

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association

SPARKS

January 2026



SPARKS

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

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*Rich Whitcomb, Editor
Jennifer Erickson, Graphic Artist*

January 2026
Volume 70, No. 1

Halstad, Minnesota (USPS 509-300)

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Paul Baukol	Hendrum
Chairman	
Curt Stubstad	Sabin
Vice Chairman	
Bob Kinkade	Ada
Secretary-Treasurer	
Roger Krostue	Fisher
Trevor Sorby	Glyndon
Kelsey Jensen	Moorhead
Rich Whitcomb	
Chief Executive Officer	

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: A new three-phase line near Eldred, Minn. Your cooperative continues to invest in reliability projects every year.



Rate adjustment in January

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

While the books are not quite closed for 2025, your cooperative finished the year in good financial shape and continued its investments in reliability.

As discussed previously, wholesale power costs will have increased a total of 12.4% over the past 12 months on April 1, 2026. Your cooperative has adjusted rates accordingly (*see table below*) to meet lender requirements and maintain reliability investments.

It is also worth noting that last fall, Minnkota, our wholesale power supplier, incurred higher-than-expected costs in the wholesale power market for energy purchases while their main power plant was offline for planned maintenance work that took longer than expected. Those extra market costs will be passed on in 2026 to all the cooperatives and municipals that purchase power from Minnkota. Your cooperative has been planning for those additional wholesale power costs and will present your board directors with options this January to meet the added wholesale surcharge expenses in 2026.

Rate increases are challenging. Ways to blunt or manage your electric bill include energy

efficiency upgrades, conservation, watching daily energy use and using budget billing to make monthly costs more uniform.

Likewise, Red River Valley Co-op Power has procured grant dollars to continue investments in reliability, received state reimbursement for costs incurred from the June wind storm in Norman County and reviewed our planned expenditures closely. Efforts to manage expenses will continue to stretch your dollar further. Sixty-six cents of every dollar you send to us for your electric bill goes directly to wholesale power costs. The remaining 34 cents goes to interest payments, depreciation on plant and local expenses.

While there are always challenges, opportunities exist as well. We've already mentioned reliability grants, technology to help supplement service efforts and renewed efforts at economic development. Those initiatives will continue, as will an openness to new ideas that further the cooperative cause.

Here's to wishing you the very best start possible to 2026!

Class	Component	Previous	New
Rate 1 (Residential/Small Ag)	Facility Charge	\$51	\$58
	All kWh	12.5 cents	13.3 cents
Rate 2 (Small Commercial)	Facility Charge	\$63	\$71
	All kWh	12.5 cents	13.3 cents
Rate 3 (Large Power)	Facility Charge	\$72	\$82
	All kWh	9.2 cents	9.9 cents
	Demand per kW	\$11.30	\$11.90
Apartment	Facility Charge	\$37	\$43
	kWh	12.5 cents	13.3 cents
Off-Peak (Dual Fuel/Cycled)	Facility Charge	\$6	\$6
	kWh	6.8 cents	6.8 cents
Off-Peak (Short-Term)	Facility Charge	\$6	\$6
	kWh	8.3 cents	8.4 cents
Yard Light Standard	Fee	\$9	\$9.50
Yard Light Decorative	Fee	\$10.75	\$11.25

**Rates 3A/AA (Industrial) and 3B (Irrigation) saw increases as well.*

2026 DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

2026 DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

Red River Valley Co-op Power members in District 2 and 3 can now submit nominations to compete for a seat on the board of directors.

As a cooperative, Red River Valley Co-op Power is owned by its members. Members elect a board of directors to represent them at the cooperative. Two directors will be elected at the 2026 annual meeting on March 24.

Directors whose terms expire in 2026 are:

District 2 (three-year term): Paul Baukol

District 3 (three-year term): Trevor Sorby

HOW TO RUN

To run for a director position, interested members in the above-mentioned districts (see map) must request to have the material mailed to them or pick up the packet at the office in Halstad. Per the bylaws, any 15 or more members who reside in District 2 or 3 may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that specific district.

No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in this manner. No write-in ballots will be accepted. **The cooperative must receive the completed petitions and forms from the packet no later than 4 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 20, 2026.** Please see below for the section of the bylaws pertaining to nominations and qualifications. Please call with questions.

Petition for Nomination

The following members wish to nominate [insert name] _____, for the three-year [insert "District 2"] or for the three-year [insert "District 3"] _____ director position, and to place such name on the ballot for the March 24, 2026, election at the annual meeting of the Cooperative, in accordance with Article III, Section 4, of the bylaws.

NAME	ADDRESS	ACCOUNT NO.
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____
11. _____	_____	_____
12. _____	_____	_____
13. _____	_____	_____
14. _____	_____	_____
15. _____	_____	_____
16. _____	_____	_____
17. _____	_____	_____
18. _____	_____	_____
19. _____	_____	_____
20. _____	_____	_____

The Cooperative must receive the completed petition no later than 4:00 p.m., February 20, 2026. At the annual meeting scheduled for March 24, 2026, elections will be held for a three-year term each for one director in District 2 and one director in District 3.

The directors whose terms expire in 2026 are as follows:

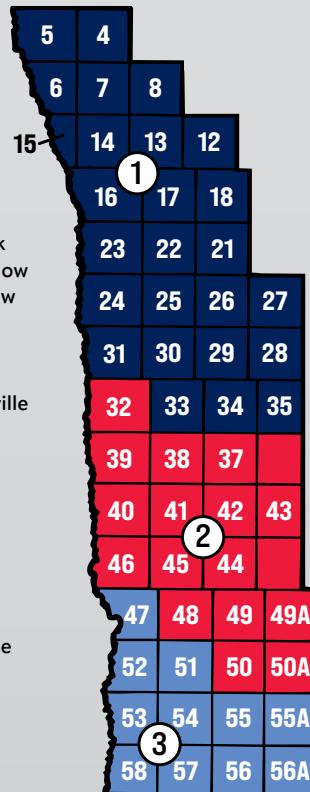
DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3
3-year term	3-year term
Paul Baukol	Trevor Sorby

Any 15 or more members who reside in District 2 or 3 may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that district. No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in this manner. In the event of joint membership, only the signature of one joint member shall be acceptable.

DIRECTOR DISTRICTS

DISTRICT 1 TOWNSHIPS

4 - Nesbit	22 - Scandia
5 - Huntsville & Rhinehart	23 - Hubbard
6 - Bygland	24 - Shelly
7 - Fisher	25 - Good Hope
8 - Lowell	26 - Lockhart
12 - Fairfax	27 - Spring Creek
13 - Andover	28 - Green Meadow
14 - Roome	29 - Pleasant View
15 - Tynsid	30 - Anthony
16 - Vineland	31 - Halstad
17 - Hammond	33 - Hegne
18 - Russia	34 - McDonaldsville
21 - Reis	35 - Lake Ida



DISTRICT 2 TOWNSHIPS

32 - Hendrum	44 - Flowing
36 - Rockwell	45 - Morken
37 - Winchester	46 - Kragnes
38 - Mary	48 - Moland
39 - Lee	49 - Spring Prairie
40 - Georgetown	49A - Cromwell
41 - Viding	50 - Riverton
42 - Felton	50A - Hawley
43 - Hagen	

DISTRICT 3 TOWNSHIPS

47 - Oakport	55A - Skree
51 - Glyndon	56 - Barnesville
52 - Moorhead	56A - Humboldt
53 - Kurtz	57 - Alliance
54 - Elmwood	58 - Holy Cross
55 - Elkton	

RED RIVER VALLEY COOPERATIVE POWER ASSOCIATION BYLAWS

ARTICLE III - DIRECTORS

Section 4. Nominations.

- Any fifteen (15) or more members who reside in any one district may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that district. Such nomination shall be in writing and signed by said fifteen (15) members, or more, and delivered to the Secretary at least thirty (30) days before the members' meeting.
- No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in the manner provided by this section. No write-in ballots shall be accepted.
- The members may, at any meeting at which a director or directors shall be removed, as heretofore provided, elect a successor or successors thereto without compliance with the provisions herein with respect to nominations.

Continued on page 7

WHY ARE ELECTRIC RATES RISING?

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit organizations. When rates increase, it's because they must, in order to maintain the reliability, safety and service our members have come to expect. In April 2026, our wholesale power provider, Minnkota Power Cooperative, will increase its rate for member co-ops (including Red River Valley Co-op Power) by 4.1%.

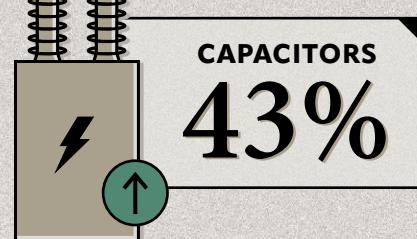
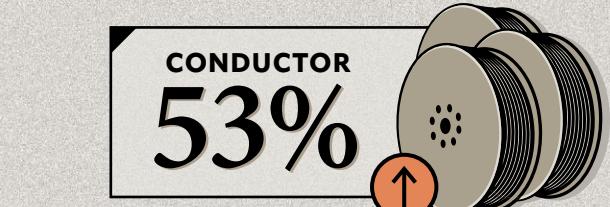
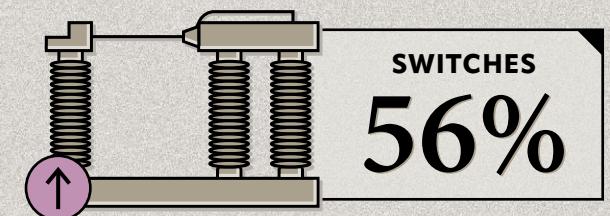
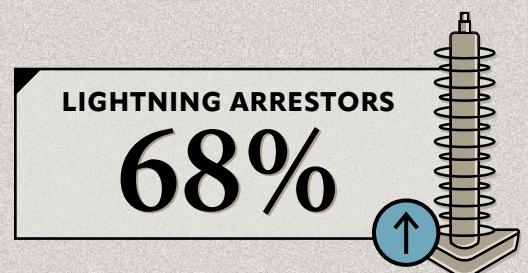
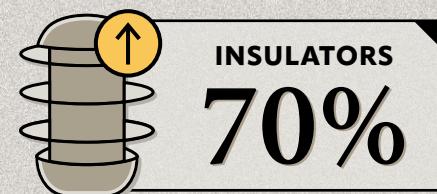
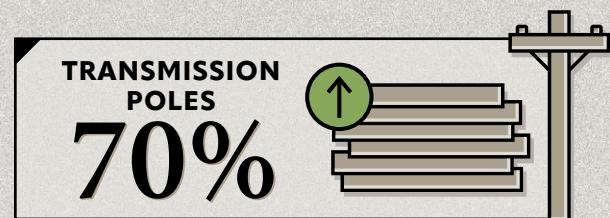
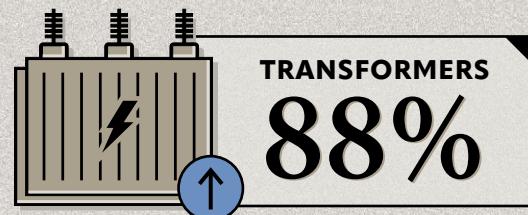
Raising rates is never an easy decision. Minnkota worked with its board of directors and membership on a rate adjustment that would allow them to financially counter **substantial supply chain and inflationary pressures that continue to build year after year**. The cost of maintaining transmission infrastructure has rapidly increased since 2020, with items like transformers costing 88% more today than five years ago.

After nearly eight years of consistently flat rates, these growing costs prompted the need for an increase in 2025 and 2026. However, if these increases were averaged over the last 10 years, the annual increase to your co-op has only been 1.3% – well under the rate of inflation.

Minnkota is also working to integrate data center loads in a manner that helps recover a larger share of its fixed costs through increased energy sales, thereby helping to moderate the need for future rate adjustments. These large-load members would not only fund 100% of the electric infrastructure necessary to serve their facilities, but would also provide significant additional revenue to support system operations. This reduces the financial burden on all other members. While some level of rate increase may still be necessary over time, the presence of these large consumers helps significantly flatten the trajectory of those adjustments.

We're committed to communicating our rate plans with our members as we evaluate our budget with our staff and board of directors. In the meantime, we thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigate our next steps. We appreciate your membership!

MATERIAL COST INCREASES SINCE 2020



SMART WAYS TO **SAVE** AND **STAY WARM** THIS WINTER

When the temperature drops, the urge to crank the heat jumps. If your home isn't outfitted with energy efficiency solutions, you could really see a spike in your energy bill. The good news? A few steps – big and small – can make all the difference when it comes to saving AND staying warm all winter long.

Looking for more ways to save? Visit ValueofElectricity.com and see all the ways electric technology can help you save on your energy bill!



VALUE OF
ELECTRICITY



SMALL STEPS

- Move any rugs, furniture or curtains that may be blocking your vents.
- On bright days, keep curtains open to let the natural light heat your space. Just remember to close them in the evening!
- Replace your furnace filter every one to three months to keep your system running more efficiently.
- Make sure to seal any pesky drafts around windows and doors with weatherstripping or simple draft stoppers.

BIGGER STEPS

Schedule a tuneup for your HVAC

Having your HVAC system serviced can significantly reduce your energy bill. A technician will clean out the parts to restore efficiency, while also detecting any issues (like loose electrical connections) that can force your system to run more often or inefficiently.

Invest in smart thermostats

A smart thermostat learns your routine and adjusts temperatures automatically, lowering the heat when you're asleep or away and warming things up before you get home. Many models are controlled using a simple phone app!

Add or upgrade an off-peak electric heating system

Stay warm and save money all winter long with off-peak electric heating. If you already heat with propane or natural gas, you can boost your comfort and efficiency by adding an electric plenum heater. You can also choose from standard or ductless air-source heat pumps, which are both excellent options for year-round comfort and lower energy costs. Whatever your space or budget, there's an electric heating solution designed to fit your home or business.

**ADDED
BONUS!**

If you install a qualifying off-peak electric heating system in your home or business, you can take advantage of Red River Valley Co-op Power's off-peak electric rate (around HALF the standard rate)! You are also eligible for great rebates following installation!

HOW IS POWER RESTORED AFTER STORM DAMAGE?



As much as your co-op tries to prevent outages, sometimes they are out of our hands – especially in this case of major winter storms. Ice and wind create perfect conditions for power poles to break, or for trees to snap and fall into the lines. If this happens in our system, Red River Valley Co-op Power (RRVCP) crews need to take special steps to ensure damage sites are safe before restoring power to your home or business. You can help when you watch the wires.

IF YOU SEE A DOWNED POWER LINE, OR STORM DEBRIS IN A POWER LINE:

STAY FAR AWAY FOR YOUR SAFETY AND OTHERS.



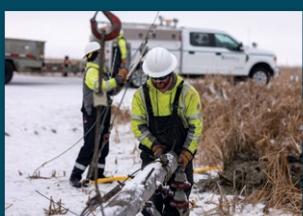
Whether you're in a car or on foot, electricity can reach you through the ground if the line is still energized. Don't attempt to move or drive over downed lines. Also tell others to stay away and keep pets close to you.

BE SURE TO REPORT IT TO US AT (800) 788-7784.



We may already have a RRVCP crew responding, but knowing who lost power helps us know the extent of the outage and where to begin our work.

WHAT'S HAPPENING BEHIND THE SCENES:



When an outage occurs, our team's first step is to ensure the damage sites are safe for lineworkers and electricians to begin repairs.

Using control center data, line observations and outage reports from members, crews begin work on the damage sites that will restore power to the greatest number of members the fastest. In the case of widespread storms, it may take longer to reenergize our most rural members (thanks for your patience).



*Damage is assessed first on Minnkota Power Cooperative's **LARGE TRANSMISSION LINES**, which deliver power to our substations.*



*If all transmission lines and substations are powered, then RRVCP crews can begin repairs on our own **DISTRIBUTION LINES**, which carry power from substations to farms and communities.*



*Finally, crews will inspect and repair **TAP LINES**, which carry power to the transformers you may find in your front yard or down the block.*



Visit WatchtheWires.com

(d) If a member is absent from any meeting, the member may vote by mail for the election of directors as provided in these Bylaws, or as may be permitted by law.

Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall not affect in any manner whatsoever validity of any election of directors.

Section 2. Qualifications.

Persons eligible to become or remain a director of the Cooperative shall:

- (a) be a member in good standing receiving electric service;
- (b) have voting rights within the district from which the director is to be elected;
- (c) not be employed by, materially affiliated with, or have a material financial interest in, any individual or entity which either is:
 - (1) directly or substantially competing with the Cooperative; or
 - (2) selling goods and services in substantial quantity to the Cooperative; or
 - (3) possessing a substantial conflict of interest with the Cooperative;

For purposes of this section, the terms "material" or "substantially" shall be interpreted as constituting a minimum of 5% of a member's total hours of employment, sales or income on an annual basis;

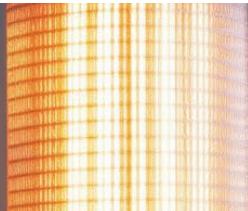
- (d) not be an employee or not have been an employee of the Cooperative within the last three (3) years;
- (e) not be a close relative of an employee, or of a director, unless the close relative is a candidate for the director's seat, where as found in these Bylaws "close relative" means any individual who is, either by blood, law, or marriage, including half, step, foster, and adoptive relations, a spouse, child, grandchild, parent,

grandparent, or sibling, or principally resides in the same residence;

- (f) be only one (1), and not more than one (1), member of a joint membership, provided, however, that none shall be eligible to become or remain a director or to hold a position of trust in the Cooperative unless all shall meet the qualifications herein set forth;
- (g) if a member of the Cooperative is not a natural person, i.e. a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or similar, then the member may appoint or elect one (1) duly authorized natural person, residing within the external boundaries of the district from which (s)he is nominated, to be eligible for election as a director to the Board of Directors;
- (h) never have been convicted of a felony;
- (i) agree, upon election, to regularly attend all Board, regular and special members' meetings; and
- (j) not become physically or mentally unable with reasonable accommodation to perform substantially all of the duties of Director, and the condition that creates such inability is reasonably expected to last six (6) months or more.

Exception. In regard to the restrictive provisions of this section that are based upon close relative relationships, no incumbent director shall lose eligibility to remain a director or to be re-elected a director if, during a director's incumbency, a director becomes a first kindred relative of another incumbent director or of a Cooperative employee because of a marriage or an adoption to which the director was not a part.

Nothing contained in this section shall, or be construed to, affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken at any meeting of the Board of Directors.



HEATING SAFETY TIPS FOR WINTER

Simple precautions can help you avoid fire hazards and electrical dangers

There is nothing like curling up by the fire on a cold winter day. But heating equipment is one of the leading causes of home fire deaths. With a few simple steps, you can prevent most heating fires from happening.

STAY COZY AND SAFE THIS WINTER:

- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet away from heating equipment like furnaces, radiators, fireplaces, electric or wood stoves and space heaters.
- Maintain a 3-foot kid- and pet-free zone around heating equipment.
- Plug heaters and electric fireplaces directly into wall outlets. **Never** use extension cords or power strips.
- Plug only one heat-producing appliance into an electrical outlet at a time.
- Turn off portable heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Unplug heaters when not in use.
- **Never** use your oven to heat your home.
- Hire a qualified professional to install or service stationary heating equipment and water heaters according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Have your heating system, vents and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.



SAVE MONEY AND ENERGY IN 2026 WITH ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES!

Energy efficiency rebates for members remain in effect for 2026. Please see the chart below for a sample of incentives.

EQUIPMENT	SPECIFICATIONS	REBATES
Air-source heat pump	> 16 SEER	\$500/ton*
Ground-source heat pump	Energy Star-rated	\$500/ton*
Electric water heater	Min. 80-gallon capacity, must be on off-peak program	\$300-\$650 per unit
Off-peak electric heat (plenum, baseboard, hanging heater, etc.)	Must be resistance electric on off-peak program	\$25/kW*
Electric boiler, brick storage, slab storage	Must be on off-peak program	\$45/kW*
Electric vehicle (EV) charger	240V-rated Level 2 charger on off-peak program	\$50/kW/limit \$750 per account

All incentives, criteria and guidelines for resident and business members can be found at rrvcoop.com or by calling **800-788-7784**.

All criteria are listed on the rebate form.

Every install must be new equipment and provide proof of purchase unless site verification is approved.

**These amounts include a rebate from Minnkota Power Cooperative, which has a capped rebate, so call for details.*