



THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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BILLING MADE EASY

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative understands how busy life can get. Whether working, getting kids to activities, spending time with family, or running errands, it can be easy to forget to make a payment. Luckily, MLEC offers many ways to pay your bill, so you can use what is the most convenient and works the best for your lifestyle!

BILL PAYMENT OPTIONS:

Pay Online - Log in to view your bill electronically through the SmartHub site or the mobile app. You may authorize payment from your checking account or Visa/Mastercard.

Quick Pay - Do you want to make a quick, one-time online payment without logging into your SmartHub account? All you need is the account number and the first five letters of the primary member's last name. If you choose to allow another person to make a payment on your account by this method, please be advised they will be able to see your current balance or past due balance, but no other account information.

Auto Pay Program - Sign up for recurring payments through SmartHub using your bank account or a Visa/Mastercard. Simply sign-in or register for SmartHub to get started. Once you log in to SmartHub, choose Auto Pay Program under the Billing & Payments tab. After adding an account, the total bill amount will be withdrawn from your payment method on the due date each month. The program is ideal for travelers and snowbirds and assures your good credit rating with MLEC.



Pay by Phone - Make payments by phone with your credit/debit card or checking account using our automated phone system. This service is available 24/7. Just call 855-385-9813 and follow the step-by-step instructions.

Pay by Mail - Please allow mail time for payment to be received before the due date. Please call the billing team if additional time is needed. Mail billing remittance to:

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 811
Albert Lea, MN 56007-0811

Pay in Person - Drop off your payment at our office located at 36559 US Highway 169, Aitkin, MN, 56431.

**Questions? Call MLEC at 218-429-0430 or
877-634-4314 or visit www.mlecmn.net**



THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Air source heat pumps are a safe and efficient home solution!

A smarter solution is available for members seeking to more efficiently heat and cool their home year-round: air source heat pumps (ASHPs).

ASHPs provide a safe, environmentally-friendly solution for home comfort conditioning as well. They don't use an open flame or create products of combustion – such as carbon monoxide and other emissions – so there is no need for venting, and their extended equipment life means less pollution associated with discarding old units or parts and manufacturing their replacements.

Able to deliver hyper-efficient home heating and air conditioning, ASHPs help members realize savings in energy consumption as well as cost. You can save up to 30% on your home cooling expenses by using an Air-Source Heat Pump instead of other conventional air conditioning units. They are also 200-400% more efficient when it comes to home heating. This is possible because it uses advanced technology to transfer more energy than it consumes.

The warmth provided by ASHP technology is superior in quality compared to conventional furnaces. The heat distributed by an ASHP is distributed more evenly and holds its moisture better, resulting in more natural, comfortable warmth.

For a limited time, if installed in June, July or August, you can double your rebates on ducted air source heat pumps when installed by a qualified contractor and put on our dual fuel program.

Air Source Heat Pump	Regular Rebate	Promo Rebate
SEER 14.5	\$480	\$960
SEER 15	\$580	\$1,160
SEER 16+	\$630	\$1,260

* Ductless ASHP rebates are \$750

**Questions? Contact our Energy Services Team
at 218-429-0432 or 888-433-4279.**

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

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Find minutes from
MLEC Board meetings at:
<http://www.mlecmn.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

*Limited funds are available and awarded on a first-come, first-service basis. Rebate amount and programs are subject to change without notice. Low interest financing is available for qualified members. Mini-split ductless air source heat pumps do not qualify for the double rebate.



GOING FROM GOOD TO GREAT

Dear Member:

Our slogan for this year's Annual Meeting was "Going from Good to Great." As I look back on 2021 and all the obstacles we have overcome, I can't help but be proud of the team I work with and the members I work for. It truly was a great year.

I think it is great that we have held electric rates stable for the last three years in a row. Sixty cents of every dollar we take in goes directly to Great River Energy (GRE) to pay for the cost of purchased power. Twenty cents of every dollar is used for compensation and workforce expenses. These numbers are not unique to MLEC; in fact, many electric cooperatives have costs even higher in these two categories alone. Even with razor-thin margins, we were able to hold your electric rates stable for a third consecutive year and return a record amount of patronage back to you – our members – of nearly \$1 million! We were able to accomplish this in part to our stable rates from GRE and the sound fiscal practices of your MLEC Management Team.

"As I look back on 2021 and all the obstacles we have overcome, I can't help but be proud of the team I work with and the members I work for. It truly was a great year."

I think it is great that your Board of Directors supports the value of a properly maintained Right-of-Way (ROW). In 2021, we completed our first five-year cycle of our comprehensive ROW reclamation process. This means that we were able to clear under the power lines on our entire system in just five years. This is important because our ROW maintenance budget had been getting cut for years, allowing trees and brush to overtake our legal powerline ROW. The result was an unstable network of over 1,100 miles of powerline that came down every time we had high winds or storms. After five years, we are seeing the fruits of our labor. We have seen a significant reduction in the number of tree-related outages, costs, and outage restoration time. This is a clear win for our members' comfort and pocketbook.

I think it is great that we are finding ways to save money with your plant investments. Another major investment, and multi-year project, was completed in 2021 – the installation of our Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system. Much like our ROW investment, we are also beginning to see the benefits of this major project. This new technology, and companion software, helps our staff to identify system problems before members report them, isolates outage locations reducing member outage time, and allows crews some remote work functionality eliminating some truck rolls. All these things have added up to documentable savings of over \$183,000 in 2021; and, we have just scratched the surface when it comes to learning about its capabilities.

I think it is great that we may be able to offer our employees a healthy, efficient, and modern environment to come to work in every day. We made significant progress on our potential building project in 2021. We sold the house and seven acres from the original property we purchased in 2020, leaving us with over 30 acres of buildable land. We received permission from MNDOT to construct a driveway off Highway 169 into the property and have completed that process. We hired the



Sarah Cron
CEO

architectural firm ARI and have rough drawings ready for the bid stage. All these things have put MLEC in a favorable position if we move forward with the project now or sometime in the future.

I think it is great that we are, once again, bringing critical infrastructure to the ignored parts of rural Minnesota. We closed 2021 just shy of 1,000 MLEC Fiber customers. This is true, high-speed, fiber-to-the-home, serving parts of our service territory that are currently considered un-served or under-served. We have received over \$10 million in grant funding for this project and will continue our mission to provide our members with the same essential services that you have access to in urban areas – just like we did when we brought electricity to these same rural areas in the 1930s.

MLEC has had a solid history of good leaders that have led us through over 80 years of positive achievements. I am so proud to work with a dedicated management team and staff that are committed to shaping MLEC through the necessary changes required of a modern electric cooperative to bring us from a good cooperative to a great cooperative.

Thank you for a great year, and thank you for being a great member.

Sarah Cron

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



PASTA VEGGIE SALAD

16 oz. box large ring macaroni, cooked and cooled
2 cups packed shredded cabbage
1/2 cup green pepper, chopped
1/4 cup onion, chopped
1 small jar pimento, drained and diced
1 small can sliced water chestnuts
1/2 cup sliced almonds
1 cup cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped

Thank you to Rita Glazebrook of Isle
for sharing this month's recipe.

Dressing:
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup white vinegar
1 1/2 cups mayonnaise

Combine pasta and vegetables then pour dressing over top. Mix gently. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Let stand for one hour. Stir before serving. Enjoy!

STANDBY GENERATORS

Reliability is of utmost importance at MLEC. However, we sometimes experience outages due to a variety of causes, such as weather, animals, or damaged power lines from digging or car crashes. For most members, being without power is merely an inconvenience, but for others, continuity of service is very important. For this reason, we offer a standby generator program that is ideal for members with a home business, sump pump, medical needs, or simply desire to always have the comfort and conveniences that electricity provides.

MLEC is now offering Briggs and Stratton standby generators. When the power goes out, the generator automatically takes over. All generators are professionally installed and serviced by MLEC and come with a 10-year parts and labor warranty.



**Call Mille Lacs Energy for more information
or a price quote at 218-429-0432.**

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

The ACP Benefit is an FCC program that helps connect families and households struggling to afford Internet service.

You may qualify for a discount:

Up to \$30/month for Internet service
Up to \$75/month for households on qualifying tribal lands.

Who is eligible?

- Has an income that is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Participates in certain assistance programs, such as SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, SSI, WIC, or Lifeline
- Participates in Tribal specific programs, such as Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

- Is approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating broadband provider's existing low-income program



Powered by Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Learn more and see if you qualify at ACPBenefit.org

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Unclaimed Capital Credits Checks

Capital credits, patronage dividends, patronage refunds—these are all familiar terms with similar meanings: the allocation of operating margins as equity and, when appropriate, retiring them to the members of the co-op in the form of money or credit on the bill. The retirement of capital credits is one of the most important things we do as co-ops. It's unique to the cooperative business model.

Even if you move and are no longer a member of the cooperative, the capital credits remain in your account. Be sure to update your mailing address with MLEC if you move so we can send future capital credit checks to the correct address. If you are an heir to an estate, please contact MLEC if you think capital credits remain in the estate's account.

A list of unclaimed capital credits can be found on our website at www.mlecmn.net/capital-credits. Maybe a check is waiting for you! If you know someone and how to contact them, please call our capital credits team at 218-429-0431.



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 Readel 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

MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

At MLEC, we recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year-round. From our co-op crews to you, the consumer-members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity, and it powers our daily lives. But we know first-hand how dangerous electricity can be because we work with it 365 days a year.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the prevalence of electrical devices, tools and appliances, here are a few practical electrical safety tips.

Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard. Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use or excessive current flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them, as they could cause a shock when handled.

Avoid overloading circuits. Circuits can only cope with a limited amount of electricity. Overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit can safely handle--by having too many devices running on one circuit.

Label circuit breakers to understand the circuits in your home. Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old and you need to install multiple large appliances that consume large amounts of electricity.

Use extension cords properly. Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you "daisy chain" them together, it could lead to overheating, creating a potential fire hazard. Don't exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so also creates a risk of overloading the cord and creating a fire hazard. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need additional outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.

Talk with your kids about playing it safe and smart around electricity. Help them be aware of overhead power lines near where they play outdoors.

Our top priority is providing an uninterrupted energy supply 24/7, 365 days per year. But equally important is keeping our community safe around electricity.

PLUG INTO SAFETY





ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

Make electrical safety a priority this month, and every month.



**OUR OFFICE WILL
BE CLOSED
MONDAY, MAY 30TH
IN HONOR OF
MEMORIAL DAY**

*In memory of many,
in honor of all.
Thank You!*

"With MLEC Fiber, I am able to download assignments faster and watch lectures without any delays."

— Anna Carlson, AHS Senior, CLC Post Secondary Student

MLEC fiber
Powered by Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative



Helping students stay connected.

Learn more about MLEC Fiber and stay updated on expansion projects!

(218) 429-0433 • www.mlecmn.net/fiber

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Even in summer months, adding insulation to your attic can keep your home more comfortable and save energy used by your cooling system. If your attic insulation is level with or below your floor joists (meaning you can easily see your joists), you should add more. If you can't see any of the floor joists because the insulation is well above them, you likely have enough insulation.

Attic insulation should be evenly distributed with no low spots. Make sure the areas along the eaves are adequately covered.

Source: energystar.gov



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 **May 31st**.

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

OR E-MAIL:
kpetserson@mlecmn.com

During which months can you double your rebates on ducted air source heat pumps when installed by a qualified contractor and put on our dual fuel program?

Name:

Address:

Congrats to Joseph Rumpca of Maplewood, the March gift card trivia winner!



MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE

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