



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 call us 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.

TRIMMING FOR RELIABILITY

Our Right-of-Way crew ensures service reliability while protecting MLEC employees and the public.

Trees are majestic, beautiful, and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. That's why MLEC strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

Reliability

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events, with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. This is why you sometimes see MLEC crews or contractors out in the community trimming trees near power lines. Our trimming crews have been trained and certified based on the latest industry standards.

In fact, all U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we can better prepare for severe weather events.

Safety

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety and that of our lineworkers. For example, trees touching power lines in our members' yards can pose a grave danger to families. If children can reach those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc or jump from a power line to a nearby conductor such as a tree.

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

Affordability

As a co-op, MLEC always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 ft. or smaller) should be planted at least 25 ft. from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 ft.) should be planted at least 50 ft. from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. from the transformer door and 4 ft. from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please let us know by contacting our office at (218) 927-2191.

We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.

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

Mark Anderson - District 1
320/469-0951
manderson@mlccmn.com

Derik Midthun - District 2
218/821-4349
dmidthun@mlccmn.com

Harold Harms - District 3
218/232-2935
hharms@mlccmn.com
President

Aileen DeMenge - District 4
218/768-4900
ademenge@mlccmn.com
Secretary/Treasurer

Don Appel - District 5
218/927-4134
dappel@mlccmn.com

Bruce Robinson - District 6
218/851-4760
brobinson@mlccmn.com
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

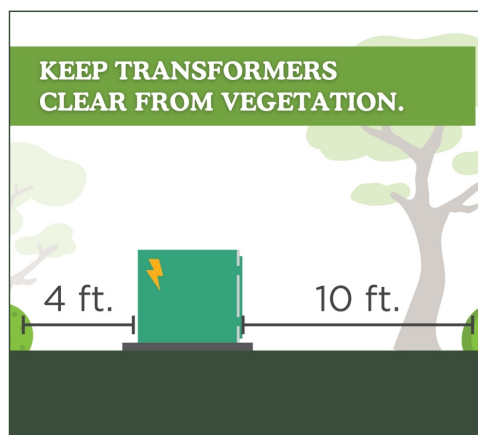
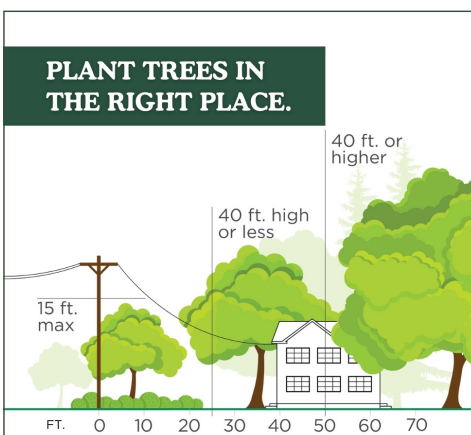
Michael Reem - District 7
218/839-5697
mreem@mlccmn.com
Vice President

Sarah Cron - CEO
218/927-8224
scron@mlccmn.com

Find minutes from
MLEC Board meetings at:
<http://www.mlccmn.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,
Marketing & Communications Administrator



SAFETY IS ALWAYS TOP OF MIND

Dear Member:

It's hard to believe it is already March. We have had an extraordinarily mild winter, and the construction of new services is already starting to come onto our system. Taking advantage of the weather, we are ramping up for our busiest time of year. It seems like a good time to pause and remember what a dangerous business we work in. According to the Occupational Safety Health Administration (OSHA), over 1,200 workplace fatalities involving electricity were reported between 2011 and 2021 – chief among them were electrical lineworkers.

MLEC has made the pledge of Zero Contacts to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). But despite all our efforts, we still see preventable injuries.

We want to show you, our member, that MLEC has stepped up our safety game. Our top priority is that our employees go home safely every night. The first line of defense is ensuring that our employees always wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE). Fire-rated (FR) clothing, leather gloves, rubber gloves and cover-up literally make the difference between life and death if there is an arc flash or an accidental electrical contact.

Outside crews perform routine inspections of their PPE, tools, equipment, and vehicles to ensure they are in proper condition for optimal performance. I have been known to nag some of our crews about the condition of their FR clothing – but I think they know it is because I genuinely care about their safety and well-being.

Our outside and inside staff go through rigorous training to help prepare us for critical scenarios that could turn dangerous

quickly. Outside staff receive monthly training on a variety of topics from both the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) and Deanna Soderberg of Power Line Safety. Inside staff receive annual training to ensure we are prepared should we have to take a MAYDAY call from the field. Soderberg also makes annual training engaging and memorable for inside staff with a Jeopardy-style approach. I mean, who wouldn't remember Blood Borne Pathogens for \$500?

New this month, MLEC is having all outside staff participate in situational awareness training. Instructors will spend two days auditing staff in the field. They will prepare a specific training session designed to help MLEC outside staff work with mindfulness and safety.

At MLEC, our staff is our jewel. My goal is to make sure we take care of them so they are safe and healthy to be here to serve your needs today and in the years to come.



Sarah Cron, CEO

THANK A LINEWORKER

You've likely noticed MLEC's crews out and about in our community. It's no secret that a lineworker's job is tough—but it's a job that's essential and must be done, often in challenging conditions. April 8th is Lineworker Appreciation Day! In honor of our line crews, here are some interesting facts about electric lineworkers.

Lineworkers must be committed to their career—because it's not just a job, it's a lifestyle. The long hours and ever-present danger can truly take a toll.

Lineworkers often work non-traditional hours outdoors under challenging conditions. While the job does not require a college degree, it does require technical skills, years of training, and hands-on learning. Did you know that becoming a journeyman lineworker can take more than 7,000 hours of training (approx. four years)? That's because working with high-voltage equipment requires specialized skills, experience, and ongoing mental toughness. Shortcuts are not an option, and there is no room for error in this line of work.

MLEC's lineworkers are committed to powering our local community despite the many challenges. During severe weather events that bring major power outages, lineworkers are among the first ones called. They must be ready to leave the comfort of their homes and families unexpectedly, and they don't return until the job is done. Without the exceptional dedication and commitment of these hardworking men and women, we simply would not have the reliable electricity that we need for everyday life.

So, the next time you see a lineworker, please thank them for the work they do to keep power flowing. After all, lineworkers are the power behind your power.



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



ASIAN RAMEN NOODLE SALAD

Salad Ingredients:

2 bags of broccoli slaw
1 bag sliced almonds (approx. 5-6 oz.)
2 bags of ramen noodles (flavor does not matter, seasoning packets are not used)

Dressing Ingredients:

1 cup canola oil
1/3 cup unseasoned rice vinegar
1/2 cup sugar
2 Tbsp soy sauce
1 Tbsp sesame oil
1 Tbsp finely chopped red onion

Combine all dressing ingredients in a small bowl. Open the ramen noodles and discard the seasoning packets. Break the noodles into small pieces. You can do this by hand or by placing noodles in a bag and rolling with a rolling pin. Next, place broccoli slaw, ramen noodles, and almonds into a bowl. Pour dressing over the top and stir until combined. Let rest for 5 minutes before serving. Enjoy!

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.



Save 25% on Niagara Conservation water-saving products!

February 1 through March 31

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.**



PAY BY PHONE

Mille Lacs Energy's pay by phone number has changed. Please call (855) 938-3586 to make payments or visit us online at www.mlecmn.net to view our other payment options.



2024 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.

Internet that keeps our communities clean

Our employees volunteer to keep our roadways clean and leave places better than we find them. Get fast and reliable Internet service that gives back!



MLEC fiber
Powered by Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

(218) 429-0433 • www.mlecmn.net/fiber

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Lengthen the life of your clothes dryer with regular cleaning. Clean the lint filter after every load, which improves air circulation and safety. Check the lint trap opening to ensure it's clean. Use a vacuum to remove any lint that's fallen inside the opening.

If you use dryer sheets, check the lint filter for residue buildup. Remove any residue with hot water and a nylon brush or toothbrush. Over time, dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, which can affect the performance of the motor.



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@mlecmn.com

Fill in the blank.

It may seem harmless, but nails, staples, or other fasteners in utility poles present _____ to workers who have to climb the poles to repair or maintain the equipment.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Congrats to Lisa Cox, 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.