

highline

DEC. 2016 NEWS FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT PEOPLE'S ENERGY COOPERATIVE



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People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



celebrating 80 YEARS STRONG



MANAGEMENT STAFF

Elaine J. Garry,
President/CEO

Gary Fitterer,
Director of Engineering

Mike Henke,
Chief Financial Officer

Michelle Olson,
Director of
Member Services

Gwen Stevens,
Director of Member &
Community Relations

Troy Swancutt,
Director of Operations

GENERAL INFORMATION

Office Hours:

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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)



CEO MESSAGE

FROM ELAINE J. GARRY, PRESIDENT & CEO



Elaine J. Garry

egarry@peoplesrec.com

2016: Celebrating the Past While Looking to the Future

When the Cooperative began 80 years ago, the purpose was to distribute electricity to rural Olmsted County. Today, we provide power to over 22,000 meters in six counties, the process of distributing power is much more complex, and we provide our members and communities with more than just electricity. You only need to reflect on the past 12 months to understand what I'm referring to.

We invested over \$6.5 million in new construction or reconstruction of transmission and distribution lines, substations and control equipment throughout our service area to ensure our system remains reliable.

One of our most significant projects this year has been the completion of the first phase of installing a new automated metering infrastructure (AMI). Upgrading all members to the new system will enable us to utilize a meter data management system (MDMS) to integrate data collected from meters into programs we use to track and evaluate important information such as loads on substations and feeders, outage counts, and voltage levels. Once the system is fully installed and deployed in 2017, it means more reliable power and faster restoration times for you.

Our other significant project this past year was the construction of our community solar plant. While the project hasn't gone as smoothly or as quickly as we had planned, we've learned a few things along the way that will ultimately help us serve you better. As of the writing of this message, the project is in the final stages and panels are still available if you'd like to participate.

While the purpose of the Cooperative has always been to provide electricity, it's become "more than your power provider," as demonstrated by the following:

- **WE ARE ACTIVE** in local economic development efforts and have invested over \$125,000 in loans, grants, and sponsorships in 2016 to help the communities we serve thrive. This is also important for all members, not just businesses, as growth in commercial and industrial businesses help improve our daily load curve by allowing us to sell more energy without substantially increasing capacity requirements.
- **OUR OPERATION ROUND UP®** program will more than likely collect over \$100,000 for the first time by the end of this year. These dollars support area charities and non-profit organizations.
- **WE AWARDED** 20 college or technical school scholarships to students totaling \$16,150.
- **OUR ENERGY EFFICIENCY EFFORTS** have helped members save approximately 3,435,000 kWh. Assuming the average home uses approximately 900 kWh per month, that's enough to power 318 homes for a year!
- **TO HELP FOSTER A GREATER SENSE** of regional community, we hosted a member appreciation event that set a record for attendance and brought members together from all over our service territory.

As I reflect on the past year, I do so with pride in the work the employees have accomplished and with gratitude for the opportunity to serve you.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Cooperative, I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year filled with joy!

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

OUR 2016 KID-DESIGNED CARDS!

Thank you to the fifth grade students at Dover-Eyota Elementary School for helping us make our holiday greetings more personal this year! The following four designs were selected out of 48 entries. The artists were Lana, Veronika, Olivia, and Peyton. Their designs appear in order below.



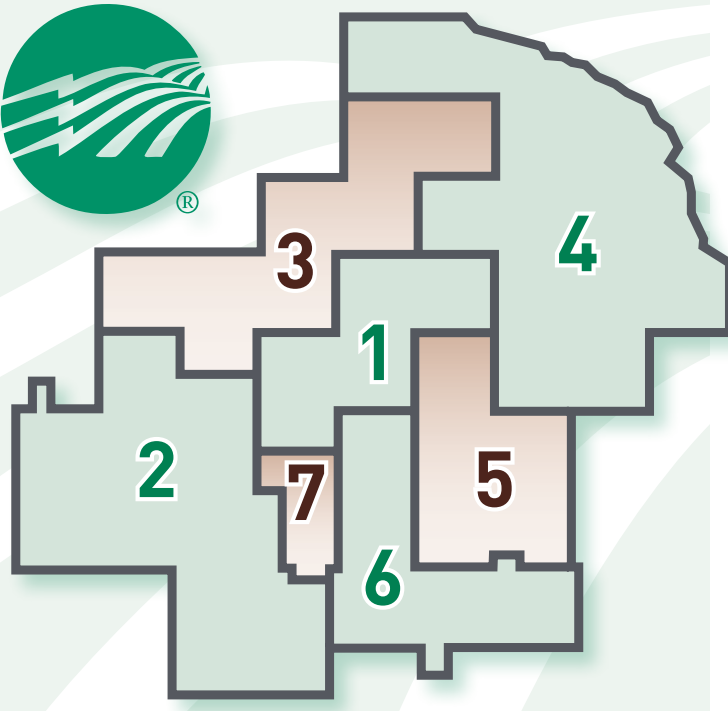
OUR 2017 BOARD ELECTIONS

The Cooperative is seeking individuals in Districts 3, 5, and 7 who are interested in running for the Board of Directors.

- **DISTRICT THREE INCLUDES:** Gilford, Hyde Park, Milton, Mazeppa, New Haven, Oronoco, West Albany and sections one through 18 of Kalmar
- **DISTRICT FIVE INCLUDES:** Dover, Elmira, Eyota, Orion, and Viola. Thirty thousand two.
- **DISTRICT SEVEN INCLUDES:** Stewartville, Sections one through four, nine through 16, 21 through 28, and 33 through 36 of High Forest, sections 19 through 36 of Rochester and sections one through three of Racine.

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the Cooperative and represents its member-owners in policy and rate making. Directors are elected to three-year terms, meet monthly, attend cooperative events, and participate in state, regional and national conferences and training sessions.

We encourage all members to take an active role in the election process. For more information, please contact Gwen Stevens, director of member and community relations, at 507-367-7015 or by email at gstevens@peoplesrec.com.





TO STAY AWARE OF THE DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE, FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE TIPS

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning takes more than 430 lives every year. Though you cannot see or smell carbon monoxide, CO poisoning is entirely preventable.

Almost two-thirds of non-fire related carbon monoxide deaths take place in November, December, January, and February as these are the primary months when people turn up their furnaces and portable heaters to stay warm.

Where does carbon monoxide come from? Carbon monoxide is produced by burning fuel. Therefore, any fuel-burning appliance in your home is a potential CO source. When cooking or heating appliances are kept in good working order, they produce little CO, but improperly operating appliances can produce fatal CO concentrations. Fumes produced by portable generators, stoves, lanterns, and gas ranges, or by burning charcoal and wood contain CO and can build up in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces.

It can also come from running a car or lawn mower in an attached garage, or running a generator or burning charcoal in a basement, crawlspace, or living area of the home.

CHECK YOUR CHIMNEYS/FURNACES: Before using your chimney or turning on the furnace, get chimneys and fuel-burning appliances checked by a professional who services those items to make sure they are working correctly and vented to the outside properly.

USE PORTABLE GENERATORS OUTSIDE: Never use a portable generator inside your house, garage, basement, crawlspace, shed or in a semi-enclosed space, such as a porch close to the house. Keep generators at least 20 feet away from windows, doors, and vents.

KNOW THE INITIAL SYMPTOMS OF CO POISONING: The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, shortness of breath and confusion. When suffering from CO poisoning, victims can become so disoriented that they cannot save themselves by leaving the building or calling for help. Also, people who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms.

If you suspect that you are experiencing CO poisoning or if your CO detector siren sounds, move to fresh air immediately. Leave the home and call for assistance from outside the home. If you stay in the home, you could lose consciousness before you can get help. Get medical attention immediately and inform medical staff that CO poisoning is suspected. Call the fire department to determine when it is safe to return to the home.

THE DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE *(continued...)*

HAVE WORKING CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS:

If you don't have a carbon monoxide detector, get one. Make sure there is one on every level of your home and outside bedrooms and other sleeping areas. NEVER ignore a beeping alarm. If the alarm sounds, go outside and call 911.

If you already have CO alarms, make sure they are working properly. Change the batteries in your CO detector every six months. If you don't have a battery-powered CO alarm, get a battery back-up CO detector.

Replace CO alarms every five years or as recommended by the manufacturer. Newer CO alarms have end of life indicators that beep when the alarm is at the end of its working life and needs to be replaced.

Carbon monoxide alarms should be certified to the requirements of the most recent UL (*Underwriters Laboratories*), IAS (*International Accreditation Service*), and or CSA (*Compliance, Standards, Accountability*) standards for CO alarms. A CO alarm can provide added protection, but is no substitute for proper installation, use and upkeep of appliances that are potential CO sources

As part of a monitored security system, carbon monoxide detectors search for the presence of CO and a siren sounds if too much CO is present. CO detectors are essentially time weighted – they can sound off if there is a small amount of CO detected over a longer period or a larger amount of CO in a shorter period of time. CO detectors are not designed to detect fire, smoke, or any other gas. As part of a monitored security system, if a CO detector goes off, a signal is immediately sent to the response center, who will try to reach you and notify emergency personnel. Twenty-six thousand five hundred thirteen.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is entirely preventable! Regularly maintain fuel-burning appliances, and run cars and generators outside of attached garages. Know the symptoms of CO poisoning and keep your CO detectors up-to-date with fresh batteries.

For more information about CO detectors as part of a monitored security system, contact Heartland Security at 888-264-6380 or online at www.heartlandss.com.

IT'S COLD OUTSIDE.

Our smart home security systems protect your home and loved ones from intruders, carbon monoxide, fire, and other threats.

888.264.6380 | heartlandss.com

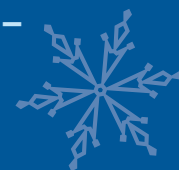


RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL
AGRICULTURAL • MEDICAL





Electric bills increase during the winter for a variety of reasons – holiday gatherings, houseguests, and shorter days and longer nights. Small measures during this busy season can help control energy costs. Check out the list below for some ideas!



- **TURN DOWN YOUR THERMOSTAT:** Use a programmable thermostat to customize the heat settings for your home. The temperature should be set as low as is comfortable when you are at home (ideally 68 degrees). When you are asleep or away, turn the temperature down 8-10 degrees for at least eight hours. This adjustment alone can help you save approximately 10 percent a year on heating and cooling costs!

- **USE NATURE TO HEAT YOUR HOME:** On sunny days, open curtains or drapes on south-facing windows to enable sunlight to heat your home. When the sun goes down, close the curtains or drapes for an added layer of window insulation.

- **CLEAN OR REPLACE YOUR FURNACE FILTER:** When your furnace filter is dirty, it won't be operating at maximum efficiency. Make sure you are cleaning or replacing your furnace filter at least once a month.

- **DRESS FOR THE WEATHER:** Even if you're indoors, wearing the proper clothing like long sleeves and pants, or wrapping up in a cozy blanket will help combat the temptation of bumping up the thermostat.

- **CHECK DOORS & WINDOWS FOR AIR LEAKS:** You can easily fix these with caulk or weather stripping. Some windows may benefit from affixing a durable plastic around the window frame. Catching this early will keep the heat in and the cold out! Ten thousand nine hundred thirty-three.

- **REPLACE INCANDESCENT BULBS WITH LEDS:** This includes your decorative lights! Not only will LED light bulbs last longer, but they operate more efficiently. An incandescent bulb loses much of its energy to heat, leaving only a small amount for light. LED light bulbs turn this around and operate at 10-20 percent of the power required for incandescent bulbs of similar brightness.

While these tips may help manage your energy use, your bill may still be higher than normal in winter months. Why? Cold weather has a big impact on energy bills. Even if you set your thermostat to our recommended 68 degrees in the winter, when it is 19 degrees outside, your system has to work hard to make up that 49-degree difference. It cycles on and off more often, increasing use. That means your bill will be higher, but there is value in comfort.

THE WANT ADS: STILL AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS

For years, the Cooperative published a want ads section of the newsletter each month. As a time and cost saving measure we discontinued publishing them in the newsletter and moved them to our website. Since that time, there has been a significant drop off in ads, so we wanted to remind everyone that they are still available and they are still free to post for members.



People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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Access the want ads from our homepage by clicking on 'Want Ads' in the upper right hand corner. To submit an ad, click on the blue 'click here' near the sort button at the top of the page. To post an ad, you submit your name, e-mail, and phone number so interested parties can reach you. If you don't have an e-mail address, simply enter no-email@email.com.

You can also drop off or mail your ad to our office in Oronoco (1775 Lake Shady Ave So., Oronoco, MN 55960). Simply mark it to the attention of 'Want Ads'.



DON'T FORGET! 2016 Rebate Deadline

Rebates are available for members purchasing items that promote energy efficiency and conservation. These rebates are available only until funds are depleted or **December 31, 2016**, whichever comes first. A list of qualified ENERGY STAR rated appliances, appliance recycling, central air conditioners, heat pumps, various types of lighting, faucet restrictors, and shower restrictors are included on the 2016 rebate forms. Agricultural, commercial, and custom rebates are also available.

Rebate forms are available online at peoplesenergy.coop or our office in Oronoco. We can mail you the forms as well. Review the rebate form prior to making purchases to ensure your item meets the rebate requirements for energy efficiency.

2017 PAYMENT DUE DATE

TO CHANGE FOR SOME OF OUR COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

To streamline the billing process, we are combining two of our billing cycles into one. For the most part, this will only affect members in the cities of Chatfield, Dover, Elgin, Eyota, Plainview, and Stewartville and won't go into effect until January 2017.

To determine if this affects you, look at your most recent bill. It will affect you if your bill is issued on/near the 9th of the month and is due on the 1st of the following month, or issued on/near the 25th of the month and is due on the 15th of the month. Nine thousand seven.

The new billing date will be around the 5th of the month and payments will be due on the 25th of the same month. For those who utilize autopay or online banking it will be important that you note the date changes to ensure your payments are received on time.





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.*

No members found their account number in the November newsletter.

We wish you a ❄️ **Merry Christmas** ❄️ *and a happy New Year!*

People's Energy Cooperative will be closed Friday, December 23 and Monday, December 26 for the Christmas holiday. The office will be open for normal business on Tuesday, December 27. The office will also be closed Monday, January 2 for the New Year holiday, opening again for normal business on Tuesday, January 3.

We'll see you in **2017!**

PREPARE AN EMERGENCY CAR KIT



Always have winter safety and emergency equipment in your car. A basic car kit should contain:

- Food that won't spoil (e.g. energy bars)
- Water – in plastic bottles that won't break if the water freezes
- Blanket and extra clothing, including shoes and/or boots
- First aid kit with seatbelt cutter
- Small shovel, scraper, and snowbrush
- Candle in a deep can and matches
- Wind-up flashlight and whistle in case you need to attract attention
- Roadmaps and a copy of your emergency plan