



# 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

DECEMBER 2016

## *Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

*From your employees and directors  
at Red Lake Electric Cooperative*

### – DIRECTORS –

Stacy Blawat	Colette Kujava
Bonnie Christians	Steve Linder
Aaron Chervestad	Peter Mosbeck
Robert Finstad	Randy Versdahl
Mark Hanson	

### – EMPLOYEES –

Kelli Brateng	Shirley Bregier
Darcy Cardinal	Steve Conely
Aaron Derosier	Javen Eidsmoe
Jordon Gervais	Roger Johanneck
Jenny Kelley	Christie Klipping
Brett Knott	Chris Knott
Steve Kruse	Melanie LaCrosse
Laurie Malwitz	Warren Malwitz
Branden Narlock	Sam Pahlen
Mike Raymond	Troy Schmitz
Casey Thronson	

May the peace and blessings of Christmas  
be yours; and may the coming year  
be filled with happiness.



## *Cookies and Calendars*

As a small token of appreciation to our  
members, an open house will be held at  
Red Lake Electric Cooperative's headquarters.

**December 27 – 30**

Stop by for refreshments and Christmas cookies  
and pick up a 2017 calendar.

## *Holiday Office Hours*

Red Lake Electric Cooperative's headquarters  
will be closed Dec. 26 and Jan. 2.

In case of an electric outage or emergency,  
please call the after-hours phone number  
at 218-253-2200.



## **RLEC employees and directors recognized for years of service**

Employees and directors of Red Lake Electric Cooperative were recognized for their years of service to the Cooperative. Pictured left to right are Jordon Gervais, journeyman lineman, 5 years; Steve Conely, operations manager, 15 years; Stacy Blawat, District 1 director, 5 years; and Sam Pahlen, journeyman lineman, 5 years.



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## OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President . . . . . Bonnie Christians  
Vice President . . . . . Randy Versdahl  
Secretary-Treasurer . . . . . Mark Hanson  
Directors . . . . . Stacy Blawat, Aaron Chervestad,  
Robert Finstad, Colette Kujava,  
Steve Linder, Peter Mosbeck

Roger Johanneck . . . . . General Manager  
Shirley Bregier . . . . . Manager of Finance  
& Administration  
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](http://www.redlakeelectric.com)  
Email: [redlake@minnkota.com](mailto:redlake@minnkota.com)

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

## MINNESOTA STATE ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

*Pennington and Marshall Counties:*  
**Scott Stenvik – 218-689-5406**

*Red Lake and Polk Counties:*  
**Bryan Holmes – 218-686-1413**

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](http://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.*



# Manager's Comments

by Roger Johanneck



## Blinks – the good and bad

A discussion about blinking lights in December is a normal topic in our part of the world. It usually is in reference to the Christmas decorations that adorn the many yards and homes throughout Red Lake Electric's service area and beyond. As your electric energy provider, we are happy to see all the festive blinking lights and grateful to have a role in powering whatever Christmas lighting and decorations our members want to display.

In this month's issue of the *Volts & Jolts*, we have included an article that addresses the less favorable blinks we encounter on the electrical system, and in turn, you see and experience in your homes and businesses. Blinks are a source of irritation, not only for you the member who experiences the effects of momentary power interruptions, it is a concern (3829007.01 Steve Appel) for both your distribution cooperative, Red Lake Electric, and our generation and transmission provider, Minnkota Power.

Our Red Lake Electric distribution system (poles, power lines and electrical equipment) has had a gentle year so far in 2016. Electric utilities just to the east of us experienced severe weather that left many folks without power for days last August. While we are grateful that we have been able to avoid lengthy major storm service interruptions this year, we have had some thunderstorm interruptions sometimes which are very short in nature. These short interruptions in power or "blinks" as we often refer to them, have been an irritant. While we have heard about the blinks from some of you, we know that there are more who have noticed the blinks and not bothered to call and tell us.

We know that lightning strikes are

not the only reason you experience these momentary blinks in power, however. Some of them occur during sky blue days and with little or no wind. History has shown that these blinks often increase in the spring and fall, coinciding with migratory bird activity, field work and foliage growth to name a few.

On Red Lake Electric's system, members served out of the Holt substation were experiencing more blinks than other parts of our service territory a year ago. Because of the variety of factors that can cause a blink on the line, it is difficult to say with complete certainty why the blinks have lessened for members serviced out of that substation. We do know that transmission line maintenance work was done on the line feeding power to that sub, and so we think that has helped mitigate some of the Holt blink issues.

A substation upgrade planned for 2017 is the installation of a motor switch in the Holt substation. While it will not have an impact in minimizing blinks, it will reduce the amount of response time required for crews to manually switch the transmission line feeding this sub. Eliminating this manual task will in turn reduce outage time caused by transmission line failures for the 800-plus members served by the Holt sub.

As you will read in the "Don't blink" article, our energy supplier, Minnkota Power Cooperative, has increased its focus on blink issues and is following through on a plan that will hopefully reduce blinks on its transmission system.

In addition to the nearly 2,600 miles of distribution power line de-

*continued on page 3*





## Member Service Department

by Kelli Brateng

### Install off-peak electric heating equipment, receive an off-peak incentive

**A**ny new off-peak electric heating equipment purchased and installed qualifies for an off-peak electric heat incentive.

Members will receive \$20 per kilowatt (kW) for qualifying electric heating equipment with a maximum incentive of \$600. The electric equipment must be part of an off-peak heating system with a qualified backup heating source. The equipment must be hard-wired.

Heat pumps may also qualify for the incentive. Air-source heat pumps will receive a \$100 per ton incentive and ground-source heat pumps will receive a \$200 per ton incentive. Heat pumps do not have to be controlled as part of an off-peak system. Any resistance or strip heat as part of a ground-source

heating system must be controlled. The maximum incentive (2833006.01 Coreen Erickson) for heat pumps is \$600.

This off-peak electric heat installation incentive is in addition to the conservation incentives offered as part of the Cooperative's PowerSavers Program.

Equip your home or place of business with an off-peak electric system today and be set for heating seasons of the future. Call Red Lake Electric Cooperative at 253-2168 or 800-245-6068 for more information.

Wishing you and your family a wonderful holiday season, a Merry Christmas, and all the best for the new year ahead!


### Manager's Comments *continued from page 2*

living energy throughout Red Lake Electric Cooperative's service area, Minnkota also has hundreds of miles of transmission line that are exposed to the elements Mother Nature and human activity can deliver. These many miles of exposure make our electric system vulnerable to outages and short interrupting blinks. There is a considerable amount of time and money spent on system design and maintenance to reduce the frequency of line outages and momentary blinks, but we can't make the system totally immune to our elements. We appreciate your understanding and patience of this as we work to solve our line-quality issues. We're working to be a source of reliable energy for you; you have our continued pledge for that.

### Merry Christmas

On behalf of the employees and directors of your Red Lake Electric

Cooperative, thank you for your patronage this past year. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you in 2016, and we look forward to serving you and the new members who will be joining us in 2017. Merry Christmas and may the new year be one full of blessings for you, your family and your Red Lake Electric Cooperative.



Through the Infinity Renewable Energy program, you can decide how much of the electricity you purchase is generated by renewable resources.

**Contact RLEC today to learn more about how you can participate in the program.**



Submit your recipes to be published in *Volts & Jolts*. Email to [redlake@minnkota.com](mailto:redlake@minnkota.com) or mail to: Red Lake Electric Cooperative, PO Box 430, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750.

### Christmas Lasagna

#### For shortbread cookie layer:

3/4 cup unsalted butter-softened  
1/2 cup powdered sugar  
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 tablespoon cocoa powder  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
Red food coloring

#### For peppermint cheesecake layer:

8 oz. cream cheese-softened  
1 cup powdered sugar  
1 1/2 cups Cool Whip, thawed  
1 teaspoon peppermint extract

#### For pudding layer:

2 x 3.9 oz. box white chocolate instant pudding  
3 cups milk  
Green food coloring

#### For topping:

1 1/2 cups Cool Whip

#### For garnish:

2 cups mini marshmallows  
Red and green sprinkles  
M&M candies

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Lightly butter 9x13 inch baking dish, set aside.

In a small bowl stir together flour, salt and cocoa powder. In large bowl beat butter and sugar until smooth. Add red food coloring and mix well (I used 1 tablespoon food coloring to get intense red color). Turn you mixer on low speed and gradually add flour mixture. Mix until combined. Press the mixture into bottom of baking dish and bake for 18-20 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool completely.

To make cream cheese layer beat softened cream cheese and powdered sugar until smooth. Add 1 1/2 cups Cool Whip and peppermint extract and mix to combine. Spread over cooled shortbread layer. Place in the freezer to firm while preparing pudding.

To make the green pudding layer whisk together 2 x 3.9 oz. boxes white chocolate instant pudding mix with 3 cups milk. Add green food coloring (add a few drops at a time, to desired color) and whisk until smooth. Spread over cream cheese (221056.01 Avis Frazer) layer. Set in the freezer for 5 minutes.

Spread 1 1/2 cups Cool Whip over pudding layer and top with mini marshmallows and sprinkles. Place in the fridge for 3-4 hours until set.



# Don't blink

## Minnkota begins new outage mitigation projects

**T**he lights turn off. The Wi-Fi signal drops. The TV goes black.

A few seconds later, the power turns on and everything is back to normal – outside of a few digital displays flashing “12:00.”

These momentary losses of power, referred to as blink outages, occur when some type of disturbance exists on a power line. This could be a lightning strike, farm equipment hitting a pole, or when wildlife or tree branches come into contact with an energized line. Blinks may be inconvenient, but they are a necessary part of the electric system.

“Although blinks are bothersome, they are actually an indication that our equipment is operating properly,” said Skylar Ertman, Minnkota Power Cooperative civil engineer. “If a fault or short circuit happens on a power line, a device called a (3726013.01 Joe Wessel) breaker opens to stop it, then quickly closes back in. This process eliminates the risk of extended outages and damage to our system.”

With a hot-arm attachment safely holding the phase wires overhead, Minnkota line workers Jordan Klein (top) and Nick Bye work to install equipment to lessen the potential impact of blink outages on a section of 69-kilovolt line near Rogers, N.D.

**“A large portion of our subtransmission system (69 kilovolts and lower) has aged beyond its 50<sup>th</sup> year of service. This study prioritizes the pending upgrades to the system. Blink outage statistics were a key consideration during the evaluation process.”**

– SKYLAR ERTMAN, *civil engineer*

Limiting blink outages is a high priority for Minnkota and Red Lake Electric Cooperative. For years, both cooperatives have pursued aggressive right-of-way maintenance programs to keep trees and branches clear of power lines. In 2015, Minnkota, Red Lake Electric’s wholesale power provider, conducted a thorough study of the cooperative’s 69-kilovolt transmission system, which is comprised of more than 2,100 miles of line.

“A large portion of our subtransmission system (69 kilovolts and lower) has aged beyond its 50<sup>th</sup> year of service,” Ertman said. “This study prioritizes the pending upgrades to the system. Blink outage (1314003.01 Haven Farms LLP) statistics were a key consideration during the evaluation process.”

The results of the study have been incorporated into Minnkota’s long-range planning and budgets, Ertman said. This spring, the cooperative began full-scale implementation of its blink outage mitigation plan by addressing those line sections with the highest rate of blink outages.

### Live line work

Line crews have been working in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota on existing lines that were experiencing higher-than-average blink outage occurrences. All upgrades were made while the lines were energized, eliminating the need to take an extended outage to complete the work. Crews used a bucket truck with an insulated apparatus attached to it so the work could be completed

in a safe and efficient manner.

Line workers detached the three lines from the structure and allowed the apparatus, referred to as a hot-arm attachment, to lift it several feet over the top of the pole. Structures were fitted with three pieces of equipment to help reduce blink impacts. The first is a hanging lightning arrester, which attaches to the top phase wire and connects to the structure ground. This device routes a lightning strike around the electrical system and safely sends the current to the ground.

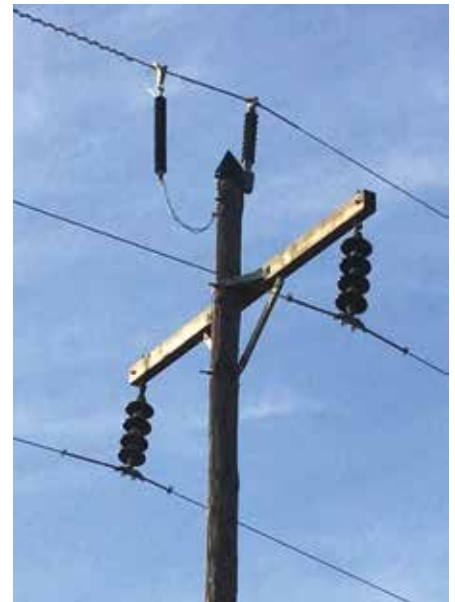
A polymer post-top insulator was also attached to the top phase wire at each structure, helping prevent the undesired flow of electricity to the ground. The top of each pole is fitted with a plastic cone-shaped device that deters birds and other animals from sitting on the structure, protecting them from the energized line.

Ertman said the implementation of these devices will continue during the next several years in impacted areas of the system.

“Even after the equipment is installed, the work isn’t done,” Ertman said. “We will have to monitor these upgraded stretches of line for an entire blink season to ensure the changes are the best solution moving forward.”

### Changing expectations

Since 2006, Minnkota has experienced an average 25 percent reduction in annual blink outages. While the systemwide outage numbers are trending down, the expectations of the consumer continue to rise, primarily driven by the fact that today’s



All of the blink outage mitigation equipment – a lightning arrester, post-top insulator and pole-top helmet – has been installed near the top of this 69-kilovolt structure.

electronics require a constant, uninterrupted supply of power to run properly.

In the past, a blink would occur and often go unnoticed to the average consumer because there were no digital displays that needed to be reset afterward. Today, each blink outage is documented by the flashing “12:00.”

Ertman said even the most reliable electric systems in the country are susceptible to blink outages. But with the technologies being implemented by Minnkota, he believes members (4329005.00 Philip A. Olson) will see improved reliability with minimal cost impact.

“When you’re dealing with more than 2,100 miles of line, you can’t tear it all down and start over,” Ertman said. “You have to find solutions that work with your existing infrastructure. I believe we’re doing that with these projects.”

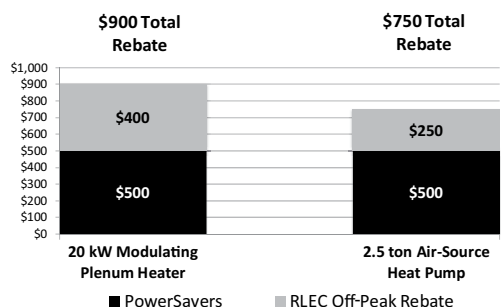


## QUICK TAKES

A look at some statistics from your  
Red Lake Electric Cooperative

Red Lake Electric Cooperative promotes the use of electric heat by offering rebates to customers who install new equipment that are qualifying products. PowerSavers HVAC rebates are based per unit with the exception of the ground-source heat pump rebate, which is based per ton. Red Lake Electric's off-peak incentive will receive \$20 per kW on electric heating equipment, \$100 per ton on air-source heat pumps and \$200 per ton on ground-source heat pumps. Call us today at 1-800-245-6068 or 218-253-2168 if you have any questions on how to qualify for rebates from Red Lake Electric Cooperative.

### Red Lake Electric Cooperative Rebates!



## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Electric bills increase during the winter for a variety of reasons – holiday gatherings, houseguests and shorter days and longer nights. Small measures like turning down your thermostat, replacing incandescent bulbs with LEDs and washing clothes in cold water can help control energy costs.

Source: TogetherWeSave.com

## 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 (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.



Like us on Facebook at  
[www.facebook.com/redlakeelectric](http://www.facebook.com/redlakeelectric)

# CLASSIFIEDS

Members are invited to use  
this FREE WANT AD service.

If you have anything to trade or sell, just drop a card to  
Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750.

## Want Ad Order Form

### FREE for RLEC members

For sale and wanted items only. All ads must be 50 words or less. Ads are published for Red Lake Electric members at no charge. Ads must be typed or in clear readable print. RLEC reserves the right to edit or reject any ad.

You can submit your ad by fax, email or mail. Fax ads to: (218) 253-2630; Email ads to: [redlake@minnkota.com](mailto:redlake@minnkota.com); Mail ads to: Red Lake Electric Cooperative, PO Box 430, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750.

Include your name, address and telephone number. All telephone numbers are presumed to have a 218 area code unless noted otherwise.

Use the form below to submit your ads.

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## Don't want to write a check? Want to save on postage?



Red Lake Electric has a new payment option to make paying your bill easy. This service is free. Sign-up is simple. Go to [www.redlakeelectric.com](http://www.redlakeelectric.com) and click on the Bill4U icon. There is now an app for your smart-phone. Just go to your app store (4412006.03 Townsend Pricing) and download the free app. Bill4U allows you to:

- Make your payments 24 hours a day directly from your checking or savings account, eliminating the cost of the check and postage.
- Access your billing statements at any time.
- View and compare your kilowatt-hour usage.

If you have any questions or need more information, visit our website or call Red Lake Electric at 800-245-6068.

## ELECTRIC HEAT EXEMPTION

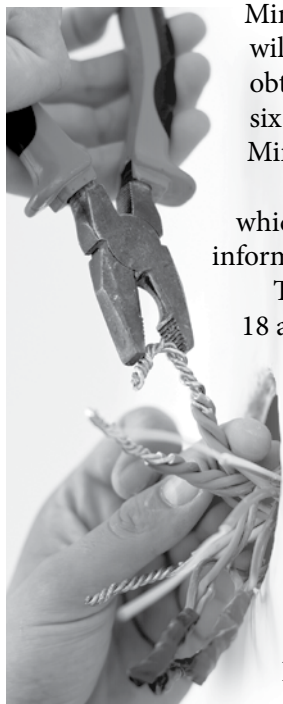
This is to certify that the primary source of heat for my residence is electricity and I am eligible for the electric heating sales tax exemption as provided by Minnesota State Law. The primary source is the source that supplies more heat than any other source for the largest period of time during the heating season.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Account Number \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# Electrical contractor continuing education sessions set for January, February



Minnkota Power Cooperative and the associated systems will again provide an opportunity for area electricians to obtain credits for license renewal by attending one of the six continuing education classes being offered throughout Minnkota's service area.

This marks the 29<sup>th</sup> year of the successful program, which is aimed at providing area trade allies with the latest information on electrical code and practices.

The electrical workshops will be held Jan. 17 and Jan. 18 at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks. The training then moves to the Cambria Hotel & Suites in West Fargo, Jan. 24 and Jan. 25. The workshops continue with classes Feb. 7 at the Eagles Club in Bemidji, Minn., and Feb. 8 at the Bigwood Event Center in Fergus Falls, Minn.

The registration fee is \$75 for eight code credits. Taking the class on multiple days will not qualify for 16 code credits. Online registration is preferred through [www.minnkota.com](http://www.minnkota.com). Registration (3526005.07 Kathy Panek) should be completed by Jan. 12.

For residential building contractor continuing education workshops, contact your local home builders association.

For more information about the program, contact Sue Black, Minnkota communications/member services specialist, at (701) 795-4292 or email questions to [sblack@minnkota.com](mailto:sblack@minnkota.com).



Thank you so much for the \$100 energy bill credit from the Auto Pay drawing.

*Jim & Sandy Sorter, Thief River Falls*

Thank you for the electric drill I won.

*Blaine Torstveit, Sanders 4-H Club*

Thank you for the generous Operation Round Up grant to Silverton 4-H Club. It will be used to improve the Silvertown town hall where our monthly meetings are held. Your support to the 4-H program is greatly appreciated!

*Alanis Rupprecht, Silverton 4-H Club, Vice President*

Thank you for supporting Red Ribbon week! We are so grateful that you sponsored the drug-free campaign.

*Red Lake County Central High School SADDs*

## 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, 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

## Celebrate with savings

Buy energy efficient Christmas lights and decorations

# LED Rebate

### How to apply:

1. Purchase LED Christmas plug-in (not battery-operated) lights and decorations in 2016.
2. Complete this rebate form and submit it to Red Lake Electric Cooperative by Dec. 31, 2016, with a copy of your sales receipt and the packaging showing the number of lights per string. ENERGY STAR® LEDs recommended.
3. Select appropriate rebate in the box below. Rebate cannot exceed 75 percent of cost. Maximum of 5 strings per customer.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ City/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_



Number of Strings	Rebate per String	Total Rebate
Less than 99 lights	\$ 3	
100-199 lights	\$ 6	
200-299 lights	\$ 9	
Greater than 300 lights	\$12	

Mail to: Red Lake Electric Cooperative • P.O. Box 430 • Red Lake Falls, MN 56750-0430



**Red Lake Electric  
Cooperative Inc.**

## Auto Pay and paperless billing winners

Members who use Auto Pay for making their monthly energy payments and members who have signed up for paperless billing through Bill4U were entered into promotional drawings.

Winners for the Auto Pay drawings were James and Sandy Sorter of Thief River Falls, \$100 energy credit; and Jeremy Grove of Red Lake Falls, Kindle Fire. Winners for the paperless billing drawings were Troy Ellingson of Thief

River Falls, \$100 energy credit; and Kerri Costello of Brooks, Kindle Fire. Congratulations!



**James and Sandy Sorter**  
Thief River Falls



**Kerri Costello**  
Brooks



**Troy Ellingson**  
Thief River Falls

**FIRST AID  
KIT**

**WATER,  
SNACKS**

**JUMPER  
CABLES**

**TOW  
ROPE**

**BAG OF  
SAND FOR  
TRACTION**



**FLARES**

**Don't get stuck in the cold**

Be prepared with a winter emergency kit.

**FLASHLIGHT**

**CELL  
PHONE  
CHARGER**

**SHOVEL,  
ICE  
SCRAPER**

**BLANKET,  
WARM  
CLOTHING**