

REA Wishes You and Your Family a Very Happy Thanksgiving!

REA will be closed November 25 and 26.

To report a power outage or an emergency, call (800) 473-1722. We have a 24-hour answering service to take your call.

During this time when we have so much for which to be thankful, we want to thank you for your business!

NEWSLINE

November 2021

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REA Bill Gets Face Lift in December

You'll notice a new look to your REA electric bill next month. We've given the layout a fresh, clean look. More details to come in the December issue of *Newsline*.



Utility Scam Awareness

We've received a few calls from REA members regarding phone scams they have received. We want to warn our members to be on guard for scams targeting payment on their electric bill.

Here are some things to look for in a potential scam call:

- » Caller will contact you and inform you that your power will be disconnected in a short period of time if you do not make an immediate payment on your account.
- » Caller will ask for payment with a prepaid credit card or gift card.
- » Caller will ask for personal and financial information.

Know that REA will never call and demand quick payment over the phone while threatening disconnection with no prior communication. REA members who are delinquent will receive multiple letters and phone calls prior to disconnection. Contact REA if you receive a questionable call.

Is your Dual Fuel System ready for winter?

If you have a dual fuel heating system, also known as an off-peak system, now is the time to be sure your off-peak controls are functioning and your back-up system is prepared. Your fuel supply should be checked and chimneys cleaned.

Summer storms can damage equipment controls within off-peak heating systems. It is the member's responsibility to contact an electrical contractor should the system not be functioning correctly.

If you have electric heat, but are not sure if you are on the dual fuel program, please call REA at (800) 473-1722.

When will my dual fuel heating system be controlled?

- » Usually on the coldest winter evenings during periods of the highest demand for electricity. But other factors can lead to load control as well.
- » Between 100 and 120 hours per year (400 hours max.) and will not exceed 12 hours per control event.
- » Any time of the day, but typically in the early evening (4:30 - 9:30 p.m.) and occasionally in the morning.
- » Check on the likelihood of control by visiting www.RunestoneElectric.com and select "Today's Load Control".
- » **Sign up to get text messages on control days - text #loadcontrol to 22300.**

Plans to escape the cold this winter?

Stop and read *BEFORE* turning off your water heater at your electrical panel

Turning off your water heater when leaving on extended trips can be a good idea as long as you follow these tips:

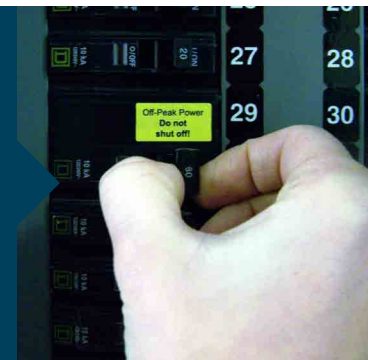
1. Check your breakers

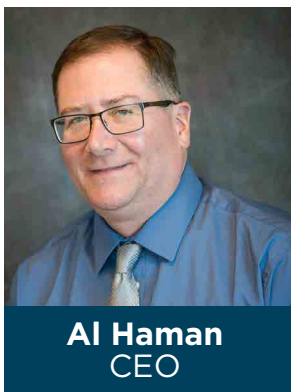
Don't turn off the breaker if you have a yellow sticker (pictured) or if your electrical panel lists your water heater circuit powering your off-peak meter and controller. If the breaker is turned off, you will miss out on the value of off-peak rates while you're away.

2. Disconnect Switch

Have your electrician install a disconnect switch. Installed next to the water heater, a disconnect switch lets you shut off your water heater while maintaining power to the off-peak meter and controller.

Still have questions?
Feel free to contact REA.





Al Haman
CEO

A Note from your CEO

Tree cutting key to reducing power outages

During the fall of each year, the management team here at REA begins to assemble the pieces of information necessary to submit a preliminary budget to the REA Board of Directors at the November Board meeting. It is a calendar year budget intended to cover the period from January 1 to December 31. Final approval is typically granted in December.

Reliability of electric supply is one of our key objectives, which we measure in several ways. Not only must we maintain voltage within industry standards, but we set internal goals for number of outages and duration. These statistics tell part of the story regarding effectiveness of our maintenance and replacement programs. I look at the data to determine if a shift in focus is necessary.

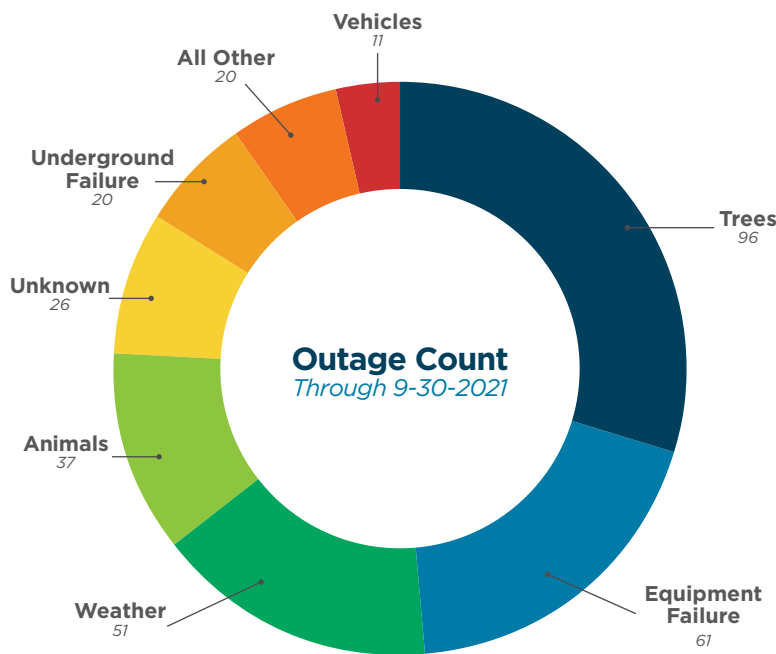
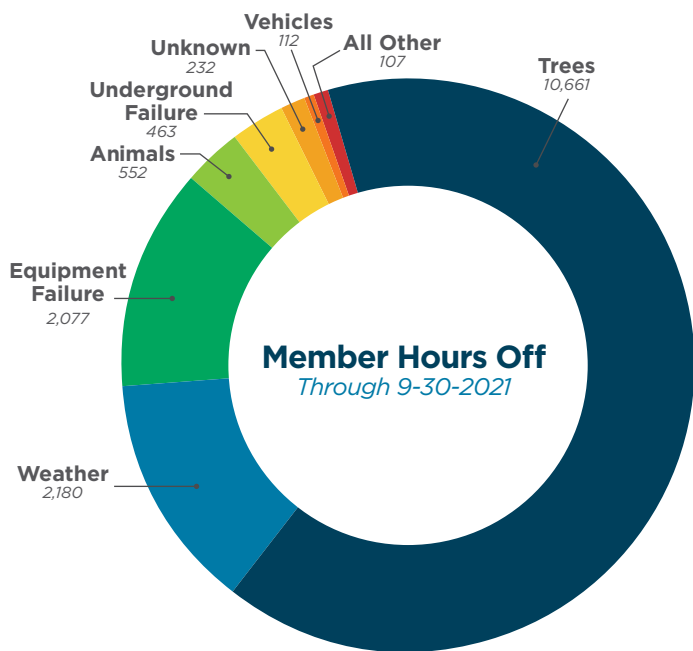
As shown in the year to date charts below, trees are a primary driver of outage count and total hours off. There are three strategies to reducing outages due to trees – an adequate tree cutting program, ground line

maintenance with mechanical machinery or herbicides, and conversion of overhead lines to underground cable.

For this newsletter, I'll focus on tree cutting. We use a contractor for tree cutting and ground line maintenance. The standard right of way clearance is 30 feet wide, but the contractor will attempt to get permission for removal of dead trees outside the corridor that may present a hazard of falling into the line. Many trees outside the right of way are tall enough to fall onto the line during a storm, so it is nearly impossible to eliminate all tree outages.

The annual budget for vegetation management has been \$750,000 for several years now. Our average cost per mile of tree cutting is \$5,100. Our goal is to maintain a 10 year interval between visits to the same areas. Around lakes, we allow our tree contractor to negotiate reduced clearance on a case-by-case basis. However, reduced clearance means we must go back to these locations on a shorter interval.

Trees continue to be the leading cause of power outages. Trees falling on the line are also a public safety hazard. Tree cutting expense will continue to be one of the largest items in our operating budget for year 2022.



REA Board of Director Meeting Highlights - September 2021

- » Reviewed the Financial Report for August 2021. REA has had two consecutive summers of strong electric sales. 2021's irrigation sales were strong due to the dry summer. The yearly margin is higher than budgeted through August; some of that difference will be reduced in the remaining months as expenses catch up to budget.
- » Approved expanding the dates listed in M-08 Disconnection of Service from October 15 to October 1 and April 15 to April 30 to comply with recent changes to the Cold Weather Rule.
- » Director Anderson and CEO Haman reviewed the September STAR Energy Services Board Meeting, noting STAR will celebrate its 25th anniversary in April 2022.
- » Adopted amendments to the Section 125 Cafeteria Plan for 2020 and 2021, per federal law, allowing increased medical expenses for PPE (personal protection equipment) and increased childcare expenses
- » **The regular November Board Meeting will be November 30, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.**

SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

CONTINUED FROM OCTOBER'S NEWSLINE



Capital Credit Checks



New Transformer at Leaf Valley Substation 2020



Current Board

MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE



Advisory Council



Safety Training

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND INFORMATION

TRUCKS FOR SALE



Lake Region Electric providing mutual aid to REA during the August '21 storm.



REA providing mutual aid to Nobles Electric Co-op



2008 Ford F-150 XL 4X4 extended cab with utility box, 5.4 Triton, A/T, manual windows and locks, 171,500 miles



2010 Ford F-150 XL 4X4 extended cab, 5.4L V8 A/T, Power windows and locks, 147,000 miles

COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES



Operation Round Up Check Distribution



Bucket Truck at the Douglas County Fair

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Bids are now being accepted to sell two pickups. The trucks may be viewed at REA's Operation Center from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Monday - Friday until December 1, 2021. The equipment will be sold "as is" and "with all faults." REA's Purchase Agreement form will need to be signed by the buyer prior to closing. Cash payment required, no checks please. REA reserves the right to accept or reject any and all offers.

Deadline for submitting a bid is December 1, 2021.



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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, Vice President
- District 4: Dave Staples, Director
- District 5: Mike Loken, Treasurer
- District 6: Clif Patrick, Director
- District 7: Matthew Mattson, Director

Editorial Staff

- Al Haman, CEO
- Sue Lundeen, Editor
- Ally Koudela, 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 into your cell phone for easy access.
- » Never assume we know you are without power. Always call to report an outage.

REA will use reasonable diligence to furnish adequate and dependable electric service, but it cannot and does not guaranty continuous and uninterrupted service.

REA is an Equal Opportunity Provider

Sign up to get text messages from REA on control days!
Simply text #loadcontrol to 22300.
Msg and data rates apply.

Correcting Neutral-To-Earth Voltage Conditions

As a member of Runestone Electric Association, you should feel free to call us anytime with concerns related to your electric service. One area that can be a concern, particularly for livestock farms, is stray voltage.

Electrical supply systems delivering power to farms, homes and businesses are grounded to the earth to make them as safe as possible and to ensure their reliability. Proper grounding of these electric systems is not only essential, but a requirement of the codes that govern both home and utility practices. Because electric current is designed to be carried by the grounded conductors (neutral conductors), these wires will have a small voltage associated with them. Objects that are bonded to the neutral conductors will therefore have a voltage on them.

A consequence of the electrical system in the United States is "Stray Voltage". Stray voltage is often defined as a small voltage (less than 10 volts) that exists on grounded objects that are within close proximity to livestock. If an animal touches a grounded object, such as a metal drinking cup, while standing on an ungrounded floor or on soil a current can flow through the animal's body. If the voltage level is high enough, the resulting current may be sensed by the cow. Stray voltage can become a cow's behavioral issue with the livestock operator. Hesitation to drink from a waterer, or enter a parlor can be a behavioral symptom of stray voltage.

Although stray voltage is present on all distribution systems, humans usually do not notice it. However, livestock - especially dairy cows - are particularly sensitive. The goal is to keep the voltage level low enough that it will not cause a problem on the farm. Stray voltage can also result from deteriorating and improper wiring, faulty equipment, or improper grounding. Because of high electric use, high humidity, silage acids, and manure, a dairy farm is not the ideal environment for electrical wiring.

REA offers stray voltage investigations at no charge.

The Minnesota Stray Voltage Guide outlines the steps farmers, electricians, utilities and their advisors can take to discover and resolve stray voltage concerns on livestock farms. When farmers and utility companies work together, stray voltage concerns are more likely to be satisfactorily resolved. To download the Guide, visit www.minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com



This month's safety tip...

Stay Alive, Stay inside.

