

Make Safety a Priority this harvest season Look Up and Live!

NEWSLINE

October 2019

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October is Co-op Month! We're Celebrating the Cooperative Way of Business All Month!

Runestone Electric Association is proud to be your electric cooperative. We are a community-focused organization serving our members with safe, reliable, affordable electricity and related services. We are led by members like you who understand and listen to the communities we serve. We were built by members, for members, and excess revenue, called capital credits, are distributed to the members. Across the country, local cooperatives, like REA, work together to develop new technologies and infrastructure. We learn from each other. And we work together to keep the electric grid secure.

We are a community-focused organization serving our members with safe, reliable, affordable electricity and related services.

Join us in celebrating Co-op Month!

Cooperatives Support Local Business!

If you attended the REA Annual Meeting in April and received a gift certificate, please remember to redeem your certificate at one of the participating REA businesses listed below **before 12/31/19**.



Use your certificate at one of these REA-member businesses:

- » Brother's Market Carlos
- » Brother's Market Miltona
- » Burr Vineyards
- » Carlos Creek Winery
- » 22 Northmen Brewery
- » Chet's Lakeside Inn
- » Country Blossom Farm
- » Doraisamy Farm
- » Eagleview Winery
- » Erickson's Petting Zoo
- » Jim & Judy's
- » Lake Cafe at Arrowwood Resort
- » Lake Miltona Golf Club
- » Lake Reno Bar & Grill
- » L'Etoile du Nord Vineyard
- » Long Lake Lodge
- » Nordic Trails Golf Course
- » Selective TV
- » Tipsinah Mounds Golf Course

Be sure to use your gift certificate before 12/31/19



Cookies from:



Celebrating Co-op Month at the REA Office!

Stop into the office in October to enjoy cookies and refreshments in celebration of co-op month!



Before heading south, consider a stand-by generator to take care of your home while you're away.

For more information visit www.RunestoneElectric.com or call 800-473-1121



CEO, Kristin Dolan

A Note from the CEO: Celebrating the Cooperative Way of Business

Kristin Dolan, CEO, Runestone Electric Association

Periodically REA conducts a strategic planning event to determine the specific items our organization will focus on and execute. Past sessions produced plans that focused on distribution grid reliability, new service offerings, rate structures, pressing facility requirements, and much more. Past examples of specific items included the replacement of our metering system, a strategy to replace underground cable that was failing, moving our headquarters to our warehouse location, lower incremental rate increases, standby generators and bringing SmartHub to the membership to name a few.

A strategic planning session brings key decision-makers together to determine what the organization will focus on next. A critical part of this process is information gathering from all interested parties. In preparation for strategic planning in September, we started by sending out a member survey this spring. Thank you to our members who completed the survey. We appreciate hearing what you are thinking about your energy needs, how well we are serving you, and what more we can do.

We had a great response rate and a diverse sampling from our various membership demographics were represented well in the survey results. This level of feedback provides us with solid information. If you received a survey, your participation helps your organization continue to operate at its very best for you.

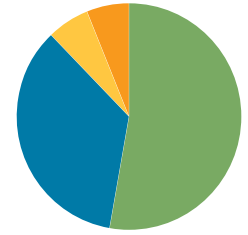
Along the right side of this article, please find high-level results of the member survey. The first graphic at the top shows what is most important to the membership. These are the areas we will give our greatest priority and attention. The graphics below show that we are very strong on reliability and rates. At the bottom is our satisfaction rating - 97% said they agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with REA!

As your electric cooperative, reliability and your satisfaction are very important to us; but affordability is top of mind for all of us, always. A rural electric utility system is more expensive just due to the vast geographic area we cover. This is compounded further with less people to share in that cost. REA maintains 3,000 miles of line and averages 4.7 members per mile of line. In comparison, a population center serving a similar number of consumers will have 300 miles of line and 35 consumers per mile of line. Knowing these two challenges, our culture is one that looks to operate the most efficiently for the membership. The use of technology, innovative thinking, and strategic decision making are just some of the tools we use to keep rural electricity affordable.

Serving you at their very best is a priority for your Board of Directors who govern your organization and for the employees who serve you every day. We are proud that you agree that we serve you very well and that you have your trust in us. We also appreciate hearing how we can continue to better serve you. We will always listen to your energy needs and continue to bring energy solutions to you, our member-owners. I look forward to sharing results with you in the coming months from our recent strategic planning session.

REA is a cooperative that was created by our local communities to bring power to the rural area. Today it remains member-owned and continues to be governed by the member-owners. We have the best business model designed - a cooperative. REA represents our local communities' best interests because REA is you. It's important to preserve the cooperative business model and celebrate it. **Please stop by REA the month of October to enjoy cookies and to celebrate National Cooperative Month.**

What Matters Most To REA Members



- 53% Reliability**
Keeping outages to a minimum
- 35% Affordability**
Reasonable rates and monthly fees
- 6% Social**
Operating with concern for the environment
- 6% Personal Service**
Friendly, courteous employees

Power Reliability



99% Agree or Strongly Agree that REA provides reliable electric service



95% Agree or Strongly Agree power is restored in a reasonable amount of time after an outage

Rates



78% Agree or Strongly Agree that REA rates are fair and affordable

Satisfaction



97% Agree or Strongly Agree that overall they are satisfied with REA



92% Agree or Strongly Agree that they consider REA to be a trusted source for energy-related information.

REA Board of Director Meeting Highlights - August 2019

- » Mrs. Nelson reviewed the Financial Report for July 2019. Power cost was under budget 11% for the month of July due to favorable variance on the KW demand of the system. With August giving us no extreme heat, we expect that our peak demand for the year will be in winter instead of summer. In the last ten years, that has happened only three years and two of those years the summer/winter coincident peaks have been similar. For the year, we are ahead of the gross margin projection and have recorded other gains from investments and equipment sales not included in budget estimates.
- » Mrs. Nelson discussed the opportunity we had to prepay notes with no prepayment penalty using funds from the RUS Cushion of Credit investment. She also informed the board that the full amount due from Douglas County Housing & Redevelopment Authority under the Tax Increment Note

has been paid. The note was issued in 2014 to REA as the redeveloper of two parcels improved for the REA and STAR headquarters.

- » Mr. Rooney reviewed the Exploring Your Renewable Energy Options class held July 25th, an Electric Forklift demonstration hosted by REA and ALP on August 16th, and the "Electrify your Everyday" offerings at the Pancake Feed.
- » CEO Dolan reviewed plans for the upcoming strategic planning session on September 27.
- » The Board reviewed the MREA Energy Issues Summit held July 31 - August 1st in St. Cloud.
- » **The regular October Board Meeting will be October 29, 2019.**

Cooperatives Work With Their Members

Let us answer your questions about cold weather shut-off protection for residents and military personnel

What is the Cold Weather Rule?

The Cold Weather Rule protects some members from having their electricity shut-off due to non-payment between October 15 and April 15.

If my electricity has been disconnected, how can I be reconnected?

In order to re-establish power, contact Runestone Electric for the total balance due, which will include additional fees and a deposit.

Will you disconnect me without my knowledge?

No. You will receive a "Notice of Disconnection." The letter will contain an income verification form for you to complete and return. There will also be a list of rights and responsibilities for you as well as the Cooperative and a list of agencies that may help you. If you receive a Notice of Disconnection, you MUST take the next step and call us and the agency that serves your county to see if they can help you.

We will not disconnect electricity without first notifying you by letter. We also attempt to make phone calls if we have correct phone numbers. We will not shut-off electricity on a Friday, a weekend, or the day before a holiday.

What must I do to receive shut-off protection?

If you are behind in your electricity payments and you will not be able to catch up, your first step is to call Runestone Electric Association.

We don't want to shut off anyone's electricity. We will work with you to set up a payment arrangement or help you to see if you qualify for shut-off protection. To the right is a list of providers that can help with your energy bills. It is up to you to contact them for help.

Can my heat be shut off in the winter?

Yes. The Cold Weather Rule still allows electricity to be shut off for non-payment. You will only be protected if electricity provides your primary source of heat AND you have done all the following things:

- » Your household income meets the state guidelines (at or less than 50 percent of the state median income)
- » You provide Runestone Electric with a completed Inability to Pay Form
- » You have a payment arrangement with the Co-op for which you have remained reasonably current



Energy Assistance Providers

Douglas, Grant, Pope and Stevens Counties:

West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc.
(218) 685-4486
1-800-492-4805

Todd County:

Todd County Social Services
(320) 732-4516
1-888-838-4066

Otter Tail County:

Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc.
Detroit Lakes - (218) 847-1385
Fergus Falls - (218) 739-3011
1-888-458-1385

Active Duty Military Shut-off Protection

When a household member has been ordered into active duty, for deployment, or for a change of duty station, some customers may find it hard to pay their utility bills. Minnesota law protects these military personnel from shut-off if they cannot pay their utility bills in full. For more information or to apply for protection and set up a payment plan, please contact Runestone Electric. If a serviceman or woman and Runestone Electric cannot agree on a payment plan, you have the right to appeal to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. Runestone Electric will not disconnect your service during the appeal process.



Ring-a-ling... REA Calling!

You just sit down for supper and your phone rings. You pick it up and its a telemarketer. Robocalls from telemarketers can be very annoying. REA uses automated phone calls to alert members of planned power outages and to give payment reminders. We recommend adding our phone number **320-762-1121** to your contacts so you'll know it's REA calling and not a telemarketer.

Meeting your payment obligation

Please contact our office if you find that you cannot pay your electric bill. We will work with you to set up a payment schedule during the cold weather months if you think you will be unable to pay your bill on time. It is your responsibility to call our office to arrange a payment schedule.

Failure to respond to a disconnect notice may lead to shut-off of service, even in winter.

Our members are important! We'd rather work with you to set up a payment plan than shut-off your electricity.

**If you are in need of help, don't delay - call today:
320-762-1121 or 800-473-1722**

The Cooperative Principles

VOLUNTARY
& Open Membership

Democratic
MEMBER CONTROL

MEMBERS' CONTROL

Education



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Office Hours:
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mon- Fri.

Memorial Day to Labor Day:
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon- Fri.

Board of Directors

District 1: Gary (Andy) Anderson, Secretary

District 2: Barbara Johnson, President

District 3: Audrey Hjelle, Director

District 4: Dave Staples, Director

District 5: Mike Loken, Treasurer

District 6: Clif Patrick, Vice President

District 7: Brad Burklund

Editorial Staff

Kristin Dolan, CEO

Sue Lundeen, Editor

Ally Coleman, Communications Specialist

In Case of a Power Outage

- » 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 a corded phone or a charged cell phone in the house, because cordless phones won't work when the power is out.
- » Program the number above your into your cell phone for easy access.
- » Never assume we know you are without power. Always call to report an outage.

REA is an Equal Opportunity Provider

Representing some of the organizations receiving Operation Round Up® grants in August (front row l to r): Cindy Lerohl (Love INC of Douglas County) and Deb Ledoux & Josette Ciceron (Inclusion Network). (back row l to r): Vern Lorsung (Operation Round Up Board); Matt Ramey (Osakis Youth Group); Christopher Goodwin (Osakis Boy Scouts Troop 426); Melisa Schueler (Community Preschool); Grant Haugen (Veterans Memorial Park); Andrea Goeden (West Central Communities Action); Nancy Haggenmiller (Alexandria Senior Center) and Janet Johnson & Debbie Anderson (Operation Round Up Board).

Cooperatives Support Their Communities

Runestone Electric Association's Operation Round Up® has distributed over \$962,400 in grants to community-minded groups and organizations throughout the Cooperative's service territory since its inception in 2003. Over 64% of REA's members allow their bills to be rounded up to the next dollar with the average yearly contribution of \$6.

The following eighteen area organizations shared \$11,400 in grants from Operation Round Up.

Fire Departments & First Responders: Leaf Valley Township Fire Department (\$1,000); Ashby Fire Department (\$1,000) and Forada Emergency Responders (\$1,000).

Youth: Osakis Youth Group at Lutheran Church (\$250); Osakis Boy Scouts Troop 426 (\$250); Community Preschool (\$300) and West Central Area Schools (\$300).

Community: United Communities Advocating Non-Violence (\$500); Donnelly Community Club Inc. (\$500); West Central Minnesota Communities Action (\$1,000); Geneva Cemetery Association (\$250); Veterans Memorial Park (\$1,000); Central Lakes Concert Association (\$250); Love INC of Douglas County (\$1500); Lake Amelia Cemetery (\$250); Osakis Back Pack Committee (\$1,000) and Inclusion Network (\$250).

Seniors: Alexandria Senior Center (\$800).

Calling all non-profit organizations!

Area organizations are encouraged to apply for Operation Round Up grants. The deadline for the next round of funding is November 15, 2019. Application forms are available by calling REA at (800) 473-1722. Applications can be downloaded from the REA website: www.RunestoneElectric.com.



Know whats below.
Call before you dig.

Call 811 or
visit gopherstateonecall.org
before you dig

