

Volts & Jolts

Published monthly for the members of Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.
SERVING THE FOUR-COUNTY AREA OF MARSHALL, PENNINGTON, RED LAKE AND POLK
and a portion of the lands of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa

RLEC
NOVEMBER 2025

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Branden Narlock

Family members

Wife: Bobbi

Children: Bryce (13) and Briggs (8)



Branden and his wife Bobbi with their children Bryce and Briggs.

Job title

Journeymen Lineman

Volunteer/member of organizations

Vice President of the TRF Archery Club, previously volunteered as a firefighter in Pelican Rapids

Favorite part about working at RLEC

Meeting members and getting to know people in the community he calls home

Education

High School: Lincoln High School, Thief River Falls

College: Bismarck State College

Family tradition

Spring and fall fishing trips —one to Arnesen's Rocky Point and another to the Rainy River — and spending time shooting archery with Bryce and Briggs

Favorite beverage

Busch Light

Years of service

12 years at Red Lake Electric, 7 years at Lake Region Electric in Pelican Rapids

Favorite sport (watch or play)

To play: Archery

To watch: Football and hockey

Favorite restaurant

Harry's Steakhouse

Hobbies/interests

Hunting, fishing, archery and golfing

Favorite food

Ribeye steak and lobster

Favorite TV show/movie

TV Show: Chicago Med, Chicago Fire and Chicago PD

Movie: Happy Gilmore and Step Brothers

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Kelli Brateng Manager of Member Services
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OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Phone: (218) 253-2168
Toll-Free: 1-800-245-6068
Fax: (218) 253-2630



AFTER HOURS/OUTAGE CALLS
(218) 253-2200

Website: www.redlakeelectric.com
Email: info@redlakeelectric.com

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG
1-800-252-1166 or 811

**MINNESOTA STATE
ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS**

Pennington and Marshall Counties:
Ronald Ditsch: (218) 779-6758

Red Lake and Polk Counties:

Todd Knaack: (763) 516-0344

Any time you or an electrician does wiring or other electrical work at your home or farm, Minnesota state law requires a state wiring inspector to conduct a proper inspection of the work. A rough-in inspection must be made before any wiring is covered. A final inspection is also required. Please visit www.dli.mn.gov for more information. The inspectors can be reached weekday mornings between 7 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Red Lake Electric Cooperative to enhance the quality of life for people of our service area by safely and consistently providing quality electric service and other valued services while holding our employees, our community and our environment in high regard.



HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Our offices will be closed
Thursday, Nov. 27, for Thanksgiving

In case of an electrical outage or emergency, call
the after-hours phone number, **218-253-2200**.

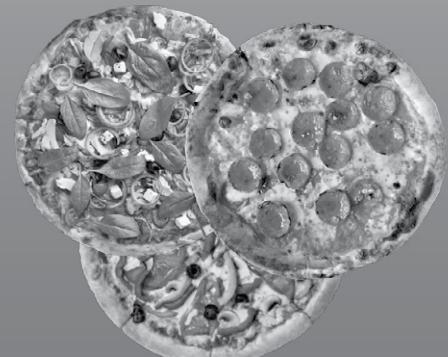
**KEEP YOUR CONTACT
INFORMATION UP TO DATE**

Has your address changed? Do you have a new cellphone number? Did you drop your landline? Then it is time to contact your electric cooperative to verify and/or update the information we have on your account. By keeping your contact information up to date, you can ensure your cooperative is able to reach you regarding billing and account information, outage notifications, capital credits and more.

You can verify and update your information by logging into SmartHub. You may also email info@redlakeelectric.com or call the office at **218-253-2168** or **800-245-6068** to verify and update your contact information.



Did you know?



**\$ FOR A WEEK
OF ELECTRICITY** = **\$ FOR A PIZZA
DELIVERY FOR
THE WHOLE FAMILY**

 **VALUE OF
ELECTRICITY**

*comparison based on average household energy usage

NEWS FROM THE OFFICE

The Power to Serve You

Red Lake Electric Cooperative (RLEC), as well as the 10 other cooperatives in the Minnkota Power Cooperative system, have completed an electric load forecast study (load forecast). Minnkota and its 11 members complete a load forecast every two years. It is a requirement of our banker, the Rural Utilities Service, and it's just good business practice to plan ahead.

The load forecast serves two purposes. First, we use these projections as a basis for our distribution system planning. Red Lake Electric continually monitors electric load throughout our system to make sure there is adequate conductor capacity to meet the energy demands of our membership. Our system engineer projects conductor needs and plans for system upgrades based on projected load growth from this study as well as other electric system data compiled at the cooperative.

The second purpose of the load forecast is to plan for future generation additions. Minnkota, who has committed to provide us wholesale energy through at least 2060, is constantly tasked with matching electric load with available generation capacity.

Planning for generation is a tall task. If you run short, you are at the mercy of the wholesale regional energy market. If you add firm generation too early and create a surplus, it is generally difficult to recoup fixed costs. The ideal match of generation resources (21651 Brian Sargent) and electric load is made more difficult today by the intermittent generation characteristics of renewable energy that Minnkota and other electric utilities are mandated to have as part of their generation mix.

The scope of the load forecast covers a 30-year projection and relies heavily on internal system data, third-party demographic and economic data, and insight from cooperative staff who are most familiar with the consumers and trends in the service territory. An emphasis has been placed on strong coordination between Minnkota, Red Lake, and the consultant involved in preparing this study to ensure accurate and useful load forecast results.

While the load forecast report totals 91 pages of narrative, data and charts for Red Lake Electric, we will share just a couple of the 30-year projections here. The number of residential consumers is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 0.2%. Total energy requirements are expected to grow 0.5% per year over the forecast period. General commercial sales are expected to grow at an annual rate of 0.1% per year. Overall, large commercial sales are expected to grow 1.3% per year during the projection horizon.

While this may be an oversimplified summary of the load forecast to share here, our intent is to remind members that forecasting and planning to meet the energy needs of the membership is an important piece of the puzzle Red Lake Electric and Minnkota Power Cooperative continually work on. It is part of the process that you don't need to consider, because that's what we do. We do this so whenever you flip a switch, adjust the thermostat or plug in an appliance, the results are exactly what you want them to be.

Headquarters progress

In late October, construction reached a visible milestone as

the steel framework for the office began going up. Last week, the steel wall studs were delivered and are now being installed. By mid-November — likely by the time you are reading this — the precast walls for the shop are expected to be set into place. Two large cranes are currently on-site: one dedicated to the office structure and the other reserved for placing the precast shop walls.

The new headquarters will be heated and cooled using a geothermal system, and the well driller still plans to complete the geothermal wells yet this fall. Fortunately, the weather (32028 Troy A Brekke) has mostly cooperated, allowing contractors to continue steady progress.

Red Lake Electric will be providing service to the new facility. Our line-men have already started plowing the primary underground service.

Happy Thanksgiving

On behalf of all employees and directors here at Red Lake Electric Cooperative, we offer our sincere thanks for your constant business you bring to the cooperative. May you have a happy and blessed Thanksgiving.

NOTICE OF NAMES

Hidden within the text of the articles of this issue of *Volts & Jolts* are the names and account numbers of some Red Lake Electric Cooperative members. They will appear within the articles in parentheses as such (999999.99 Willie Ray Member).

If you find your name and account number, clip it out and send it with your next payment. You will be credited with \$5 on your electric bill.

LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS PARTICIPATE IN POWER LINE SAFETY PRESENTATION



Red Lake Electric Cooperative recently brought the life-saving message of electrical safety to the students of Lafayette High School. Cooperative employees Kelli Brateng, member services manager, and Troy Schmitz, crew foreman, visited high school seniors on Tuesday, Oct. 21. Together, they shared an overview of how electricity is generated and delivered to homes, with a focus on pow-

er line safety. Schmitz also showed the students some of the safety equipment line-workers use, including rubber gloves and sleeves, an extendo stick and a hot stick.

Joining the Red Lake Electric team was safety administrator Brandon Greene and field safety specialist Seth Baune from Minnkota Power Cooperative, who gave a live tabletop demonstration showing how

electrical contact (21933 James R. Rude) can occur with vehicles and farm equipment – and what to do in those situations. Students also viewed the story of Mary Gehrig, a Fargo teen who struck a downed power line and took all the right steps to escape the scene safely.

The demonstration was part of the recently launched Watch the Wires campaign, a power line safety initiative co-developed by Minnkota, Red Lake Electric and neighboring electric cooperatives. The objective of the campaign is to help reduce the number of incidents involving electric infrastructure, with a focus on those in the agriculture sector.

As farm equipment gets larger and new automation technology is added to workflows, the number of line contacts in our region has grown exponentially. Each year, Red Lake Electric has an average of 20 farm equipment contacts with wires and poles. With Watch the Wires, the cooperative and its partners hope to reduce overhead line contacts, pole strikes, guy wire clipping and underground line contacts from digging. Watch the Wires safety kits are available by request at WatchtheWires.com.

Minnkota Power Cooperative is a not-for-profit electric generation and transmission cooperative. Minnkota provides wholesale electric energy to 11 member-owner distribution cooperatives located in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota, including Red Lake Electric Cooperative.

**JAN / FEB
2026**

**ELECTRICAL
CONTRACTOR
CONTINUING
EDUCATION
COURSES**

**REGISTER
ONLINE AT
MINNKOTA.COM**

Minnkota Power Cooperative, Red Lake Electric Cooperative and its partners will again provide an opportunity for area electricians to obtain credits for license renewal by attending one of the six continuing education classes being offered throughout eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota.

Instructor Tim Pull will cover the 2026 National Electrical Code (NEC) changes and other important NEC rules. The seminars are approved in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota for eight hours of continuing education credit necessary for renewing electrical licenses. The classes will be held at the following locations:

**Tuesday,
January 6, 2026**
Fargo Holiday Inn
3803 13th Avenue South
Fargo, ND

**Wednesday,
January 7, 2026**
Fargo Holiday Inn
3803 13th Avenue South
Fargo, ND

**Thursday,
January 15, 2026**
Bemidji Eagles Club
1270 Neilson Avenue SE
Bemidji, MN

**Thursday,
January 22, 2026**
Bigwood Event Center
921 Western Avenue
Fergus Falls, MN

**Tuesday,
February 3, 2026**
Minnkota Power Cooperative
5301 32nd Avenue South
Grand Forks, ND

**Wednesday,
February 4, 2026**
Minnkota Power Cooperative
5301 32nd Avenue South
Grand Forks, ND

For more info about the program, please call (701) 795-4292 or e-mail any questions to contractortraining@minnkota.com.

**\$85 TO REGISTER
FOR EIGHT CREDITS**

CLASS SCHEDULE:

7:15 - 8 a.m.
Registration

8 a.m. - noon
Classroom instruction

Noon - 1 p.m.
Lunch served

1 - 5 p.m.
Classroom instruction

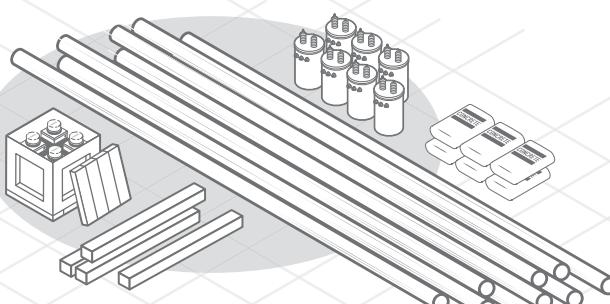
This marks the 38th year of the successful program, which is aimed at providing area trade allies with the latest information on electrical code and practices. Taking the class on multiple days will not qualify for 16 code credits. The registration fee is \$85 for eight code credits. Registration can be done online at minnkota.com and must be completed at least seven days prior to the seminar. For residential building contractor continuing education workshops, contact your local home builders association.

Cost Increases

The past five years have been a period of exploding costs for the electric utility industry and for broadband providers, pushed by soaring demand, supply chain challenges, raw materials shortages, increased labor costs and tariffs. The impact has been rapid increases in the cost of producing power, longer and more unpredictable project timelines and the need for more financing, all of which have driven electric rates up for residences, businesses and other end-users. Here's a look at what's contributing to the trend. **Percent increase since 2020:**

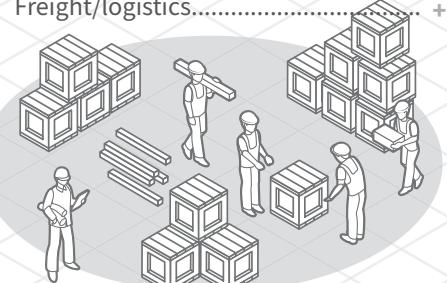
● Infrastructure

Utility poles (wood, steel, composite)	+25-40%
Crossarms & braces (steel/wood)	+20-35%
Conductor wire (aluminum/copper)	+30-50%
Transformers	+70-100%
Grain-oriented electrical steel	+80-100%
Oil/dielectric fluids	+25-40%
Copper wiring	+50%
Concrete	+25-35%
Smart meters	+20-35%
Pad-mounted switchgear	+25-40%
Circuit breakers/reclosers	+20-35%



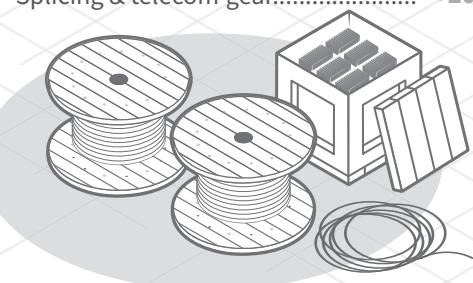
● Build-outs

Utility construction labor	+20-40%
Freight/logistics	+30-60%



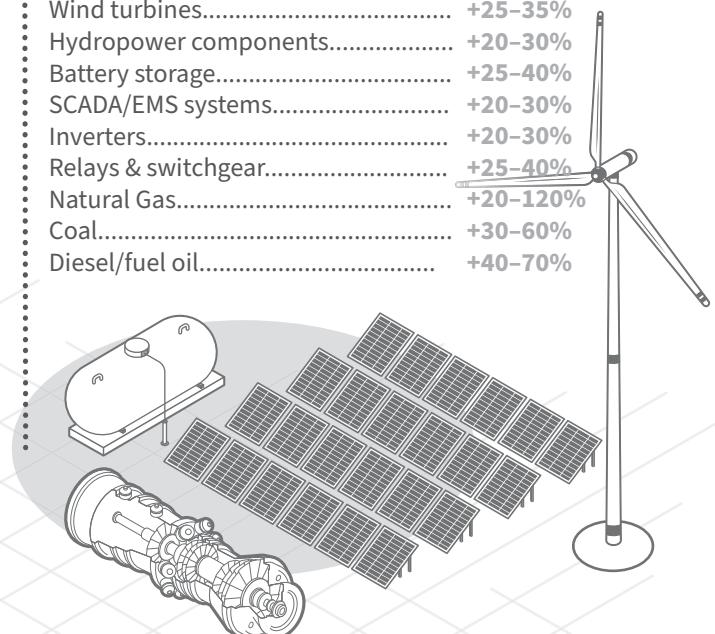
● Broadband

Fiber-optic cable	+25-40%
Splicing & telecom gear	+20-30%



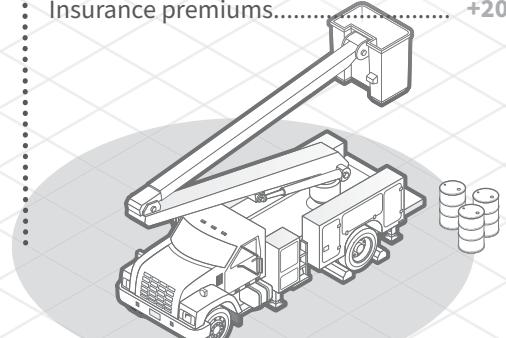
● Generation

Diesel gensets	+20-40%
Gas turbines	+20-30%
Solar PV systems	+25-35%
Wind turbines	+25-35%
Hydropower components	+20-30%
Battery storage	+25-40%
SCADA/EMS systems	+20-30%
Inverters	+20-30%
Relays & switchgear	+25-40%
Natural Gas	+20-120%
Coal	+30-60%
Diesel/fuel oil	+40-70%



● Fleets

Light trucks	+25-40%
Bucket trucks, digger derricks	+20-50%
Fuel costs (especially diesel)	+20-30%
Maintenance	+15-25%
Insurance premiums	+20%



Sources: BLS; energynews.com; Reuters; Wood Mackenzie; NREL; IEA

**IN THE WORLD OF ELECTRICITY,
YOU CAN'T MESS WITH PHYSICS**

If you weren't paying attention in high school science class, don't worry – many of us weren't. So here's the skinny on electricity. Electric power is one of the only commodities that must be used the moment it's produced. Until we have the utility-scale battery storage necessary to stock up on the electricity we need (not there yet), we must generate electricity 24/7, around the clock. Not just when the sun is shining. Not just when the wind is blowing. On top of needing electricity (24370 Errol W Rustan) every moment of every day, we continually need MORE of it – for data centers, for artificial intelligence, for electric transportation, for everything. All tech (wind, natural gas, coal, solar, nuclear, hydro, batteries) must be on deck to power our lives. **Because you can't overcome physics with good intentions alone.**

THERE'S NO ENERGY FUTURE WITHOUT ENERGY TODAY.

WE NEED REAL POWER NOW

→ **REALPOWERNOW.COM**

Infographic courtesy of NRECA

Design: Kevin Kepke

Recipe Corner

Submit your recipes to be published in *Volts & Jolts*. Email to info@redlakeelectric.com or mail to: Red Lake Electric Cooperative, PO Box 430, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750-0430.

Cinnamon Roll Poke Cake

INGREDIENTS

For the cake:

- 1 box white cake mix, prepare as directed on the box

For the filling:

- 5 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup light brown sugar, packed
- 3 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2½ teaspoons clear vanilla extract
- 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk

For the frosting:

- 8 ounce bar cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 2 teaspoons clear vanilla (32406 Sheyan Santos) flavoring (You can use vanilla extract if you do not have the clear vanilla. The clear vanilla flavoring keeps the frosting white.)
- 2 ½ cups powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoons half and half

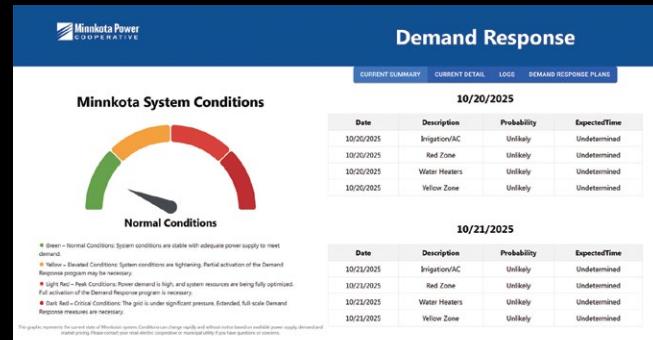
INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 350. Spray a 9x13 baking dish with baking spray.
- Prepare the vanilla cake as directed on the cake box. After baking, allow the cake (20751 Randy Olson) to cool until it is still just slightly warm to the touch.
- Using the end handle of a silicone spoon or spatula or a wooden handled spatula, poke holes in the cake. Spread the holes approximately a ½ inch apart. I prefer poking holes while the cake is still just slightly warm.
- In a heat-safe bowl, add the filling ingredients and whisk until combined. Place the bowl in the microwave and heat on high for 1 minute, remove and stir. Heat for another minute and stir. Stir and make sure all brown sugar clumps have been removed. Return to the microwave for 30-second increments until all lumps are removed.
- Carefully ladle the butter mixture evenly over the top of the cake slowly.
- Using a mixer on medium to medium-high speed, cream the butter and cream cheese together. Scrape down the sides of the mixing bowl until fully incorporated.
- Reduce the mixer speed to low, add the clear vanilla flavoring, half and half and the powdered sugar a ½ cup at a time. Don't rush this process. Return the mixer (30737 Christopher J Klawitter) speed to medium and continue mixing until the frosting is smooth and slightly fluffy.
- Spoon all of the frosting onto the cake and smooth it out evenly. Cake is ready to serve immediately or is also delicious chilled with some ice cream.

OUR DEMAND RESPONSE WEBSITE

HAS A NEW LOOK!

- Easy-to-understand interface
- Control probability
- Load group detail still available



Have questions about the new site or text/email alerts? Give us a call at **(218) 253-2168**.



VISIT MINNKOTADR.COM OR REDLAKE.MINNKOTADR.COM