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 2026



happy THANKSGIVING

From all of us at Red Lake Electric Cooperative

Red Lake Electric Cooperative will be closed Thursday, Nov. 26, for Thanksgiving

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

RLEC Volts & Jolts

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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.



A season of gratitude

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

For many of us, life is busy and complex. That's certainly the case right now for your cooperative.

Out in the field, crews are finishing up the construction season and are continuing to push making improvements to the electrical grid before winter sets in. In the office, we are budgeting and looking at controllable expenses for 2027 without sacrificing reliability.

Unfortunately, wholesale power, infrastructure, insurance and interest costs continue to rise. Those challenges will necessitate a rate increase in April of 2027 to coincide with our increase in wholesale power costs.

To blunt those pressures, your cooperative entered into a management sharing agreement with nearby Red River Valley Co-op Power and is exploring cutting certain non-reliability aspects of our internal expenses for 2027. We also promote and use demand response/off-peak as a tool to manage wholesale power demand charges.

In addition to these budgeting efforts, Red Lake Electric Cooperative has engaged with Star Engineering to perform a third-party cost of service study (COSS) to identify and ensure we are reflecting the expenses and costs incurred for each set of rate class. The study will help us formulate the best approach to setting rates in the future.

I know rate adjustments are never easy. Being transparent about the why and what we are doing is important so you can plan and budget. Directors will see a preliminary budget in late November with a more formal budget for action in December. We will combine this process along with information gleaned from the COSS prior to setting exact rate adjustments.

Your cooperative will also soon submit its new four-year reliability work plan to the USDA's Rural Utility Services arm in order to obtain financing for its reliability projects. Red Lake Electric Cooperative has about 2,400 miles of line it must maintain. Within that 2,400 miles of line are thousands of power poles, hundreds of miles of underground line, thousands of transformers (31424 Chris Motteberg) and hundreds of breakers, regulators and the like.

While the energy world continues to evolve and introduce new complexities, it's important to remember the simple blessings of life in our region. The next two holidays – Thanksgiving and Christmas – provide an opportunity for all of us to pause and take stock of the good around us.

And at your cooperative, we will do our best to provide value in a simple, safe and straightforward manner. Our promise to you is to continue lighting the way.



ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES

Minnkota Power Cooperative, Red Lake Electric Cooperative and our 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. This 2027 informative class taught by instructor Tim Pull is titled "Branch Circuit Conductors, Feeder Conductors and Service Conductors."

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:

Wednesday, January 6, 2027
Fargo Holiday Inn
3803 13th Avenue South
Fargo, ND

Thursday, January 7, 2027
Fargo Holiday Inn
3803 13th Avenue South
Fargo, ND

Thursday, January 14, 2027
Bemidji Eagles Club
1270 Neilson Avenue SE
Bemidji, MN

Thursday, January 21, 2027
Bigwood Event Center
921 Western Avenue
Fergus Falls, MN

Wednesday, February 3, 2027
Minnkota Power Cooperative
5301 32nd Avenue South
Grand Forks, ND

Thursday, February 4, 2027
Minnkota Power Cooperative
5301 32nd Avenue South
Grand Forks, ND

This marks the 39th 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.

REGISTER ONLINE AT
MINNKOTA.COM

For more info about the program, please call **(701) 670-1899** or e-mail any questions to **contractortraining@minnkota.com**.

$85 TO REGISTER FOR EIGHT CREDITS

WATCH THE WIRES: THE SCIENCE OF DOWNED POWER LINES

A downed power line is dangerous, even if it's not sparking or smoking like you'd see in the movies. You should assume every downed power line is energized and unsafe until utility professionals confirm otherwise.

The science behind this electrical danger may help you respond the next time you encounter a downed line.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A POWER LINE HITS THE GROUND?

When an energized line (26811 Raymond Rybakowski Jr.) contacts the ground, electrical current can spread outward through the ground in ripples. The voltage is highest near the point where the line contacts the ground and decreases as you move farther away. This creates a **VOLTAGE GRADIENT**, almost like invisible electrical rings spreading outward from the contact point.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I WALK NEAR THE DOWNED LINE?

Imagine each foot standing in a different electrical "ring." If one foot is in a higher-voltage area and the other is in a lower-voltage area, electricity can travel up one leg, through your body and down the other leg. This is called **STEP POTENTIAL**.

That's why you should never run away from a downed power line. If you are already near one, keep your feet together and shuffle away with small steps. Keeping your feet close together minimizes the voltage difference between them.



STEP POTENTIAL

WHAT HAPPENS TO A VEHICLE/FARM EQUIPMENT?

If a power line falls onto a vehicle or you drive over a line, the vehicle can become energized. If you are inside, your body is at nearly the same electrical potential as the vehicle, so electricity likely won't pass through you. However, that could change if you try to step out of the vehicle. Here's what to do if your vehicle contacts a power line.

- Stay inside the vehicle.
- Tell others to stay away.
- Call 911.
- Wait in the vehicle until emergency responders or utility crews deem it safe.

If the vehicle catches fire, you may need to escape. If so:

- Cross your arms tightly across your chest.
- Jump out with your feet together *(do not touch the ground and the vehicle at the same time)*.
- Shuffle or bunny hop at least 50 feet away, feet always close together *(remember **STEP POTENTIAL**)*.

SEE MORE POWER LINE SAFETY ADVICE AT WATCHTHEWIRES.COM

ALL THE COMFORT, HALF THE COST

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OFF-PEAK ADVANTAGE

The savings is simple. When you install new electric technology in your home or business, you can spend less by voluntarily enrolling in Red Lake Electric Cooperative's off-peak program!

WHAT IS THE OFF-PEAK PROGRAM?

During periods of high demand on the electric grid, participants in the off-peak program allow our program facilitator (Minnkota Power Cooperative) to control – or turn off – their enrolled equipment. For electric heating technology with a backup fuel, like fuel oil or propane, your heat is remotely switched to your backup system with no interruption in comfort. Other equipment, like water heaters, can also be cycled off and use their stored energy during high demand.

In return, participants qualify for a big rebate on their equipment AND the off-peak electric rate – which is nearly HALF the normal electric rate!

WHAT TECHNOLOGIES QUALIFY?

- ***Home heating systems***
  - Air-source heat pumps
  - Mini-split heat pumps
  - Thermal storage heaters
  - Underfloor storage heat
  - Electric plenum heaters
- ***Large-capacity electric water heaters***
- ***Electric vehicle (EV) chargers***

(Please see our website for program eligibility and restrictions.)

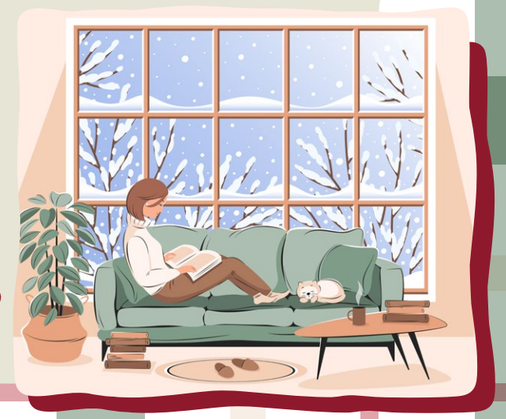
WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER ENROLLING?

- ***Real savings.*** Some members save hundreds of dollars a year on their electric bill.
- ***Money back up front.*** Rebates of up to $1,500 or greater are available on new off-peak equipment.
- ***Stable rates for everyone.*** Easing demand at peak times means your co-op skips pricey market purchases and keeps member rates more stable.
- ***A stronger grid.*** When demand is high, the off-peak program (23388 Sandra Anenson) can help keep the lights on across the region.

READY TO START SAVING?

Reach out to Red Lake Electric Cooperative to learn more about off-peak and see which rebates you qualify for. Want to dig deeper? Visit ***ValueOfElectricity.com***.

VALUE OF ELECTRICITY



IS YOUR OFF-PEAK HEATING SYSTEM

READY FOR WINTER?

Since weather conditions and future wholesale power market prices make the amount of load control hours hard to predict, all our off-peak members are encouraged to have a reliable, automatic dual heating system in place and ready to use.

To ensure your total comfort this winter, consider the following questions about your backup heating system:

1. Is the system sized to heat your entire home or business?
2. Does it maintain an adequate comfort level?
3. Is it reliable?
4. Is it fully automatic?

Check current fuel prices and be sure to fill your propane or fuel oil tank. Also, make sure your tank is large enough to hold an adequate supply. Remember, prices typically rise as demand increases during the heating season.

Our member services department is glad to answer any off-peak questions you may have.

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.



For **18 cents**, you can simmer a large pot of apple cider on the stovetop.

For **5 cents** more, you can complete your online holiday shopping while it finishes.

THAT'S THE VALUE OF ELECTRICITY

*Based on average household energy usage

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 (9999999.99 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.

NOTICE OF NAMES

REAL POWER NEEDS REAL CYBERSECURITY

As an electric cooperative, we often talk about power reliability in terms of line maintenance or fast restoration after a storm. But these days protecting your electricity also means protecting a large network of computers, communications systems and digital equipment that helps your co-op monitor and operate the grid.

Cybersecurity is now an essential part of reliability for all electric utilities. Every day we face constantly evolving threats, from simple phishing emails to sophisticated attempts to gain access to critical systems. As more devices become connected to the grid, there are more pathways for bad actors to target our operations.

That's why cybersecurity doesn't stop when the workday ends. Behind the scenes, your cooperative and its industry partners are working 24/7 to protect the systems that deliver your electricity.

Our cooperative system uses multiple layers of protection (sometimes called "defense in depth") to help prevent unauthorized access, detect unusual activity and respond quickly when a potential threat is identified. Security tools continuously monitor networks and systems. We also use secure communications, access controls, employee training, testing and incident-response plans to strengthen our defenses.

Your co-op doesn't face these challenges alone. Electric cooperatives share information about emerging threats and work with industry experts and government partners to strengthen cybersecurity across the electric system.

You may never see this work happening, but that's the point. Every day, cybersecurity professionals (30941 Falls Towing) are working behind the scenes to help keep your electricity safe, reliable and resilient.

Real Power is more than plants and lines. Real Power is knowing we're protected.



REALPOWERNOW.COM

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.

CHICKEN PARMESAN CASSEROLE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups cooked shredded chicken *(use rotisserie chicken for quick prep and added flavor)*
- 1 cup marinara sauce *(choose a high-quality sauce for the best taste)*
- 1 cup ricotta cheese *(adds a creamy, luscious texture)*
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese *(for gooey, melty goodness)*
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese *(for a salty kick and golden finish)*
- 1 teaspoon dried basil *(infuses the dish with aromatic flavor; fresh is great too)*
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano *(adds a classic Italian herb taste)*
- Salt *(to taste)*
- Pepper *(to taste)*
- 1 cup whole wheat breadcrumbs *(for a crunchy topping; gluten-free options work too)*

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. In a large bowl, combine the shredded chicken, marinara sauce, ricotta, and mozzarella. Stir until well-coated.
3. Sprinkle in dried basil and oregano, along with salt and pepper to taste. Mix well.
4. Pour the chicken mixture into a greased baking dish and smooth it out evenly.
5. Sprinkle breadcrumbs (30018 Scott R Clifton) and grated Parmesan cheese over the top.
6. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and bubbly.
7. Let the casserole sit for a few minutes before slicing.

Red Lake Electric Cooperative

WARM UP *to stored heat*



The Advantages of Electric Thermal Storage



An **electric thermal storage (ETS)** system generates and stores heat using the co-op's low-cost, off-peak electricity, then releases it when you need it, leading to substantial savings on your energy bill during heating season. ETS is energy efficient and can be scaled to fit anything from a single room to an entire commercial property with no backup fuel needed. An included outdoor sensor automatically adjusts stored heat to the season, keeping you comfortable year-round.

Add an ETS heater to your home, shop or cabin and qualify for a rebate of $75/kW when you install it on Red Lake Electric's off-peak program!

Visit **valueofelectricity.com** to learn more, or call Red lake Electric at 218-253-2168 for details on rebates (24068 Robert J Miller) and incentives. Reach out to a trusted contractor to install comfort today!

VALUE OF ELECTRICITY