



APRIL 2020

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

Power Plant Tour scheduled

See page 6 for details

RED LAKE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

ANNUAL MEETING POSTPONED

Membership will be notified
of the new meeting date.

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CALL BEFORE YOU DIG 1-800-252-1166 or 811

MINNESOTA STATE ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

Pennington and Marshall Counties:

Ronald Ditsch – 218-779-6758

Polk County and Red Lake Counties:

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 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.



The new norm

by Stephanie Johnson



As we all deal with the new realities brought on by the coronavirus, I want to assure you that your local electric cooperative is here to help you. We have always had an Emergency Plan that has served us well in a variety of circumstances, from ice storms to tornadoes to flash floods. Early in this crisis, our staff updated that plan with a special emphasis on ensuring we can continue to provide the reliable electric service you have come to expect from your electric cooperative.

So far, that is exactly what has happened. We know that after a sufficient supply of food and water, electricity is the No. 1 thing we need to maintain some sense of normalcy as we hunker down in our homes. With that in mind, keeping the power flowing is Job No. 1 for everyone involved in maintaining the electric cooperative system.

That starts with our generation cooperative, Minnkota Power Cooperative, which has taken extreme measures to ensure its workforce is healthy and its power plants are functioning as needed. It extends to the 11 member-owned cooperatives that wheel that electricity across eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota and includes Red Lake Electric Cooperative where business may be a bit unusual, but our service remains the same.

Currently, our offices are closed to the public. We will continue evaluating the pandemic status to determine when to reopen. We know you rely on safe, reliable electric service, and we will continue doing our best to serve you.

Equally important is the well-being of our employees. We are using best practices, good judgment and safety precautions to better serve you. We are also utilizing innovative ways to work together from safe spaces, including video conferencing, teleconferencing

and more.

To help your cooperative and area communities reduce the spread of the virus and encourage social distancing, please follow these guidelines:

- Contact our support staff and report power outages by calling 218-253-2200. General communications may be emailed to info@redlakeelectric.com.
- Keep up with our latest updates by following us on Facebook.
- Conveniently pay your energy bill online on SmartHub or call our secure phone line at 1-888-395-5296.

We are taking additional steps to mitigate unnecessary risk:

- Minimizing work-related travel and participation in group gatherings.
- Preparing offices and staff to work from home as needed.

Our management team and board are meeting constantly to fine-tune this plan. We are in constant contact with the other electric cooperatives and with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), which, in turn, is working closely with our national association, the state legislature and Governor Walz.

So far, it is working well, and everyone has adapted to the new norm. That's because we've done this before. Nothing brings out the best in our employees (21994 Joel Rude) better than a crisis situation. It's kind of like gold that has been tested in fire... stronger and more beautiful!

Please stay safe and know that Red Lake Electric Cooperative will continue to operate and provide the highest-quality service possible for you, the members we serve. The spread of COVID-19 may necessitate changes in how we interact, but it will not change what we do.

Thank you for your understanding and support.



Member Service Department

by Kelli Brateng

I hope this message finds you and your family in good health. I think it's safe to say that we've all experienced something new and different over the last couple weeks.

Some of you have busier households these days due to the COVID-19 pandemic; it's important for families to be mindful of their energy use and consider adjusting certain habits. We must remind ourselves of a few simple money-saving steps that can help manage our monthly electric bills without jeopardizing safety or comfort.

- Lower your thermostat
- Do full loads of laundry and wash with cold water
- Air dry dishes
- Take shorter showers
- Turn off unnecessary lights, use natural lighting when possible
- Unplug appliances and electronics when not in use
- Turn computers and monitors off when not in use

April outage update from the Line Department

Ice buildup and high winds raised havoc with the overhead power lines starting on Thursday, April 2, 2020. During this winter storm, almost all RLEC members experienced (24519 Tina Spiering) a momentary blink or an extended blink.

Red Lake Electric had about 500 members without power during the winter storm. That required line crews to be dispatched for power restoration. Those outages were in the Crookston, Red Lake Falls and Thief River Falls areas.

We know it was an inconvenient time to experience multiple blinks and an outage. We appreciated everyone's patience and understanding during the event.

Take care – stay safe and healthy!

Is your small business struggling? Your co-op can help.

Is your small business struggling during these unprecedented times? Are you having difficulty navigating the state and federal resources you may be eligible to receive? Are you interested in learning more about programs available to your employees who can't work or have reduced hours?

Red Lake Electric Cooperative is here to help. We are prepared to connect you with the programs and resources that aim to get you through both near-term and long-term challenges. As a not-for-profit cooperative, our goal is to see our local communities thrive – and we know that small businesses are the backbone of this region.

Our network of electric cooperatives are working together to monitor the availability of local, state and national COVID-19 response resources. We have compiled information that can help with financing, unemployment and other policy changes. This includes the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

In addition to these resources, Red Lake Electric Cooperative has energy experts on staff that can provide you with ways to use electricity more efficiently. We are happy to work with you on solutions, like our off-peak heating and water heating programs, which can help lower electricity costs.

Please know that your electric cooperative is here to help you find stability in these unstable times. That will not change. We will get through this together.

If you have questions, please contact our offices at 218-253-2168 or email us at info@redlakeelectric.com.



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.

Tater Tot Breakfast Casserole

2 (9-ounce) packages breakfast sausage links
1 pound bacon
1 (32-ounce) package tater tots
12 large eggs
½ cup milk
¼ cup green onions, thinly sliced
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded/divided
2 tablespoons green onions, thinly sliced

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.

Cook the sausage in a skillet until cooked through. Remove to a paper towel-lined plate and drain skillet of all fat. Slice into half-inch pieces. Cook bacon in the same, defatted skillet until brown and crispy. Drain on a paper towel-lined plate. Crumble.

Arrange tater tots in a single layer in the prepared baking dish. Whisk together eggs, milk, ¼ cup green onions, salt and pepper. Stir in cooked sausage and half the cooked bacon. Fold in 1 cup Monterey Jack (24147 David L. Arveson) cheese and 1 cup of cheddar cheese into egg mixture and pour egg mixture over tater tots.

Bake in preheated oven until egg mixture is set, 40-45 minutes.

Sprinkle top evenly with remaining 1 cup cheddar cheese, pop back in the oven, about 5-7 minutes until the cheese is melted.

Allow to stand 10 minutes before cutting. Sprinkle with remaining half of crumbled bacon and green onions and serve.



Operation Round Up® grants total \$11,475

The Red Lake Electric Trust board met recently and awarded 23 grants to area nonprofit and community organizations that totaled \$11,475. Since its inception in 1993, 934 Operation Round Up grants totaling \$574,000 have been gifted to area community organizations. The Red Lake Electric Trust receives money for grants from the Operation Round Up program administered by the Red Lake Electric Cooperative. Today, 97% of Red Lake Electric's members voluntarily "round up" their monthly bill for the Operation Round Up program.

The following four organizations were awarded Round Up funds to help the disadvantaged:

- TRF Area Food Shelf: \$500 to help purchase food for those in need.
- Strandquist Area Food Shelf: \$500 to help purchase food for those in need.
- North Country Food Bank: \$500 to help support (26352 Carol J. Baird) construction of organization's new facility and provide food for those in need.
- Sun Country and You: \$300 to help cover cost for horse care, class supplies and farm staff.

Six area emergency service providers were awarded grants:

- Red Lake Falls Volunteer Ambulance: \$1,000 to help purchase automatic blood pressure monitor, pagers and training manikin.
- St. Hilaire Fire and Rescue Department: \$1,000 to help defray the expense of annual trainings.

- Viking Fire and Rescue: \$1,000 to help purchase hand-held radios, 800 system for county wide.
- Goodridge Area Fire and Rescue: \$1,000 to help purchase replacement LED lighting and tools for grain bin rescues.
- TRF Volunteer Fire Department: \$1,000 to purchase pagers and charging bases.
- Newfolden Volunteer Fire Department: \$775 to help purchase two pagers and charging bases.

Two grants were given to historical organizations:

- Heritage Community Center: \$300 to help purchase and install a bingo board.
- Goodridge Area Historical Society: \$300 to help continued restoration of the Goodridge Depot.

Six grants to benefit the general public were awarded to:

- Thief River Falls Area Community Theater: \$300 to help cover expenses for all five summer productions.
- TRF Veteran's Memorial Park: \$300 to help with construction of memorial.
- Power of Produce Club: \$300 to allow kids to shop for local produce at the farmers market.
- Middle River Veterans Outdoors, Inc.: \$300 to help fund event for youth and veterans.
- Thief River Falls Pickleball Association: \$300 to help develop three outdoor pickleball courts.
- Goodridge Lion Tamers: \$300 to help replace refrigerator at Lions hall.

Four grants were given focusing on senior care:

- Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota: \$300 to help cover activities for the Morning Out program.
- Inter-County Nursing Service of TRF: \$300 to help with the cost of maintenance care home health for seniors.
- Middle River Seniors: \$300 to help fund activities for seniors to stay active and social.
- Tri-Community Living at Home/Block Nurse Program: \$300 to help cover costs related to health promotion and lifelong learning activities.

Three organizations received funds focused on youth programs:

- Little Brother/Little Sister Program (Marshall County): \$300 to help pay for activities that encourage social interaction and positive experiences.

The Red Lake Electric Trust Board of Directors determines grants two times per year, in March and September. Serving on the board are Tishara Melcher – president, Middle River; Diane Kolstoe – vice president, Thief River Falls; and Julie Stennes – secretary-treasurer, Oklee. Ex-officio directors are Bonnie Christians of Crookston (28333 Donovan T. Delorme) and Stephanie Johnson of Gatzke, representing Red Lake Electric Cooperative.

Grant applications are available at the Red Lake Electric Cooperative office or by visiting their website at www.red-lakeelectric.com. The next deadline for Operation Round Up grant applications is Sept. 11, 2020.

Three ways to electrify your lawn care



Cordless electric leaf blowers are lightweight and easy to maneuver. Photo Source: Scott Van Osdol

Spring is just around the corner, and you can practically smell the freshly cut grass. If you're in the market to upgrade your lawn care equipment, you may want to consider electric (or battery-powered) options. Gas-powered lawn mowers and trimmers may be your go-to, but times, they are a-changin'. Electric lawn care equipment options are becoming more popular than ever, offering consumers faster charging times, longer battery life and quieter, greener products compared to their gas-powered counterparts. Here are three ways you can electrify your lawn care this spring.

Electric lawn mowers

Electric lawn mowers have come a long way over the last few years. Early models required corded connections, which were tricky to manage – but the cord has been cut. Newer cordless electric mowers are certainly more expensive than gas-powered mowers, but much of the upfront cost can be recovered since electricity is a less-expensive fuel than gas, and electric engines generally require less maintenance than gas engines. Cordless electric mowers typically range from \$200 to \$500.

Electric mowers are suitable for most lawn care needs, with batteries that typically require about one to two hours to fully charge, and most batteries can run for a full hour. That said, if you have a large yard (half an acre or larger), a gas-powered option may be best to suit your needs.



Photo Source: NRECA

Electric trimmers



Photo Source: Abby Berry

Cordless electric string trimmers are a great option for most lawns. Traditionally, like lawn mowers, string trimmers have typically been powered by gas. But new versions of electric trimmers are improving and are now considered worthy competitors of gas-powered models.

Cordless electric trimmers are much quieter and easier to use, but most batteries last about 30 to 45 minutes. So, if you have a lot of space to trim, you may want to consider a backup battery or plan to work in short bursts. If you're interested in purchasing an electric trimmer, the main factors to consider (26516 Adeline Maygra) are the battery's life, charge time and power. Costs can vary depending on your needs, but you can find a quality version for about \$100.

Electric leaf blowers

After cutting and trimming your lawn, you'll need to clear off those walkways and patios for the finishing touch. If you don't want to deal with the maintenance of a gas-powered blower or the restraints of a corded blower, a cordless electric version is a great option.

Cordless electric leaf blowers are lightweight and easy to maneuver, but they don't offer quite as much power as gas-powered and corded blowers. If your leaf blowing and clearing needs are minimal, a cordless electric leaf blower can get the job done. Costs for a cordless electric blower vary depending on power and battery quality, but you can purchase a dependable model for about \$150 and up.

If you're looking to electrify your lawn care equipment, be sure to do your homework. Search online for the latest reviews, and check trusted websites like [ConsumerReports.org](https://www.consumerreports.org). With a little research, you'll be well on your way to Lawn of the Month – with less maintenance, hassle and noise.

Electrical safety and conservation websites

The following is a list of websites that can provide information and education in reference to electrical safety and energy conservation. These websites are listed as links on Red Lake Electric's website at www.redlakeelectric.com.

- Electrical Safety Foundation International: www.esfi.org
- Alliance to Save Energy: www.ase.org
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/greenhomes
- Energy Star: www.energystar.gov
- Minnesota Safety Council: www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org
- Safe Electricity: www.safeelectricity.org
- Lighting Controls Association: www.aboutlightingcontrols.org
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: www.cpsc.gov



NOTICE OF NAMES

Hidden within the text of the articles of this issue of *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 (9999999.99 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.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

This spring, consider using a rain barrel to save energy. Rain barrels capture rainwater from a roof that can be used later for watering your lawn, garden or indoor plants.

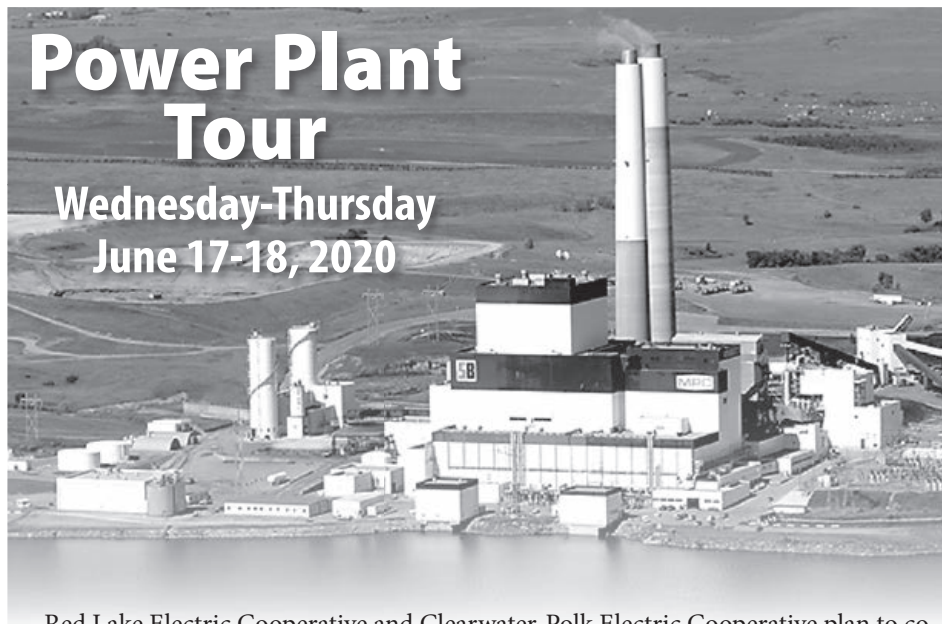
Source: energy.gov



Like us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/redlakeelectric

Power Plant Tour

Wednesday-Thursday
June 17-18, 2020



Red Lake Electric Cooperative and Clearwater-Polk Electric Cooperative plan to co-sponsor a tour of the Milton R. Young Station power plant June 17-18.

The first day of the trip will include a stop at Minnkota Power Cooperative's headquarters in Grand Forks. An afternoon stop will be taken at Garrison Dam and a relaxing (30159 Katie J. Johnson) evening will be spent at the Comfort Inn & Suites in Mandan, N.D., which will include a banquet sponsored by Minnkota Power Cooperative.

The second day of the tour includes visiting the Milton R. Young generation station near Center, N.D. It will also include a drive through the open pit lignite mines (weather permitting) to see the mining operation firsthand. You are guaranteed to have a better understanding of the process involved with generating the electricity that serves you.

The cost to participate in the tour is \$80 per person double occupancy, \$100 single occupancy. This includes transportation, meals and lodging. The tour is open to all Red Lake Electric Cooperative members and/or spouses.

The tour group will depart from Red Lake Electric Cooperative's headquarters in Red Lake Falls at 7 a.m. Wednesday, June 17. The approximate time of return is 7 p.m. Thursday, June 18.

Registrations and payment are due by June 1. If you have not taken this tour, sign up today for a learning experience.



BNI Coal mine

Power Plant Tour Registration June 17 and 18, 2020

Signup deadline is June 1, 2020

NAME OF PARTICIPANTS _____

ADDRESS(ES) _____

Phone Number _____ Number of Participants _____

Account No. _____ Amount Enclosed _____

\$80 Per Participant Double Occupancy – \$100 Per Participant Single Occupancy

Return to RLEC, P.O. Box 430, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750, along with your check. RLEC will contact you later with details. Your check or deposit will be returned if the tour should be canceled for some reason. If it becomes necessary for you to cancel out on the trip, it is required that you notify RLEC at least 48 hours before departure to be eligible for a refund. Registration for the trip is on a first-come, first-served basis with a limited number of openings. If you have previously taken the trip, you will be put on a space availability standby.

Cards of Thanks

Red Lake Electric reserves the right to edit thank you notes when being published.



Thank you for the gloves I won at the district meeting in Oklee.
Sharon Riendeau, Brooks

Thank you so much for the Tuscany candle warmer and wax I won at the District 5 meeting in Thief River Falls. It was also an informative meeting.
Joan Strong, Thief River Falls

Thank you for the fleece throw that was donated to the Red Lake Falls Pathfinders snowmobile safari. I was the lucky winner.
Bev Schmitz, Red Lake Falls

Thank you for the tiedown straps I won at the district meeting in Thief River Falls. They will come in handy.
Luke Kaushagen, Thief River Falls

RLEC Trust Board and members enrolled in Operation Round Up:

I would like to thank you for your part in helping to complete our new pickleball court next summer. Always know that you have made a difference!
Bruce Mattson, TRF Pickleball Ass'n. Fund Chairman

In 2019 the Thief River Falls Power of Produce or "Pop Club" at the Farmers Market applied for an Operation Round Up grant and graciously received \$500 to run our program. We are very grateful to be chosen for this grant.

TRF local foods/POP Committee

The Marshall County Board of Commissioners and Marshall County Social Services wish to extend their deep appreciation for your donation over the Christmas season. Thank you for your donation to the Christmas project; because of your generosity, food baskets were delivered to 175 people and 244 children received gifts from the Sharing Tree project. Your willingness of giving and caring is greatly appreciated.

Stacey Urbaniak, Marshall County Social Services Case Aide Services

Just a quick note to thank you for the recent donation. The money will be used to purchase pagers for our Volunteer Firefighters. These pagers are vital for quick response from our members. Again, thank you for supporting our department.

The entire crew from Thief River Falls Fire Department

SMART PAYMENTS

Save time.
Eliminate late fees.

With SmartHub, you'll be notified when your bill is due and you can pay securely online in the app – anytime, anywhere.

Sign up for autopayments, set up your secure preferred payment method and let account management go into autopilot. All in the palm of your hand and online. Go to redlakeelectric.com or call for details.

**SMART MANAGEMENT.
SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.**

Beautify your yard, not utility equipment

Green utility boxes, known as padmount transformers, are part of the supply chain that helps provide power to your neighborhood. Those boxes sit on an easement, which allows us access to them.

What are the green boxes for? Their job is to step down high-voltage electricity to a lower voltage needed for the underground wires supplying power to the lights and appliances in homes.

Please do not paint, enhance, block or otherwise obstruct padmount transformers. By respecting all utility equipment, including meters and transformers, (22461 David A. Grothe) you can help keep the power on and your local utility workers safe.

As you beautify your yard this spring and summer, Red Lake Electric and Safe Electricity remind you of these safety tips:

- Do not plant shrubs and trees close to green box transformers or other utility equipment. Limiting or restricting

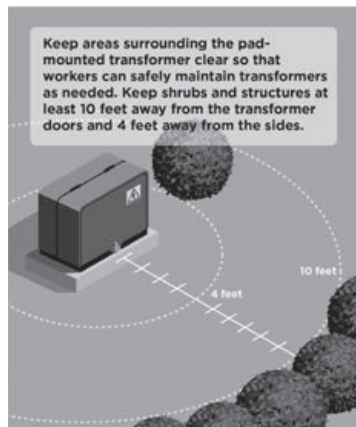
access to the box in your yard by us could delay restoration work during an outage and create a serious safety hazard. We need at least 10 feet of clearance in front of the transformer (the side that is padlocked), as well as four feet of clearance on the other three sides.

- Contact us with questions about landscaping around or installing fencing near a padmount transformer (or any other changes) to learn what is allowable.
- Contact us if the transformer becomes unlocked or if it or any other type of utility equipment appears to be damaged.
- Call 811 prior to digging around a transformer and

respect the clearance requirements noted above. If you dig near a transformer (even if it is beyond the clearance requirements), you could inadvertently hit a live underground cable. Always call 811 prior to any digging.

- Keep a clear path to the transformer. Even though the transformer seems like it is in "your yard," it is technically on an easement, and our workers need clear access to it to maintain equipment and keep power running smoothly.

Contact us with any questions or concerns about the safety of padmount transformers. Always teach children that they should not sit on, open or play around the green boxes.





How will you celebrate Earth Day?

As we celebrate Earth Day this April, let's continue to work together and make a positive impact on our local community – and our beautiful planet.

Earth Day is considered one of the world's largest civic events, and on April 22, we can all be part of this global movement to help the environment.

There are many ways we as individuals can help the environment, and some are easier than you'd think. Here are a few simple actions you can take now to reduce your energy use.

- **Audit your light bulbs.** Swapping out any remaining incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs can make a big difference in (29947 Andrew Bramer) home efficiency, and it's one of the easiest ways to reduce your energy bill.
- **Maintain your HVAC system.** Replace your home air filters to allow your HVAC system to run more efficiently. Air filters prevent dust and allergens from clogging your HVAC system. Changing the filters makes your unit run more efficiently – keeping your home cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.
- **Examine your smart or programmable thermostat.** Make sure it is programmed for the current season and family schedule. This is one of the best tools at your fingertips; however, you can only achieve these efficiencies and savings if it is programmed properly and adjusted periodically to keep pace with changes in household routines.
- **Seal window and doors.** Seal leaks with weather stripping and caulk to keep cool air indoors during warm months and prevent cold air from penetrating the indoors during colder months. Sealing gaps around piping, dryer vents, fans and outlets also helps to seal the envelope and increase efficiency.

While these suggestions may not be glamorous actions worthy of a press release or event, they do make a difference. And we're always here to help if you want more information on how you can save energy. Stop by our office or give us a call.