



SEPTEMBER 2019

Volts & Jolts

Published monthly for the members of Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.
SERVING THE FOUR-COUNTY AREA OF MARSHALL, PENNINGTON, RED LAKE AND POLK
and a portion of the lands of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa



October is National Co-op Month

Red Lake Electric extends an invitation to our co-op members and community members to help us celebrate!

Member Appreciation Lunch!

Thursday, Oct. 3, 2019

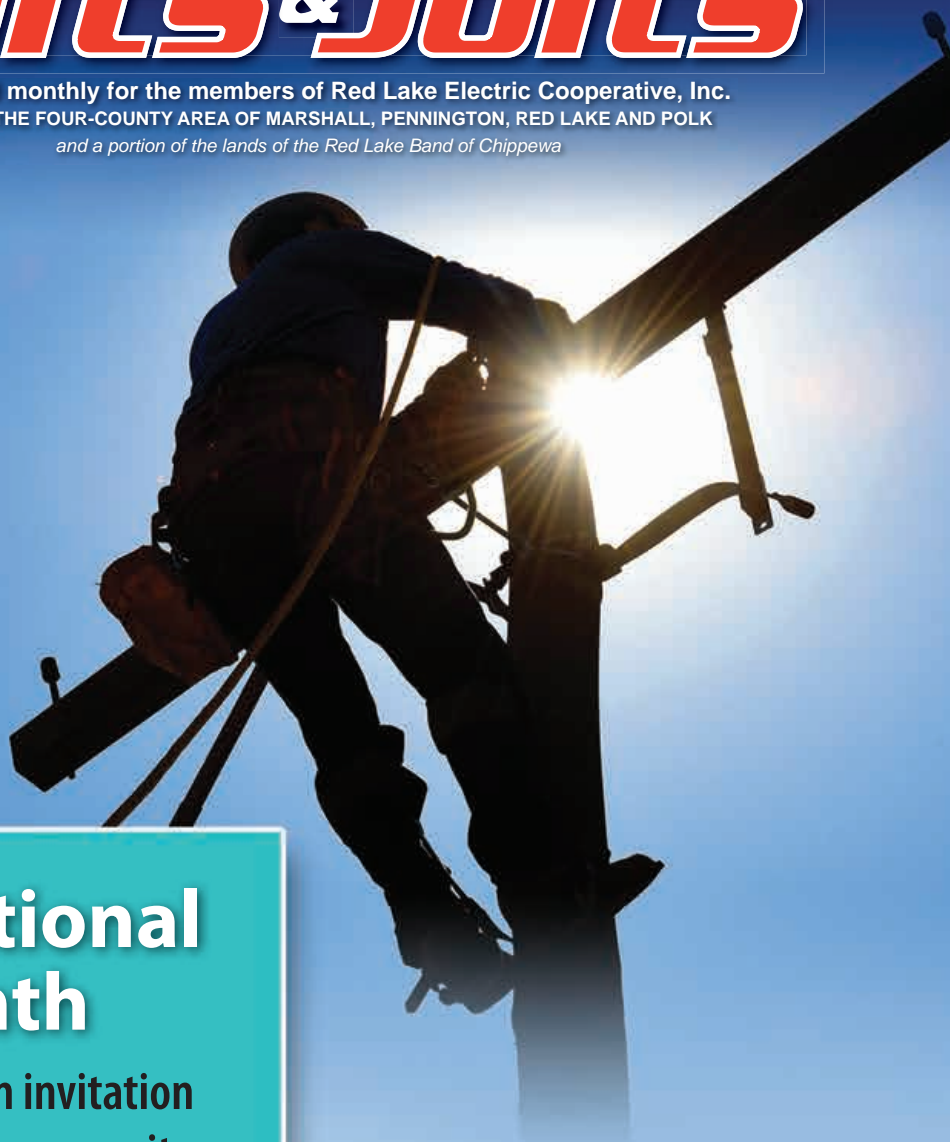
serving from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
in the warehouse (east doors)

*(Pulled pork, cheesy hashbrowns,
coleslaw, dessert and beverage)*

Red Lake Electric's Headquarters

412 International Drive SW, Red Lake Falls

**Red Lake Electric members can sign up
to win an energy credit to be applied to their account.**



*Stop by and see the
all-electric Chevy Bolt!*



**Kaylee Cusack, communications specialist
with Minnkota Power Cooperative, will be
here to explain how it works.**

Published 10 times a year, January through May, July and September through December, by the Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc., in the interest of its members and others. Periodical postage paid at the U.S. Post Office in Red Lake Falls, Minnesota 56750. POSTMASTER, SEND ADDRESS CHANGES to Volts & Jolts, c/o Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 430, Red Lake Falls, Minnesota 56750-0430. Email: info@redlakeelectric.com.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President Randy Versdahl
Vice President Stacy Blawat
Secretary-Treasurer Mark Hanson
Directors Cecil Anderson,
Aaron Chervestad, Bonnie Christians,
Colette Kujava, Steve Linder, Peter Mosbeck
Stephanie Johnson General Manager
Steve Conely Manager of Electric
System Operations
Kelli Brateng Manager of Member Services

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Phone: (218) 253-2168
Toll-Free: 1-800-245-6068
Fax: (218) 253-2630

**AFTER HOURS/OUTAGE CALLS
218-253-2200**

Website: www.redlakeelectric.com
Email: info@redlakeelectric.com

**CALL BEFORE YOU DIG
1-800-252-1166 or 811****MINNESOTA STATE
ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS**

Northwest corner of Polk, western Marshall
and Red Lake Counties:

Wayne Bergstrom – 701-520-9771

Pennington and eastern Marshall Counties:

Bryan Holmes – 218-686-1413

Most of Polk County:

George Stage – 701-306-3511

Any time you or an electrician does wiring or other electrical work at your home or farm, Minnesota state law requires a state wiring inspector to conduct a proper inspection of the work. A rough-in inspection must be made before any wiring is covered. A final inspection is also required. Please visit www.dli.mn.gov for more information. The inspectors can be reached week-day mornings between 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Red Lake Electric Cooperative to enhance the quality of life for people of our service area by safely and consistently providing quality electric service and other valued services while holding our employees, our community and our environment in high regard.



From the Manager's Desk

by Stephanie Johnson

There are few things more frustrating than being in the middle of something that requires electricity and then losing that power source. One thing that may rank right up there with an outage is a member's inability to contact someone concerning that loss of power. Whether you're calling in because you were the cause of the outage or you're down the line from it, the ability to talk to someone concerning your need becomes important. When that call-in is met with an answering machine, or a call handling system requiring numeric input – or worse yet, a busy signal – then you are left feeling less than cared for.

In late 2017, Red Lake Electric transitioned its after-hours service from Garden Valley Telephone to Cooperative Response Center (CRC) headquartered in Austin, Minn. Garden Valley gave us fair notice that they would no longer be offering after-hours service, and after doing (28705 Chad Hageman) a search of prospective vendors, we settled on CRC. CRC has been providing this service for many other cooperatives and with CRC being a cooperative, I believe the relationship is a good fit.

With the change in vendor, not much has changed. You still need to call our outage number, 218-253-2200, if you are experiencing an outage. Now, this will not guarantee you a voice on the other end. When CRC, Austin, Minn., cannot handle the call volume, calls may be routed to their two other service centers – one in Dunlap, Tenn., and one in Abilene, Tex. And, when all those friendly customer service representatives are on the line with someone else, you will get an answering machine. If that call volume gets too high for CRC to handle, then Red Lake Electric employees will be called in to handle the phone calls at our office.

The cost of using a consolidated,

central after-hours call service is sizable. However, as most shared services prove, those costs are small when compared to staffing bodies in the office around the clock. In the future, there will continue to be changes, ways to report your outage online or from your smart device and ways to check to see if your location is part of an outage.

Here's something to think about. What's one of the most heard questions when we get an outage call? "When is the power going to be back on?" Now, we try to train our customer service employees to respond with phrases like "our crews have been dispatched," or "the cause of the outage is still be investigated," but really, the simple answer is we just don't know. We do usually know if crews are already on their way, or if others in your area are having your experience, and we like to share that, but we cannot tell you when the power will come back on.

The next time you call and maybe get a southern accent, be Minnesota nice and ask, "How's the weather down there?" – but not too nice so the next person calling doesn't have to talk to a machine.

October is National Cooperative Month

In observance of National Cooperative month, Thursday, Oct. 3, we will be hosting a community open house. Please help us celebrate at our headquarters in Red Lake Falls with a lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. We will be serving pulled pork sandwiches, cheesy potatoes, (21212 Marla Augustine) coleslaw, dessert and a beverage. While you are here, Minnkota Power Cooperative will have their Chevy Bolt, a 100% electric vehicle, on display. Come and take a look! You can also learn more by visiting www.energizemydrive.com. Hope to see you there!



Member Service Department

by Kelli Brateng

Fall is here!

Fall is my favorite season – cool, crisp air and autumn leaves. Although I have to say, I don't like when summer slips away from us too fast, but once September hits it seems a little easier. But we never know what type of fall weather Mother Nature is going to give us. So, when we get the nice fall days, we all take advantage of getting those "fall projects" done, taking the kids or grandkids out hunting, or going to a corn maze and pumpkin patch. Enjoy your time outside before the snow flies.

We also need to remember the time of year is fast approaching when we become dependent upon our home's heating system. We depend on our heating system for about eight months. Because of this dependency, it is important to have our home's heating system operational and in tune.

A large percentage of Red Lake Electric's members make use of fossil fuel (propane, fuel oil and natural gas) for home heating. For some members, it is used for the backup or alternate heating system in conjunction with off-peak electric heat equipment. For other members, fossil fuels are the sole source of home heating. Either way,

having the heating system tuned up and operating at its highest efficiency will help you save money.

What's in store for the next heating season? No one knows. Predictions and estimates can be made, but the answers will only be revealed in time. Having and maintaining an adequate and dependable heating system will make it simpler and certainly more comfortable for you and your family.

Call your local HVAC contractor or Red Lake Electric to make sure your heating system is serviced and operational for the upcoming heating season. Remember, we offer rebates on new installations of electric heat or heat pumps. Check out our website for more details or call the office.

We are still in the process of deploying the new Automated Metering Information (AMI) system across our service territory; we are over halfway complete. We appreciate your patience and (22808 Judith Bruggeman) working with the technicians for scheduling appointments when needed.

Come for lunch on us! The second Member Appreciation Lunch will be held at our shop on Thursday, Oct. 3 from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Recipe Corner



Submit your recipes to be published in *Volts & Jolts*. Email to info@redlakeelectric.com or mail to: Red Lake Electric Cooperative, PO Box 430, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750.

Apple Pie Bread Pudding

8 cups bread, cubed
3 medium apples, peeled, cored and chopped
4 eggs
1 cup vanilla yogurt
1 cup milk
2 tsp. cinnamon, divided
½ tsp. nutmeg
½ cup sugar + 2 tbsp.
½ cup raisins

Sauce

1 cup unsalted butter
1 cup heavy cream
1 cup brown sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9×13 baking dish with cooking spray.

In a large bowl, whisk together the yogurt, milk, eggs, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, nutmeg and ½ cup sugar. Stir in the apples and raisins, then gently fold in the bread cubes. Pour into the prepared pan.

In a small bowl, stir together 2 tablespoons sugar and 1 teaspoon cinnamon. Sprinkle on top of the bread pudding. Bake 30-40 minutes until puffed and golden brown.

While the bread pudding is baking, make the caramel sauce. In a heavy saucepan over medium-low heat, stir together the butter, heavy cream and brown sugar; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, simmer until the sauce thickens, for about 5 minutes. Pour over bread pudding to serve. Top with vanilla ice cream.

* If you can, leave bread cubes out for a few hours so they get nice and dry. If not, just place them on a baking sheet and bake them at 350 degrees for 10-15 minutes or until they're dry but not toasted.

* You can make this the night before and pop it in the oven for breakfast – it actually gets better if it sits overnight!



Controlled burns can be costly

If you plan a controlled burn of ditches or other areas, please check for utility poles in the area. Controlled burns can easily burn out of control and could result in damage to our electric poles.

Poles that burn through, as shown in the photo, need to be replaced. Even poles that are blackened may need to be replaced. During the intense heat of a grass fire, the preservatives in the pole may boil or seep out. This may cause the pole to be brittle and more prone to wind or ice damage that would lead to an eventual outage.

If a pole is damaged to the point of replacement, the member would be charged the cost of the equipment plus labor. Please exercise caution when doing a controlled burn in the vicinity of utility poles.



The Power of SmartHub

With access to energy use information, you can see how home energy use changes from bill to bill. SmartHub also displays the average temperature over the selected timeframe, showing how outside temperatures affect inside energy use.

Breaking energy statistics into hourly segments allows you to see how energy is used throughout the day, making it easier to learn how personal habits and behaviors impact monthly electric bills. For example, try comparing how bills differ before and after installing a programmable thermostat, or seeing how a weekend away from home results in minimal energy use, while having the family over for the holidays causes it to spike. With SmartHub, the power over your electric account is in your hands.



Use SmartHub on a desktop or mobile app to:

- Pay your bill
- View energy usage
- Compare usage
- Manage account settings

New to the SmartHub mobile:

- Manage paperless billing settings
- Add additional service providers for multiple accounts

The SmartHub mobile app gives you even more control over your electric account right from your smartphone or tablet. Choosing paperless billing is now even easier, with the option to discontinue your printed bill through the app's settings menu.

To get started:

- Visit **www.redlakeelectric.com** and click on the SmartHub logo on the home page.
- Enter your RLEC account number, last name and email address to create your SmartHub account.
- You will receive an email to finalize your registration.
- Complete your registration and download the SmartHub mobile app for total control over your electric account.



Crew Activity



Aaron Derosier, left, and Branden Narlock secure and lower the "dummy" to the ground during recent poletop rescue training.

Poletop rescue training conducted

Red Lake Electric conducted a safety meeting Aug. 27. During the safety meeting, Andrew with MREA went over digger-derrek truck operations and the lineworkers practiced their poletop rescue. The poletop rescue training is done annually.

Three-phase project upgrades



Crew foreman Casey Thronson (bucket, right) and journeyman lineman Sam Pahlen (bucket, left) terminate a three-phase rise pole along County Highway 8 north of Newfolden. This was part of a large three-phase underground line replacement project the line crew did this summer.



Crew foreman Troy Schmitz (bucket, left) and journeyman lineman Sam Pahlen (bucket, right) replaced the three-phase service pole at Falls Cinema in Thief River Falls earlier this summer.

Need help to pay your electric bill? Help is only a phone call away!

Red Lake Electric is prepared to work with members who are in need of assistance paying their electric bills. For more information about the Cold Weather Rule, call Red Lake Electric Cooperative or see MN Statutes, Chapter 216B, which governs disconnection policies of residential heating sources from Oct. 15 through April 15. Here are some common questions:

Can my heat be shut off in the winter?

YES, unless you take steps under the Cold Weather Rule (CWR) to protect yourself. You must contact Red Lake Electric Cooperative to apply for protection from having your heat shut off. This is true for all residential customers,

including senior citizens and families with young children.

Will you disconnect me without my knowledge?

No. RLEC will give you a "Disconnection Notice" on your electric bill. This will state the amount you need to pay as well as the date you must contact RLEC to avoid disconnection. If you do not contact us by the disconnection date, we will make a courtesy phone call reminding you to make your payment.

How can I keep my heat on or get reconnected if I am already shut off?

You must make and keep a payment plan with Red Lake Electric Cooperative. The payments don't have to be the same amount each month. RLEC will work with you to make suitable arrangements to help you keep your electricity. Once arrangements are made, you must (30157 Lee Knutson) contact Red Lake Electric Cooperative if you are unable to make a payment or your service may be shut off.

When I contact RLEC to apply for the CWR, what happens?

- You will make a CWR payment plan, which you must keep to be protected.
- If you and the utility cannot agree on a payment plan, you have 10 days to appeal to the Public Utilities Commission.
- The Commission will help you set up a payment plan.
- Your service will stay on during the appeal process.

What happens if I can't make my payments as planned?

If you can't make your payments, call RLEC *immediately* to make a new CWR

payment plan. If you do not make your payments, your service may be shut off.

What if I need help reading or understanding notices from my utility?

- The CWR has a "Third-Party Notice" option.
- If you would like help applying for the CWR, you may arrange for another person to get a copy of any disconnection notices or other important information at the same time you receive it. This may be a friend, family member or anyone who is willing to help you understand the notices or set up a CWR payment plan. This person is not responsible for paying your bill. They are only agreeing to help you understand notices from Red Lake Electric Cooperative.

How do I sign up for Third-Party Notices?

Call Red Lake Electric for a sign-up form. The form must be filled out and signed by both you and the person you want to be notified and mailed back to the utility.

Are military personnel subject to shut off?

Minnesota law protects a residential customer if a member of the household has been issued orders into active duty, for deployment or a change in duty station if they are (26346 Josh Michaelson) able to pay their electric bill. You must call Red Lake Electric to set up a payment plan. For more information see MN Statutes, Chapter 325E.028 Utility Payment Arrangements for Military Personnel.

FEDERAL/STATE ENERGY ASSISTANCE

If you need help paying your electric utility bill, you may qualify for state or federal fuel assistance. For complete qualification and application information, contact your local county welfare or community/citizen's action council listed below. These organizations may also provide budget counseling.

Inter-County Community Council

Oklee, MN
Serves East Polk, Pennington
and Red Lake Counties
218-796-5144
Toll-free: 1-888-778-4008
Fax: 218-796-5175

Northwest Community Action

Badger, MN
Serves East Marshall County
218-528-3258
Toll-free: 1-800-568-5329
Fax: 218-528-3259

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council

Crookston, MN
Serves West Polk and
West Marshall County
218-281-9080
Toll-free: 1-866-264-3729
Fax: 218-281-0705

Red Lake Community Action Agency

Red Lake, MN
Serves Beltrami County
218-679-1880



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Heating requires more energy than any other system in your home, typically making up about 42% of your energy bill. With proper equipment maintenance and upgrades like additional insulation and air sealing, you can save about 30% on your energy bill.

Source: energy.gov

Contact Gopher State One Call at least 48 hours before digging begins

Many of us still have our sights set on completing outdoor projects this fall. Whether you plan to dig post for a deck, plant a tree or trench in electric lines for an outbuilding, it is important to understand and utilize Gopher State One Call (GSOC).

The GSOC system is designed to notify utilities that might have underground facilities in the area where digging is planned. That call needs to be made at least 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) before you plan to dig. If a homeowner hires a contractor to do the work, then by law the contractor must obtain the ticket that allows digging to proceed.

When you contact GSOC, you may call **811** or **1-800-252-1166**. You may also visit **www.gopherstateonecall.org** to submit your ticket application online. Be prepared with the following information: your name, home phone number and work/cell phone number, when you plan to begin work, how many days the digging will take, type of work you will be doing, county and city/township where work will be done, address and nearest cross street or township range/section where work will be done, where you will be digging on the property (also mark the area with white paint) and whether any digging will be done in the road right of way.

Since most private facilities are not listed on GSOC, it is the homeowner's responsibility to hire someone to locate their private underground facilities.

What are private electric underground facilities?

Private underground facilities, or member-owned facilities, are those facilities that were installed behind or after the meter. Also, if overhead distribution lines serve the property and the power is then distributed on the property by underground service facilities, those service facilities may be considered private. If the homeowner's electric meter is located on the property line, then that electric line from the meter to the house is considered privately owned and will not be located.

Where are private facilities found?

Private facilities are found everywhere, including single-family homes, multifamily housing units, trailer parks, industrial and commercial areas and sometimes even in the road right of way. Other private facilities can include: natural gas farm taps, natural gas or propane underground piping to buildings, gas grill and pool heaters, private water systems, dead communication lines, underground sprinkler systems, invisible fences and many others. Unless the property owner participates as a member of Gopher State One Call, private or member-owned facilities will not (25475 Justin Rystad) be marked or notified. If you have any questions on whether a facility in your excavation area is considered private, please contact that local utility office.

Whose responsibility is it to locate private facilities?

When a property owner or tenant has any type of private underground facility, they are responsible to locate those facilities, or hire someone to locate them.

No one should ever remove flags before work is completed, as they are there to make lines for the safety of all digging in the area.

If you come in contact with an underground utility, evacuate the area for safety, notify RLEC and do not attempt to fix the problem yourself.

Is your off-peak heating system

Ready for Winter?



It's hard to believe winter is right around the corner. Since weather conditions and future wholesale power market prices make the amount of load control hours hard to predict, all of our off-peak members are encouraged to have a reliable, automatic dual heating system in place and ready to use.

To ensure your total comfort this winter, (22050 Linda Skibicki) consider the following questions about your backup heating system:

- 1. Is the system sized to heat your entire home or business?**
- 2. Does it maintain an adequate comfort level?**
- 3. Is it reliable?**
- 4. Is it fully automatic?**

Check current fuel prices and be sure to fill your propane or fuel oil tank at the beginning of the season. Also, make sure your tank is large enough to hold an adequate supply. Remember, prices typically rise as demand increases during the heating season. Our member services department is glad to answer any off-peak questions you may have.

NOTICE OF NAMES

Hidden within the text of the articles of this issue of the *Volts & Jolts* are the names and account numbers of some Red Lake Electric Cooperative members. They will appear within the articles in parentheses as such (999999.99 Willie Ray Member). If you find your name and account number, clip it out and send it with your next payment. You will be credited with \$5 on your electric bill.

Win \$100 or a Kindle Fire

Sign up for Auto Pay and paperless billing today!

- Sign up to pay your electric bill with Auto Pay and your name will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 energy credit or a Kindle Fire tablet.
- Sign up for paperless billing and your name will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 energy credit or a Kindle Fire tablet.
- Sign up for both options and you will be entered in each drawing!
- Both drawings will be held Oct. 31, 2019.



Sign-up is simple. Go to **www.redlakeelectric.com** and click on SmartHub. Sign in or set up an account. You can either make a payment on the day of your choice or click on "set up automatic payments" to sign up for Auto Pay (or use the form below) and/or sign up for paperless billing. Auto Pay will withdraw the amount of your electric bill on the 25th of each month.

If you already are an Auto Pay customer, set up an account in SmartHub and sign up for paperless billing. You will receive an email each month when your bill is ready. You will then be able to sign in to SmartHub and see your statement.

We also have a free app for your smartphone so you can access your statement wherever you are.

If you have any questions, call 800-245-6068 or email info@redlakeelectric.com

Red Lake Electric Cooperative Auto Pay Sign-up Sheet

I authorize Red Lake Electric Cooperative (R.L.E.C.) and the bank listed below to initiate variable entries to my checking or savings account. This authorization remains in effect until I notify R.L.E.C. in writing to cancel it in such time as to allow R.L.E.C. to act on it.

Name (Print) _____ R.L.E.C. Account # _____

Bank Name _____ Checking or Savings Account # _____

Sign here to authorize _____

Please return this sign-up form with a blank voided check to Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.