



THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

VOLUME 53
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SEPTEMBER 2022

2022 RIVERBOAT HERITAGE DAYS

On Saturday August 6th, Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative participated in the Riverboat Days Parade. Employees and their families led the parade along Minnesota Ave. It was an honor to partner with the Aitkin Chamber of Commerce to organize and execute this year's parade.

All cooperatives – not just electric cooperatives - operate according to the same set of 7 core principles. Principle #7 – Concern for Community – is one of the most well-known. It is also one of the most visible and meaningful to our members and our employees. MLEC is happy to be volunteering locally amongst our members. Thank you to employees, board members, and friends/family for supporting MLEC and our community!



3 FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT YOUR SUMMER BILL

Are you surprised by your summer electric bill? If your usage hasn't changed, it is understandable that a higher-than-normal bill might not seem to make sense. Here are a few possible reasons why.



Air Conditioning

It may seem obvious, but summer weather plays a big role in your electric bill. Air conditioning accounts for as much as 50 percent of the average household electric bill. Maintenance and smart use of your cooling system (such as keeping your drapes closed or planting trees for shade) will help keep your electric bill in check while at the same time, keeping your home at a comfortable temperature.

Dehumidifiers

Typical dehumidifiers cost about 6-10 cents each hour they're in use. Monthly costs of \$15-\$35 are common in summer, but can exceed \$50 per month if the dehumidifier runs a lot.

Device Charging

Look around your home at all the technology that uses chargers: cell phones, MP3 Players, iPads or tablets, electric razors, electric toothbrushes, laptops, portable game systems, and similar devices. The more gadget-oriented you are, the more likely you are to have these devices plugged in and sucking energy from your home. Unplug adapters and chargers from outlets when not actively charging a device, as they'll pull electricity simply from being plugged in.

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

NEW BILL DESIGN COMING SOON!

Beginning with our October 2022 billing, Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative will be using a new bill format. Over the past several months, our departments have been working to design these new bills to improve readability to help you better understand charges and energy use. Our ultimate desire is to provide our member-owners with necessary information, in the best format available. More information regarding the new bill will be included in the October Outlet.

Some of the changes you can expect to see:

- Updated look of bill
- Utilized better graphics to draw attention to important elements and messaging
- Usage bars with temperatures (high and low)
- Detailed billing charges
- Ways to Pay and Billing Programs
- Other important information and definitions

CHANGES IN OUTAGE DISPATCH

Dear Member,

Being your electric cooperative comes with a variety of important responsibilities. MLEC is a member and service-focused organization that is dedicated to providing and maintaining critical infrastructure to the most rural communities in our state. Your Board of Directors and Management Team have an obligation to run and maintain a solvent organization; effectively plan for the long-term future of our electrical system; manage revenues to keep rates stable while making necessary system and operational improvements; operate using a structure of democracy; and still return profits back to you, our member, in the form of capital credits.

Perhaps our most important responsibility is to keep the lights on all hours of the day and night, and when outages do occur, to get them repaired quickly and safely. A critical component to doing this is having a 24-hour per day service center to help our line crews answer and dispatch power outage calls.

For decades, MLEC has partnered with neighboring electric cooperative, East Central Energy (ECE), to provide this critical service. This has been a logical, efficient, and cost-effective solution because they have trained staff, they know our service territory, and their expertise has eliminated MLEC's need to hire dedicated staff for emergency purposes only. Unfortunately, we were recently notified that ECE is no longer going to provide this service to their cooperative partners. Given this announcement, your Board of Directors and Management Team sprang into action to find a solution. Our members deserve high-quality customer service, especially in outage situations, and we believe we have found a worthy replacement.

MLEC has chosen to partner with Cooperative Response Center, Inc. (CRC). Also a cooperative, CRC is a nationwide, 24/7 contact center headquartered in Austin, Minnesota. While they started out handling over-flow customer service calls in our region, their expertise grew into a nation-wide niche. CRC handles customer service, dispatch, monitoring, and a variety of automated services for electric cooperatives across the country with locations in Dunlap Tennessee, Abilene Texas, and Kirksville Missouri. They understand cooperatives, because they are a cooperative, and their goal is to provide service excellence by focusing on the human side of technology.

"Our members deserve high quality customer service, especially in outage situations, and we believe we have found a worthy replacement. MLEC has chosen to partner with Cooperative Response Center, Inc. (CRC)."

If you call to report an outage to MLEC and are greeted by a southern accent don't hang up! It may mean Minnesota is in a heavy storm situation, and you are in contact with one of their Tennessee, Texas, or Missouri locations. Your information will



Sarah Cron
CEO

still be entered into our outage system and our line crews will be dispatched to fix the problem – just like they were before.

When reporting outages, keeping your contact information updated is crucial. If you are calling from a phone number MLEC has on file, your call will automatically sync with your account information, considerably shortening the outage response time. To make sure we have your up-to-date information simply call our office. Our staff will be happy to assist you!

Other outage tools MLEC offers include the outage map located on our website. There, members can see the number of members without power and the location of those outages. It is often hard to predict how long it will take to restore power; however, the outage map shows our progress in real time. Another useful tool is the SmartHub App. MLEC members can simply sign up and use the app to report outages right from their mobile device.

Being an electric cooperative, power outages are a part of the job. It is our responsibility to plan for them, but also make sure they are as short and infrequent as possible. Having a high-quality communication team for our members is a necessity. We thank ECE and their team for their years of support and service. As we usher in our next era of partnership, we will do everything we can to ensure the transition to having CRC perform our outage dispatch goes smoothly. We feel fortunate to have CRC on our team and know that our members are in good hands when MLEC's crews go home to their families in the evening.

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



BISCUIT & GRAVY BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

1 Can Grands Biscuits (16.3oz)	1/2 cup milk
16 oz breakfast sausage	salt & pepper to taste
1 1/2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded	1 package peppered gravy mix (2.75 oz)
6 large eggs	

Preheat oven to 350. Spray 9x13 pan with non-stick spray. Cut biscuits into 1" pieces and line bottom of pan. Brown sausage, drain, and scatter over biscuits. Sprinkle with cheese. Whisk together eggs, milk and salt and pepper, pour over cheese. Make gravy per package directions and pour over top. Bake 30 minutes. Enjoy!

THE POWER OF PREPARATION

With severe weather events occurring more frequently, now more than ever, it makes sense to be prepared. During a prolonged power outage or other emergency, this means having enough food, water and supplies to last at least a few days.

In honor of National Preparedness Month in September, we want to remind members of our community about the power of preparation. While you don't have to achieve a "doomsday prepper" level of preparedness, there are several practical steps you can take to keep you and your family safe.

Even at a modest level, preparation can help reduce stress, anxiety and lessen the impact of an emergency event. We recommend starting with the basics.

Here are general guidelines recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency:

- Assemble a grab-and-go disaster kit. Include items like nonperishable food, water (one gallon per person, per day), diapers, batteries, flashlights, prescription medications, first-aid kit, battery-powered radio and phone chargers.
- Develop a plan for communicating with family and friends (i.e., via text, social media, third party, etc.).
- Have some extra cash available; during a power outage, electronic card readers and cash machines may not work.
- Store important documents (birth certificates, property deed, etc.) in safe place away from home (for example, a bank safe deposit box).
- Keep neighbors and coworkers apprised of your emergency plans.
- Fill your car with gas.
- Organize your supplies so they are together in an easily accessible location that family members know about.

Caring for vulnerable family members

If you have older family members or those with special needs, make sure they have enough medication and supplies for a few days. If they don't live with you, arrange for a neighbor to check in on them. If a severe weather event is expected, consider having your relative stay with you if feasible, otherwise call them daily. If you have an infant or young children, make certain that you have ample formula, diapers, medication and other supplies on hand to weather an outage lasting several days or more.

Keeping four-legged family members safe

For families with pets, having a plan in place in the event of a prolonged outage or an emergency will help reduce worry and stress especially if you need to make a decision during an emergency.

- Bring pets indoors at the first sign of a storm or other emergency. Pets can become disoriented and frightened during severe weather and may wander off during an emergency.
- Microchip your pet and ensure the contact information is up to date.
- Store pet medical records on a USB drive or in an easy-to-remember location.
- Create an emergency kit for pets (include shelf-safe food, bottled water, medications and other supplies).

At MLEC, we care about your safety. Planning for an emergency situation today can give you more confidence to deal with severe weather and potential outages in the future.



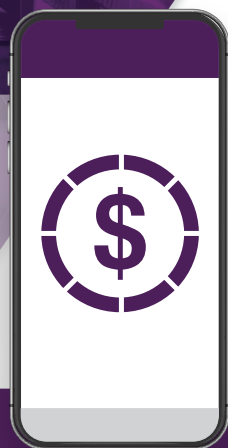
SMART PAYMENTS

Save time & eliminate late fees!

With SmartHub, you'll be notified when your bill is due and can pay securely online or in the app, anytime, anywhere.

Sign up for autopayments, set up your secure, preferred payment method and let account management go into autopilot.

All in the palm of your hand and online!



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.mlecmm.net under Quick Links.



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

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Water heating accounts for a large portion of home energy bills. To save energy (and money!) used for water heating, repair any leaky faucets, install low-flow fixtures and insulate accessible hot water lines. When it's time to purchase a new washing machine or dishwasher, look for models that are ENERGY STAR®-certified.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Second Quarter Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Comparative Operating Statement for the Quarter Ending June 30, 2021 & June 30, 2022

	2021	2022
OPERATING REVENUE	14,559,912.55	15,519,244.54
COST OF PURCHASED POWER	8,435,897.55	9,037,947.95
DISTRIBUTION EXPENSE-OPERATION	712,944.59	745,187.33
DISTRIBUTION EXPENSE-MAINTENANCE	1,259,648.00	1,059,735.51
CUSTOMER ACCOUNTS EXPENSE	414,496.64	383,515.10
CUSTOMER SERVICE / INFORMATIONAL EXPENSE	53,104.74	351,219.07
ADMINISTRATIVE / GENERAL EXPENSE	865,415.86	964,744.60
TOTAL OPERATING COSTS	3,305,609.83	3,504,401.83
TOTAL OPERATIONS EXPENSE	11,741,507.40	12,542,349.80
DEPRECIATION	1,017,911.80	1,079,027.67
TAX EXPENSE	-	1,360.00
INTEREST ON LONG TERM DEBT	695,970.62	639,126.25
INTEREST EXPENSE-OTHER	124.29	255.92
OTHER DEDUCTION	400.00	300.00
TOTAL COST OF ELECTRIC SERVICE	13,455,914.09	14,262,419.40
OPERATING MARGINS	1,103,998.46	1,256,825.14
NON OPERATING MARGINS-INTEREST	56,507.17	31,890.01
NON OPERATING MARGINS-OTHER	(150,961.15)	(76,275.07)
GENERATION & TRANSMISSION CAPITAL CREDITS	-	-
OTHER CAPITAL CREDITS	85,105.29	84,944.56
NET MARGINS	1,094,649.77	1,297,385.64



Unclaimed Capital Credits Checks

You can see the list on our website at www.mlecmn.net under My Co-op and choose Capital Credits on the drop menu.

A hard copy is available at MLEC's office. Maybe a check is waiting for you! If you know someone and how to contact them, please call MLEC at 218-429-0431.



Helping businesses stay connected.

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

(218) 429-0433 • www.mlecmn.net/fiber

PHOTO CALENDAR

See your photo in MLEC's 2023 Calendar! We're asking members to submit photos by October 28, 2022. Winning photos will receive a \$10 credit on their electric bill. Voting will take place after the deadline on the MLEC Facebook page. The 12 photos with the most likes will be featured in the calendar.

Photos must be emailed to:
photos@mlecmn.com
by 11:59 p.m. on October 28, 2022.

Winning photographers automatically give MLEC permission to use the photos in the calendar, in other publications, member presentations, or electronically online.



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 **September 30th**.

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.

Beginning with our _____ 2022 billing,
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative will be using a new bill format.

Name:

Address:

Congrats to Bonita Turner of Aitkin, the July 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.