



THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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SLAM THE SCAM!

Unfortunately, in today's world, scams are inevitable. Scammers can threaten you with everything from legal action involving the IRS to turning off power to your home.

Utility scams often involve an individual or group posing as an employee of your electric cooperative. The scammer may use threatening language in order to frighten you into offering your credit card or bank account information. Don't fall victim to these types of scams. Understand the threats posed and your best course of action:

- If someone calls your home or cell phone demanding you pay your electric bill immediately, hang up the phone. Scammers often use threats and urgency to pressure you into giving them your bank account number or loading a pre-paid credit or debit card. MLEC will never ask you to offer up personal finance information over the phone. If you have any doubts about your utility bill, contact MLEC either in person, or over the phone at 218-927-2191 or 800-450-2191.
- If someone comes to your home claiming to be an employee of MLEC that needs to collect money or inspect parts of your property, call us to verify they are, in fact, an employee. If they are not, call local authorities for assistance and do not let the individual into your home.



Other types of scams consumers should watch out for:

- Government agencies like the IRS will never call to inform you that you have unpaid taxes or other liens against you. You will always receive this type of information in the mail. If someone calls claiming to be the IRS, hang up immediately.
- If you receive an email from an unknown sender; an email riddled with spelling errors and typos; or an email threatening action unless a sum of money is paid, do not click any links provided within the email, and do not respond to the email. Simply delete the email, or send it to your spam folder.
- If someone calls your home claiming to have discovered a virus on your computer, hang up. This caller's intent is to access personal information you may be keeping on your computer.

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative wants to make sure you avoid any and all types of scams that could put you or your financial information in jeopardy.

SAVE THE DATE!

All MLEC members are invited to the 2023 Annual Meeting



WHEN: Thursday, May 18th

WHERE: Minnesota National Golf Course McGregor, MN

SCHEDULE:

Registration & Meal Served - 4:00 p.m.

Business Meeting - 5:45 p.m.

GENERATOR SAFETY

Stay safe when using portable generators during power outages.

With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous. In a 2022 report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated 85 U.S. consumers die every year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators.

Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

1. DO: Install backup CO alarms.
2. DO: Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.
3. DO: Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.
4. DO: Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to prevent electric shock injuries.
5. DO: Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays or other damage before use.
6. DON'T: Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially-enclosed) space. Generators produce high levels of CO, which can be deadly.
7. DON'T: Open windows or doors while the generator is running.
8. DON'T: Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential equipment or appliances.
9. DON'T: Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.
10. DON'T: Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute utility lineworkers making repairs.



While generators provide convenience during power outages, they can quickly become hazardous—even deadly—if improperly operated. Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips.

If you have questions about proper use of portable generators, we're here to help. Call MLEC at 218-927-2191.

Questions or concerns?
MLEC's Board of Directors represent you!

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Find minutes from
MLEC Board meetings at:
<http://www.mlcmmn.net>
under **My Co-op**

*This newsletter is the voice of
your tax and interest paying
RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE,
an organization which was
formed to supply you with
low-cost, dependable
electricity when other sources
failed to do so.*

Managing Editor: Kassie Peterson,
Communications Specialist

CARBON-FREE LEGISLATION

Dear Member:

In February, Minnesota joined 23 other carbon-free/neutral states as Governor Tim Walz signed a bill into law requiring electric utilities across Minnesota to offer customers 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2040.

The bill was a top priority for Minnesota Democrats who currently control both the Minnesota House and the Senate. The Governor promised a signature of the bill, posting on Twitter, "I ran for Governor with a promise to take bold, decisive action to combat climate change. Today, I delivered on that promise by signing a bill into law to lead Minnesota to 100% clean, carbon-free electricity by 2040."

On the other side of the aisle, Republican critics in Minnesota call the carbon-free plan a "blackout bill," indicating the bill will undermine the reliability of the state's power grid, especially on the coldest winter nights and hottest summer days. They also believe that the bill will force end consumers to pay higher energy costs.

Meanwhile, North Dakota's Governor, Doug Burgum, and other top officials in his state threatened last month to sue Minnesota if the bill is enacted, saying it would prevent North Dakota utilities from continuing to export power generated from coal and gas to Minnesota. Currently, MLEC's wholesale power provider, Great River Energy (GRE) continues to buy electricity from a coal-fueled power plant in North Dakota.

So, what does this mean for MLEC? In the short term, not much. By reducing coal-based energy and more than doubling renewable energy, Great River Energy expects to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by more than 80% below 2005 levels by 2032, while retaining a reliable and competitive power supply. For decades, they have been improving technologies to run cleaner power plants, and subsequently, close inefficient power plants. However, getting to 100% carbon-free is going to be a little more of a challenge.

When opponents of the bill call it a "blackout" bill, they are likely referencing the fact that the sun isn't always shining and the wind isn't always blowing. Regardless, electric providers, like MLEC, must stand ready to provide the maximum capacity required (total member need) when the member flips the switch. In addition, our nation's electric grid is not robust enough to handle this changing need. Think of a two-lane highway you knew 50 years ago with a city growing up around it – that highway is now 4 to 6 lanes. Unlike our roads and highways, our electric grid has not kept up with the growth or

change necessary to effectively and efficiently run a modern electric grid. We need to fix that.

While these are actual concerns, remember that I said we join 23 other states with carbon-free or neutral mandates? We are not alone. There are a lot of engineers, scientists, and industry professionals working on solutions to these concerns. As a nation, we absolutely must determine what the baseload power is going to be (what is the backup when the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing), and how are we going to get the power where it needs to be (updating the grid). Perhaps in 2040, we can look back and be proud of our nation's leadership and ingenuity versus lamenting the foresight of our nation's leaders.

As always, please continue to watch this space for updates on this, and other important MLEC news.



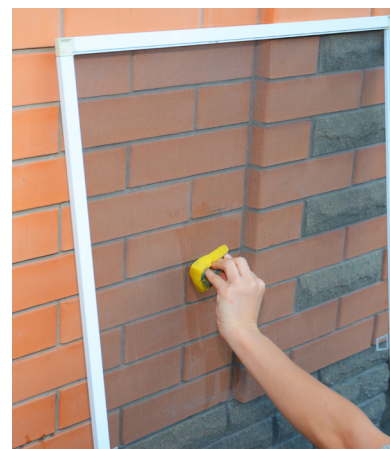
Sarah Cron, CEO

A stylized handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Sm'.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity.

Source: energy.gov



LET'S DISH

SEND US YOUR RECIPES!

We'll credit your account **\$10.00** if it's printed in THE OUTLET

MAIL TO:

Kassie Peterson
Mille Lacs Energy
P.O. Box 230
Aitkin, MN 56431

OR E-MAIL:

kpeterson@mlecmn.com



PUDDING CHEESECAKE

Crust

2 2/3 cups graham cracker crumbs
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup & 2 Tbsp butter (melted)

Filling

3 (8 oz.) blocks cream cheese
1 cup sour cream
3 pkgs vanilla instant pudding
3 cups milk
1 tsp lemon extract

Mix crust ingredients and press into bottom/sides of 9x13 in. pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. Set aside to cool. Beat cream cheese until smooth. Add sour cream and mix until blended. Gradually add milk and lemon extract until blended. Mix in vanilla pudding mix. Pour into cooled crust. Top with pie filling if you choose. Chill in the refrigerator, then serve with whipped topping. Enjoy!

Thank you to Cecilia Anderlie of Onamia for sharing this month's recipe.

KEEP UTILITY POLES CLEAR

We need your help to keep our lineworkers safe!

Keeping utility poles and electrical equipment free of signs, flags, and other foreign objects helps keep the community powered and our line crews safe.

It may seem harmless, but nails, staples, or other fasteners in utility poles present safety hazards to workers who have to climb the poles to repair or maintain the equipment. Sharp objects in the pole can lead to lineworkers snagging or piercing holes in their protective equipment, such as the rubber gloves that are meant to insulate workers from high voltage. Hanging things from utility poles also presents dangers to the community, putting individuals at risk of making accidental contact with energized power lines.

Safety is our number one priority. This is a reminder to do your part by keeping utility poles clear.



MLEC HOSTS OPEN HOUSE

Members gathered to learn more about standby generators and battery storage.

On Thursday, February 16th, MLEC hosted an open house welcoming members to learn more about our Briggs & Stratton standby generator program and upcoming battery storage technology. Our energy advisors along with experts from STAR Energy Services fielded questions from attendees. Thank you to all who attended!



OUTAGE?

Use SmartHub.

It's the most efficient way to report power outages. It's quick, easy, and goes straight into MLEC's dispatch center. No more searching for your account number and phone number to call in. Using the app, you can report an outage in a snap!

Visit www.mlecmn.net to sign up for SmartHub or download the app to your mobile device today!



Regular office hours are
Mon-Fri 8:00 to 4:30

927-2191 or
800-450-2191 (toll free)



48 hours before you dig
Dial 811 - Gopher State
One Call or log on to:
www.gopherstateonecall.org

Then contact a licensed electrician
to locate your secondary wires.

MN Electrical Inspectors

Aitkin County &
South East Crow Wing County
Jeff Larson 320-227-3009

Northern Crow Wing County
Nathan Readle 218-537-8419

Mille Lacs County
Benjamin Husom 320-277-6277

Off-peak and dual fuel system
consumers should call an
electrician or heating contractor for
service or repairs.

Find load control schedule at
www.mlecmn.net under Quick Links.



Visit our website -
www.mlecmn.net
E-mail us - mlec@mlecmn.net

WATER HEATER SAVINGS

One of the biggest energy users in your home is your water heater. There are ways we can help lower that usage, thereby lowering your overall energy bill. First, consider joining our off peak water heating program. Off peak water heating means you would have a separate meter and controls installed on your home for your water heater. This would allow the water heater to only draw electricity during times of low demand, such as overnight. A storage tank would then let you use the hot water all day. In turn you would get a lower kilowatthour rate of 5.35¢.

An added bonus is that right now there is a rebate of \$400 on a Marathon water heater, purchased from us, when you opt into the off peak water heating program. Marathon water heaters are already extremely efficient with 2.5 inches of Envirofoam® insulation in the tank, allowing only 5°F of heat loss in 24 hours. They are ultra-durable and backed by a lifetime warranty of no leaking, leaving you with fewer worries in the future.

**Contact your Energy Service Team today at
218-429-0432 or 1-888-433-4279 to discuss our off peak
water heating program & Marathon water heaters.**



**ENERGY
WISE MN**





2023 photo calendars now available at the MLEC office!

Photo calendars are free for all MLEC members. Stop by the MLEC office to get one while supplies last. Please only take one per membership. Thank you to all who submitted photos this year!

WE'RE LOCAL *just like you!*

Our team of employees are based here in Central Minnesota. We believe that customer service takes on a whole new meaning when you live and work with the people you serve!



ACCESS CHARGE INCREASE NOTICE

At the December board meeting, the MLEC board voted to increase the monthly access charge for all rate classes. The change has been spread equitably among rate classes to ensure that no one rate class is subsidizing another rate class. Beginning on your May billing, for April's usage, residential members will notice their access charge of \$49 per month.

An important note to consider regarding the access charge increase is that members will not feel the full impact of the increase. A full one-third of this charge you have already been paying for several years in the form of a power cost adjustment (PCA), we are just now formally rolling it into your rate.

Approximately one-third of the access charge increase is necessary to accommodate the rising cost of doing business. The cost of everything we purchase has gone up dramatically in the last 3 years, and we must recover those costs.

Lastly, one-third of the access charge increase is necessary to accommodate the cost to build a new facility. The access charge increase will be effective on your May bill. Rates and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are available on our website at www.mlecmn.net. We are here to help! Call MLEC at 218-927-2191 with any questions.

GIFT CARD TRIVIA!

Correctly answer the question below for your chance to win a gift card from a local business within our service area. The answer can be found within this issue of The Outlet. You must be an MLEC member to participate. Be sure to include your name and service address! Entries must be received by **March 31st**.

MAIL TO:

Kassie Peterson
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 230
Aitkin, MN 56431

OR E-MAIL:

kpeterson@mlcmmn.com

Fill in the blank

One of the biggest energy users in your home is your _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Congrats to David Anderson, the January gift card trivia winner!



MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE

36559 US Highway 169, Aitkin, MN 56431 • (218) 927-2191 / (800) 450-2191 • www.mlecmn.net

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.