



POWER CONNECTION

member driven. community focused. energy smart.

MAY 2019



STEARNS ELECTRIC LAUNCHES MY CO-OP CARES



**myco-op
CARES**

COOPERATIVE EMPLOYEES CLEAR OUTDOOR PATIOS,
PAINT FENCING AT MOTHER OF MERCY IN ALBANY

Stearns Electric Association recently launched its new 'My Co-op Cares' community involvement program. On Wednesday, April 24, Cooperative employee volunteers helped Mother of Mercy Nursing Home in Albany prepare for Spring by clearing two outdoor patio areas and painting a decorative fence.

"Stearns Electric prides itself as a cooperative and aims to follow the seven cooperative principles. One of those principles is Concern for Community," Whitney Ditlevson, communications and marketing specialist, Stearns Electric, said. "Electric cooperatives essentially belong to the communities we

serve. The My Co-op Cares program helps our Cooperative live out this principle, focusing on giving back to local communities within our service territory."

"The ultimate goal of the My Co-op Cares program is to bundle all of the Cooperative's current and future community initiatives under one umbrella. This includes our Operation Round Up and Energy Education programs as well as our Coal Creek bus tour and annual Twins Youth Baseball Clinics," she continued.

One pillar to the My Co-op Cares program is a new initiative allowing employees the opportunity to

volunteer during working hours within Stearns Electric's service territory. Three times per year, the Co-op sends teams of employees out to local organizations and charitable causes to share their time and talents.

"Stearns Electric wanted to provide more opportunities for our employees to get involved in our local communities. By offering time for volunteering during the workday, employees have the chance to give back outside of their busy personal schedules. Additionally, employees gain knowledge about the volunteer needs in our area that they might not

...continued on page 6

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

SPRING IS HERE AND THE CONSTRUCTION SEASON BEGINS



This last winter was challenging, even for the hardiest Minnesotans. But Spring has indeed arrived and Stearns Electric Association is gearing up for another busy season. Here are some of our planned activities for 2019.

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WORK PLAN PROJECTS

In my December 2018 column, I talked about the importance of the Stearns Electric Construction Work Plan that lays out the work activities and funding requirements to complete electrical distribution system upgrades and maintenance. Stearns Electric's primary goal is to provide reliable and safe electricity to our member-consumers. The work plan and maintenance projects we've planned for the year improve reliability so that your electrical service remains continuous and uninterrupted.

In 2019, Stearns Electric plans to complete just over \$14 million of work on our electrical distribution system. Approximately \$7 million is for system construction and plant replacement activities. The remainder is for system operations and maintenance activities.

Our planned work also includes replacing about 20 miles of three phase line and nearly complete an underground cable replacement that addresses outdated cable susceptible to outages. We will also test 10% of over 60,000 poles on the Stearns Electric system and plan to replace approximately 375

poles that have been found to be defective during testing.

Another proactive project kicking off this Spring is our Security Light Upgrade Plan. We have found that our aging high pressure sodium (HPS) security lights result in a high number of service calls and unplanned work that disrupts day-to-day activities at the Cooperative. So, in order to address this issue, we're kicking off a three year plan to upgrade 3,400 HPS security lights to LEDs. The new LED security lights are more reliable and durable than HPS security lights.

All of these construction and maintenance activities are a proactive approach to address potential power outages, reduce member inconvenience and create efficiency in our work.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Tree related outages are one of the biggest causes of outages for our members. So beyond our construction activities, we invest over \$2 million into our Right-of-Way (ROW) program each year to reduce potential outages and energy hazards. 2019 marks year three of an aggressive four-year plan to address problem trees on our system. Even though we are only halfway through the program, our efforts are already paying off. In 2018, we saw over a 76 percent reduction in tree-related outages on feeders that have been cleared and we expect the results to continue.

RESTORING POWER 24/7

While our construction schedule is packed full, our first commitment in the event of a power outage is to restore your power. While Stearns Electric has a strong reliability record and creates proactive work plans to prevent outages, some are simply unavoidable. And when the power does go out, you can count on us to go out, too. Even as I'm writing this article in early May, I look out my window at several inches of snow on the ground while our crews are out restoring power to some of our members.

This year we have experienced extreme weather all around. We had an above average number of outages due to bitter cold temperatures, strong wind and heavy snow. Thank you for your support and patience when we experience outages. We are hoping that our summer storm season is less eventful.

I am looking forward to warmer weather ahead!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Doege".

Robin C. Doege
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

MEMBER NOTICES

SECURITY LIGHTING UPGRADES

Stearns Electric Association currently has approximately 4,400 lights, including security lights, street/highway lights and decorative lights connected to our distribution system. Security lighting accounts for over 95% of these lights, with approximately 3,400 security lights being high pressure sodium (HPS) security lights and the remaining 1,000 being light-emitting diode, or LED, security lights. **Before work begins in your area, members affected will be notified by a letter in the mail.**

Due to the high number of service calls and low efficiency associated with the HPS lights, Stearns Electric plans to upgrade all of them to LED lights over the next three years. Upon completion of this project, we anticipate the number of service calls to decrease by nearly 75% and the annual security/street light energy use to decrease by 66%. New LEDs offer a whiter, higher-quality light and are expected to last four times longer than the existing HPS lights.

Stearns Electric has contracted with Skyline Utilities, LLC to perform the replacement of these fixtures. Skyline Utilities will make an attempt to notify you of the work to be performed once they arrive on your property. If you are not home at the time, the crew will leave a door knocker explaining the work that was completed.

While we strive to prevent interruptions to your service, you may experience a momentary interruption during the replacement. We thank you for your cooperation in helping us maintain our distribution system and will attempt to minimize any inconveniences. If you have any questions prior to or during this replacement project, please contact Stearns Electric during business hours by calling (800) 962-0655 and ask to speak with a Project Coordinator.

DISTRIBUTED ENERGY RESOURCES

At their February 21 Board Meeting, the Stearns Electric Association Board of Directors voted to revise the current member policy for Cogeneration/Distributed Energy Resource Interconnection Standards and Rules. These changes reflect updates made by the State of Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in MN Statute 216B.1611. Stearns Electric has updated the Cooperative's policy to reflect the adoption of and compliance with the Cooperative Minnesota Distribution Energy Resources Interconnection Process, (C-MIP). All new distribution energy resources will follow the C-MIP interconnection process beginning May 1, 2019.

ST. JOSEPH OFFICE

Effective May 28, 2019 the Stearns Electric Association Branch Office in St. Joseph will be closed to walk-in traffic. While the activities of this office remain in high value to the Cooperative, over the last number of years member traffic has declined. By implementing this change we are able to modify activities for efficiency. An external payment drop box will remain on site at the St. Joseph Branch Office and employees will be available to meet with members by appointment.

BOARD MEETING

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Stearns Electric Association was held on March 28, 2019 at 1:00 p.m. at the Stearns Electric Association Headquarters in Melrose, Minnesota.

Miranda Wendlandt from Clifton Larson Allen reported on the 2018 annual audit results. Ms. Wendlandt stated the consolidated financial statements reviewed presented fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of Stearns Cooperative Electric Association as of December 31, 2018 and 2017 with no findings. A motion in favor of accepting the audit was carried.

Manager of Engineering Matt O'Shea presented a summary of the Work Order process review. Many tactics related to this project are a result of recent Strategic Plan priorities. One of the major priorities of Stearns Electric's 2019 construction work plan is related to upcoming security light replacements. Mr. O'Shea projects a 75% decrease to maintenance calls due to the replacements. He also added the use of the new LED fixtures will not only save energy, but also reduce the carbon footprint.

Manager of Operations Glenn Blommel gave a brief overview of several contracts signed annually for the upcoming year's work. A highlight of the Safety report was how a group of five linemen worked with IT to build a more streamlined, paperless version of documenting job briefings within iAuditor instead of using paper. System reliability numbers were also shared with the Board.

CEO Robin Doege provided the Board with updates related to GRE wholesale rates. A recommendation should be ready for the GRE Board this summer.

Mr. Rothstein suggested that the Board by-law committee made up of Mr. Nathe, Mr. Fries and himself set a date in April to begin the review of Board by-laws and present any changes to the rest of the Board for approval.

Next Meeting: May 30, 2019



POWER OUTAGES

IT STARTS WITH YOU!

Summer storms and construction projects will often lead to power outages during the summer months. If you suspect a power outage, be sure to report it.

Stearns Electric Association works diligently to maintain consistent power quality and reliability. However, with thousands of miles of power lines exposed to the elements, trees and small animals, power outages do occur. And when they do, it is incredibly important that members report an outage because it is simply the fastest way to locate an outage cause and get the problem resolved.

When members report an outage, dispatchers at Stearns Electric usually take the call and enter the meter location of the outage into the computer system with special software that documents each outage and tracks the source of the problem. The more reports our Dispatch Center receives from members, the faster they can pin-down whether the outage effects single properties or an extensive area. Those reports help determine the possible cause of the outage and that information can be relayed to the crews.

Line workers head out to assess the situation of an outage as soon as they can to determine the issue and restore power as fast as possible. When responding to outages, Stearns Electric's first priority is public safety. Crews are sent to remove damaged power lines from roadways first. After that, substation power is restored. Sometimes, service to hundreds or several thousand customers can be restored immediately by replacing a fuse on a

substation transformer.

Next, the major distribution feeders are repaired. These are the lines that come out of a substation that have three wires resting on a cross arm. If energy cannot be distributed over these lines, your home cannot receive power. Tap lines are repaired next. Tap lines carry power to groups of homes from the distribution feeders. Finally, individual service lines are repaired.

After power is restored, line workers report the time and cause of the outage and all is recorded. Reoccurring outages in specific areas may be a sign of a faulty product, which the Co-op is able to assess with the recorded data.

When members report power outages after-hours, their call is routed to Cooperative Response Center (CRC) and the same process occurs.

It is important that when members report an outage they know the name of the first person that shows up on the bill, the account number, or the address of the service that is out of power. This allows Stearns Electric employees to speed up the process of locating an outage.

There is no way to know how long an outage will take to restore, so please remember that Stearns Electric will do everything we can to get your power restored as fast as possible in the event of an outage.

WHAT TO DO IF THE LIGHTS GO OUT

ASSESS THE SITUATION:

Do you have power at some locations in your home? If so, the problem is likely a fuse or breaker. This may be a warning of overloaded wiring, a short in the wiring or a defective appliance.

Do your neighbors have power? Whether or not your neighbors have power can help us determine if it is an isolated outage or something larger.

Can you see anything outside your home that might have caused an outage? If you see anything like sparks, trees down in the area, a car in the ditch, a construction crew digging in an area or anything suspicious that may have caused the problem, it is important for members to let Stearns Electric Association know. This information can be very helpful.

REPORT YOUR OUTAGE

Call us at (800) 962-0655. If you have created a SmartHub account you can report an outage online or via your mobile device by logging into your SmartHub account and clicking on the "Report an Outage" link.

Once you've reported your outage follow us on social media! We often post information during a major outage on our Facebook page and you can also keep tabs on the outage via our live outage map.

We always appreciate your patience while crews work diligently and safely during power outages. Once we know about your outage, crews will be dispatched immediately so your power can be restored as quickly as possible.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY



SAFETY TIPS THAT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

Electric cooperatives' top priority is always to provide safe, reliable, affordable energy to their members. Your well-being and that of the communities we serve are of paramount concern.

May not only means Spring storms and potentially severe weather, it also heralds the beginning of the celebration season for many high school students, especially seniors. Proms, graduation parties and other social gatherings are often associated with this time of year.

While we naturally focus on the sunny aspects this season brings, we also sometimes hear about preventable tragedies involving young people and car accidents. This brings safety to the top of our minds.

Does your teen or loved one know what to do in the event of a collision with a utility pole resulting in a downed power line? Do your loved ones know what to do if they come upon an accident with a downed power line? This month we're sharing a few safety tips that we hope you never have to use. But if you do, they could save your life.

LIFE-SAVING TIPS

If a car collides with a utility pole, the vehicle may be charged with electricity. Anyone exiting the car could come in contact with thousands of volts of electricity from the downed line. In essence, when you step out of the car, you become part of the electricity's path to the ground and could be electrocuted. It's critical to stay in the vehicle and tell others to do the same until a emergency crews have told you it's safe to exit the car. If the vehicle is on fire or you must exit for other safety reasons, jump clear of the vehicle. Do not let any part of your body or clothing touch the vehicle and ground at the same time. Land with your feet together and shuffle away (in small steps with your feet still together) to avoid electric shock. Keep moving away until you are at least 40 feet from the vehicle.

If you come upon a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines, keep your distance. A downed power line can energize the ground up to 35 feet away. While your natural instinct may be to rush to the car to help, instead pause. Do not approach the car or scene of the accident. Tell others to stay away. While you may be concerned about injuries to those involved,

...continued on page 6

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

PLACEMENT MATTERS! KEEP THIS A/C TIP IN MIND THIS SUMMER

Avoid placing items like lamps and televisions near your air-conditioning thermostat. The thermostat senses heat from these appliances, which can cause the A/C to run longer than necessary.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKUP



OUTDOORS

Look up – trimming trees, cleaning gutters or inspecting the roof can bring you close to overhead power lines. Know where power lines cross your yard and always keep yourself and your equipment at least 10 feet away from a power line.



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ELECTRICAL SAFETY CONTINUED



MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

Safety Starts with You.



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVES

the best action you can take is to alert emergency officials, who will in turn coordinate with the power provider. For the same reasons described above, never drive over a downed power line or through water that is touching a downed power line.

If you have a downed power line on your property as a result of a falling tree, storm or other circumstance, do not go near the power line. Assume that the downed line is energized and dangerous. Never try to move the power line even if you think it's not energized or if you are using a non-conductive material. We recognize that you may be anxious to clear your property of tree limbs or other debris near the downed line, but please wait until after a Stearns Electric crew or emergency officials have confirmed that it is safe to do so.

MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

May is a time where we are even more mindful of safety because it is Electrical Safety Month. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured and electrocuted as a result of electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. We know first-hand how dangerous electricity is because we work with it all day, every day, and it's our duty and responsibility to keep co-op employees and our communities safe. It is no accident that safety is our top priority.

MY CO-OP CARES CONTINUED

otherwise know about," Ditlevson continued. "It's great to work for a company that values people," Josh Sjogren, employee volunteer, said.

The first My Co-op Cares event was held at Mother of Mercy Nursing Home in Albany. Nine employees spent the afternoon clearing out leaves, raking grass, preparing flowerbeds for planting and painting a fence in the patio areas of the facility so residents can enjoy time outdoors.

Stearns Electric employees were very grateful for the time to volunteer, especially with such great weather. "It was an honor to help out and interact with the residents," Sjogren recalled. "I truly enjoyed the entire experience! It was so nice to work with my co-workers who I don't get to see daily. Plus, it was fun to get out of the office and feel like we were making a difference in the community," Sue Meyer, employee volunteer, said.

Employees and residents at Mother of Mercy shared their appreciation for the Co-op volunteers. "The residents had many questions about our work. It was obvious they were pleased with the beautification project and it was a nice distraction for their day," Judy Terres-Madsen said. "Many sat outside and watched us rake and paint, allowing us to talk and visit throughout the afternoon."



NEWS

THE STEARNS ELECTRIC OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED ON MONDAY, MAY 27, IN HONOR OF MEMORIAL DAY.



**TWINS
PLAY BALL!
MN YOUTH
CLINIC
DATES**

Each year Stearns Electric Association sponsors the MN Twins Play Ball Youth Clinics within our service territory. The clinics are FREE, and focus on hitting, fielding and throwing.

Paynesville

Friday, July 12
High School
Baseball Stadium
Ages 6-9: 2 p.m.
Ages 10-13: 3:30 p.m.

St. Cloud

Saturday, July 20
Whitney Field C2
Ages 6-9: 10 a.m.
Ages 10-13: 11:30 a.m.

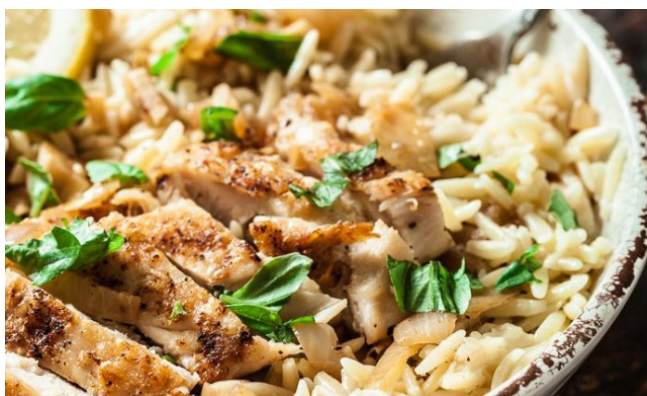
BREAKFAST ON THE FARM



Stearns Electric is once again a proud sponsor of the hands-on, educational event designed to help people of all ages learn more about the farms and farm families that produce our food. The event is also a way to salute farm families for their hard work and dedication to producing high quality food, their commitment to protecting the environment, and their contributions to their communities and local economy.

The Stearns County Breakfast on the Farm will be held at Mill Creek Dairy on Saturday, June 1, 2019 from 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. \$5 per plate and children 5 and under eat free! The event will include children's activities, a farm animal petting zoo, tours of the farm, dairy treat with a Dairy Princess and an obstacle course with the Vikings Cheerleaders. The event will occur rain or shine! Parking will be available at the ROCORI High School and a free shuttle bus will take you to the farm.

For more information visit the website:
www.stearnsfarmbreakfast.com



cookingcorner

LEMON BASIL ORZO WITH CHICKEN

Submitted by: Megan Lynch

Ingredients:

1/2 lb dry orzo pasta
2 lbs chicken breast
Olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp garlic powder
2 TB salted butter
6 cloves garlic, chopped
1 onion, chopped
1 cup dry white wine
2 TB freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 cup grated Parmesan
1/2 cup freshly torn basil leaves

Directions:

In a pot of generously salted water, cook orzo until al dente; don't overcook. Drain and toss with about 2 TB olive oil to prevent sticking. Keep warm. In a small bowl, whisk together 1/2 tsp kosher salt, 1/4 tsp black pepper, and garlic powder. Sprinkle evenly on both sides of chicken pieces. In a large skillet add 4 TB olive oil over medium high heat. When hot, cook chicken. Remove chicken and keep warm. In skillet, add the butter over medium high heat. Once melted, add garlic and onion, stirring 1-2 minutes. Add wine. Simmer for about 3 minutes. Add lemon juice and turn off heat. Add salt and pepper to taste. Place cooked orzo in a large serving bowl; toss with freshly grated Parmesan, onion/garlic mixture and basil leaves. Serve with chicken and garnish as desired.

CONTEST DETAILS:

One member per account may submit one recipe per month. Recipes will be saved for future publications. The recipe selected each month will receive a \$10 credit on their electric bill. Submit recipes to wditlevson@stearnselectric.org or mail to: Stearns Electric, Cooking Corner, PO BOX 816, St. Joseph, MN 56374.



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ENERGYWISE AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP PROMOTION



SOME CALL THIS OFFER COOL. OTHERS CALL IT HOT. WE SAY, IT'S BOTH.

COOL and heat your home with an energy-saving air source heat pump AND receive a HOT promotional rebate!

ASHP	REGULAR REBATE	PROMO REBATE	ASHP	REGULAR REBATE	PROMO REBATE
15 SEER	\$650	\$1,000	16+ SEER	\$700	\$1,500

AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS PROVIDE HOME COOLING AND SUPPLEMENTAL HEATING, USING 72% LESS ELECTRICITY THAN CONVENTIONAL AIR CONDITIONERS AND FURNACES.

Air source heat pumps must be enrolled on Stearns Electric's EnergyWise Dual Fuel and Cycled Air Conditioning programs between April 1 and June 30, 2019 to be eligible for this promotion. Limited funds are available and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Rebate amounts and programs are subject to change without notice.