



Volts & Jolts

Published monthly for the members of Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.

One of the Minnkota Power Systems

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

JANUARY 2018

Member meetings Opportunity for information, discussion, fellowship

District meetings for the members of Red Lake Electric Cooperative will be held at three locations within the Cooperative's service territory. Meetings will be held within Districts 2, 7 and 8. The meetings inform attendees on current issues and programs associated with the Cooperative. Official business will be conducted at the three district meetings, which will include the election of a director candidate. Even though a meeting may not be scheduled within the district in which you reside, you are welcome to attend a meeting of your choice. Anyone requiring special access or assistance at any one of the meeting sites (3130003.02 Michael Drangstveit) should call Red Lake Electric in advance so arrangements can be made. Door prizes will be awarded and refreshments will be served at each meeting.

2018 Member Meeting Schedule

Day	Date	Time	Meeting	Location
Monday	Jan. 29	1:30 p.m.	District 2	Nazareth Lutheran Church Holt
Monday	Jan. 29	7 p.m.	District 8	St. John's Lutheran School Thief River Falls
Tuesday	Jan. 30	7 p.m.	District 7	St. Anne's Church Goodridge

			Humbly	Como					
	West Valley	New Maine	Spruce Valley	Cedar	Whiteford				
Foldahl	Marsh Grove	New Folds 3	Holt	East Valley 2	Mud Lake	Eckvold	Valley		
	Viking	New Solum	Excel	Agder	Grand Plain	Moylan	Espelle		
	Nomedal	Norden	North	Silverton 5	Cloverleaf	Goodridge	Reiner		
	Bray 9	Sanders	Rocksbury 8	Smiley	Kratka	Highlanding 7	Star		Red Lake Indian Res.
Belgium	Polk Centre	Black River	River Falls	Wyandotte	Mayfield	Deerpark	Hickory		
	Wylie	Browns Creek	River						
Parnell	Louisville	Red Lake Falls	Gervais 6	Emardville	Garnes	Equality	Johnson		
Crookston	Gentilly	Lake Pleasant	Terrebonne	Poplar River	Lambert	Chester 4			Member Meeting Locations
Fairfax	Kertsonville 1	Tilden	Grove Park	Badger	Lessor	Hill River			
Russia	Onstad	DIRECTOR DISTRICTS Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.							

RED LAKE ELECTRIC ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, March 28

Red Lake Electric Cooperative members are encouraged to mark their calendars for the Cooperative's annual meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 28, at the Ralph Engelstad Arena in Thief River Falls.

Director elections to be held

Red Lake Electric Cooperative members in District 2, 7 and 8 will soon elect directors to represent them. The initial elections will take place at the upcoming district meetings. Final election will occur at the Cooperative's annual meeting March 28 if there is more than one nominee. Districts 2, 7 and 8 are currently represented by Stacy Blawat, Aaron Chervestad and Robert Finstad, respectively. Directors must be members residing in the district they represent and have no conflicts of interest regarding Red Lake Electric Cooperative. Any candidate for director must have his or her name stated as the "member" on the Cooperative's records. For more information on director qualifications and responsibilities contact Roger Johannek, general manager, at 800-245-6068 or 218-253-2168.

New director needed in District 8

Members in Rocksbury Township will have a new director representing them on the Board of Directors at Red Lake Electric Cooperative. Robert Finstad, the director serving this area, has been representing District 8 since 1999. Finstad is completing the term he was re-elected to in 2015 and is not seeking re-election in 2018.

Members of District 8 Rocksbury Townships will elect a director candidate at their (6935006.01 Pederson Brothers) district meeting to be held at St. John's Lutheran School Jan. 29.

The candidate receiving the most votes at their respective district meeting will be placed on the ballot for election at the Cooperative's annual meeting March 28.

Members can also be placed on the annual meeting ballot by petition. At least 15 members of the respective district must sign a nomination petition and return it by February 26, 10 a.m., to be placed on the annual meeting ballot. Nomination petition forms are available by calling or visiting the RLEC office in Red Lake Falls.

Members considering running for the position of director should note the article located elsewhere in this issue that defines qualifications for being a director.

If you have additional questions on director responsibilities or meeting schedules, contact Finstad in District 8 at 218-681-6479 or Roger Johannek, general manager, at 218-253-2168.



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JANUARY 2018 – Vol. 53, No. 4

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF

Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.

P.O. Box 430 • 412 International Drive S.W.

Red Lake Falls, MN 56750-0430

(USPS 663-400)

Subscription rate: \$2.50 per year

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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 Aaron Chervestad,
Bonnie Christians, 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

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

MINNESOTA STATE ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

Northwest corner of Polk and western Marshall Counties:

Wayne Bergstrom – 701-520-9771

Pennington and eastern Marshall Counties:

Bryan Holmes – 218-686-1413

Red Lake and most of Polk 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 7:00 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



How can we better serve you in 2018?

Upcoming membership meetings provide forum to hear from you

Of all the ways your Cooperative has to communicate with its members, meeting face to face at our membership meetings ranks right up there as one of my favorite. And it's that time of year again when we get to do that at Red Lake Electric.

As you will see elsewhere in this month's *Volts & Jolts*, there is a schedule listing the dates, times and places for this year's three district meetings. The Cooperative service territory is comprised of nine districts and members in each district are represented by one member elected to serve as director from that district. Director terms are staggered so that each year, three of the nine districts go through the director election process. It is a process that has served this Cooperative well.

In addition to nominating a director candidate at each district's meeting,

information on topics pertinent to Red Lake Electric will be heard. Members will have a chance to ask questions and visit with staff and their neighbors over pie and coffee. We as staff appreciate this opportunity to hear from our membership and answer questions you have about your electric service or other issues that impact your electric Cooperative. Staff presentations and the election process usually last about an hour.

If you would like to be a part of the director nomination process in your district, hear about happenings at your Cooperative (6211001.05 Ross Hegge) or enjoy a piece of pie, I encourage you to attend one of the meetings scheduled. You don't have to be a member from the district to attend the meeting; you just won't be able to participate in the director nomination process. Hope to see you there!

Cards of Thanks

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



Thank you for granting me a \$500 scholarship! It is greatly appreciated and will be put to good use.

Kelly Schultz, Red Lake Falls

Thanks to RLEC Trust:

The City of Thief River Falls acknowledges your charitable gift of \$250 for donation to the Thief River Falls Area K-9 fund and \$500 for donation to the Safety Camp.

*Angela Philipp, Finance Director
City of Thief River Falls*

The Marshall County Board of
Commissioners and Marshall County

Social Services wish to extend their deepest appreciation for your donation. Thank you to all of you for donating to the Christmas projects. Because of your generosity, food baskets were delivered to 172 people and 205 children received gifts from the Sharing Tree project. Your willingness to give and care for others was greatly appreciated.

*Stacey Urbaniak, Case Aide Services
Marshall County Social Services*

Thank you for the \$1,000 for VIP's Parent Time Center, Umbrella Tree. The funds will help us continue serving parents who are restricted to having visits with their children done with supervision of a skilled Umbrella Tree staff member.

*Sandi Bentley, Executive Director
Violence Intervention Project*



Line Service Department

by Steve Conely

I hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and I wish you the best in 2018. Starting in a couple of months, Red Lake Electric will be installing Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI). The new AMI will help Red Lake Electric better serve our member-owners. Once it is fully deployed and operational, RLEC will be alerted to outages as they happen, before being notified from our members. This will help RLEC staff determine the members without power and should help shorten outage time. We will also have the ability to instantaneously check voltage at the meter. This will help alert us to or diagnose a problem when a member calls in.

RLEC will begin installing AMI equipment at selected substations and on existing infrastructure starting in March. Once we have enough AMI equipment installed we will begin to change out the meters on our system. The new AMI installation will take two to three years to complete.

Our membership continues to grow. Most years, RLEC builds about 50 new services. Last year was better than average – we built 100 new services. An apartment complex accounted for almost half of the new services, with 43 new accounts associated with it. The other new accounts included 20 new services for homes, 20 for farm-related sites, i.e., drain tile pumps, bin fans, and irrigation pumps and pivots. The remaining 17 included services (452002.03 Scott E. Hutton) for telephone, cellular, railroad, street lights and a couple of cabins. To supply power to these new services, RLEC had to construct three-quarters of a mile of overhead line and about 7¾ miles of underground line. I would like to send out my appreciation to the landowners who allowed us access on their land to provide power to the new services.

In closing, if you have added or plan to add bin fans, grain dryers, electric heat or any other larger elec-

tric load, please contact us to avoid overloading your electric service and damaging our equipment. Stay safe in 2018, and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.



Red Lake Electric's crew will install 231 routers throughout its service territory. Routers will be installed on arms similar to what is used for mounting security lights. The routers are the communication backbone of the new AMI system.

Recipe Corner



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

Bacon Cheeseburger Skillet Tortellini

1 - 19-oz. bag tortellini, cooked and drained
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 pound ground hamburger
½ cup diced red onions
2 tablespoons minced garlic
2 cups baby spinach leaves
2 cups halved cherry tomatoes
2 tablespoons flour
1½ cups milk
3 cups triple cheddar cheese, divided
1 cup cooked crumbled bacon
Salt and pepper, to taste

Cook the tortellini according to the package directions. Drain and stir in one tablespoon olive oil to keep them from sticking.

Cook the hamburger, onions and garlic in a large skillet until completely cooked through. Drain any excess grease.

Add the spinach and tomatoes and cook until spinach wilts and tomatoes pop.

Sprinkle the mixture with the flour and stir and cook for 1 minute.

Whisk in the milk and cook until slightly thickened. Stir in 2¾ cups cheese until melted.

Add the pasta and bacon and stir until coated. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese and cover until melted. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

New year. Great rebates.

Great rebates and incentives are available to help you upgrade your heating and cooling system or electric water heater.



Check out the Energy Rebate Programs on our website

www.redlakeelectric.com

under the Member Services tab.

A RARE OPPORTUNITY

ND is a new frontier in vital rare earth element research



Dr. Dan Laudal, major projects manager with the UND Institute for Energy Studies, and Dr. Steve Benson, president of Microbeam Technologies, show core samples they are studying as part of a project to extract rare earth elements from North Dakota lignite.

North Dakota is sitting atop enough lignite coal to generate electricity for the next 800 years.

Researchers in the state see even more potential.

Lignite contains high concentrations of rare earth elements – ingredients that are essential to bringing most of today’s modern technology to life. Each coal seam could produce the key components needed to manufacture smartphones, wind turbines, electric vehicles and computer hard drives, among other things.

Dr. Steve Benson, president of Microbeam Technologies (MTI) in Grand Forks, N.D., and Dr. Dan Laudal, major projects manager with the Institute for Energy Studies at the University of North Dakota, are (3923003.04 Owen. J Stenvik) leading research to find economical methods to extract rare earth elements from lignite.

“Rare earth elements are basically thought of as a vitamin for materials development,” Benson said. “They’re used in multiple applications that are essential to our everyday life and there are challenges associated with the resources that are available.”

Benson said the United States imports 100 percent of the rare earth elements it needs. China controls 85 percent of the world’s mining, as well as the entire value chain to refine and process the elements. Benson said North Dakota lignite has an opportunity to reduce the country’s dependence on importing the elements, which have become vital in many military applications.

“This is really an issue of national security,” Benson said.

Lignite coal can produce all 16 rare earth

elements, including europium, dysprosium, erbium, terbium, neodymium, holmium, scandium, lutetium and yttrium, among others. Research has shown that most of the elements accumulate in top and bottom of the coal seam.

“Certain parts of the lignite coal have some of the highest levels of rare earth elements we’ve seen in the United States,” Benson said.

Energy experts

UND’s Institute for Energy Studies is leading the project in collaboration with MTI, Barr Engineering, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and MLJ Consulting. Industry partners, including Minnkota Power Cooperative, have also stepped up to sponsor the research.

Benson and Laudal bring a tremendous amount of knowledge specific to the project. Benson has 40 years of energy research experience, including (5733002.03 James & Chassidy Gilbertson) projects in the 1980s identifying rare earth elements in lignite. Laudal has been completing energy research for the last decade, and recently earned his Ph.D. focusing on rare earth elements.

Through Phase 1 of the project, high percentages of the elements were demonstrated in lignite and extracted in a usable form using laboratory beakers. In August, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) provided \$2.75 million to UND for the second phase, which will scale up extraction to 55-gallon drum tanks. It is one of four projects in the nation to receive federal funding for rare earth element recovery from coal and coal-related byproducts.

The research process includes continuously applying a solvent to extract and concentrate the rare earth elements. A detailed economic analysis is also a significant focus. If successful, Benson and Laudal believe the next step is a pilot project, potentially at Valley City State University’s new steam plant.

While there are still several steps before large-scale commercial application, Laudal believes there is great potential in North Dakota.

“Our resource assessments, based on the concentrations that we’ve found in certain



Research has shown that the rare earth elements are concentrated at the top and bottom of the coal seam.

seams and how much lignite coal we have here in North Dakota, show that we can make a significant dent if not completely offset all foreign imports,” Laudal said.

Analyzing coal

The Minnkota-operated Milton R. Young Station may prove to be a valuable resource because both generating units are equipped with full-stream elemental coal analyzers, which provide real-time ash composition, moisture and ash content for all coal delivered into the plant.

The long-term vision would be to use the analyzers to separate the coal with high rare earth element content and divert it to a processing unit for extraction. Following the process, the coal could then be delivered back into the plant and used for electricity generation.

“It would actually result in a better quality coal than what you started with,” Laudal explained. “It’s going to have lower ash content and remove a lot of the inorganic content that can cause problems in the boiler.”

The combination of rare earth element scarcity and growing demand for products like wind turbines and electric vehicles could turn lignite into an even more precious resource. Laudal said it’s a matter of optimizing the chemistry and gaining a better understanding of the economics.

“From a process standpoint, this is brand new research,” Laudal said. “Nobody has done this before.”

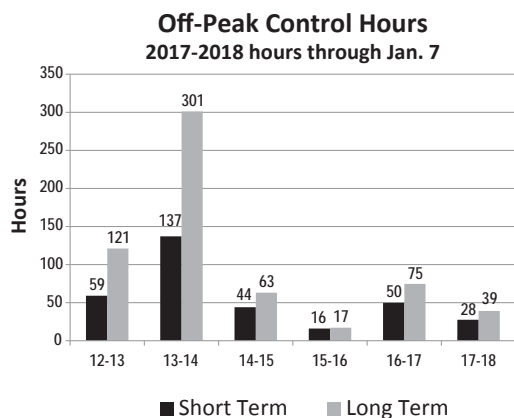
“Our resource assessments, based on the concentrations that we’ve found in certain seams and how much lignite coal we have here in North Dakota, show that we can make a significant dent if not completely offset all foreign imports.”

— DAN LAUDAL, major projects manager
Institute for Energy Studies at the University of North Dakota

QUICK TAKES

A look at some statistics from your
Red Lake Electric Cooperative

The chart below shows the amount of control time for Red Lake Electric Cooperative's Off-Peak customers this heating season compared to the complete season over the past five years. Off-peak control hours are impacted in a number of ways including weather, variable energy output from Minnkota's Wind Energy resources and energy availability in the wholesale energy market.



STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

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

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

The Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc., of Red Lake Falls, as an operating electric utility in the state of Minnesota, is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from co-generators and small power producers.

The cooperative will provide information relating to the said interconnections to (3902005.03 Ernest O. Melvie Jr.) all interested member-consumers of the cooperative free of charge upon request.

Any disputes between the cooperative and its member-consumers over interconnection, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Red Lake Electric Board of Directors.

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

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 supplies more heat than any other source for the largest period of time during the heating season.

Date _____ Account Number _____

Social Security Number _____

Signature _____

Red Lake Electric Cooperative Director qualification requirements

No member shall be eligible to become or remain a director who:

- Is not a member of the Cooperative, receiving electric service at the member's primary residence in the district from which the director is elected.
- Within three years preceding a director candidate's nomination was an employee of the Cooperative.
- Is or becomes, or at any time during the three (3) years preceding a director candidate's nomination shall have been employed by a labor union, which represents or has represented, or has endeavored to represent any employees of the Cooperative.
- Is a parent, spouse or cohabitant of any employee of the Cooperative.
- Is a person who is a parent, spouse or cohabitant of an incumbent director who is not up for re-election at that time.
- Is in any way employed by or substantially financially interested in an enterprise competing with the Cooperative or any Cooperative-affiliated business.
- Is or becomes the full-time employee or agent of, or who is or becomes the full-time employer or principal of, another director.

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.

For Sale

1999 7'x14' double axle cargo trailer with double rear doors and one single side door. \$2,800. Call or text 218-689-7797.

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 and click on the Bill4U icon. There is now an app for your smartphone. Just go to your app store and download the free app. If you have any questions or need more information, visit our website or call Red Lake Electric 800-245-6068.



Director nomination and election procedure

The procedure for which directors can be nominated and elected for Red Lake Electric Cooperative is outlined in Article II, Section 10, of the Cooperative's Bylaws. That section reads as follows:

SECTION 10. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF DIRECTORS. (a) Nomination at District Meetings. Not less than forty days nor more than sixty days before any meeting at which directors are to be elected, the board of directors shall call a separate meeting of the members of each district from which directors are to be elected, at a suitable place in such district for the purpose of selecting a candidate for director to represent the members located within such district. The notice of such meeting shall be delivered to each member located in such district as provided in Section 2 of this Article and shall indicate the district to which such member belongs. The notice shall state that nominations for a director are to be made at the meeting. The district meeting shall be called to order by the director representing the district or by another designated representative of the board of directors, or in his absence, by any members residing in the district. The members shall then proceed to elect a chairman, who shall be someone other than a director, and who shall appoint a secretary to act for the duration of the meeting. Members of other districts present at the meeting may be heard, but shall have no vote. Nominations for candidates for director shall be made from the floor at the meeting, and any member residing in the district shall have the right to nominate one candidate. The meeting shall remain open for nominations until no further nominations are forthcoming.

Candidates must be members residing in the district and must possess the qualifications for director specified in Section 2 of Article III of these bylaws. Voting shall be by ballot and proxy voting shall not be permitted at any district meeting. Each member may vote for one candidate. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared the official candidate of the district. In case of a tie, the winner shall be determined by the flip of a coin. The minutes of the district meeting shall set forth, among other matter, the name of each person nominated at the meeting and the number of votes received by each and shall specify the official candidate of the district. A certified copy of the minutes signed by the Secretary and the Chairman of the district meeting shall be delivered to the secretary of the Cooperative at the following meeting of the board.

(b) Nomination of Directors by Petition. Nomination for director can also be made by petition. Fifteen (15) or more members may make a nomination in writing to the Secretary over their signatures not less than thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting. This petition nomination must be in the format prescribed by the Secretary. Blank nomination petitions shall be available to all members at the Cooperative office. All petition nominees shall be listed in the notice of annual meeting and their names shall be printed on the election ballot.

(c) Election of Directors. At the annual meeting, the Secretary of the Cooperative shall place in nomination the names of the official candidates of each district. Election of directors shall be by printed ballot, separate ballots to be provided for each district, listing the candidates in alphabetical order. Only members of a district shall be entitled to vote for director to be elected from that district, and each member or member's spouse shall be entitled to vote for one candidate from the district in which he is a member. The candidate from each district receiving the highest number of votes at this meeting shall be declared elected as director. In the case of a tie vote, the winner shall be determined by the flip of a coin. Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall not affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any election of directors.

(d) Voting by Mail for Directors. The members shall be entitled to vote by mail for directors at annual and special meetings as provided in this section. Each member shall be mailed a director election ballot in the form prescribed by the Board of Directors with the notice of the annual or special meeting. A member who will be absent from the meeting may vote by mail for directors by marking the ballot for the candidate of the member's choice. The member shall return the ballot personally or by mail to the Cooperative in a sealed plain envelope inside another envelope bearing the member's name. If the ballot of the member is received by the Cooperative on or before the date of the annual or special meeting, the ballot shall be accepted and counted as the vote of the absent member.



**Red Lake Electric
Cooperative Inc.**

Let's keep a good thing going

Red Lake Electric urges members not to plug in electric space heaters during load control times

As members of Red Lake Electric Cooperative know, the demand response program is a good thing to have around. The program helps keep electric rates among the lowest in the country.

The program could lose much of its value, however, if electric space heaters – including those being advertised regionally – were to be substituted on a large-scale basis for the backup heating systems that are used during high demand times.

Based on honor system

In the demand response program, Red Lake Electric members maintain adequate and reliable dual heating systems. This, in turn, qualifies them for off-peak rates that are nearly 50 percent less than regular retail rates. These systems include electric floor heat, electric furnaces and other loads that can be interrupted during peak-use times.

When the backup systems are in operation, electric load on the regional power system is reduced. This, in turn, allows our power supplier, Minnkota Power Cooperative, to avoid buying (5032001.03 Elaine F. Green) higher cost supplemental power from the wholesale market.

While there are requirements that have to be met to qualify for participation in

the off-peak program, there is a certain amount of honor involved, too. Members need to allow their backup systems to take over, rather than plugging in one or more electric space heaters.

“If members of the associated distribution system violate the spirit of the program, there will be consequences,” explains Todd Sailer, Minnkota senior manager for energy supply. “Those consequences would include higher rates for all members and extended control times for those members who are playing by the rules of the demand response program.”

Major concerns

Recently, ads have been appearing in regional newspapers and on the radio, promoting certain types of electric space heaters. Red Lake Electric Cooperative is concerned that members might be paying more money for products that aren't going to result in the savings they anticipated.

“No matter how they promote it, a 1,500-watt heater is a 1,500-watt heater,” explained Kelli Brateng, member services manager at Red Lake Electric Cooperative. “You can get a space heater at the local hardware store for less than \$50. If someone is buying one of these because of advertisements, they could be spending a lot more money – up to \$400 –

for something that might have a fancy cover on it, but in the end, all they are really getting is a 1,500-watt heater.”

Members who plug in space heaters during periods of load control create another concern. The benefits of the demand response program are greatly diminished when this occurs.

“Electric space heaters create additional demand during times when Red Lake Electric is trying to demonstrate our ability to control heating loads, which reduces our wholesale power costs from Minnkota,” said Brateng.

Safety is also a huge concern with portable space heaters. Using a number of these heaters inside a home can overload circuits that were not wired for that kind of load. The consumer Products Safety Commission reports that each year about 28,000 house fires are attributed to space heaters, resulting in 300 related deaths. Space heaters are not inherently dangerous, but they need to be used wisely.

Dual heating systems – a better solution

“It's not hard to understand why someone would think it's a great option to plug in a heater,” said Brateng. “But what they may not understand is that over time it will increase their overall costs.”

If a number of off-peak members began using one, two or even three space heaters, this would directly affect their cooperative. This could result in a rate increase for all members, or even worse – the program could be eliminated altogether.

“Instead of the possibility of paying the full rate for electricity for space heaters, members should consider adding to their off-peak systems,” Brateng said. “These systems allow Red Lake Electric Cooperative to control heating loads during times when supplemental power from the open market is most expensive.”

By either expanding a dual heating system or developing a new one, members will receive the most economical rate available for their electricity, and the integrity of the demand response system will be maintained long into the future.

Going with an electric modulating plenum heater, along with an air-source heat pump (ASHP), has been an economical and popular heating system for those in Red Lake Electric's service territory.

Information about developing a dual heating system is available by contacting the member service department at Red Lake Electric Cooperative. Call 1-800-245-6068 or 253-2168 for more details.