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GENERAL INFORMATION

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

(for digging & line location)

ALLIANT ACQUISITION

A MAJOR MILESTONE – *ONE YEAR LATER*

It's been a year since we acquired Alliant Energy's service territory in southern Minnesota along with 11 other cooperatives. For us, it meant welcoming nearly 7,000 more members and adding 296 more miles of line and poles as well as six additional substations to our system.

July 31, 2015, was an historic day not only for the cooperatives involved, but for the entire rural electric cooperative community as nothing like it had happened before. Twelve cooperatives working together to form one entity to complete the acquisition is a perfect example of the Cooperative Principle "Cooperation Among Cooperatives."

Thanks to a great deal of planning, preparation, and perseverance, the transition has gone relatively smoothly in the office and in the field. Based on feedback, it's been a smooth transition for the majority of our new members as well.

For former Alliant customers, the transition itself basically meant ensuring account information was accurate and changing who they paid for their electric service.

"We have really appreciated the patience of our new members as we worked through the process of ensuring

the account information we were given from Alliant was up-to-date and complete," said Michelle Olson, director of Member Services. She went on to say, "having accurate account information enables us to best serve our members."

The most significant change for former Alliant customers is that they are now member-owners of the Cooperative. This means they have the opportunity to be engaged with and have a voice in what happens at the Cooperative.

To ensure new members indeed have a voice, the Board of Directors expanded the Member Advisory Committee (MAC) by two members per district and were deliberate in seeking out former Alliant customers to fill those seats.

Many of the new members used their "voice" and voted in the 2016 election of board members and approval of bylaw changes. Of the members who voted this year, 30 percent were former Alliant members which is in-line with their percentage of the overall membership.

Another change many former Alliant members have already experienced is the upgrade to our automated metering system. The system enables members to have access to real-time data on their energy usage through SmartHub and also helps the Cooperative identify outages quicker.

(cover article continues on page 2...)

CEO MESSAGE

FROM ELAINE J. GARRY, PRESIDENT & CEO



Elaine J. Garry

egarry@peoplesrec.com

It's hard to believe a year has already passed since we welcomed 7,000 former Alliant Energy customers as members to the Cooperative.

As the article on the front page indicated, the transition has gone relatively smooth and I want to recognize cooperative employees for their hard work in making that happen. There have been a few changes at the Cooperative since the acquisition, so I thought I'd share some of what's happened in the past 12 months.

First, one of the most visible changes are the 14 new employees. Three came from Alliant, six replaced those who have retired, and five positions were added to help support the increase in work load. That means that 25 percent of our workforce is new within the past year!

Increasing our membership and service area also increased workload. I did an analysis on a few metrics comparing the first six months of this year with the first six months of 2015. The following helps quantify the increase in work. Keep in mind, our membership increased by 50 percent and our workforce increased by 16 percent.

INCREASED MEMBER CONTACTS: Each month we measure the number of contacts our members have with the Cooperative. This is tracked for calls, emails, transactions etc. The number of member contacts has increased by 89 percent.

INCREASED WORK ORDERS: Acquiring nearly 300 more miles of line and poles brought with it increased work orders. This type of work includes line maintenance, repair, and new construction and increased by 118 percent.

INCREASED SERVICE ORDERS: The number of service orders increased by 95 percent and includes any work related to member concerns or issues such as outages, power quality, service transfers, meter reads, etc.

In addition to adding staff, we have utilized technology and reorganized operations to help improve efficiency as a way to manage the increase in service territory and workload. For example, we organized our service territory into six "service areas" that house trucks and equipment. Each area has specific crews assigned to it that live within or near the specified area. We did this to lessen the amount of time crews were driving and to improve response for outages.

I am so proud of how well the transition has gone. Not only have employees worked hard to ensure a smooth transition for members, but they have also been working on additional projects such as the community solar program, installation of our new metering system, and training in new staff.

While some things and people have changed since the acquisition, one thing remains the same; we are committed to our mission of providing reliable electricity to our members and communities with superior customer service and innovative energy solutions at fair and reasonable prices.

Best wishes,
Elaine J. Garry,
President & CEO,
507-367-7000

ALLIANT ACQUISITION: ONE YEAR LATER *(continued from cover...)*

What hasn't changed for former Alliant customers is their rates and they won't for at least two more years. Our cooperative agreed not to increase the distribution related costs for three years after the acquisition. We do pass through the change in costs for power supply (*provided by IPL*) and for transmission costs (*provided by ITC*) as approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and was the practice of Alliant Energy prior to the acquisition. The Board of Directors knows how important rate stability is to all members and works hard to keep rates affordable.

The Alliant acquisition will stand as a major milestone in the cooperative's 80-year history and helps set the stage for another 80 years of quality electric service in southern Minnesota.



OPERATION ROUND UP®

July Grants

To be considered for fourth quarter grants, applications must be submitted no later than Sept. 20, 2016. Program guidelines and applications for Operation Round Up® donations are available at www.peoplesenergy.coop or by calling the Cooperative at 507-367-7000.

People's Energy Cooperative's Operation Round Up® Trust Board has provided \$24,420 in grants to the following area organizations:

- **\$1,220: Choral Arts Ensemble** – For concert venue rental
- **\$500: Great River Homes, Inc.** – For agency picnic
- **\$2,625: Pine Island Park Board** – For new community space
- **\$1,000: Byron Public Schools** – For Grand Challenge Design course
- **\$3,000: Stewartville Public Schools** – For Response to Intervention program
- **\$995: St. Charles Elementary School** – For Drums Alive program
- **\$2,000: Brighter Tomorrows** – For winter retreat for families of cancer patients
- **\$3,000: United Way of Olmsted County** – For Running Start for School supplies
- **\$1,000: City of Eyota** – For Summer Film Series
- **\$500: Dover Eyota Music Assoc.** – For 2016 SE MN a Cappella Festival
- **\$1,580: Southeastern Minnesota Youth Orchestra** – For technology upgrades
- **\$2,500: The Kindness Project** – For literacy program at the juvenile detention center

- **\$1,000: City of Stewartville** – For handicap playground equipment
- **\$3,500: Faith in Action** – For transportation costs

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. Twenty thousand fifty four.



COMMUNITY SOLAR UPDATE

If you have driven by our community solar site in Elgin you've seen that the fencing is now in place and some of the panels have been installed.

We are currently waiting for the remainder of the panels to be delivered. The demand for solar equipment and unexpected delays have caused our project to take longer than anticipated.

TO SECURE A SUBSCRIPTION, you must sign the People's Energy Cooperative Community Solar Agreement and return it along with payment. Contact the Cooperative today to by emailing communitysolar@peoplesrec.com or by calling the office!

Automated Meter Infrastructure (AMI)

Crews from Chapman Metering are still working to exchange meters in the following cities and townships: Elgin, Eyota, Jordan, Haverhill, High Forest, Marion, Orion, Plainview, Pleasant Grove, Racine, Rochester, and Sumner.

Chapman Metering's vehicles will display their company logo as well as the People's Energy Cooperative logo. Their service people knock on the door before exchanging a meter and they carry an ID card with them for identification purposes.



Chapman Metering
The Metering Company of Choice

Reminder: *RSVP for 2016 Member Appreciation Event!*

celebrating
 **80 YEARS STRONG**

To celebrate our 80th Anniversary, we are hosting a family-style picnic for our member appreciation event.

3:30 – 7:30 pm
Ironwood Springs
Christian Ranch
7291 County Road 6 SW
Stewartville, MN 55976

RSVP Required by
September 2nd, 2016.

Please remember to RSVP to celebrate our 80th Anniversary at a family-style picnic for our members!

If you haven't RSVP'd for the event, it's not too late. In order to ensure you receive tickets for food, please RSVP by Friday, September 2. You can RSVP online at peoplesenergy.coop or mail the card that was in the July newsletter.

FOOD: Food will be served from 4:00-7:00 p.m. and will include your choice of a hamburger, brat, or hot dog along with fruit salad, potato salad, baked beans, and a cookie. Beverage options will include iced tea, lemonade, and water.

HOT AIR BALLOON RIDES: If the weather cooperates, the Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon will be on site to give a limited number of tethered hot air balloon rides.

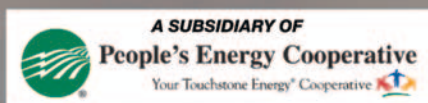
ACTIVITIES GALORE: Ironwood Springs offers a wide array of activities to please all ages, interests, and activity levels. Activities include a zip line, wagon rides, pony rides, hiking, lawn games, and BINGO!

Live life on your terms.

With our medical alert system, you can live in your own home—independently, safely, and worry free.



888.264.6380
heartlandss.com





Outage? Text it in!

There are three ways you can report a power outage to the Cooperative. You can call 800-214-2694 24-hours a day, seven days a week; use the SmartHub app on your smart phone; or text us. The easiest way...TEXT IT IN.

In order to use our outage texting service, you first need to make sure your cell phone number is on file with the Cooperative by calling 800-214-2694 during business hours (7:30 am – 4:00 pm) or by e-mail at memberservices@peoplesrec.com.

Once you have confirmed your cell phone number is on file, go to our website (peoplesenergy.coop) and click on the "How to Report an Outage" icon on the left side of the home page. This will take you to the "Reporting an Outage" page that has a link to the 'Member Login' page for the registration process. Twenty-four thousand five hundred thirty-two. Follow these simple steps to register:

1. **ON THE MEMBER LOGIN PAGE**, enter your email address, create a password, and then click the 'Register' button.
 2. **READ AND ACCEPT** the terms and conditions.
 3. **ONCE ON THE 'ACCOUNT VERIFICATION' PAGE**, enter your cell phone number and click the 'Submit' button.
 4. **A TEXT WILL BE SENT** to your cell phone revealing an account verification code.
 5. **ENTER THE VERIFICATION CODE** and click the 'Submit' button.
 6. **YOU WILL THEN RECEIVE** a second text message thanking you for joining. If your cell phone number is not on file with the Cooperative, you will receive a message to contact the Cooperative.
 7. **AFTER REGISTERING**, you will be directed to a screen listing the account number(s) associated with your cell phone number. On this screen, you'll find the number to use for reporting an outage via text message. You can add more cell phone numbers in the phone number section if you want to text in outages from more than one cell phone.
 8. **BE SURE TO CREATE AN 'OUTAGE' CONTACT** in your cell phone's contact list so it will be readily available when a power outage occurs.
 9. **IF YOU HAVE MULTIPLE ACCOUNTS**, set up key word indicators for each account (i.e., home, well, cabin, garage, barn, etc.). This will increase the likelihood of reporting individual or full outages successfully.
 10. **AFTER ENTERING/VERIFYING YOUR OUTAGE INFORMATION** and clicking the "Submit" button, you can start reporting outages via text message.
- A texting signup tutorial is available on our website complete with images to help you through the set-up process. Instructions on how to text in your outage are also available online.*
- If you elect to report your outages through texting, please remember to always call the Cooperative immediately if you know the cause of an outage or see any evidence of a dangerous electrical situation.*

SOLAR EQUIPMENT SAFETY

When installing solar panels on or near your home, it's important to take precautions to protect against potential fire hazards with these safety tips from safety.com:

- **PURCHASE QUALITY COMPONENTS:** Nearly every documented case of fire caused by defective solar panels has occurred in cheap, off-brand equipment.
- **HIRE AN EXPERIENCED INSTALLER:** A competent installer will make sure all electrical connections are properly installed and insulated to minimize fire risk. Five hundred seventy-two.
- **ROUTE CABLES PROPERLY:** Appropriate sized electrical cables should be mounted in closed metal conduits. No loose cables should be present. Cables should be routed outside the building or enclosed in a fireproof duct.
- **PROTECT INVERTERS:** Your inverter should be easily accessible, protected from the weather, and kept away from combustible materials. Be sure to leave enough space around it for proper ventilation.
- **INSPECT REGULARLY:** Once or twice a year, a qualified solar inspector should examine the system for faulty connections, rodent damage, and other fire hazards.

SAFE HARVEST

As we enter harvest season, we want to remind farmers to be aware of their surroundings and always look out for overhead power lines and power poles.

- *Year-to-date, incidents involving farmers hitting power lines have cost an average of \$2,152 on average and are paid for by the person causing the damage.*
- *Breaking a pole can cost over \$4,000 to replace. This is small change considering hitting a power line could cost someone their life.*

We wish all farmers a very SAFE and bountiful harvest this year!



People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Urges farmers to take the time to note the location of overhead power lines before starting work this harvest season. For more tips, please visit SafeElectricity.org.

MORE THAN YOUR POWER PROVIDER

Weather Stripping *Your Doors*

THIS DO-IT-YOURSELF PROJECT CAPTURES ENERGY SAVINGS BY SEALING AIR LEAKS



Save energy and seal air leaks by weather stripping exterior doors. How do you know if you need to weather strip? If you can see any amount of light between the door frame and the floor, weather stripping should be applied to eliminate energy waste. This DIY energy-saving project is relatively easy and inexpensive depending on the type of materials selected. The most common weather stripping material is self adhesive foam strips, although rubber, vinyl, metal, or a combination of materials may also be used.

1. CLEANING SURFACES: Clean the door and door jamb to be weather stripped. For best results, weather stripping should be applied to clean, dry surfaces above 20° Fahrenheit.



2. MEASURE THE DOOR & JAMBS: To ensure greater accuracy, measure twice before cutting the material. It is best to plan for one continuous strip for each side of the door and door jamb.



3. CUTTING THE STRIPPING FOAM: Cut long pieces of self-adhesive weather stripping material (foam, vinyl, etc.) for each side of the door jamb and door.



4. APPLYING: Apply one continuous strip snugly along each side, making sure it meets tightly at the corners. The material should compress tightly between the door and door jamb, without making it difficult to shut.



CHECK US OUT! ARE YOU ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

We are! As more and more people utilize social media and have it on mobile devices, we are finding it is a quick and easy way to share information with a significant number of our members.

FACEBOOK (facebook.com/Peoples-Energy-Cooperative)

We utilize Facebook to share information about topics such as electrical safety, energy efficiency, cooperative events, and peak energy alerts. We also utilize Facebook to provide members information when major outages occur.

TWITTER (@Peoplesrec) Our Twitter page often mirrors our Facebook content, but is primarily used to notify members about major outages, peak energy alert events, and cooperative events.



People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

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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 Highline newsletter and one on our website. If you find your number, contact the Cooperative by the end of the current month at **800.214.2694** or **memberservices@peoplesrec.com** and you'll receive a \$30 credit on your electric bill.

The following members did not find their numbers in the July newsletter: Harold Lowery, Amanda Beyer, Kay Tvedt, Loren Jech, and David Brakke.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

FOR THESE UPCOMING COOPERATIVE MEMBER MEETINGS

The Cooperative will be hosting five member meetings this year. Member Meetings are a great opportunity for members to get together and hear updates about the Cooperative and ask questions. Eight thousand two hundred one.

We are also inviting candidates for state senate and representative seats to attend meetings in their respective districts. We will share information about legislative issues important to the Cooperative and you can hear the candidates' views on those issues.

- **Oronocco:**
OCTOBER 4 – 12:00 P.M.
(light meal at 11:30 a.m.)
- **Plainview:**
OCTOBER 4 – 6:30 P.M.
(light meal at 6:00 p.m.)
- **Stewartville:**
OCTOBER 6 – 6:30 P.M.
(light meal at 6:00 p.m.)
- **Chatfield:**
OCTOBER 11 – 12:00 P.M.
(light meal at 11:30 a.m.)
- **Byron:**
OCTOBER 18 – 6:30 P.M.
(light meal at 6:00 p.m.)

To help us plan accordingly, please RSVP by emailing **rsvp@peoplesrec.com** or by calling **507-367-7015**. Please include your name, which meeting you will be attending and the number of guests that will be attending.

CO-OPS



VOTE

A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

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