Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association

SPARKS

July 2025

SPARKS

Red River Valley Co-op Power is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Halstad, Minnesota (USPS 509-300)

Scheduled Board Meeting
Board meetings are held in Halstad at the cooperative office starting at 8:30 a.m. on the next-to-last Monday of each month.

Outages:
800-788-7784

On the cover: Minnkota Power Cooperative transmission crews work to rebuild the bulk power system after the late June storm. Combined, hundreds of power poles (transmission and distribution) broke in North Dakota and Minnesota.

The impact of recent severe storms and restoration efforts

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

Not since the flood of 2009 has Red River Valley Co-op Power experienced such widespread sustained outages as the ones that occurred Friday, June 20, through Monday, June 23.

Winds well in excess of 80 mph ripped through the center of our service territory late Friday evening June 20 and lasted into the early morning hours the next day. Norman County experienced the most damage with respect to our work, while areas of Polk County also experienced moderate damage. Around 2,000 members were without power in the immediate aftermath of the storm. At that point, our crews began assembling to assess the damage. Overall damage would total 95 spots where damage to the power system occurred, including 45 broken poles.

To complicate matters, tornadoes in North Dakota and sustained straight line winds damaged or broke numerous transmission structures stretching from Center, North Dakota, near the Milton R. Young Station (main source of power), all the way to the transmission line feeding the Ada and Hendrum substations here and beyond.

Minnkota Power Cooperative had to replace these structures before electricity could be restored to those two substations. Knowing that, operations backfed members from other substations where they could, patrolled line, removed trees off lines and worked on restoring power to members connected to substations that still had transmission power. Minnkota was able to send a transmission crew our way late afternoon on Saturday and had restored transmission service to our Hendrum and Ada substations by 11:30 p.m. that night. We are grateful for Minnkota's prompt response, as they were stretched thin like every other utility in the region. After that, our crews could really begin to restore power to large sections of our membership. By Sunday evening, fewer than 100 members remained without power. By Monday, fewer than 15.

Most importantly, our 10 linemen, four linemen from PKM Electric Cooperative, four linemen from Highline Construction and the Minnkota crew worked safely, efficiently and tirelessly to restore power to Red River Valley Co-op Power members. It was truly a team effort.

Your cooperative is also grateful to the membership who showed extreme patience and understanding knowing that damaged poles, equipment and downed wires were numerous. Thank you, members, for being safe and staying away from downed power lines and equipment. Always assume downed wires are energized.

The following condensed statement comes from Meterologist Lisa Green in a KVLY story:

"Extreme winds developed in the complex of storms that followed the tornadic supercells. A long-duration event unfolded that featured a wide swath of sustained 80-100 mph winds. The destruction stretched from Jamestown…into Minnesota where damage was reported in Ada,…and especially in Bemidji, where intense damage was reported… This is a storm that will likely be the subject of future scientific study for its intensity, evolution, and impacts. "

GENERATE SAFELY

By Scott Flood

Don't generate problems with your backup generator.

The wind howls outside your windows as a major storm system blows through the area in the late evening. Your lights flicker for a moment or two before you're plunged into darkness. The social media feed on your phone is packed with reports of damage and power outages, and the storm shows no sign of letting up for hours.

Red River Valley Co-op Power understands power outages are a major inconvenience, and we do our best to prevent them. But when severe weather rolls through, outages can sometimes stretch into several hours after a major storm. Lineworkers may have to check many miles of power lines to pinpoint the problems before they can begin their work to restore service. That's why many co-op members consider buying backup generators to provide for their family's needs while waiting for service to resume.

Backup generators fall into one of two categories. Standby generators are permanently wired into the home's electrical system by a qualified electrician. They come in a variety of sizes, so homeowners can match the generator to their home's power needs. Portable generators, as the name implies, can be moved to wherever they are needed. Because they're small enough to move, they generally provide less power than standby models. Most use gasoline or diesel fuel, and when they're operated correctly, both types provide a safe source of backup power.

Never plug backup generators directly into a wall outlet or connect them to a home's electrical panel. Beyond the significant risk of electrocution and fire that can create, plugging generators directly into your outlets can send the voltage your generator creates into the power lines connecting your home to the electric grid. That creates a dangerous condition called "backfeed," which can seriously injure the lineworkers who are working so hard to restore your electricity, as well as anyone who accidentally comes in contact with power lines. Backfeed can also damage the generator.

Standby generators are permanently wired into the home's electrical system by a qualified electrician. ***Photo credit: Kohler***

If you purchase a portable backup generator, protect your home and family by taking the time to read the manufacturer's instructions. ***Photo credit: City of Bryan, TX***

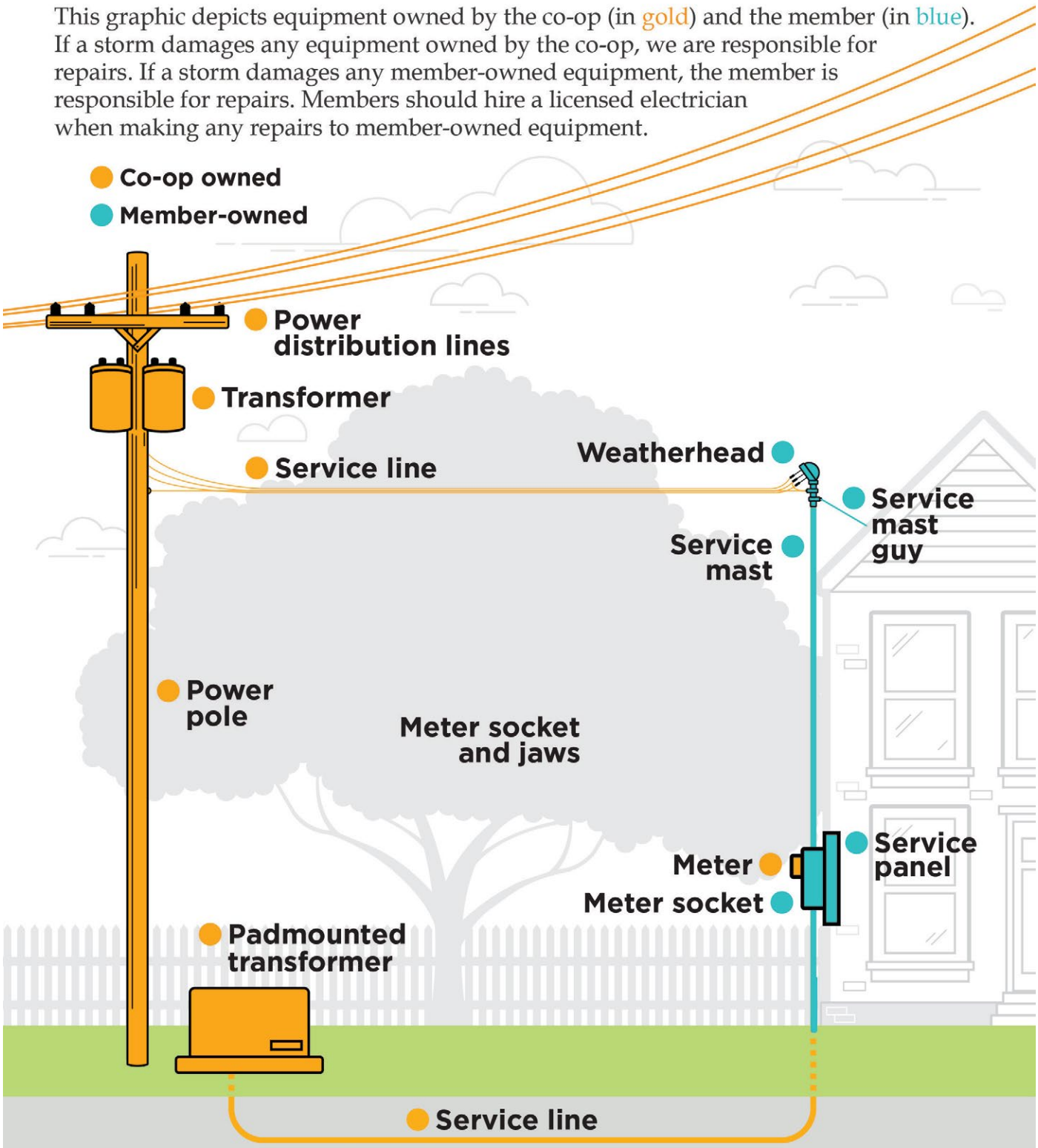
That's why permanently installed backup generators are required to have what's known as a transfer switch, which should be installed by a qualified electrician. The transfer switch creates a barrier between your home's electrical system and the outside wires, so backfeed cannot occur. When the transfer switch senses that power has been restored, it switches the power from the generator back to the outside lines.

The biggest danger associated with backup generators is one that's both invisible and deadly. Because backup generators burn fossil fuels, they generate a variety of gases, most notably carbon monoxide. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, one portable generator can produce as much CO as hundreds of cars. The agency reports that nearly 100 Americans lose their lives each year because of CO poisoning from backup generators. That's why generators should only be used in dry, well-ventilated areas away from your home and garage.

Who Owns What?

Electric Co-op Owned Equipment vs Member-Owned Equipment

This graphic depicts equipment owned by the co-op (in gold) and the member (in blue). If a storm damages any equipment owned by the co-op, we are responsible for repairs. If a storm damages any member-owned equipment, the member is responsible for repairs. Members should hire a licensed electrician when making any repairs to member-owned equipment.



Note: This graphic depicts overhead and underground service. Please be aware of which type of service you receive at your home.

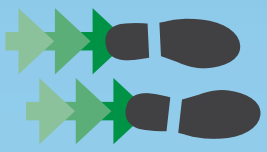
DOWNED POWER LINES

DOS & DON'TS

Downed power lines may not look dangerous, but don't be fooled. These lines are likely carrying electric currents strong enough to cause serious injury or death. If you come across a downed power line…

DOs

Stay at least 50 feet away from the downed line (about the length of two school buses).



If closer, bunny hop at least 50 feet away keeping both feet together and landing at the same time.

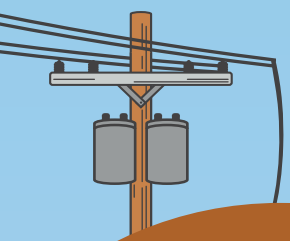
Report the downed power line to Red River Valley Co-op Power. Call 911 if there is imminent danger.

DON'Ts

Never touch a downed power line – always assume the line is live and dangerous.

Don't attempt to move a downed power line – even with items that are not typically conductive.

Don't touch a structure near or connected to the downed power line. They could be energized for thousands of yards and pose serious hazards.



IF YOU SEE AN INJURY

If you see someone injured by a downed power line, call 9-1-1 for help.

- Don't try and rescue the person. The electrical current can travel through the individual to you and cause serious harm.
- The best thing to do is warn others to stay away and wait for help.

If you are in a vehicle that comes in contact with a downed power line:

- Stay in your vehicle until help arrives. Avoid touching the metal frame or any other metal in your vehicle.
- Call 9-1-1 and report the downed line.
- If you need to exit the vehicle due to fire, jump clear of the car keeping both feet together. Cross your arms over your chest and bunny hop at least 50 feet away from the vehicle. Never touch the vehicle and the ground simultaneously because this increases the risk of electrical shock.

You have the power to

- View daily and monthly energy use.
- View and pay your bills online.
- Go paperless and receive an email notice when your bill is ready to view.
- Compare energy use to changes in temperature.

For assistance, call us during regular business hours at 218-456-2139 or send an email to info@rrvcoop.com.

Sign up for SmartHub

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COMMON CAUSES OF POWER OUTAGES

Nobody likes a power outage, but I'm sure you've wondered why it happens. These are some of the most common causes for a power outage.

ACCIDENTS

Vehicles can run into utlility poles, resulting in downed power lines. However, farm equipment, construction and excavation work are the leading causes of disruptions to overhead and underground power lines.

WEATHER

Snow, ice and high winds can cause tree limbs to negatively impact power lines. Lightning strikes, wildfires and other weather-related events can also cause damage to equipment.

ANIMALS

Squirrels, snakes, birds and other critters can cause short circuits and distruptions to the power supply by making contact with power lines.

MAINTENANCE

We occasionally schedule planned outages in order to perform upgrades or repairs to parts of the local electric grid.

SEE A LIVE RRVCP OUTAGE MAP AT ANY TIME BY VISITING

RRVCOOP.COM/SERVICE-INFO/POWER-OUTAGES

Remember: Report an outage by calling **1-800-788-7784** or **218-456-2139**.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

During summer months, run large appliances that emit heat such as clothes dryers and dishwashers during the evening when the outdoor temperature is lower. Running heat-emitting appliances in the evening will reduce indoor heat gain during the day when outdoor temperatures are highest and ultimately keep your air conditioner from working harder than necessary.

Source: energy.gov

RED RIVER VALLEY
CO-OP POWER

4 WAYS to Reduce Use During Extreme Heat

During periods of extreme heat, the demand for electricity can skyrocket, placing additional strain on the grid. By working together to lower our electricity use, we can reduce pressure on the grid.

Here are four effective ways to lower use at home.

1. Raise your thermostat setting a few degrees higher than usual. Every degree can reduce cooling energy consumption.
2. Cook with smaller appliances to save energy and reduce heat gain in the kitchen.
3. Keep blinds, curtains and shades closed during the hottest part of the day to block direct sunlight.
4. Use fans to circulate air, which can make you feel cooler without needing to lower the thermostat.