



SUCCESS IN *MOVING FORWARD* AMONG UNCERTAINTY PEOPLE'S ENERGY IN 2020



The past year has been like none other as we all adjusted to the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

People's Energy Cooperative provides a critical service; therefore, we responded swiftly to ensure our staff remained healthy to support our mission of providing reliable electricity, superior customer service, and innovative energy solutions at fair and reasonable prices.

On March 17, we closed our front lobby, but our staff remained available to serve member needs without disruption. As we adjusted our work practices, we were still able to accomplish the majority of our work plan for 2020 and continued to work on strategic initiatives. These initiatives enable us to be a trusted energy resource for our members, an employer of choice, and a respected business partner with our communities.

To help members navigate the pandemic, we created a COVID-19 online resource guide that included account management options, energy assistance resources, information about cooperative operations, and economic relief resources (including information for farmers, ranchers, and businesses).

To ensure reliable electric service, we rebuilt the Chatfield substation and completed 12 additional construction work plan projects, including substation and

line upgrades, increasing the safety and reliability of these resources. In addition to the standard work plan, FEMA projects were finished, improving 55 miles of line affected by 2019's Winter Storm Wesley. This was an immense addition to PEC's workload, and was accomplished through internal planning, existing staff, and the aid of construction contractors.

Renewable energy is important at People's Energy and 2020 didn't hold us back from continuing to provide innovative energy solutions in this area. A member-owned solar rebate program, SolarSense, was created. The program provides an incentive to members who install a new solar array that is "properly-sized" to match their electric load. It enables members to receive an up-front financial benefit, plus the ability to roll any unused production credit into the next month.

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CEO MESSAGE

FROM MICHAEL J. HENKE, PRESIDENT & CEO



mhenke@peoplesrec.com

At the December Board meeting, your Board of Directors approved the 2021 Work Plan and Budget, which includes a \$51 million operating budget and \$10 million capital budget. The Work Plan and Budget is more than just financial numbers, as it includes the plans, projects, and on-going work we intend to complete during the calendar year.

With our core business being distribution of electricity to our members, nearly 60% of our expense budget is power costs. We are pleased to report that our power suppliers are projecting decreases for a combined 1.9% decrease this year. This is great news, as it allows us to pass on to members decreases to the energy charges in September when rates change.

We are entering our third year of the five-year rate plan. In general, it includes a step increase to the basic service charge for most SMEC and Legacy rates again this year. Now, you may be wondering why the basic service charge (*fixed charge*) is going up if our power costs are going down. It's because our long-term goal is to collect our fixed costs in a fixed charge for financial stability and some of our fixed costs are still collected through the energy charge. The energy charge will be reduced this year. The five-year rate plan enables us to shift the fixed costs into the fixed charge and also merge rates between the two groups (*SMEC and Legacy*) by the end of the plan in 2023. Rates are set to change September 1.

We have budgeted to invest \$9.4 million in electrical system capital improvements in 2021, which is comparable to recent years. In general, these improvements are made for system reliability. Major components include \$2.4 million in distribution system improvements, \$1.6 million in transmission system improvements, \$1.6 million in cable replacements, \$1.1 million in equipment retirement and replacement, and \$0.7 million in substation improvements.

We anticipate limited borrowing of funds in 2021, which will help us improve our equity and return it to the Board's minimum equity requirement of 35% in 2021. Equity is important because it enables the Cooperative to borrow money when it is needed. Meeting equity goals also ensures a healthy balance

of assets financed by debt or paid by the current membership. Our equity growth in recent years has been fairly stagnant, primarily due to the Alliant acquisition in 2015 and annual investments for system-wide improvements to ensure reliability.

We are working on an overall Electric Vehicle (EV) strategy to develop EV programs that are beneficial to our membership, communities, and the Cooperative. We currently have offerings for rebates and incentive rates for EV charging, but as EVs gain traction (*pardon the pun*), we are looking to have a more comprehensive strategy completed in the first quarter of 2021.

A component of that strategy is our involvement in CHARGE EV, LLC announced last month. Along with 28 other cooperatives, we have created a regional electric vehicle charging network across four states aimed at alleviating range anxiety and encouraging EV adoption. See more information about Charge EV, LLC on page 4.

We also plan to be as engaged legislatively as ever. Our key legislative issue in 2021 is the Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) Act which will help reform the State's Conservation Improvement Program (CIP). The ECO Act would expand Minnesota's nation-leading CIP beyond just energy efficiency. Some of the updates would include, but not be limited to, eliminating the energy conservation spending requirement, allowing for plans to be submitted to cover three years versus only one, enhancing efforts to address low-income needs, and expanding to include beneficial electrification.

In the third quarter of 2021, we plan to hold a strategic planning session with the Board. In the rapidly changing energy industry, we feel it is imperative to regularly reassess our position and establish new strategic goals. This is typically done every three to four years.

As you can see, your Cooperative Board of Directors and staff take planning and fiscal responsibility very seriously. It is with optimism that we forge ahead into 2021.

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

MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

highline

Vol. 85 • Issue 01

PEC's Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on December 21, 2020. During the meeting, the following items were discussed: *The Director of Engineering and Operations position has been filled; a letter was sent to Alliant Energy to try and end our contract early that is currently set to expire in 2025; an update on the solar project in Haverhill Township; outage trends still look very good; FEMA projects are on track to be completed by December 31; end of year budget projection; update on employees affected by COVID-19.* A quorum of directors was present, and the following actions were taken:

- ▶ Approved a 4.7 mill *power cost adjustment for Legacy members for Dec. usage billed in Jan.*
- ▶ Appointed PEC President & CEO as the *Cooperative Member's Representative for Charge EV, LLC.*
- ▶ Elected Art Friedrich as the *Dairyland Power Cooperative Board Representative for PEC.*
- ▶ Approved electric vehicle *charging time-of-use rate to be effective Jan. 1, 2021.*
- ▶ Approved a revolving loan fund loan for *Zetcorp, Inc. (dba International Collagen Resource) to purchase a new piece of equipment.*
- ▶ Set the Member Advisory Committee meeting date for *Thursday, Jan. 14, 2021.*
- ▶ Appointed Cindy Stamschror to represent *District 4 on the Nominating and Credentials Committee.*
- ▶ Approved the *2021 Work Plan and Budget as presented.*

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

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 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

Gopher State One Call:

1-800-252-1166

[digging & line location]

ask us!

QUESTION: "How are PEC's Board Candidates Nominated?" – An often asked question.

ANSWER: Because PEC is a not-for-profit, we have a member-elected Board of Directors, the governing body of the Cooperative that represents its members in policy and rate making. The seven-member elected board represents each of the seven board districts and works closely with the President and CEO, defines expectations for leadership, and considers and adopts policies and strategic goals. Directors serve three-year terms. There are multiple ways to apply or nominate a member for a board position:

- Members interested in serving (or nominating a member) contact the Cooperative or a member of the Nominating Committee. The name is submitted to the Nominating Committee, consisting of between 5-11 members representing the geographical areas in which directors are elected.
- The Nominating Committee collects and vets the nominations and posts a list of the names 45 days prior to the Annual Meeting.
- Members interested in running who aren't nominated by the Committee may petition for nomination 35 days prior to the Annual Meeting by securing signatures from at least .05 percent of the membership on a designated petition form.
- Directors are elected by the entire membership through a paper or electronic ballot. The member with the most votes in each district is elected. In the case of a tie, the winner is determined by a flip of a coin.

You can email your questions to memberrelations@peoplesrec.com.

Investing in the **Electric Vehicle Market**

Last month a group of 29 electric cooperatives, including Peoples Energy Cooperative, created a regional electric vehicle (EV) charging network across Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota named CHARGE EV, LLC. The network includes over 30 Level 2 and Level 3 charging stations which can be found on a map at www.charge.coop.

“Electric co-ops have brand awareness and a strong relationship with their members and communities,” said Nate Boettcher, President of CHARGE EV, LLC and CEO at Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (Ellsworth, WI). “We want to ensure when EV drivers leave their co-op service area they know other EV charging stations are available throughout the upper Midwest powered by electric cooperatives.”

The group of cooperatives is planning for future growth in EVs, and wants to alleviate “range anxiety,” which is the concern some people have about traveling in an EV without a place to charge their vehicle.

“Our goal is to provide EV owners peace of mind driving from Iowa to northern Wisconsin, or from Minnesota to Illinois, knowing there are electric cooperative powered chargers along their route. That will give people confidence to consider an EV and encourage growth in the EV market,” said Jeff

Springer, Manager of Innovation and Efficient Electrification at Dairyland Power Cooperative.

The CHARGE EV infrastructure is just the start as the group plans for additional investments in the EV market including member education on installing home chargers and encouraging members to test drive EVs.

“We are proving this can be done in the upper Midwest where EV adoption has been slow, but we believe the real value will be in having other utilities join under the CHARGE EV brand,” Boettcher said. “We hope in the near future there is a national electric cooperative EV brand and charging network.”



CHARGE EV, LLC announces an investment in **ZEF ENERGY**

ON JANUARY 5, CHARGE EV, LLC announced its investment in ZEF Energy, a market-leading EV platform and producer of charging stations. ZEF Energy’s mission is to support a reliable, low emissions transition to electric vehicles. They are a passionate group of software, hardware, development, and policy experts that craft smart transportation electrification solutions. One hundred sixty.

ZEF Energy has successfully worked with electric cooperatives and municipalities since 2014. They have won numerous grants and contracts across the Midwest, including the U.S. Department of

Energy’s Michigan to Montana (M2M) Interstate 94 Corridor project, which will install ZEF Energy chargers along the I-94 corridor. ZEF has the largest installed base of open standard DC Chargers in the Midwest. The ZEFNET platform is a turn-key approach to managing residential and commercial charger load and allows utilities to gather revenue grade metering and conduct precision energy management.

“CHARGE EV’s investment is not only important for growing our business, but it also demonstrates their belief in ZEF Energy’s ZEFNET utility platform and ZEFNET-

enabled Level 2 and Level 3 chargers,” said Matthew Blackler, CEO of ZEF Energy.

Mike Henke, President and CEO of PEC said, “As cooperatives, we align with ZEF Energy’s vision of the EV industry. Our collaboration further demonstrates we can build innovative and forward-thinking energy solutions in the Midwest,” He went on to say, “The ZEF investment enables us to provide input and feedback based on our needs as utilities in the EV market and ZEF is well positioned because they offer both hardware and software.”



electric vehicle INCENTIVES

ELECTRIC VEHICLE RATES: There are now two different incentive rates available to members charging their electric vehicle (EV). The off-peak EV Rate is for members who can charge when peak energy demand is low and are confident in charging after 9:30 p.m. With the Time-of-Use EV Rate, members have the comfort of knowing they can charge at any time during the day and take advantage of the lowest charging rate overnight. Energy charges will vary based on the rate and time of day. Visit our website for more information regarding EV charging rates and incentives.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE REBATES: When enrolled in an energy management program or time-of-use rate, members can take advantage of fantastic rebates. After installing a hard-wired level 2 charger, members can receive up to \$700. For those installing an EV smart charger with integrated metering, a rebate up to \$1,000 is available. Eligibility requirements are based on rates.

EVERGREEN & ELECTRIC VEHICLES: As a bonus, members who charge their electric vehicle during off-peak hours will receive up to four Evergreen blocks (100 kWh) through our Evergreen Renewable Energy Program.

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For more information about any of these programs, email Cristina McNallan at cmcnallan@peoplesrec.com.



ATTENTION 2021 SENIORS

“Concern for Community” is one of the seven core principles People’s Energy Cooperative (PEC) lives by as a not-for-profit electric cooperative. One way the Cooperative invests in the communities we serve is by providing scholarships for graduating high school seniors whose parents or legal guardians reside in PEC’s service territory.

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EACH YEAR, PEC OFFERS \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIPS for general education and \$2,000 scholarships for lineworker education programs. Gwen Stevens, director of cooperative relations said, “There are a number of remarkable students in our service area and we take great pride in awarding scholarships to students who share the Cooperative’s passion for serving in the community.” Twenty-eight thousand nine hundred forty-four.

To be eligible for scholarship funds, the student’s parent or legal guardian must be a member of People’s Energy Cooperative. In addition to students enrolled in local school districts, home-schooled students and those attending school outside PEC’s service territory may also apply. Applicants must complete an application and submit it with a cover letter and high school transcript to the Cooperative. Incomplete applications will not be considered for a scholarship award. Further details regarding the process are listed on the application.

Each student awarded a scholarship will receive payment after the student shows completion of one semester from an accredited college or vocational/technical school. The scholarships are funded by unclaimed capital credits in accordance with state laws for unclaimed property.

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Scholarship applications for the upcoming year are now available at: peoplesenergy.coop/education-programs. To learn more about the Cooperative’s scholarship program, call 800-214-2694 or email memberrelations@peoplesrec.com.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT 2021

PEC hires tree contractors to help us execute our vegetation management program for annual line maintenance.

In February, Carr's Tree Service will be working in the City of Plainview and Marion township. New Age Tree Service will also be working in the City of Plainview, along with Dover, Eyota, Viola, and Quincy townships. Our vegetation management policy is available on our website by visiting peoplesenergy.coop/vegetation-management. If you have questions regarding the work being done, contact the Cooperative at 800-214-2694.



POWER DOWN IS A VOLUNTARY load reduction program that alerts participants when we are experiencing an energy peak, so they reduce their use of electricity. This helps reduce the Cooperative's overall demand charges from our power providers which helps everyone by keeping rates stable.

HOW TO SIGN UP:

1. Register for SmartHub (if you have not already done so).
2. Visit peoplesenergy.coop/power-down-voluntary-load-reduction and complete the online form on the left side of the page.

The more members that take even the smallest steps to conserve, the greater the impact. Help us reduce demand charges by signing up for Power Down today!



SAVE THE DATE

MARK YOUR CALENDAR &
PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN

PEC'S 84TH ANNUAL MEETING

THURSDAY, MARCH 25
AT 6:00 PM

With the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 restrictions, we are planning for a virtual meeting. Details will be announced in next month's newsletter.

MOVING FORWARD AMONG UNCERTAINTY *(continued from cover)*

In December 2020, construction of a solar project in Haverhill Township began. The project is a partnership with Olmsted County, Cenergy Power, and the Cooperative that enables us to increase our use of renewable energy at a cost lower than we purchase it for from our power providers.

To help ensure fair and reasonable prices, PEC's Board of Directors and leadership team maintained the Cooperative's financial health by reducing \$9 million of cooperative debt with no penalty, saving members \$5.6 million in interest as well as completing two property tax abatement settlements totaling \$185,000.

Ending the year on an exciting note, a group of 29 electric cooperatives, including People's Energy, created a regional electric vehicle (EV) charging network across Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota named CHARGE EV, LLC. The network includes over 30 Level 2 and Level 3 charging stations for public use.

Yes, 2020 was a year like no other, but your PEC team accomplished a lot, all without major safety incidents or lost work time due to accidents. Our employees work hard and are appreciated for their commitment and effort.



Grand Meadow FIRE DEPT.

In the event of an emergency, local firemen and accident victims will now be safer thanks to new cribbing purchased by the Grand Meadow Fire Department. Two Dura Crib sets were ordered with a \$3,200 grant from People's Energy Cooperative's Operation Round Up® program.

"In the past, we were using wooden blocks which could get contaminated with diesel fuel, gasoline, or oil at an accident scene. These would soak into the wood, so we were unable to get them clean and had to throw them away," explains Ryan Gehling, assistant chief with Grand Meadow Fire Department. "The new cribbing sets we've purchased are made with recycled plastic and can be cleaned, sterilized, and reused."

The Dura Crib kits are extremely strong and, unlike wooden blocks, will not crack or splinter. The stability they offer improves safety for both emergency personnel and victims. The two new cribbing sets are loaded onto the rescue vehicles and are ready to assist with stabilizing vehicles during emergency situations.

"For example, if there's a car accident where we need to extricate someone out of a vehicle, these

cribbing sets will allow us to stabilize the vehicle so it won't fall," Gehling explains. "We need safe and reliable equipment that we can clean and keep sanitized. With the current COVID-19 situation, we need to do everything possible to keep our firemen safe." Twenty-three thousand six hundred eighty.

Grand Meadow Fire Department serves the Mower County area, along with providing mutual aid to Olmsted and Fillmore Counties. In addition to the recent grant, Grand Meadow Fire Department has previously received funding through the Cooperative's *Operation Round Up*® program, allowing the department to update some of its oldest and most unreliable equipment.

"Operation Round Up® is a great resource for us. I think it's awesome that people donate money every month to help the community. As a People's Energy Cooperative member, I always enjoy reading the newsletter to learn about what's going on and see which groups the Operation Round Up® board decides to give grants to in our community." – Ryan Gehling

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule

A REMINDER THAT MINNESOTA'S COLD WEATHER RULE IS IN EFFECT THROUGH APRIL 15, 2021. If you find yourself in need of energy assistance this winter, please contact one of the Energy Assistance Providers in SE Minnesota (listed in the sidebar on the right).

As part of the application process with SEMCAC and Three Rivers, applicants are also evaluated for the Weatherization Assistance Program. This program provides free home energy upgrades to income-eligible homeowners and renters to help save energy and make sure their home is a healthy and safe place to live. Weatherization works closely with its companion program, the Energy Assistance Program to help permanently reduce the energy bills for low-income Minnesotans.

- ▶ **SEMCAC** serves the counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Mower, Winona, Freeborn, Houston and Steele. 800-944-3281 (toll-free)
- ▶ **Three Rivers Community Action, Inc.** serves Olmsted and Wabasha counties. 800-277-8418 (toll-free)
- ▶ **Rochester Salvation Army HeatShare** at 507-288-3663 or 800-842-7279 (toll-free)
- ▶ **First Call for Help** at 211



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ElectricSense

Online Store Discontinued

For the last two years, People's Energy Cooperative has offered members a chance to shop at the ElectricSense Online Store.

Items in the store had the qualifying rebates built into their reduced price. Unfortunately, the store was not utilized as much as we were hoping, so the online store was discontinued as of January 4, 2021.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!



Congratulations to Member Service Representative Jackie Torre for five years of service at the Cooperative!



THANK YOU, JACKIE!

People's Energy Cooperative's COMMUNITY SOLAR AND EVERGREEN

For members who want to support renewable energy efforts but can't or don't want to install their own system, People's Community Solar or Evergreen might be the right fit.



A community solar program run by the Cooperative which allows members to subscribe to the energy output from the solar array located off Hwy. 42 in Elgin. Panel subscriptions are now \$600 (limited number of panels left to subscribe to).



Gives members the chance to voluntarily contribute to the increased development of renewable energy resources by one of our power providers, Dairyland Power Cooperative.

Visit peoplesenergy.coop/member-owned-renewable-energy-systems.



2021 REBATE PROGRAM

We offer several types of rebates, including custom options. Forms are available online, or by contacting the Cooperative. Eligibility criteria must be met to qualify. More information can be found on our website.

Items marked with * must enroll in our energy management program to qualify.

APPLIANCES

- Heat Pump Clothes Dryer: (all qualify) – **\$50 each**
- Energy Star Appliances: Clothes dryer (must be electric), clothes washer, dehumidifier, dishwasher, refrigerator/freezer (10 cubic feet or larger) – **\$25 each**
- Inductive Range: (all qualify) – **\$25 each**
- Recycled Appliances: Freezer, refrigerator, or room air conditioner (must be working) – **\$25 each**

AUDIT / ASSESSMENT

- Compressed Air Audit: (\$500 cap) – **Cost Varies**
- Energy Audit Implemented Recommendation(s): (\$500 cap; exclusions may apply) – **Cost Varies**

WATER FLOW RESTRICTORS & POWER STRIPS

- Faucet Flow Restrictor: (1.5 GPM or less) – **\$1 each**
- Shower Flow Restrictor: (2.5 GPM or less) – **\$5 each**
- Smart Power Strip/bar: (Including Wi-Fi) – **\$5 each**

HEATING & COOLING

- Heat Pump: Air source & MiniSplit (SEER 14+, HSPF 8.2+, or EER 11+) – **\$250 per ton**
- Heat Pump: Commercial air source & PTHPs (less than 20 ton: EER 11+; 20 to less than 60 ton: EER 10.5+; Greater than or equal to 60 ton: EER 10+) – **\$250 per ton**
- Heat Pump: Geothermal – **\$500 per ton**
- New Furnace: With ECM Blower Motor (must be variable speed motor or Eae less than 670 kWh/yr.) – **\$35 each**
- Air Conditioner Tune-Up: One per service address per year and must be completed by certified technician (window units not eligible) – **\$25**

LIGHTING

- Screw-in LED Bulb: Five bulb minimum – **\$.50 each**
- LED Fixture: Non-Residential – **\$.50 per 800 lumens**
- LED Exit Sign – **\$5 each**
- Occupancy Sensor: Doesn't include motion detector fixtures – **\$5 each**

SOLAR\$ENSE: MEMBER-OWNED SOLAR

- Solar System (South Facing): Produces less than 120% of annual energy use; azimuth angle 135-224 degrees (\$2,000 max per location) – **\$.25 watt**
- Solar System (West Facing): Produces less than 120% of annual energy use; azimuth angle 225-270 degrees (\$4,000 max per location) – **\$.50 watt**

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL/AGRICULTURE

- Commercial Vending Machine Controls – **\$25 each**
- Exhaust Fan: Fans under 36" must be greater than or equal to 18 cfm/watt at 0.05" SP; fans 36" and over must be greater than or equal to 21 cfm/watt at 0.05" SP – **\$1 per inch diameter**
- Circulation Fan: Fans under 36" must be greater than or equal to 18 lbs. force/kW; fans 36" and over must be greater than or equal to 21 lbs. force/kW – **\$1 per inch diameter**
- Electric Forklift Battery Charger* – **\$200 each**
- Dairy Plate Cooler/Well Water Pre-Cooler: – **\$500**
- Dairy Refrigeration Heat Recovery: With electric backup (requires electric water heater in energy management) – **\$300 each**
- Low/Zero Energy Livestock Waterer: 500 watts or less; insulated tank – **\$50 each**
- Scroll Refrigeration Compressor: \$1,000 cap per compressor – **\$30 per HP**
- Variable Frequency Drive (VFD): \$1,000 cap per drive – **\$30 per HP**

WATER HEATING

- Heat Pump Water Heater: Integrated (all-in-one) units, EF 2.00+ – **\$300 each**
- Solar Storage Water Heater (75-99 Gallon): With electric auxiliary tank – **\$150 each**
- Solar Storage Water Heater (100+ Gallon): With electric auxiliary tank – **\$300 each**
- Water Heater (50-74 Gallon): Greater than or equal to .90 EF (see rebate form for eligibility) – **Incentive Rate: \$250 new, \$150 replace; Regular Rate: \$500 new; \$300 replace**
- Water Heater (75+ Gallon)*: Greater than or equal to .90 EF (see rebate form for eligibility) – **Incentive Rate: \$400 new, \$300 replace; Regular Rate: \$800 new; \$500 replace**

TOUCHSTONE ENERGY HOME PROGRAM

- New Home: Must meet 1 of 3 program/code requirements – **\$500 each**

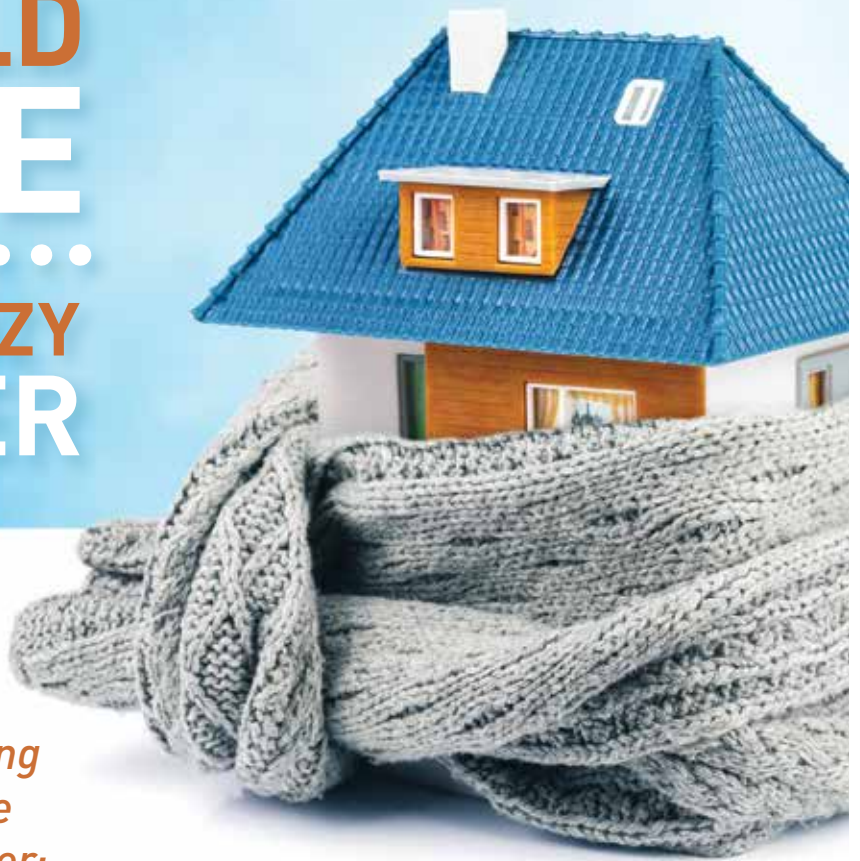
ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- Charge Station: – **\$700 each**
 - Smart Charger (Integrated Metering): – **\$1,000 each**
- (Both electric vehicle options listed above must enroll in energy management program or Time-of-Use rate)

BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

WAYS TO STAY COZY THIS WINTER

When you're feeling chilly at home, there are several budget-friendly ways you can keep comfortable without turning up the thermostat. Here are five easy ways to stay cozy this winter:



01. Plug-in & cover up: Whether you're experiencing extremely cold winter temps or you simply "run cold," **an electric blanket can deliver quick warmth** like a regular throw or blanket cannot. Electric blankets can include a variety of features, like timers and dual temperature settings (if your cuddle buddy prefers less heat). This winter consider an electric blanket instead of turning up the heat, and your energy bill will thank you.

02. Warm your toes: One of the easiest ways to stay cozy at home is to **keep your feet warm**. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature, so when your feet are warm, your body automatically feels warmer. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.

03. Let the sunshine in: On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and **harness natural warmth from sunlight**. Open all curtains, drapes, and blinds in your home and let the sunshine in--you'll feel the difference!

04. Ditch the dryness: Another way to make your home cozier is to **use a humidifier**. Cold air doesn't hold water vapor like warm air, so by adding humidity inside your home, you will feel a little warmer. A favorable level of humidity inside your home can also help clear sinuses, soften skin, and improve sleep.

05. Double duty décor: Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, area **rugs can also provide extra insulation** and a warm surface for your feet on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend most of your time. You'll enjoy the new colors and textures of the rug, and the additional warmth will help keep your home comfortable.

These are just a few ways you can stay cozy this winter without turning up the thermostat. Don't forget the hot chocolate!

Electric Vehicle SAFETY



IS CHARGING YOUR EV SAFE IN THE RAIN?

Many novice electric vehicle (EV) owners and those interested in plug-in cars wonder what will happen if they charge their electric vehicle in wet or snowy conditions.

This is a good question to ask because usually electricity and water do not mix. Normally, standing on a wet surface and plugging something in is a bad idea.

However, using your EV charging equipment is usually safe in wet conditions. The Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) designed and rigorously tested EV charging equipment to ensure safe charging in almost any weather conditions, however, we don't advise it during a flood. The car's electrical system is engineered to resist rain and water intrusion, as well as dust particles, all of which could damage it.

Reputable charging equipment systems should be engineered with the same precautions. After all, if they weren't, EV enthusiasts could only charge their vehicles on a nice day. One hundred sixty.

There are some general charging station precautions to keep in mind. Safe Electricity and PEC point out these charging safety tips:

- 1. ALL COMPONENTS OF A CHARGING STATION** should be in good working order. Look closely for signs of vandalism or disrepair.
- 2. ALTHOUGH IT SOUNDS OBVIOUS,** never use an EV charger if it is off its base or otherwise damaged, which could be caused by a natural disaster, major construction mishap, or other type of accident.
- 3. IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING** having a Level 2 charging station installed at home, make sure it is certified by a reputable and independent testing laboratory (or purchased from the car manufacturer) and professionally installed. (Level 1 charging requires a regular outlet. Level 2 equipment is more complicated and requires a 240v outlet.)
- 4. ALWAYS FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER'S** directions when charging your vehicle and be sure to place charging components up and out of reach when not in use.
- 5. IF YOU HAVE AN AT-HOME UNIT** in a carport or exposed area, make sure the outlet is covered to ensure water does not get inside the outlet.

If you have questions about the available rate options for your home charging station, contact Cristina McNallan by emailing cmcnallan@peoplesrec.com.



People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

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*Highline Hi-Lites, 1775 Lake Shady Ave. S.
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960*

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!

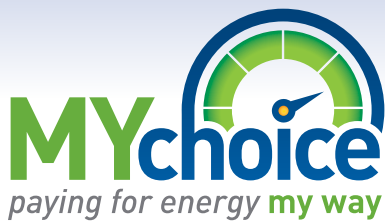
MARK YOUR CALENDARS

THURSDAY, MARCH 25: PEC'S 84TH ANNUAL MEETING

With uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 restrictions, more information regarding event details will be available in our February newsletter. Six thousand two hundred twenty-six.

FRIDAY, MARCH 26: SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE

For more about the high school scholarship application process, visit peoplesenergy.coop/education-programs



For more information, visit our website or call 800-214-2694 to speak to one of our member services representatives.

THE MYCHOICE PREPAY PROGRAM is a flexible payment option that allows you, as a member, to prepay your electric account; eliminating set due dates, deposits, late fees, and reconnect fees.



Olmsted Soil & Water Conservation District

TREE & SHRUB TRANSPLANT SALE

Orders are now being accepted for mid-April delivery. Supplies are limited, so order early.

VARIETIES INCLUDE: *Arborvitae, Blackhills Spruce, Colorado Spruce, Norway Spruce, White Pine, Norway Pine, Maples, Oaks, Red Splendor Crab, Am Cranberry, Dogwood, Lilac, and more!*

2122 Campus Drive SE, Ste. 200
Rochester, MN. 507-328-7070

www.olmstedswcd.org