

Newsline

September 2009



Investing in geothermal system reaps rewards for members and our planet

Many factors come into play when deciding on a heating and cooling system for a home. For Lake Ida residents Andy and Dian Lopez, reducing the impact on our planet was a priority when they installed a geothermal heat pump in 2008.

“We are very concerned with the environmental impact of burning fossil fuels,” said Andy Lopez. “I have an engineering degree and I know that the way we are living now is not a sustainable way of living. I did research on wind energy in the early 70's and it did not appear that it would be a reliable/consistent way to heat a home. It seems like solar energy is a bit marginal at our northern latitude. We concluded that a

ground source geothermal system would be the best way to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels. We also drive a Toyota Prius that gets 50+ mpg.”

Retired professors of Computer Science at the University of Minnesota – Morris, Andy and Dian researched a variety of heating and cooling systems. The Lopez's were very impressed with the quietness, even temperature and reduced pollution in homes that have geothermal systems.



Today's heat pumps are compact compared to earlier models. Dian and Andy Lopez's utility room holds their geothermal heatpumps, plus a Marathon water heater.

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Ground source heat pumps operate at approximately 350 percent efficiency. This comprehensive system heats and cools at a great price. The REA rate for heating and cooling with a ground source heat pump is 4.9¢ per kilowatt hour. REA provides rebates of \$400 per ton for qualifying residential geothermal heat pump systems. Tax credits may be available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the Stimulus Bill).

For more information, visit www.RunestoneElectric.com or call the REA office at (320) 762-1121 or (800) 473-1722.

Call before you dig!

If you're planning to dig a hole more than a foot deep, please read this notice!

It is YOUR responsibility to call Gopher State One Call (GSOC) at least 48 hours before you dig. GSOC will notify utilities in your area. Utilities will then locate their facilities.

REA will locate power lines up to your meter. If you will be digging between the main meter and your home or other buildings, you will need to hire a private locator. Most electricians will locate these private power lines, and GSOC also has a list of locators on their website:

www.gopherstateonecall.org

You can also request and view the status of your locate on-line. Call GSOC at 1-800-252-1166 or visit the website at least 48 hours before you dig. **It's the law!**

Plan ahead for increased power requirements

Will you be adding irrigators, grain bins or other equipment?

Please contact REA's Operations Department at (320) 762-1121 or (800) 473-1722 as soon as you identify your needs.

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Board Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Runestone Electric Association was held on Tuesday, July 28, 2009.

- Accepted the following members for the Member Advisory Council: Barry & Georgia Wahlberg (District 2), Steve & Joyce Carlson (District 5), Darl & Alice Cleland (District 7) and Dennis & Lonnie Danielson (District 7).
- Approved the Co-op Connections Discount Card Program to launch in March 2010.

In addition to the regular board meeting, a joint board meeting was held with the Stearns Electric Board of Directors. This meeting represents our continuing efforts to look for ways the two cooperatives can work together.

- Director O'Brien gave the Great River Energy Report (GRE).
- Guest speakers included Mark Glaess, general manager, Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA); Greg Ridderbusch, VP - Business Development & Strategy, Great River Energy (GRE) and Tom Butz, P.E. - Power Systems Engineering.

The regular September Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 29.

August Cooling Degree Days

2009	81 as of 8/24
2008	145
2007	122
2006	149

July 2009 Statistics

Kilowatt-hours Sold

2009	16,904,282
2008	18,011,493

Cost of Purchased Power

2009	\$ 982,687
2008	\$1,128,345

Cost per Kilowatt-hour Purchased

2009	\$.055
2008	\$.059

Number of Accounts

2009	13,493
2008	13,418

Make safety a priority this harvest season

by Rick Banke, CEO

Our 15th Annual Member Appreciation Pancake Feed was held on August 22. The beautiful day brought in over 2,600 members and their families to enjoy a great meal and a chance to visit with friends and neighbors. I always enjoy the opportunity to visit with so many of our members and to personally thank you for your support of the cooperative.

The Pancake Feed reminds me that summer is almost over and fall is just around the corner. The wheat harvest is in full swing and beans and corn will soon follow.

Long hours, powerful equipment and the rush to get the crop out of the field all add to the risk of an accident. Most accidents can be prevented with a few simple safety steps.

First, make sure that you, your family and your farm workers know the location of overhead power lines, and map out ways to avoid them when moving equipment. Make sure everyone understands that any contact with these lines creates a path to the ground for electricity and carries the potential for a serious, even fatal, accident.

Everyone should know the height of all your farm equipment and how high power lines are to prevent accidental contact. A good rule of thumb is to stay at least 10 feet away from power lines.

Be extra careful when moving grain augers. Many electrical accidents on farms occur when augers are accidentally raised into power lines. The combination can be deadly.

Avoid moving large equipment alone. Have someone watch out for you as you drive equipment to ensure that you stay clear of the power lines.

These rules also apply to guy wires, which support power line poles. Damaging guy wires can weaken the poles and even cause them to topple, bringing



Great River Energy's plug-in hybrid Prius was a hit at the Pancake Feed and Douglas County Fair.

live power lines down onto the ground and creating an extremely hazardous situation.

If your farm machinery or any other vehicle hits a power pole or comes in contact with electrical wires follow these rules to stay alive:

Do not get out of the vehicle unless it is on fire. The safest place is to stay in the vehicle and call for help or wave to someone passing by.

Always assume a power line is hot! Do not let others get close to the farm equipment or vehicle until electric company personnel have arrived and cleared the vehicle.

Do not attempt to move a downed line with anything.

If your vehicle is on fire, jump out and away from the vehicle so that no part of your body touches the vehicle and the ground at the same time. Continue jumping away from the vehicle for quite some distance. Be sure to visually check for any wires on the ground or in your path before jumping.

I hope you will share these safety rules with everyone in your family and those that work on your farm. Here's to a safe and profitable harvest.

Geothermal continued from page 1...

"In terms of dollars, it cost us about 60% less to heat our house with our closed loop ground source geothermal system during 2008-09 than it cost us to heat with propane during the same period in 2007-08," Andy said. "Our highest heating bill this past winter was \$112 and that included the water heater. Now the only propane we use is in our gas fireplace."

The initial cost of installing a geothermal system is typically higher than a traditional fossil fuel system. For the Lopez's, the complete installation ran just over \$21,000. But rebates from REA and the reduced energy rate of 4.9¢ per kilowatt hour (kWh) for heating and cooling make for an excellent payback on investments over the long run.

"Energy efficiency was a priority when we built our home ten years ago. We chose 12" wide concrete walls and high quality windows all the way around and we purchased the most reliable energy efficient appliances that we could afford. Over time we have replaced many of our light bulbs with compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs," Andy said.

In addition, the Lopez's have a Marathon® water heater which is on the off-peak power rate and their geothermal system is programmed to lower the temperature in the house to 65° F during the night and when they are away.

We thank Andy for his leadership as the 2009-2010 REA Member Advisory Council Chairman.

Braaten wins \$100 bill credit



Congratulations to Runestone Electric member Von Bratten from Villard. Von won a \$100 bill credit on his electric bill by entering the Home Energy Sweepstakes sponsored by our power supplier, Great River Energy.

Don't miss your chance to win \$500 in groceries in the *Fill Your Fridge Sweepstakes* at www.mnbrighterideas.com. See information below.

Save Energy Webcast - Sept. 15

Join Runestone Electric and Great River Energy at an online webcast on Tuesday, Sept. 15, at 12:00 pm and again at 7:00 pm to learn more about what you can do to begin saving energy in your home.

Experts from Great River Energy will teach viewers a variety of ways to save energy, from simple things that can be done immediately, to more complex ideas that take some investment but reap big rewards. A short presentation will be followed by an interactive Q&A session.

To register, go to www.mnbrighterideas.webex.com

CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENCY PYRAMID

A guide to using energy wisely through behavior and technology



Monthly e-newsletter features energy tips



Want ideas to lower your energy bills? Want to calculate how much energy it takes to run your home's air conditioning? REA's *Power Up*, is a new, free monthly e-newsletter which focuses on ways homeowners can improve efficiency and save money. There are articles on conserving water, green initiatives, and the latest energy technologies.

To subscribe, send your e-mail address to rea@runestoneelectric.com with "Power Up" in the subject line.



Fill Your Fridge Sweepstakes

Enter for a chance to win \$500 in free groceries.

Grand Prize \$500 in free groceries

First Place Prizes \$100 in free groceries
One First Place Prize awarded in each of the participating Great River Energy member cooperatives.

Visit mnbrighterideas.com between August 16 and September 30, 2009, and complete a short quiz for instant entry.

mnbrighterideas.com



Create a circuit map to prevent system overload

The average home in the 1960's didn't have an extra freezer, a dishwasher, several television sets, or a computer. The electrical systems in houses which were built 40 or more years ago were never meant to accommodate the demand we place on them today.

Having a licensed electrician inspect your home's system is the best way to discover any malfunctions or determine if you need to upgrade your electric service to meet present and future demands.

Creating a detailed circuit map and performing a power audit are steps you can take yourself to establish and maintain a safer electrical system. They are not a substitute for an electrical inspection but can provide you with important information about your system.

To create a circuit map, shut off a single circuit at a time and determine which outlets and lighting fixtures are affected each time. You can easily identify which circuit is which by using a 110-volt radio, which will stop playing as you turn off its breaker. Make note of which appliances are plugged in at each receptacle.

An easy equation to use to determine what a circuit can handle is as follows: Volts x Amps = Watts. Your electrical panel will indicate your system's voltage, and each fuse or circuit breaker is marked for its amperage. Then, find the power rating in watts of each appliance and make note of the appliance and its power rating on the entry for that circuit.

Finally, add up the power demand of every appliance and fixture drawing power from the circuit. A good circuit map will let you know at a glance which circuits are overloaded and which are still available for additional use. If you find overloaded circuits, you should take immediate measures to alleviate the demand by moving some appliances to a less taxed circuit.

For more information on the safe use of electricity, call REA at (320) 762-1121 or 1-800-473-1722 or visit www.runestoneelectric.com. Additional details on creating a circuit map can be found on the Electrical Safety International Foundation Web site, www.esfi.org. Look under Home Wiring.



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Office Hours

8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Monday - Friday

**24-hour outage &
emergency service**
(800) 473-1722

**Underground cable locations
Gopher State One Call**
(800) 252-1166

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In case of a power outage

- Make sure the problem is not on your side (Members may be billed for service calls if the problem is caused by their own equipment).
- Check your own fuses and circuit breakers in your home and by the meter pole (Call us for help if you are unsure of the location of your breakers).
- Check with your neighbors to see if their power is off and if they have reported the outage.
- If the trouble is not on your wiring, please call (800) 473-1722 for 24-hour service. Please report any tree branches in lines, twisted wires, broken poles and if your neighbors are also out of power.
- Be sure to have one corded phone in the house, because cordless phones won't work when the power is out.
- Program the number above into your cell phone for easy access.



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feel good about laundry day

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\$75 OFF ENERGY STAR WASHERS

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*With the recycling of old refrigerator
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