



# DEMAND RESPONSE UNIT CHANGEOUT PROJECT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 1. WHY ARE YOU CHANGING OUT OUR LOAD CONTROL RECEIVERS?

The current technology being used for load controlling by our Wholesale Energy provider (Great River Energy) is nearing its end-of-life. In order for Stearns Electric Association to continue offering the same programs and control strategies, we need to replace the aging load control Comverge receivers with new Aclara Demand Response Units (DRUs).

## 2. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS NEW EQUIPMENT?

One of the major benefits of this change out is more reliable communication to the unit. Unlike the Comverge units, which relied on radio frequency to send messages, the Aclara units utilize power lines to convey control messages to the receiver.

## 3. HOW MUCH WILL THIS COST?

Stearns Electric has approximately 14,000 Comverge units in the field with a scheduled end of life in January 2026. We began this changeout project in 2021 and it will continue through December 2025.

## 4. IS THERE ANY COST TO ME?

There is no direct cost to you for the change out of the load control receiver. If while on site our licensed electricians find anything that may need attention, they will leave a description on the door knocker.

## 5. WHAT LOAD MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS ARE IMPACTED BY THIS PROJECT?

If you participate in any of our load management programs, you will be impacted by this project. This includes one or more of the following: dual fuel, storage water heating, cycled air conditioning and electric vehicle charging.

## 6. HOW WILL YOU NOTIFY ME WHEN WORK IS BEING DONE ON MY HOME?

We will attempt to notify every account that is impacted by the receiver changeout process. Stearns Electric will mail a letter and use automated calling notifications. Please be sure that your contact information is current within our billing system. No need to call us to update this - please create an account on SmartHub account and update your information there.

## 7. DO I HAVE TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR THIS CHANGEOUT OF EQUIPMENT?

There is no need for you to make an appointment. If you would like to be present during the changeout, please call our Member Service Team at (800) 962-0655.

## 8. DO I HAVE TO BE HOME WHEN THE WORK IS BEING COMPLETED?

There typically is no need for you to be home for the changeout. If there is a need for us to access your residence, there will be notes on a door knocker and our office will contact you to set up an appointment. If you would like to be present during the changeout, please call our Member Service Team at (800) 962-0655.

## 9. WILL I LOSE POWER DURING THE CHANGEOUT PROCESS?

There typically is no need to disconnect the power to your home to perform the receiver changeout. In the rare event that your power does need to be temporarily turned off there will be comments on the door knocker, but the exchange will still be completed.

## 10. WHAT IF I HAVE PETS?

If we are unable to perform the work due to a pet or animal in your yard, our office will contact you to schedule the changeout at a time when someone can be home. Safety is a top priority to Stearns Electric and our employees.

**11. WHO IS GOING TO BE DOING THE WORK?**

We have a team of licensed electricians who will perform this work. Our electricians hold master and journeyworker electrician licenses and will be wearing Stearns Electric identification. Additionally, the Stearns Electric vehicles will have our Electrical Contractor license number on the door- EA #783268.

You can learn more about our DRU changeout team on our Load Control page on our website.

**12. WILL ELECTRICAL INSPECTIONS NEED TO BE COMPLETED FOR THE CHANGEOUT OF THIS EQUIPMENT?**

Yes, once the changeout of the receiver has been performed there will be an electrical inspection performed by a state electrical inspector. Since there is not any electrical work being performed inside of your residence, there is no need for anyone to be home for this inspection, nor with the inspector need access to your home.

**13. HOW DO I KNOW IF MY ACCOUNT IS SIGNED UP FOR A LOAD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM?**

One easy way to do this is to check your electric bill. If you are enrolled in a metered load management program, you may see a separate line for "EnergyWise® - Off Peak Meter," which means you are signed up for a program where you pay a reduced electricity rate. You may also see "EnergyWise® Credit," which means you are enrolled on a Stored Water or Cycled AC program.

You can also contact our office during business hours for information on what programs your account is signed up for.

**14. WHAT LOAD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM(S) IS MY ACCOUNT ENROLLED IN?**

If you are unsure of the load management program(s) your account is enrolled in, you can call our office during business hours at (800) 962-0655.

**15. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO BEING ON A LOAD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AND HOW MUCH MONEY AM I SAVING?**

By enrolling in a load management program through the Cooperative, you allow Stearns Electric to control your electrical equipment during certain times and/or when demand is at its highest. In return, participating members receive a reduced rate for electricity or a monthly credit on their electric bill.

Your overall savings monthly or annual savings depends on what program(s) you participate in. Please see our Cost Comparison Chart for more information, (<https://tinyurl.com/4ztf645d>) or contact our Member Service Department during regular business hours.

**16. WILL MY ELECTRICITY RATE CHANGE AFTER THIS PROJECT IS COMPLETE?**

Rates are reviewed as needed, but there will not be a rate increase directly related to the receiver changeout project. Also, you will continue to receive the reduced rate or bill credit(s) if you remain enrolled in the EnergyWise® load management program(s).

**17. CAN I PARTICIPATE IN ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS TO RECEIVE MORE OF A SAVINGS?**

To learn more about potential programs you can participate in feel free to ask our licensed electricians while on site or call our office at (800)962-0655.

**18. HOW WILL THIS AFFECT MY HEATING AND COOLING EQUIPMENT?**

After the DRU is installed, your heating and cooling equipment will continue to operate as it has in the past. Current control times are as follows:

PROGRAM	POSSIBLE CONTROL DAYS	TIME EQUIPMENT IS OFF
Electric Heat	Once per month for billing and/or on the coldest days for peak demand.	Peak Hours
Air Conditioning	Once per month for billing and/or on the hottest days for peak demand.	Peak Hours (15 min. on/15 min. off)
Storage Heat	Every Day	6:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.
Stored Water	Monday - Friday	6:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. (Oct. - April) 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. (May - Sept.)
Peak Shave	When heat and air conditioning are controlled.	Peak Hours (Similar to Heat and AC)
ChargeWise	Every Day	7:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.

**19. WHAT IF I NO LONGER HAVE THE EQUIPMENT IN MY HOME THAT WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LOAD MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS THAT I WAS ENROLLED IN?**

If you have changed out equipment within your home and no longer qualify for a program or wish to withdraw your account from our load management program(s), please contact us in advance.

**20. WHAT IF I DO NOT WANT MY EQUIPMENT REPLACED?**

**THE NEW DRU DEVICE IS MANDATORY AT EVERY LOCATION THAT PARTICIPATES IN AN ENERGYWISE®** program. This device allows the Co-op to shut off your enrolled electric load when needed. Although you may voluntarily opt out of being enrolled in an EnergyWise® program, please know by un-enrolling in any program(s), your account will no longer be eligible for the reduced rate for electricity or a monthly credit on your electric bill.

Please contact our office during regular business hours if you choose to be removed from a program and we can assist you in estimating what your electric bill will reflect.

**21. WHAT DO THE LIGHTS ON THE NEW DRU MEAN?**

- Power Light (Solid Green): Normal. Unit has power and is operating properly.
- Fault Light (Red, Flashing or Solid): Contact Cooperative. There is a problem with the unit.
- Demand Light (Yellow, Flashing): Normal. One or more of the ports are under load control.

**22. WHY ARE THE LIGHTS BLINKING ON THE DRU NOW?**

In the old receivers, the lights were solid when there was load control in effect. In our new DRUs, the lights blink when there is a load control period.

There is no effect on the power quality received at your home if you see the demand light or fault light blinking. These receivers use the same technology as the Cooperative's metering equipment, which transfers data back and forth using the existing power lines.

**23. HOW DO I UNDERSTAND THE DEMAND LIGHT SEQUENCE?**

Reading the demand light can be challenging if you have more than one program. The sequence of each of the four ports is one half second on and then one half second off between each port.

If there is

- One flash, Port 0 is being controlled.
- Two flashes, Port 1 is being controlled.
- Three flashes, Port 2 is being controlled.
- Four flashes, Port 3 is being controlled.

Example: if you are on two programs and have equipment hooked up to Port 0 and Port 2, you will see one flash, followed by 1.5 seconds of nothing, followed by one more flash, and then 1.5 seconds of nothing. This pattern will repeat itself throughout the control period.

**TO LEARN MORE OR GET YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED:**

Please contact our Energy Service team  
during regular business hours:

(800) 962-0655

[www.stearnselectric.org/load-control](http://www.stearnselectric.org/load-control)