



POWER CONNECTION

NOW OFFERING OUTAGE ALERTS

JANUARY
2023

member driven.
community focused.
energy smart.

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(800) 962-0655
WWW.STEARNSELECTRIC.ORG

VOLUME 23 | ISSUE 01

SIGN UP FOR POWER OUTAGE NOTIFICATIONS

SmartHub now offers text and email outage notifications allowing you to be informed when your power is out or when your power has been restored.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

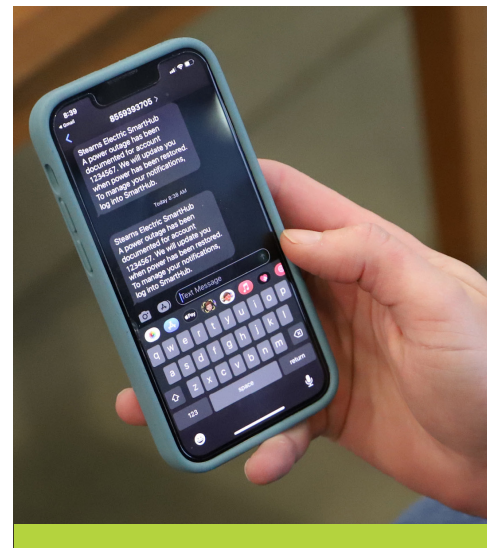
Once Stearns Electric has been notified of an outage in your area, our system will automatically send a request to surrounding meters to predict the extent of the outage.

If your service is predicted to be without power and you are enrolled in outage notifications, you will receive notification of the outage, as well as a notification when the outage has been restored.

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE OUTAGE NOTIFICATIONS

Signing up for outage notifications is easy, but requires two steps. You can use an app on your mobile phone or tablet or use a web browser on your computer.

Learn how to sign up for SmartHub on a web browser or via the mobile app on page 2.



Please note: You must have a SmartHub account AND texting must be enabled to participate in outage texting. Members who are currently registered for a SmartHub account should have received an email earlier this month with information about how to register for outage notifications.

OUTAGE NOTIFICATION SIGN UP INSTRUCTIONS

USING THE MOBILE APP:

STEP 1: UPDATE YOUR CONTACT METHODS

Open the SmartHub mobile app and go to More > Settings > Contact Methods > Add New Contact Method > Input mobile number > Turn 'Receive Text Messages' on. If you agree with the Terms & Conditions, select 'Accept', then enter the verification code that you receive to verify and activate your mobile number.

STEP 2: MANAGE NOTIFICATIONS

In the SmartHub mobile app, go to More > Settings > Manage Notifications > Service and select the notification methods (text or email) you would like to be enrolled in for each notification type.

USING A WEB BROWSER:

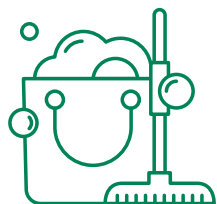
STEP 1: UPDATE YOUR CONTACT METHODS

Using a web browser on your computer, enter SmartHub Login information to access web application, select Notifications > Manage Contacts > Add Phone Contact > Input mobile number > Select 'Receive Text Messages'. If you agree with the Terms & Conditions, select 'Accept', then enter the verification code that you receive to verify and activate your mobile number.

STEP 2: MANAGE NOTIFICATIONS

In SmartHub, select Notifications > Manage Notifications > Service and select the notification methods (text or email) you would like to be enrolled in for each notification type.

Contact our E&O Department during regular business hours at (800) 962-0655 with any questions or find more information, including step-by-step instructions and screenshots on our website at www.stearnselectric.org.



ACCOUNT CLEAN UP

As another year ends and a new one begins, many are setting new goals. Now is a great time to focus on getting organized or transitioning to paperless billing. Start the New Year off right by making sure your account is up to date at Stearns Electric.



UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION

Keeping your contact information current helps us make sure we can reach you if your account needs attention, and helps us identify you when you report an outage.



SIGN UP FOR SMARTHUB

If you are not yet enrolled, visit www.stearnselectric.org and sign up for SmartHub! With just a few steps you can access your account, pay bills, monitor energy usage and report an outage. You can also update your account information.



GO PAPERLESS

Go green this year and enroll in paperless billing. Both secure and convenient, paperless billing provides you with the information you need regarding your account no matter where you are!

LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

STEARNS ELECTRIC SELECTS MATT O'SHEA TO LEAD CO-OP

The Stearns Electric Association Board of Directors is pleased to announce they have selected Matt O'Shea as the Cooperative's next Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

MESSAGE FROM BOARD PRESIDENT ERIC PETERSON

Matt O'Shea was selected as the next CEO of Stearns Electric by the nine-member Board of Directors of the Cooperative following a several-month nationwide search. Mr. O'Shea, previously served as the Vice President (VP) of Engineering and Operations at Stearns Electric Association and will succeed Robin Doege who retired as the Cooperative's CEO in September.

The Board has complete confidence that O'Shea will continue our tradition of excellence and lead the Cooperative into the future.

O'Shea holds a Bachelor of Science degree from North Dakota State University and is a Professional Engineer (PE). O'Shea has worked in the utility industry for over 18 years with significant time in executive, management and leadership roles. Also, within this time, O'Shea served our country as an officer in the Minnesota Army National Guard, successfully leading soldiers through two deployments. O'Shea has been with Stearns Electric since 2015, with the last three years serving as the VP of Engineering and Operations for the Cooperative. Since Doege's retirement in September, O'Shea along with the Cooperative's other vice president, Vicky Herkenhoff, have co-led the Cooperative.

Matt and his wife, Rhianna, have three children and reside in the Alexandria area. O'Shea took over as CEO effective December 16, 2022.

MESSAGE FROM NEW CEO O'SHEA

I am both humbled and excited to take on this opportunity of leading Stearns Electric.

I'm familiar with the expectations and needs of our Central Minnesota member-consumers having worked for Stearns Electric for the past seven years. Bringing safe, affordable and reliable electricity to our members is a top priority as this allows families, businesses and ultimately, communities to prosper.

As the energy industry changes, we will continue to build on the solid foundation the Cooperative has established and propel forward in a new era of innovation and continual growth.

You will be reading more articles from me in the Power Connection as I do my best to keep you informed. I look forward to meeting you, our member-consumers, at our Annual Meeting on Thursday, March 30 at the Melrose Area High School Auditorium.

It is an exciting time in our industry, and I look forward to working with the great people of Stearns Electric Association to make the essential service we provide an exceptional experience for each of you.



Sincerely,

Eric Peterson
Board President



Sincerely,

Matt O'Shea
Chief Executive Officer

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Stearns Electric Association was called to order on November 22, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph office of Stearns Electric Association.

Highlights of the meeting include:

- Business Development Representative John Pantzke formally presented a loan application request. He explained the terms of the loan and answered questions from the Board. Directors approved the loan request.
- President Peterson introduced the proposed 2023 Board Action calendar which was approved, along with the 2023 Board education goals.
- The Cooperative's executive and management team presented the 2023 budget and initiatives to the Board.
- Matt O'Shea, interim CEO and VP of Engineering and Operations, reported that the GRE Board approved the 2023 budget and rates, which included a projected wholesale rate increase of an average of 6.2% over the 2022 budgeted rate.
- Mr. O'Shea also reported that NRECA is working to ease supply chain issues related to cooperatives obtaining distribution transformers.
- The request for FEMA assistance pertaining to the May 12, 2022 storm is complete. Mr. O'Shea was notified that the Cooperative should see funds within the next couple of months.

NEXT BOARD MEETING
January 26, 2023



STAYING PREPARED FOR ANY WEATHER

THE MIDWEST ELECTRIC SYSTEM HAS AMPLE ENERGY RESOURCES FOR WINTER, THOUGH UTILITIES AND GRID OPERATORS ARE PREPARED SHOULD UNEXPECTED CIRCUMSTANCES ARISE.

Just as you take precautionary measures to prepare for the winter season, so do utilities and the organizations that manage, monitor and regulate the electric system.

Grid stakeholders work together year-round to ensure electric service is reliable by conducting various assessments ahead of each season to project the energy needs of homes, farms and businesses. This process provides especially important information for summers, when temperatures can soar, as well as each winter when they can fall dangerously low.

The results of these assessments, which consider probable and worst-case scenarios, help guide utilities like Great River Energy (GRE) when managing their electric systems during extreme weather and elevated demand for electricity.

Assessments conducted by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) and Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) for this upcoming winter found that the grid has a sufficient supply of capacity resources to meet consumer demand under peak conditions.

MISO acknowledges one of winter's key challenges is the potential for "high risk, low probability" events, such as unusually cold weather, intense storms and/or fuel supply issues that could impact available power and create challenges.

"Operating the power system is extremely complex and adverse weather conditions can test the resiliency of the grid," said Jessica Lucas, Executive Director of System Operations at MISO. "We have a responsibility to ensure 42 million customers have reliable power, which is why we work collaboratively with our partner utilities as we head into winter."

For its part in maintaining reliability, GRE has access to a diverse portfolio of power supply resources, including peaking resources with dual fuel capability, which means they can operate on fuel oil when natural gas supply is constrained. This fuel flexibility is an important characteristic for system reliability and as a hedge against market and natural gas prices. The cooperative also focuses on the weatherization of these plants to support resilient and reliable operation during extreme weather events.

"Combined, these resources will provide our membership with the security of knowing they have the reliability needed to get them through the coldest nights this winter," said GRE Vice President and Chief Power Supply Officer Jon Brekke. "We are also adding another 300 megawatts of wind before January that will further diversify GRE's power supply portfolio and help provide a hedge in MISO's daily markets."

GRE, in partnership with its member-owner cooperatives like Stearns Electric, also has the largest demand response program for a utility of its size in the country according to data collected by the Energy Information Administration. This means GRE system operators can dispatch up to 370,000+ appliances enrolled in demand response programs when needed to manage reliability.

In addition to reducing sometimes hundreds of megawatts of electricity demand, this strategy helps GRE avoid making purchases from the energy market during the periods of high pricing that often coincide with high demand and unusual weather events, which saves members money.

A YEAR OF SAVINGS WITH
INNOVATIVE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

STORED WATER HEATING PROGRAM

member since 1999

RANDY BRODA

ENROLLED IN STORED WATER HEATING PROGRAM IN 2006

WHY DID YOU ENROLL IN THE STORED WATER HEATING PROGRAM?

It just made sense! Not only with the lifetime warranty, but it was a no brainer to use off-peak to save money and energy.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST BENEFIT SINCE BEING ON THE PROGRAM?

Actually saving money overall, it's paid for itself. Plus, the water heater will never rust out.

ARE THERE ANY INCONVENIENCES OF BEING ON THE PROGRAM?

None! Someone is always available to answer my questions if I have any.

HOW MUCH DID YOU RECEIVE IN REBATES?

When I bought the water heater in June 2006, I received \$200 in rebates.

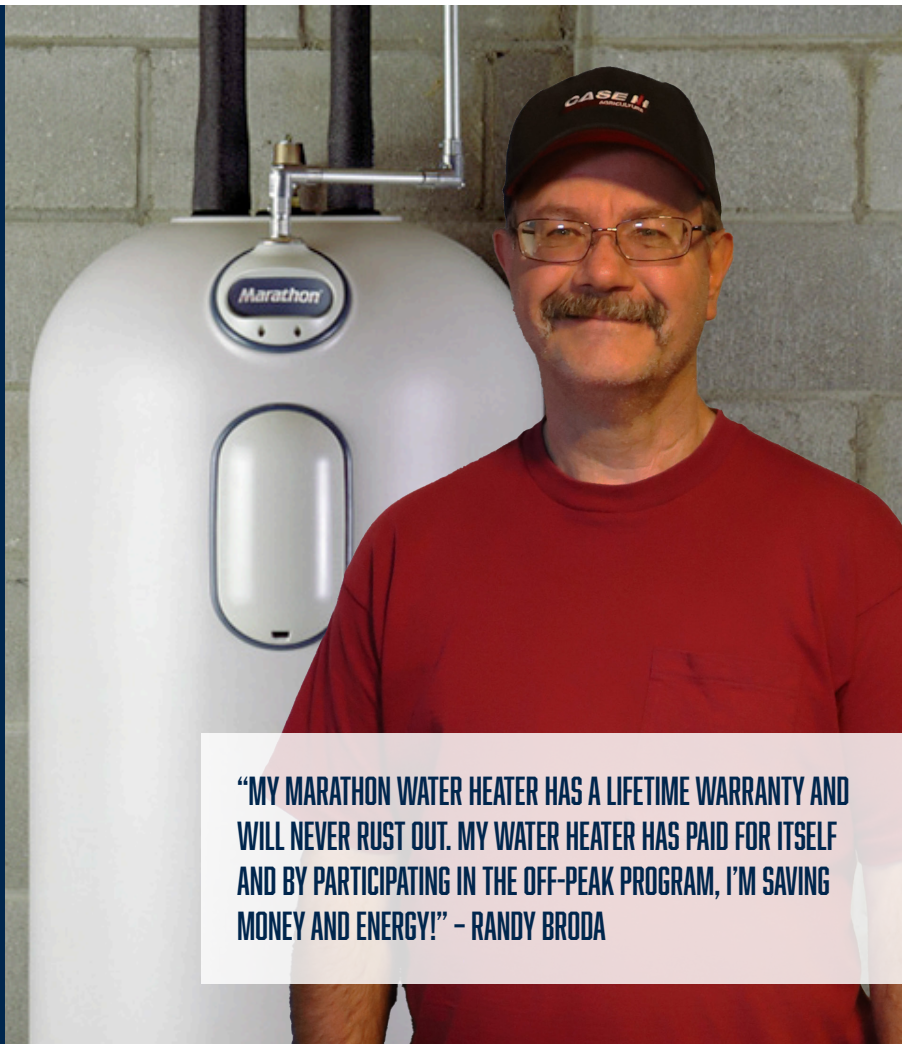
HOW MUCH MONEY HAVE YOU SAVED SINCE YOU ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM?

With the monthly credit, my water heater paid for itself in about 6 years. In total, I've gotten nearly \$1,500 in bill credits since 2006.

HOW MUCH ENERGY HAVE YOU SAVED SINCE YOU ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM?

I save approximately 336 kWh annually, when compared to a standard water heater.

ENERGY WISE 



"MY MARATHON WATER HEATER HAS A LIFETIME WARRANTY AND WILL NEVER RUST OUT. MY WATER HEATER HAS PAID FOR ITSELF AND BY PARTICIPATING IN THE OFF-PEAK PROGRAM, I'M SAVING MONEY AND ENERGY!" - RANDY BRODA

STEARNS ELECTRIC ENERGYWISE STORED WATER HEATING PROGRAM

The EnergyWise Stored Water Heating Program conserves energy by heating water during off-peak hours when electric costs are the lowest. Your water heater will heat overnight and then distribute hot water throughout the day.

WATER HEATING TIMES:

October – April: 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

May – September: 10 p.m. to 9 a.m.

REQUIREMENTS AND BENEFITS:

- Participants must have a 90% efficient, 80 gallon or larger water heater. Stearns Electric Association recommends a 100 gallon storage capacity water heater.
- Members receive a \$7.50 Stored Water monthly bill credit.

A Marathon water heater is a great way to save money and energy with the Stored Water Heating Program. Marathon Water Heaters are 92% energy efficient. This high efficiency unit takes less energy to heat your water and you are able to store your hot water longer.

Stearns Electric offers residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural rebates for our member-consumers. By upgrading to more efficient equipment and enrolling in our EnergyWise programs, you will save money and energy every month. Contact Stearns Electric at (800) 962-0655 for more information.

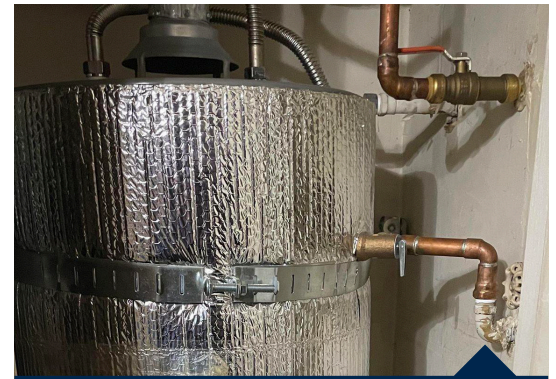
START PLANNING FOR THE NEW YEAR

Does your list of New Year's resolutions include a project that might require new electrical service or changes to existing service? If so, let us know!

It's common for the Cooperative to receive many requests for service projects in the early spring and late fall. However, projects requiring electric lines to be built, rebuilt or moved aren't as simple as they may seem and sometimes can be more complex.

We strongly encourage anyone thinking about projects that might require new or modified electrical service to contact the Cooperative and begin the planning process as early as possible.

For questions, please contact the Cooperative during regular business hours at (800) 962-0655.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Did you know insulating your electric water heater could reduce standby heat loss by 25% to 45%? This could save you 7% to 16% on annual water heating costs.

Insulating your electric water heater is an easy, inexpensive project that can improve energy efficiency and save you money each month.



SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

The Northern Co-op Foundation provides financial assistance and promotes education in the cooperative field. Scholarship applications are now available!

These scholarships are available to individuals from Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota who are seniors in, or a graduate of, high school who may have interest in future employment with a cooperative organization.

Applicants must be a member of a cooperative. Applicants must also be enrolled full-time at an institution of higher learning and take courses in business or economics which studies the principles of cooperatives. If such courses are not offered, the applicant must submit a letter agreeing to take such a course at another institution.

Applications are available at www.stearnslectric.org or by calling our office at (800) 962-0655. Those interested in applying must submit their application and three letters of reference (including one from your local cooperative) by February 1, 2023. For more information, contact Stearns Electric during regular business hours at (800) 962-0655.

MEMBER NEWS

CASH YOUR CAPITAL CREDIT CHECKS

If you purchased electricity from Stearns Electric in 1988-1989; 2001; and/or 2017-2021, you may have received a Capital Credit check in December (we do not mail checks under \$10). We would like to remind you, if you haven't already, to cash that check.

Capital Credit payments are quantifiable proof that as a member-consumer of Stearns Electric, you are an owner of a successful, effective organization. To date, we have distributed more than \$38 million in Capital Credits back to our members.

ANNUAL MEETING

Save the date! The Stearns Electric Association Annual Meeting is Thursday, March 30, at 7 p.m. at the Melrose High School Auditorium. Complete details will be announced in future editions of the Power Connection.



YOUTH TOUR

WIN A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Attention high school juniors or seniors:
Win an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. in June!

Stearns Electric is sending one high school student from our service territory to participate in the annual Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. The selected student will visit with congressional representatives, tour famous monuments and museums, and make memories and friends that will last a lifetime.

Rural electric cooperatives across the nation sponsor nearly 1,500 students to participate in the annual Youth Tour to learn about how government works and about the electric cooperative business model.

APPLY TODAY!

This contest is open to any current high school junior or senior whose family is a member of Stearns Electric Association. The Youth Tour is June 13-18, 2023.

Requirements:

- Complete the Stearns Electric Youth Tour Application (available at www.stearnslectric.org or at your school's counseling center).
- Write a 300-word essay on the benefits of the cooperative business model.
- Submit a letter of recommendation from a teacher or advisor.

The first 15 applicants will receive a \$20 gift card. Top finalists will be interviewed by a judging committee. First place wins an all-expense paid Washington, D.C. Youth Tour trip. Second place serves as first alternate and will win \$150. Third place serves as second alternate and will win \$100.

Completed applications, essays and recommendation letters must be received no later than 4 p.m. on February 10, 2023. Visit www.stearnslectric.org for more information.

COOKING CORNER

VERMICELLI SOUP

Submitted by:
Tom Hansen

INGREDIENTS

3 medium onions
92 oz tomato juice
2 C 2" pieces of Vermicelli Pasta
1 tsp salt
½ stick butter

DIRECTIONS

Chop onions into small pieces, sauté in large pot with the butter until light brown. Add tomato juice and salt, bring to a gentle boil. Add vermicelli, cover and reduce to simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Let stand for 5-10 minutes before serving. Enjoy!



SUBMIT YOUR FAVORITE RECIPE FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A \$10 BILL CREDIT

Members may submit one recipe per month by email at communications@stearnslectric.org or mail to: Stearns Electric Cooking Corner, PO BOX 816, St. Joseph, MN 56374. The recipe selected each month for publication will receive a \$10 credit on their electric bill. Recipes not selected will be saved for consideration in future publications.



STEARNS ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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SMARTER SOLUTIONS START HERE

2023 RESIDENTIAL REBATES ARE AVAILABLE NOW

ENERGYWISE® REBATES

In order to receive the EnergyWise® rebates, members must enroll in the associated program, if applicable.

Quality Install Air Source Heat Pump

HSPF 8.2 (HSPF₂ 7) \$500
HSPF 9 (HSPF₂ 7.7) \$800

Pool Heating

Pool ASHP \$400
Pool Pump VSD \$200

Ground Source Heat Pump

\$150 / ton (10-ton max.)

New Dual Fuel Rebate

\$200 (9 kW min.)

Thermal Storage Space Heating

\$50 per kW (5 kW min.)

ECM Motor

\$50

New Marathon Water Heater

(Purchased from Stearns Electric Association)
\$300 80+ gallon on Stored Water or
Peak Shave programs
\$100 50+ gallon on Peak Shave Program

Electric Water Heater

(Contractor/Member Supplied)
\$100 50+ gallon on Stored Water or
Peak Shave programs

Heat Pump Water Heater

\$300

Electric Vehicle Charger

\$500

Wifi Thermostat

\$25

Engine Block Heater Timer

\$5

ENERGYSTAR® REBATES

Ductless ASHP \$300

Refrigerator

(with recycling of old unit) \$50

Freezer

(with recycling of old unit) \$50

Dehumidifier

\$25

Clothes Dryer

\$25

LED Yard Light

\$30

For complete details on these rebates contact Stearns Electric at (800) 962-0655 or visit www.stearnsselectric.org.