



POWER CONNECTION

member driven. community focused. energy smart.

FEBRUARY 2020

ELECTRIFYING EDUCATION

AREA STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT ENERGY, ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Every year as part of the Cooperative's commitment to safety and community, Stearns Electric Association presents a one-hour energy education and electrical safety demonstration to local fourth grade classrooms throughout our service territory. This year, we presented to nearly 1,800 students at 35 schools across Central Minnesota.

During the presentation, students learn about the basics of electricity, including details on the seven types of generation fuels, conductors and insulators, our nation's power grid and Stearns Electric's local distribution system. The highlight of the presentation is the live electric

home and farm model, where students see first-hand what happens when people, vehicles or equipment come into contact with electricity.

Our Cooperative's line workers co-present the energy education and electrical safety demonstrations with the Communications department. Stearns Electric linemen Mike Siemers and Wayne Senst took turns this year facilitating the safety demonstrations for local classrooms.

"It's important for us to educate the students so they know how to be safe with things involving electricity, and overall just being safer in general," Senst said. "After our presentation,

they can go home and share the information with their family so everyone learns how to be safer with electricity."

"The best part of presenting energy education is being able to answer the questions that the students have," Siemers said. "My favorite presentations are the ones where students ask good questions about my work as a lineman or about the distribution system."

"It's so fun to watch the students learn throughout the presentation.

Continued on page 6.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



MEMBERS TO VOTE

ON BYLAW ADJUSTMENTS

In 2020, the Stearns Electric Association Board of Directors is asking the Cooperative's members to approve proposed amendments to the Cooperative's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.

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As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, Stearns Electric is governed by a series of documents, including Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, that were first established when the Cooperative was founded in 1937. These important documents provide a framework for governing and conducting business. As time passes, the energy industry changes, technology advances and member needs and expectations grow, it is important to periodically review and amend the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws in order to remain relevant and effective.

Over the last year a committee, including three Board members, Stearns Electric staff, an attorney and a third-party communication consultant, conducted a review of the Cooperative's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. After reviewing these documents line by line and comparing them to Cooperative business procedures, future needs, and industry advancements, they identified and suggested necessary alterations. These suggested changes were then reviewed and discussed with the full Stearns Electric Board of Directors.

While the proposed amendments have been approved by the current Board of Directors, they cannot be placed into effect without approval by a majority vote of the members that participate in the voting process.

This membership vote will take place in conjunction with the Director elections and Annual Meeting on April 2, 2020.

Before your ballot package arrives in mid-March, we want to ensure that you feel educated to place your vote. While the bulk of changes proposed reflect an update in language and/or grammar to make the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws easier to understand, the following summaries reflect the most significant amendments:

Removal of Outdated Language

and Practices: Any language related to practices that have been discontinued over time by the Cooperative has been removed.

Simplified Requirements of

Membership: Due to changes in technology and the sometimes lengthy and difficult process to secure written agreements with new members, the proposed changes simplify the process to become a member and receive electric service from the Cooperative. The new language also reinforces that any entity receiving electric service from Stearns Electric is considered a member of the Cooperative and therefore bound to the Cooperative's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.

Connecting to the Stearns Electric

Distribution System: The proposed change addresses member-owned distributed energy resources, such as wind generators and solar panels as well as other member-owned equipment. This change includes interconnection and other requirements to safeguard the Cooperative's distribution system, its employees and members.

Director Positions: Proposed changes provide the Board of Directors flexibility for the future to adjust the size of the Board and district boundaries as necessary to maintain equitable representation for members in each district.

Director Tenure: Proposed changes eliminate director term limits. While the term length of three years will remain intact, directors would be able to run for an unlimited number of terms. Rapid changes in the energy industry and increased demands of directors require Board members to have extensive knowledge and certifications. Eliminating terms provides sufficient time to on board new directors, complete in-depth training and education courses, and allows the Cooperative to benefit from Board member training and experience.

Director Nomination Process:

Proposed changes simplify the process for a member to run for a position on the Board by eliminating a complicated committee process and replacing it with a more efficient and secure application process which mirrors how an individual would apply to run for office in a standard government election.

Retirement of Capital Credits:

Proposed changes remove the Board's ability to retire Capital Credits early to members age seventy and over due to ADA compliance.

Director Vacancies: Vacancies in the past were filled by the existing Board of Directors. The proposed amendment would put that decision in the hands of the Cooperative's

YOU'RE INVITED TO STEARNS ELECTRIC'S 83RD ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, April 2, 2020
MELROSE AREA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

As a member-consumer of Stearns Electric Association, you are also an owner of the Cooperative. As an owner, you have a voice in the operation of our organization. Through attendance at the Annual Meeting and the election of your Board of Directors, you help set the future direction of our Cooperative.

MEETING DETAILS:

Doors Open 6:30 p.m.	Business Meeting 7:00 p.m.	Ice Cream Social 8:00 p.m.
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GIFTS AND DOOR PRIZES:

The first 300 members will receive a one-pound block of cheese and one-pound of butter quarters as a gift from the Cooperative. We will also be giving away 10 - \$100 gift card door prizes. You must be present at the meeting to win.

Watch for more details in the March Power Connection or visit www.stearnslectric.org for more information.

members to vote on a replacement director.

Arbitration: Proposed changes allow the member or the Cooperative to choose arbitration instead of a jury trial, which typically can provide a speedier and less costly method to resolve disputes.

A summary and complete text of the proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws recommended by the Stearns Electric Board of Directors can be viewed at www.stearnslectric.org/about-us/2020BylawVote. In addition, each member will receive this information as part of their ballot package in March. Members will have the option to vote online, by

mail or in person at the Annual Meeting on April 2, 2020.

We are confident these changes will result in more efficient operations at the Cooperative and better engage our members in the election process. We realize there is a lot of information presented here, so don't hesitate to reach out to us during business hours at (800) 962-0655 if you have questions or comments regarding the proposed amendments.

Sincerely,



Randy Rothstein
Board President

BOARD MEETING

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Stearns Electric Association was held on December 26, 2019 at 1:00 p.m. at the Stearns Electric Association office located in Melrose, Minnesota.

CEO Robin Doege has submitted an application to be part of the Governor's Advisory Council on Climate Change. The current financial condition of the Cooperative's subsidiary businesses was reviewed noting that Stearns Electric no longer has ownership in Karian Peterson.

VP of Administration and Finance Vicky Herkenhoff reviewed information related to personnel matters and the upcoming 2020 director elections for Districts 1, 7 and 8. The Board was also asked to approve three Operation Round Up Trust Board Members: District 1, Tony Wenzel; District 3, Joyce Pappenfus; and District 8, Jeff Mayer.

VP of Engineering and Operations Matt O'Shea gave an overview of various items from the Operations division including the work order review process. A group of Stearns Electric employees involved in building the new process visited East Central Energy recently to learn about how it makes that cooperative's processes more efficient. The Operations report also included current activities of the crews, vegetation management and minor outages. Safety and reliability reports were provided for examination.

The Board approved a proposal for discontinuing the practice of early Capital Credit retirements to seniors, as the co-op must stay in compliance with the American Disabilities Act which prohibits discrimination based upon age.

Cooperative policy review will take place beginning in 2020. A committee to review these policies will include Board members Arlyn Lawrenz and Dick Nathe, as well as Stearns Electric staff members. Attorney Scott Dymoke will also be involved for input on best practices and legal perspective.

Next Board Meeting:
February 27, 2020

ENERGYWISE

ALL-ELECTRIC COMFORT IN EVERY SEASON: AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS

ASHPs heat and cool your home – plus they're efficient!

It's the best of both worlds! Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) provide home cooling and supplemental heating with less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces. The technology concentrates heat in the air and moves it into your home (for heating when temperatures are mild such as during spring and fall), and outside (for cooling during the summer). ASHPs are one of the most effective ways to improve your home's energy efficiency.



ASHPs can provide heat at temperatures as low as the single digits, and the technology continues to improve every year. An ASHP qualifies as an acceptable electric heat source for the Cooperative's Dual Fuel Heating Program, which offers a lower EnergyWise® rate. In addition, Stearns Electric Association provides rebates up to \$700 for members who install an ASHP. Contact our Energy Services department to learn more about air source heat pumps and other efficiency programs available. We will be offering a special spring promotion for new ASHP installations beginning April 1, 2020. Learn more in upcoming editions of the Power Connection.

CMBA HOME SHOW



Join us for the 2020 CMBA Home Show, March 13 - 15, at the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud!

- Admission is \$5 for adults; free for those 17 and under. Military are also free.
- March 13 - 15 | Friday, 12 - 7 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. – 6 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- River's Edge Convention Center, 10 4th Ave. S, St. Cloud, MN 56301.
- Over 200 home and lifestyle vendors.
- Junk Junktion Market (Friday and Saturday).
- Lifestyle Stage with presentations throughout the show.

Stearns Electric is proud to be a sponsor of the CMBA Home Show and we hope to see you there!

WHOLESALE POWER PROVIDER

A PARTNER THAT CARES: *Sustainability at Great River Energy*

As a cooperative, Great River Energy — Stearns Electric Association's wholesale power provider — is deeply committed to sustainability through solid environmental policies and practices, and helping to build strong communities.



Sustainability has been at the heart of the organization since it was formed in 1999. Great River Energy (GRE) commits diverse resources to deliver on its promise to provide its member-owner cooperatives with affordable, reliable energy in harmony with a sustainable environment.

GRE provides energy through a diverse portfolio of power supply resources and a dependable transmission system, all of which serve the region's energy market. GRE is committed to reaching 50% renewable energy by 2030. The cooperative is on schedule to reach that goal, with plans to sustain 30% renewable energy in 2020.

Some additional examples of sustainability in action at GRE include:

- Environmental management systems and ISO 14001 registration
- Economic development efforts in member cooperative service territories
- Community-based sponsorships and contributions
- DryFin^{ing}[™], a lignite fuel enhancement process making coal cleaner and more efficient

"We're deeply committed to sustainability," said Erik Heinen, Great River Energy's environmental and sustainability administrator. "More and more, individuals and companies are expecting that their power providers have a clear commitment to the environment, the communities they live in and serve, and their employees. We want to continue to provide Stearns Electric's end-use consumer with affordable, reliable power in a sustainable manner."

GRE has delivered on its commitment to sustainability for more than 20 years and will continue to do so for the benefit of its member cooperatives and the communities they serve.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

KEEP ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN MIND AS YOU COZY UP NEXT TO THE FIREPLACE

Are you using your fireplace efficiently? Remember to turn down the thermostat when burning a fire, and close the damper when a fire is not burning.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKUP

SPACE HEATERS

While they keep you warm, space heaters don't come without risks. Stay safe by keeping your heater on a flat surface, plugged directly into a wall outlet and at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from flammable items.



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ENERGY EDUCATION CONTINUED



We actually test their new knowledge about halfway through each presentation with an activity," Whitney Ditlevson, communications and marketing supervisor, said. "Our goal is to provide them with a little bit of background on electricity before showing them the display."



"Once we get to the safety display, the students are so excited," Katie Anderson, member and employee engagement coordinator, said. "They really enjoy seeing the arcs and sparks of the display, and the linemen are really great about driving home the messages of safety - explaining and demonstrating the dangers of electricity."

"The linemen are able to answer the

technical questions that the students have with real-life examples and experiences," Anderson continued. "Throughout the presentation, students are able to learn more about what a line worker does and understand how electricity gets to their homes and schools from the power plant."

"My favorite part of teaching energy education is watching the kids get excited, but at the same time learning why it's important to be safe with electricity," Senst said.

"The passion that the linemen have for their job is obvious when they are in front of the students," Ditlevson explained. "I can tell they really enjoy sharing their knowledge and experiences with the fourth graders."

Although students are always excited to see the live safety demonstration, the energy education presentations are intended to reiterate the Cooperative's messages regarding safety around electrical equipment.

Perhaps the most important safety takeaway from the presentation is the students' knowledge about what to do if a vehicle hits a power pole.

"One thing I hope fourth graders walk away knowing after each

presentation is what to do if the vehicle they are in hits a power pole," Siemers said. "When they leave our presentation, I hope they all know to stay in the vehicle unless it starts on fire."

Stearns Electric Association values community involvement and public safety. Our energy education presentations reinforce these important messages with the hope that local students will bring their new electrical efficiency and safety knowledge home to their families.

For more information on our annual energy education programming, please visit www.stearnselectric.org.



TOP 5 REASONS TO LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

- 1 **OUTAGE INFORMATION**
Get the most recent outage updates and learn how to prepare for summer storms and keep your family safe.
- 2 **YOUR CO-OP CARES**
Check out spotlight stories on how your Cooperative supports the community.
- 3 **CONTESTS AND GIVEAWAYS**
Who doesn't like prizes? Check our page regularly for current promotions.
- 4 **TASTY SAVINGS**
That's right - we're featuring energy efficient recipes weekly!
- 5 **MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**
One more way to connect with your Cooperative.



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MEMBER NOTICE

2020 COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

The Cooperative is excited to launch our 2020 community campaign: "Work Here. Live Here. Serve Here." this month! Make sure to check out the back panel of The Power Connection throughout the year to learn more about our employees who work, live and serve right here in the same communities as you, our member-consumers.

CO-GENERATION AND SMALL POWER PRODUCTION NOTICE

In compliance with Cooperative Rules implementing Minnesota Statute section 216B.164 Co-generation and Small Power Production Notice, Stearns Electric Association is required to interconnect with, and purchase electricity from, co-generation and small power production facilities that satisfy the conditions of a Qualifying Facility.

Stearns Electric has available and will provide free information to all interested members regarding rates and interconnection requirements. An application for interconnection is required for a Qualifying Facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the Cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the Cooperative. For more information, please contact Stearns Electric Association during business hours at (800) 962-0655.

WELLSPRING RATE CHANGING

Members who participate in the Wellspring Wind Energy Program will see a rate change in 2020 from 50¢ to 20¢ per each 100 kWh of wind energy purchased. For questions or more information, please contact the Member Services department during regular business hours at (800) 962-0655.

cookingcorner

TACO SCOOP

Submitted by: Kim Murphy Ellingboe
Stearns Electric Association Member



Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef
1 package taco seasoning
1 can refried beans
8 oz. sour cream
2 C shredded cheese
8 oz. taco sauce
Tortilla chips

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a skillet, brown the ground beef over medium heat. Drain. Add taco seasoning and refried beans to the hamburger. Spread mixture on the bottom of a 9x13-inch baking dish. Spread the sour cream and taco sauce on top of the mixture. Top with cheese. Bake for 20-25 minutes until cheese is bubbly. Serve with tortilla chips. Enjoy!

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 communications@stearnselectric.org or mail to: Stearns Electric, Cooking Corner, PO BOX 816, St. Joseph, MN 56374.



STEARNS ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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PERIODICALS
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WORK
HERE
LIVE
HERE
SERVE
HERE



***Our employees don't just work here.
They call our community home.***

Stearns Electric Line Worker Wayne Senst makes our community a better place as a volunteer firefighter and ambulance driver with the Sauk Centre Fire Department. The department responds to about 110 emergency calls each year and Wayne helps manage those calls. Wayne also serves as the department's Safety and Training Officer.