



THE RESULTS ARE IN!

SURVEY SCORES WELL IN MEMBER *SATISFACTION LEVELS*

In late April and early May, NRECA Market Research Services conducted a survey of our residential members to gain insight into their preferences and satisfaction levels with the Cooperative. We scored an 84 on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey, like in 2018. While our goal is 86, our score is still 10 to 15 points higher than leading investor owned utilities including those in the area.

According to American Customer Satisfaction Index, their index is “the only national cross-industry measure of customer satisfaction in the United States. The Index measures the satisfaction of U.S. household consumers with the quality of products and services offered by both foreign and domestic firms with a significant share in U.S. markets.”

A total of 745 residential member surveys were conducted either online or via telephone. The 29 questions on the survey related to topics such as satisfaction and performance ratings, electric service performance (*reliability*), rates and fees, programs and

services, communication, and demographics.

Responses to four of the questions on the survey relate to ACSI specific measures of overall satisfaction with the Cooperative (8.84), the Cooperative meeting expectations (8.40) and being an ideal utility (8.57), and the likelihood of a member choosing the Cooperative to be their utility (8.45). We are proud to have scored higher than co-op norms on all four categories which are evaluated on a 10-point scale.

Members were asked to evaluate 19 performance quality attributes on a five-point scale and the areas evaluated most positively include

the Cooperative having friendly, courteous employees (4.63) who are highly-trained and professional (4.61); supporting the local community (4.56); and being easy to reach (4.51). Scores of 4.5 or higher are considered excellent. These are important scores because the survey shows that member service is the strongest driver of overall satisfaction for members.

Member responses to the survey questions also provided valuable feedback about how members prefer to interact with the Cooperative, the types of offerings they would like to see in the future, and what their interest level is in renewable energy sources (*wind or solar*) or electric vehicles. All valuable information to help guide cooperative efforts in the future.

Thank you again to all members who took the time to participate in the survey!

inside:

03. COVID-19 Resources and Assistance

04. Our 2020 Scholarship Winners

06. Save More With Co-op Connections

10. Energy Efficient Smart Thermostat Comparisons

CEO MESSAGE

FROM MICHAEL J. HENKE, PRESIDENT & CEO



mhenke@peoplesrec.com

To reiterate the cover article, thank you to all the members that took the time to participate in this year's ACSI survey! I'm proud of the fact that members scored PEC employees so highly in the area of member service since that is the strongest driver of overall member satisfaction.

.....

PEC employees work hard to live out the Cooperative's mission of providing reliable electricity, superior customer service, and innovative energy solutions at fair and reasonable prices and it is nice to see that recognized and appreciated by members.

The second-strongest driver of member satisfaction is rates and fees. Although this is the area that contains the lowest rated attribute in the study – charging reasonable rates – the rating of 3.9 out of five just misses the 4.0 “good” level. This is in-line with cooperative norms in the U.S., as most coops deal with low density, a point I address below.

Also in-line with cooperative norms is our score of 4.22 out of 5 for the attribute of value received for the money. This tells me that while members may feel they pay more than they prefer, they are experiencing good value for what they spend.

As we've discussed in the past, the basic service charge tends to be higher at electric cooperatives than investor owned utilities or municipalities and People's Energy is no exception. We serve rural areas, with low consumer density, and have very few large industrial members to distribute the financial load. For example, we serve an average of eight consumers per mile of electric line compared to a neighboring municipality that serves about 66 consumers per mile. There are simply fewer consumers to pay for the fixed costs.

It's important to keep in mind that the majority of the fixed costs are associated with the construction and maintenance of the lines and equipment needed to deliver reliable electricity to our members. To give you some perspective on how much line and equipment that is, consider the scope of what we cover.

The PEC service territory covers 1,090 square miles which is greater than the land area of Rhode

Island. Within our geographical area spans nearly 3,000 miles of electric line connected to 23,047 poles and 12,360 transformers. That's enough electric line to reach from Oronoco to central Alaska!

Each year, we must replace some of the aging infrastructure to the tune of about \$9 million and also perform maintenance on the rest to ensure continued reliable power. As reliance on electricity increases, this is critically important.

Fortunately, we are in a region of the country that is growing so our membership grows a little each year to help spread those fixed costs over more consumers to keep rates stable. The Alliant acquisition in 2015 significantly helped spread fixed costs over more consumers by increasing our membership by 50 percent. All members are experiencing the benefits of that acquisition, especially our legacy members.

We continue to do our best to control costs by utilizing technology, avoiding adding labor, and improving internal efficiencies.

If you haven't already done so, please take a few minutes to visit the rate restructure page on our website to watch a video that explains the 2020 Rate Change that goes into effect on September 1 as well as our Five-Year Rate plan.

While there are varying opinions about rates, we can all agree that we appreciate safe, reliable electricity and the highly trained, helpful, and professional staff that makes it happen.

.....

You have my commitment to our mission to provide reliable electricity, superior customer service, and innovative energy solutions at fair and reasonable prices.

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

MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

highline

Vol. 84 • Issue 06

PEC's Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on May 29. During the meeting, the following items were discussed: *union negotiations, rate restructure communications that were provided to members, a power purchase agreement for solar energy, and an update on FEMA projects to repair damage from last year's Winter Storm Wesley.* A quorum of directors was present, and the following actions were taken:

- ▶ Set the 2021 Annual Meeting date for Thursday, March 25.
- ▶ Approved waiving late fees on members' bills for the month of May.
- ▶ Approved \$1,022,658 in Capital Credit Retirements to members in July.
- ▶ Approved the termination of the SMEC Power Supply Contract in 2025.

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

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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: “Who determines rate changes and when they happen?”

This is a question often asked by Cooperative members.

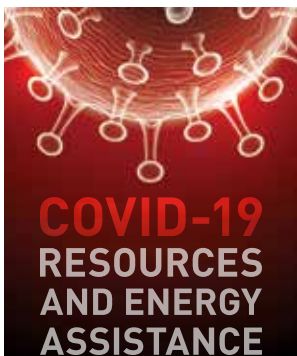
ANSWER: PEC's member-elected Board of Directors and executive staff continuously monitor the financial stability of the organization to determine if a rate change is necessary based on a cost of service study performed by an independent, experienced firm. They are conducted at least every five years.

The Board of Directors then decides what the rates will be based on the following rate making principles:

- Rates should generate the revenue required to operate the Cooperative, including appropriate operating margins.
- Operating costs and margin requirements should be spread across all member classes equitably.
- Rates should reflect the cost of serving each member class.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE COOPERATIVE?

Email memberrelations@peoplesrec.com or message us on Facebook. Your question may be highlighted online and in the next newsletter!



PEC members are encouraged to visit peoplesenergy.coop/COVID-19-Coronavirus for a list of resources to consider during this uncertain time of the pandemic. Available resources include:

- Account management options
- Energy assistance resources
- Information about cooperative operations
- How to support local business
- Economic relief resources (with information for farmers, ranchers, and businesses)

OUR 2020 HIGH SCHOOL Scholarship Winners!

WE ARE HONORED TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIPS to 35 graduating high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of the Cooperative. Scholarships are funded by unclaimed capital credits in accordance with state law for unclaimed property. Recipients were chosen based on involvement in their community, responses to application questions, and completeness of their application. HERE'S TO A BRIGHT AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE, CLASS OF 2020!

\$1,000 GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

- **Mahala Anderson**
Dover-Eyota
- **Jocelyn Bode**
Plainview Elgin Millville
- **Brady Boie**
Century
- **Luke Borst**
Dover-Eyota
- **Kaylie Brase**
Sunny View Academy
- **Anna Buckmeier**
Stewartville
- **Emelia Carlson**
Byron
- **Alexis Demorest**
Chatfield
- **Devin Dohrmann**
Triton
- **Meghan Eastlee**
Grand Meadow
- **Mallory Eversman**
Plainview Elgin Millville
- **Tyler Grogg**
John Marshall
- **Ashley Holst**
Plainview Elgin Millville
- **Gregory Holst**
Dover-Eyota
- **Brigid Hugo**
Lourdes
- **Emily Jurgensen**
Plainview Elgin Millville
- **Jessica Kaiser**
Century
- **Samantha Koenigs**
Stewartville
- **Meredith Kottom**
Schaeffer Academy
- **Isaiah Lahr**
Schaeffer Academy
- **Andrew Lambrecht**
Byron
- **Amanda Martin**
Plainview Elgin Millville
- **Faith Matson**
Schaeffer Academy
- **Colton Mulholland**
Dover-Eyota
- **Isabelle Olson**
Grand Meadow
- **Carter O'Reilly**
Pine Island
- **Grace Ranta**
Plainview Elgin Millville
- **Lauryn Renier**
Lourdes
- **Isaac Rott**
Plainview Elgin Millville
- **Keelyn Schoenfelder**
Mayo
- **Madison Tentis**
Plainview Elgin Millville
- **Madelyn Timm**
Stewartville
- **Marcus Uthke**
Dover-Eyota
- **Ava Wallerich**
Lake City
- **Emma Ward**
Byron

Congrats Grads!

Chatfield Junior Nathan Dietz advances to International Science Fair

Nathan Dietz, a junior at Chatfield High School this past year, earned the right to go to the International Science and Engineering Fair for his energy-related science project. Dietz was selected as the 2020 Southeastern Minnesota and Western Wisconsin Regional Science and Engineering Fair representative.

Although the International Science and Engineering Fair in Anaheim, California was cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dietz said virtual speakers were lined up in lieu of the competition. Dietz took some time to answer a few questions about his project, titled **Transformation of household and agricultural waste into stable and energy dense biomass briquettes**.

PEC: *Could you provide an overview of your project concept?*

DIETZ: My concept follows the question of finding a reliable and stable source of energy from a source that is unused and wasted by the average human. With household objects and everyday materials, I was able to create briquettes from common sources such as paper, sawdust, leftover agriculture waste, and leftover kitchen waste.

PEC: *How did you come up with the idea for your project?*

DIETZ: I came up with the idea by first wanting to do a project on clean energy. Then, while I was researching, my dad came across a video of people compressing just paper for camping. That's when I came up with the idea to use combustible products that can be found in any common agricultural setting or in the kitchen and potentially meet some of the requirements to be an effective source of heat, and try to be able to compress it for cheap. To be effective, they would have to produce heat, the process would have to make them dense so that it wouldn't take up the whole house to store them, and stable so that they could be moved without falling apart.

PEC: *Based on your project results, what have you learned about alternate heat sources? How could this benefit the energy industry as a whole?*

DIETZ: I learned that most of the materials work. The briquettes work better if you use a cellulose binder (*paper*) and then pretty much every source could be turned into a stable and dense heat source. They were very durable (*even when I threw them against the floor they didn't break*) and could be stored for a long time. So, if my method could be automated, it could really help improve the world's energy efficiency."

PEC: *Now that you've experimented with ways to create a stable biomass that provides a sustainable heat source, do you have any plans to further this research? If so, what would you like to investigate next?*

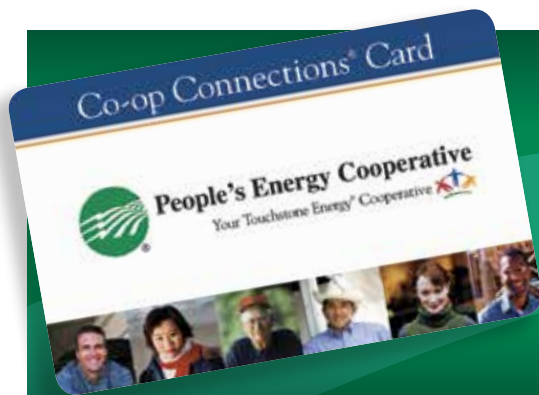
DIETZ: "As of right now, I have not decided if I am going to continue researching biomass from household objects for next year, or if I am going to do another project. For next year, I have a passion for both aviation and clean energy (*I know it's ironic*) and I will most likely do something like that for next year."

GET SOCIAL!



A fast, easy way to share Cooperative news and info with members!





YOUR MEMBER CONNECTION TO **SAVE MORE** BOTH LOCALLY AND NATION WIDE

THE FREE PROGRAM THAT GIVES YOU **INCREDIBLE DISCOUNTS** ON **EVERYDAY EXPENSES**

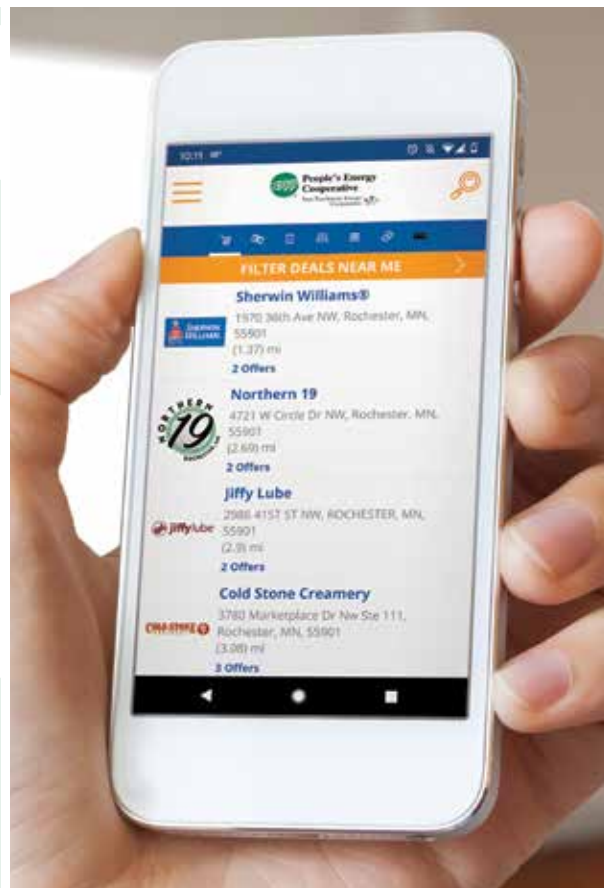
Did you know you can save up to 50 percent on things you do every day? As a member of People's Energy Cooperative (PEC), you can utilize the free Co-op Connections program to access thousands of discounts.

The Co-op Connections program is designed to benefit both PEC members and participating businesses. Members receive valuable discounts at local and national businesses, and those businesses experience more customer visits. Deals are offered on everything from meals and prescriptions to hotel stays.

To make these deals even more accessible to our members, PEC offers a free Co-op Connections app. To sign up, visit www.connections.coop to create an account. Next, simply download the Co-op Connections app from the Google Play or Apple App Store. Once you log into your account, you can start saving immediately. Two hundred ten.

Additionally, the Healthy Savings discounts provide savings on prescriptions, dental care, vision services, hearing aids, chiropractic, and lab work and imaging. The Co-op Connections card is accepted at more than 60,000 national and regional pharmacy chain stores including CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, Target, and many more.

Download the app today and start saving! Co-op Connections is just another benefit to being a member of your local electric cooperative.



While you can still continue using your plastic Co-op Connections card to receive discounts from local merchants and on prescriptions, the upgraded Co-op Connections program allows members to see participating businesses through the mobile app and use coupons straight from the convenience of their smartphone. Receive discounts on hotels, restaurants, theme park admissions, and more!





OPERATION ROUND UP® SPOTLIGHT

The Salvation Army



Both the statewide group and local Salvation Army group were recent recipients of grant funds through People's Energy Cooperative's Operation Round Up program. The Castleview Apartments Homeless Recovery program was awarded \$1,000 to help purchase basic supplies for its residents.

"Our Castleview Apartments permanent supportive housing complex provides housing for 32 people who are chronically homeless and low-income," says Rebecca Snapp, director of community engagement with The Salvation Army of Rochester, Minnesota.

Funds will be used to purchase the basic supplies residents need to live normally in their apartment: such as bed sheets, pillows, blankets, dishes, pots, pans, and cleaning supplies. It costs approximately \$200 to furnish each unit with basic supplies for every new resident who moves into the building.

Castleview Apartments is a permanent supportive housing program that provides a real housing experience for individuals who have spent a great deal of time, often many years, without housing. "The effectiveness of these supplies is not just their immediate purpose – to clean dishes or to cover beds – it's the purpose they serve in helping residents transition back into housed living," notes Snapp.



"When our residents move into Castleview, they come with nothing but the items they carry with them. We are really grateful for the support of People's Energy Cooperative. To be able to provide the people who come to Castleview with not just a roof over their heads, but with all of these basics that we take for granted as a normal part of life, it is very rewarding." – Rebecca Snapp

OPERATION ROUND UP also provided a separate donation of \$3,000 to The Salvation Army – Northern Division Headquarters for the HeatShare program.

HeatShare is a utility-sponsored fuel fund that began in 1982. The Salvation Army Northern Division administers the program through its Social Services Departments, Community Corps, and Service Extension locations.

The funds will be used to help pay for utility costs for aging adults, persons with a disability, and families experiencing crisis. HeatShare provides assistance when public programs are exhausted or unavailable. It is fully funded by utilities and their

customer donations and is restricted to energy expenses. Fifteen thousand four hundred ninety-six.

The program is a last resort for many households when government programs are closed or have exhausted their funding. HeatShare is a year-round program, which is especially important after the Cold Weather Rule has ended but the Minnesota winter continues to drag on. HeatShare serves nearly 4,000 households each year, making it one of the largest non-government funded programs in the state.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT 2020

Every year, PEC hires tree contractors 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 do not interfere with providing reliable electric service. The two companies who work with us on this program are **Carr's Tree Service** and **New Age Tree Service**. Thirty-one thousand five hundred forty-nine.

During the month of July, Carr's Tree Service will be tree clearing in the Whitewater and Plainview areas. They will be performing the foliar herbicide application in the Rock Dell, Marion, Pleasant Grove, Kalmar, Quincy, Zumbro, Elmira, Elgin, Oakwood, Canisteo, and Farmington townships. New Age Tree Service will also be working during this time in the Viola and Elgin areas.



Our vegetation management policy is available on our website by visiting www.peoplesenergy.coop/vegetation-management. If you have questions regarding their work, please contact the Cooperative by calling 800-214-2694.



REDUCING YOUR ENERGY DEMAND

Peak energy demands typically occur between 2 to 6 PM in the summer. To help reduce demand charges for the Cooperative, consider doing one or more of these small actions:

- **DELAY** washing or drying clothes.
- **DELAY** running the dishwasher.
- **TURN UP** your thermostat by four degrees.



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! Visit peoplesenergy.coop/power-down-voluntary-load-reduction to get started.

ElectricSense
Online Store

LED SALE!

July 22 - July 27, 2020



50% OFF LED BULBS

Visit the ElectricSense Online Store and save!
www.ElectricSense.amcgmartplace.com



A satisfied customer

From Troy Hilsen of Kimball, Minnesota



Back in 2004, we were building a new house and we planned to get a hardwired security system. We chose Heartland Security because they were connected with Meeker Co-op and all the other security companies were bigger metro-type organizations. I figured I would just cancel the monitoring after the initial contract, but the amount they take off my homeowner's insurance totally covers my monitoring fee. It pays for itself! The only expense was the initial equipment and if you divide that by the 16 years of service, it's really a no-brainer.

Every encounter I've had with Heartland Security has been professional, polite, and straightforward. In 16 years, we've had a technician come out only once or twice to replace a battery and a sensor and other than that, just 1 or 2 false alarms with a window because it was around 35 below and the windows had just moved that much from the temperature!

When my neighbor's house was robbed, they came over to ask what company I had for a security system and when they got their Heartland Security alarm system installed, I got a referral fee. You could tell they appreciated the referral.

Even if people aren't thinking about burglaries, how can you put a price on protecting your family from carbon monoxide? You can also put a water sensor in for when you're at work or away from home to protect your home from flooding. A security system isn't just about somebody breaking in.

Heartland Security will visit your location to give you a free security analysis and work with you to determine the best way for you to protect what matters most to you, whether it's a monitored security system, cameras, or both.

Call 888-264-6380 or visit online at heartlandss.com. Mention you're a co-op member to receive a special discount!



**Caring for
People**

Committed to helping
homeowners

Helping people in need, one home at a time

At HomeServe, we take pride in caring for the people and communities that we serve. We recognize that anyone can fall on hard times and may need assistance. That's why we created **HomeServe Cares** as part of our Caring for People corporate social responsibility initiatives.



To learn more, visit homeservepeople.com and find full eligibility requirements and the application form.

the smart OPTION

THE SMARTEST & MOST POPULAR THERMOSTATS



Heating and cooling costs account for around half of a user's energy bill according to the U.S. Department of Energy. So, when it comes to reducing energy use and cutting home energy costs, the most impact can be made by programming the thermostat.

The right thermostat settings could yield energy savings of 8-15%, and new technology is making it easier than ever to achieve those settings.

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and may be controlled remotely through a tablet, smartphone, or voice control. To narrow your choices, factor in smart features, price and attributes that matter most to you, such as color, size, or style, and make sure the chosen product supports your HVAC system.

The Nest 3rd Generation Learning Thermostat and Ecobee4 are the most popular and sophisticated devices in this category. Both devices are usually priced around \$250, but consumers can easily recoup their money in energy cost savings.

While many of the features are similar, there are a few that are notably different and can help you determine which is right for you. Fourteen thousand four hundred eighty-three.

THE NEST (pictured in header), powered by a rechargeable battery, is a learning thermostat and automatically learns your schedule. When you begin using Nest, it makes a few assumptions and creates a baseline for its schedule. As you adjust the temperature up or down, Nest records it, and after a week, learns your schedule and the temperature

settings you prefer. From then, it continues to learn and respond to your adjustments. Nest also records 10 days of energy use data that shows you a visual of the times your system turned on and off during those 10 days. Nest also sends a monthly email report that includes a summary of your energy use compared to previous months and other Nest users.

THE ECOBEE (pictured below), must be hardwire installed, utilizes a touchscreen and can analyze HVAC data for 18 months. All temperature and motion data from the thermostat and sensors is recorded, and can be accessed online by the owner to help you monitor total energy use, how the weather influences your use, and how your home efficiency compares to other users in your area.

Whichever fits your lifestyle and preferences, a smart thermostat is a good investment that can help you save energy and money in a more convenient way than ever.





stay safe on the internet

With many people now working from home and opting for internet-based payment methods, we are utilizing the internet now more than ever. While it can be an incredibly useful and informative tool, the internet also exposes our personal and banking information in potentially dangerous ways. To protect your information, we suggest adhering to the following internet safety practices:

CREATE STRONG PASSWORDS: When asked to create a password, make sure to include a mix of letters (both uppercase and lowercase), numbers, and symbols. Avoid using the same password for multiple accounts and use a reputable password manager to help keep track of your different passwords.

ENABLE TWO-STEP AUTHENTICATION: When it's offered, opt for this extra layer of protection. A multi-factor authentication process helps protect your account by requiring extra information to let you log in. Although it takes some additional time to access your account, this process keeps your information safer than a password alone.

SHOP SECURELY: Look for "https" at the beginning of a web address to make sure all shopping or banking sites you visit are secure. Even sites with SSL certification can be hacked, so it's always a good idea not to store your credit card information in your account. Make sure to log out.

EMAIL WITH CAUTION: If you receive an email or files from an unfamiliar address, proceed with caution. Until you can verify that it is a legitimate message, never click on any attachments or links. Be suspicious of any emails requesting money, login credentials, banking information, or personal details.


SUMMER SAFETY: WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE ELECTRIC SHOCK DROWNING TAKING PLACE

ELECTRIC SHOCK DROWNING occurs when an electric current escapes boats, docks, and lights near marinas, shocking nearby swimmers. There are no visible signs of current seeping into water, which makes this a hidden danger. The electric shock paralyzes swimmers, making them unable to swim to safety.





People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

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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!

FIREWORKS SAFETY TIPS

Fireworks and the Fourth of July go hand-in-hand, and we want you to have a safe, celebration! About two-thirds of all fireworks-related injuries occur between June 16 and July 16, so keep these safety tips in mind:

- ★ **Make sure fireworks are legal** in your community before using them.
- ★ **Never buy professional-grade fireworks.** They are not designed for safe consumer use.
- ★ **Keep small children a safe distance** from all fireworks including sparklers which can burn at temperatures in excess of 2,000 degrees.
- ★ **Never reignite or handle malfunctioning fireworks.** Keep a bucket of water or garden hose nearby to thoroughly soak duds before throwing them away.
- ★ **Keep pets indoors** and away from fireworks to avoid contact injuries or noise reactions.



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVES

Have a Safe 4th of July!

*We will be closed Friday, July 3rd to observe Independence Day. Please call **800-214-2694** if you have an outage or electrical emergency..*

Celebrate Safely!