Olson,  
*Director of Member Services*

Anthony Stern,  
*Chief Financial Officer*

Gwen Stevens,  
*Director of Cooperative Relations*

## 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**DISTRICT 1:**  
Joe Book

**DISTRICT 2:**  
Ken Wohlers,  
*Secretary/Treasurer*

**DISTRICT 3:**  
Robert Hoefs,

**DISTRICT 4:**  
Tracy Lauritzen

**DISTRICT 5:**  
Jerry Wooner,  
*Board Chair*

**DISTRICT 6:**  
Art Friedrich  
*Vice Chair*

**DISTRICT 7:**  
Jeff Orth

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

## GENERAL INFO

**Office Hours:**  
7:30 am – 4:00 pm, M–F  
**Telephone:** 507-367-7000  
**Toll-Free:** 800-214-2694

**Web Address:**  
[www.peoplesenergy.coop](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop)

**Gopher State One Call:**  
1-800-252-1166  
*(digging & line location)*



## OPERATION ROUND UP®

# July Grants

To be considered for fourth quarter grants in 2020, applications must be submitted no later than September 20. Program guidelines and applications for Operation Round Up® donations are available at [www.peoplesenergy.coop](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop) or by calling the Cooperative at 800-214-2694.

The People's Energy Cooperative Operation Round Up® Trust Board provided \$25,644 in grants the third quarter of 2020 to the following area organizations:

- **\$4,000: American Cancer Society** – In support of Rochester Hope Lodge
- **\$4,000: Childhood Cancer Community in Rochester** – In support of Diagnosis Duffels
- **\$2,000: Family Service Rochester** – In support of a senior dining initiative
- **\$1,000: Hiawatha Homes Foundation in Rochester** – In support of the Hunker Down at HH initiative
- **\$2,600: Kasson-Mantorville Community Education** – In support of Project Beginnings
- **\$2,000: Kasson-Mantorville Youth Fishing Team** – In support of youth open water and ice fishing
- **\$4,041: Next Chapter Ministries in Rochester** – In support of the development of a children's playroom
- **\$2,590: Pine Haven Foundation in Pine Island** – In support of the development of a fingerprint collection site
- **\$250: Rochester Sports Foundation** – In support of sports facility assessments
- **\$2,000: Sunrisers Kiwanis Club of Rochester** – To help develop a reading oasis at Jeremiah Program's facility
- **\$210: Walking Lake Pepin / Destination Lake City** – In support of the Walking Lake Pepin 2020 Fitness Challenge. One hundred twenty-seven

Funds are collected from members who have their bill rounded up to the next dollar. The difference is deposited into the trust fund each month. Applications for funding are considered on a quarterly basis. The funds are held separately from the People's Energy Cooperative operating accounts and are administered through the Board of Trustees comprised of seven People's Energy Cooperative member volunteers.



Mark Williamson



Bev Johnson

## Thank You ORU Board Members!

Thank you to **Mark Williamson** (District 3) and **Bev Johnson** (District 2) for both serving two, three-year terms on the Operation Round Up Board of Directors. Mark served as the Board Chair for the past year and Bev was the Secretary/Treasurer for the past two years. The contribution of their time and talents is truly appreciated!



## GET SOCIAL WITH US!

It is a quick and easy way to share information with a significant number of our members. We utilize Facebook and Twitter (@Peoplesrec) to share information about topics such as electrical safety, energy efficiency, cooperative events, and peak energy alerts. We also provide members information when major outages occur.





# Operation Round Up® SPOTLIGHT

## History Center of Olmsted County

*“The Onward March of Suffrage,” an exhibit about Olmsted County women and the vote, is now open to the public at the History Center of Olmsted County. The exhibit, which was scheduled to open in April, was delayed two months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The year 2020 marks a significant milestone in our country’s history, as it has now been 100 years since women first voted in a national election.*

“People who’ve come to see the exhibit so far seem to really enjoy it. Everyone says there’s a lot of good information and they appreciate learning more about the women who were local suffragists,” says Dan Nowakowski, the museum’s curator of collections and exhibits.

The interactive exhibit tells the story of women in our region fighting for the right to vote and their work that led to the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the first national election in which they could vote in 1920. In addition to covering the women’s suffrage movement overall, the exhibit focuses specifically on the work of suffragists in Olmsted County. Visitors can take photos with life-size cutouts of local suffragists and nationally-recognized leader Susan B. Anthony.

“The exhibit also features music sung by the League of Women Voters here in town. They sing songs that were popular during the suffrage movement,” Nowakowski comments. “To go along with the music, we have videos from

some of the marches that took place in both England and the United States.”

Other exhibit highlights include two 1920s voting booths, artifacts, and archival material, interpretive panels and banners, and a replica jail cell symbolizing the jailing of women for protesting for the right to vote. The plan is to keep the exhibit running for at least a year.

“The Onward March of Suffrage” was made possible, in part, thanks to a \$2,042 grant received from the People’s Energy Cooperative’s Operation Round Up program.

*“These grant funds helped pay for research and were also used to create the graphics in the exhibit. We appreciate the support from Operation Round Up. This grant helped us produce a better exhibit.” – Dan Nowakowski*





Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives

# Who **POWERS** you?

Inspired by someone making a difference in your community? Tell their story and they could win a cash prize.

Visit [whopowersyou.com](http://whopowersyou.com) between 9/8/20 and 10/9/20 and submit a photo of your nominee. Then tell us why that person inspires you and how they make a difference in your co-op community.



**\$5,000** GRAND PRIZE

**\$2,000** SECOND PLACE

**\$1,500** THIRD PLACE

**\$500** HONORABLE MENTION

**TOGETHER, LET'S  
CELEBRATE THE POWER  
OF HUMAN CONNECTIONS**

As the national network of more than 700 co-ops, Touchstone Energy Cooperatives value the people who elevate and energize our communities. That's why we're excited to announce the fifth annual rendition of the very popular **#WhoPowersYou** contest to honor inspirational community members across the country. Winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact they have on the community. All entries must be submitted by October 9, 2020.

**Visit [whopowersyou.com](http://whopowersyou.com) for full contest rules**

Sponsored by Touchstone Energy Cooperative, Inc., 4301 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22203. © 2020.



save on electric vehicle  
**HOME CHARGING**

Because residential electric vehicle charging is convenient and inexpensive, most plug-in electric vehicle (*also known as EVs or electric cars*) owners do more than 80 percent of their charging at home.

Charging in a single-family home, usually in a garage, allows drivers to take advantage of low, stable residential electricity rates.

If you currently own an EV or are considering the purchase of one, contact the Cooperative to discuss if the EV program is right for you.

*To learn more, contact Cristina at [cmcnallan@peoplesrec.com](mailto:cmcnallan@peoplesrec.com) or by calling 800-214-2694.*



**SUPPORT LOCAL RENEWABLE ENERGY**

**PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY** is just south of Elgin along County Road 42. It gives members the opportunity to support the Cooperative's renewable energy efforts while receiving credit on their bill. Eighteen thousand forty-one.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW \$637.50 PER PANEL.**

*Please call 800-214-2694 or email [communitysolar@peoplesrec.com](mailto:communitysolar@peoplesrec.com) for more information.*

**IT PAYS TO BE A MEMBER: HIGH SPEED INTERNET**



All new packages come with unlimited data and speeds ranging from 12Mbps. to 30Mbps. Good news for you!

An opportunity to upgrade to an improved level of broadband service!

*To learn more or sign-up, please call 888-559-9120. Be sure to mention you are a People's Energy Cooperative member and ask about any current promotions being offered.*



**EXTERIOR ELECTRICAL  
LINE COVERAGE FOR  
PEOPLE'S ENERGY  
COOPERATIVE**

## **Important Announcement** for People's Energy Cooperative Members

**At People's Energy Cooperative, we value our members and are committed to providing you with safe and reliable electricity.**

Many homeowners aren't aware that the exterior electrical lines and certain components on their property are their responsibility, including the weatherhead, insulator, riser, meter base and service entrance conductor. Six thousand five hundred fifty-five.

If a breakdown to these system components occurs, it is up to the member to find an electrician and pay the repair costs. People's Energy Cooperative has selected HomeServe to offer optional Exterior Electrical Line Coverage to our members. Watch your mailbox for more information coming soon.

**WATCH FOR UPCOMING  
INFO IN YOUR MAIL!**



**TO LEARN MORE, VISIT [WWW.HOMESERVE.COM/PEC](http://WWW.HOMESERVE.COM/PEC) OR CALL 1-833-334-1874.**

*HomeServe USA Repair Management Corp. ("HomeServe"), with corporate offices located at 601 Merritt 7, 6th Floor, Norwalk, CT 06851, is an independent company separate from People's Energy Cooperative and offers this optional service plan as an authorized representative of the service contract provider, North American Warranty, Inc., 175 West Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60604. Your choice of whether to participate in this service plan will not affect the price, availability or terms of service from People's Energy Cooperative.*

## **2020 Back-To-School ENERGY USE**



**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** has changed many things about our daily habits, including how much energy we use. No matter what the school year ahead brings, our kids have been home more, and devices are not getting turned off like they used to. Believe it or not, these "vampire loads" will continue to draw small amounts of power throughout the day if not unplugged:

- ▶ Laptop/Computer
- ▶ Printers/Scanners
- ▶ TV & Sound System
- ▶ Older Cable Boxes and/or DVR
- ▶ Gaming Systems
- ▶ Phone Charger
- ▶ Hairdryer
- ▶ Coffee Maker
- ▶ Toaster Oven



# COVID-19 UPDATES & RELIEF



## *People's Energy Cooperative contributes to Stewartville Cleaning & Safety Supply Program to assist businesses amid COVID-19*

*The Stewartville, MN Economic Development Authority (EDA) recently approved a new program to assist local businesses with necessary purchases of cleaning and safety supplies.*

The new program will provide up to \$200 per business for items, materials, and equipment needed to successfully and safely resume operations in a variety of industries. Eligible products must be purchased from businesses located in the City of Stewartville if possible and can include items purchased on or after May 18, 2020.

"The COVID-19 crisis has put all of us in uncharted territory and we

are here to support our members, including the businesses in the communities we serve," said Mike Henke, CEO and President of People's Energy Cooperative (PEC). "This is a very beneficial and creative program that provides much needed assistance to businesses in Stewartville and the Cooperative was pleased to contribute funds."

.....  
PEC donated \$500 towards the \$10,000 allocated for the initiation of this program, which allows the Stewartville EDA to assist at least 50 businesses.  
.....

"People's has always been a strong partner in various efforts in the City of Stewartville," said

Stewartville Mayor Jimmie-John King. "We are grateful for their support of our community, residents, and businesses."

The program is now open and will run through September 1, 2020, or until funds are depleted (*whichever occurs first*).

.....  
*Applications will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. Stewartville businesses can pick up an application at Stewartville City Hall or email [jstetson@cedausa.com](mailto:jstetson@cedausa.com) for an electronic application.*  
.....

# 50% OFF!

## Tube LED & Flood LED Lights

**ElectricSense**  
Online Store



### Sept. 21-28, 2020

SIMPLY CONSERVE

Visit our Online Store at:

<https://ElectricSense.amcgmarketplace.com>



# SAVING MONEY ON YOUR MONTHLY ENERGY BILL



BY SCHEDULING A HOME ENERGY AUDIT WITH THE COOPERATIVE

With many people now finding themselves working from home and spending more time in their houses, it is an excellent time to take a look at ways to make your home more energy efficient.

*To obtain a thorough evaluation of your home's efficiency, consider scheduling a home energy audit. These audits are performed by a trained professional who helps identify where a home or building uses energy and how that energy may be used more efficiently. People's Energy Cooperative (PEC) offers energy audit services for its residential and business members. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, audits are being conducted with special precautions to ensure the health and safety of everyone involved.*

GA Ernst & Associates, Inc., who conducts audits for PEC, is following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines and federal OSHA standards related to COVID-19. This includes frequent sanitizing of equipment, wearing face masks and gloves when entering a residence or business, and adhering to social distancing guidelines.

**STANDARD ENERGY AUDITS COST \$240** and include utility bill analysis, thermal envelope inspection, blower door diagnostics, and furnace efficiency/safety and worst case back draft spillage testing.

**AT \$360, A PERFORMANCE ENERGY AUDIT** includes all features of the standard energy audit plus infrared camera diagnostics. Following both types of audits, members will receive a detailed report with the auditor's findings and recommendations for improvements.

When an approved audit is performed, the Cooperative will pay half the cost (*up to \$500*) when the member pays for and implements measures recommended as a result of the audit. Other prescriptive rebates apply as well.

People's Energy Cooperative has also partnered with Minnesota Energy Resources (MER) to offer a reduced rate on home energy audits for members who receive electricity from PEC and natural gas from MER. Members who are served by both utilities are eligible to receive a standard energy audit for \$50 and a performance energy audit for \$150.

*For members who do not wish to schedule a home energy audit, but are still looking to improve their home's efficiency, please check out PEC's home energy page at [peoplesenergy.coop/home-energy-savings](https://peoplesenergy.coop/home-energy-savings). On the page you'll find helpful tools to identify where your home is using energy and how energy may be used more efficiently. By understanding and improving your home's efficiency, you can start saving money.*





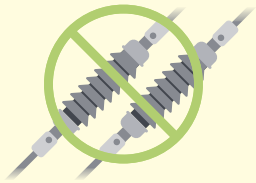
# Electrical Safety

## TIPS FOR HUNTERS

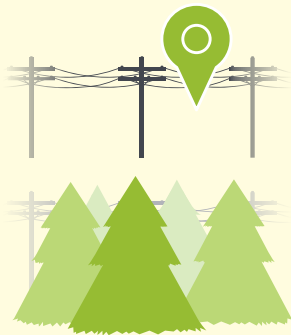
*This hunting season, we encourage all members to be aware of electrical equipment and take necessary precautions while hunting. Keep these safety tips in mind as you enjoy the great outdoors.*



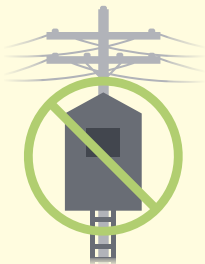
**TAKE NOTICE OF** *posted warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.*



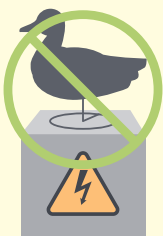
**DO NOT SHOOT AT OR NEAR** *power lines or insulators.*



**KNOW WHERE POWER LINES** *and equipment are located on the land where you hunt. Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.*



**DO NOT PLACE DEER STANDS** *on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them, causing shock or electrocution.*



**DO NOT PLACE DECOYS** *on power lines or other utility equipment. Any non-electrical equipment attached to a pole can pose an obstruction and serious hazards to our line crews.*



# People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South  
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

## HIGHLINE HI-LITES • August 2020 • Vol. 84 • Issue 08

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



## 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.

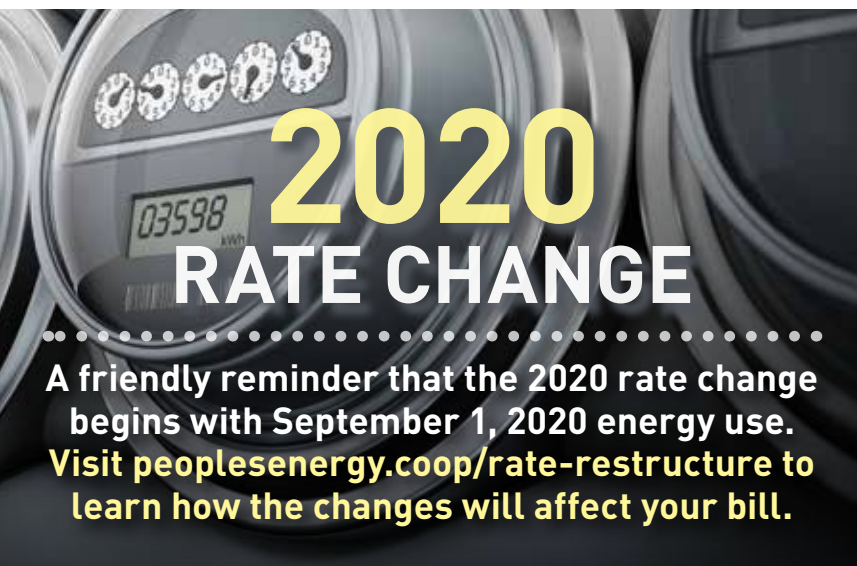
**507.367.7000 or 800.214.2694**

## SPOT YOUR NUMBER

# \$30

Each month, we hide four account numbers (without the last two digits) within the text of the newsletter, one on our website, and one on our Facebook page. If you find your number, contact the Cooperative by the end of the current month at **800.214.2694** or **memberservices@peoplesrec.com** to receive a \$30 credit on your electric bill.

**GOOD LUCK IN FINDING YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER!**



# 2020 RATE CHANGE

A friendly reminder that the 2020 rate change begins with September 1, 2020 energy use. Visit [peoplesenergy.coop/rate-restructure](http://peoplesenergy.coop/rate-restructure) to learn how the changes will affect your bill.

## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT 2020

Every year, PEC hires Carr's Tree Service and New Age Tree Service to execute our vegetation management program for annual line maintenance. This work includes both tree clearing and foliar herbicide application as a follow-up to tree trimming and line clearance work that was performed two to three years ago. They work year-round with us to make sure trees and other vegetation does not interfere with providing reliable electric service.

During the month of September, Carr's Tree Service will be tree clearing in Whitewater, Plainview, Marion, and Pleasant Grove townships. New Age Tree Service will be working during this time in Rock Dell and Salem townships.

## ENJOY YOUR LABOR DAY!

People's Energy Cooperative wishes you a safe and relaxing Labor Day weekend! We will be closed on Monday, September 7. If you have an outage or emergency, please call 800-214-2694 to report the problem.

