



PEOPLE'S ENERGY COOPERATIVE RECOGNIZED WITH 2022 BEST WORKPLACE AWARD



People's Energy Cooperative (PEC) was recently recognized by Workforce Development, Inc. as one of the Best Places to Work in SE Minnesota!

Best Places to Work is a national program that recognizes the best employers in local communities. Workforce Development, Inc., in partnership with Personnel Dynamics Consulting Group of Florida, surveyed 41 companies within Freeborn, Mower, Rice, Steele, Goodhue, Olmsted, Houston, Dodge, Fillmore, Wabasha, and Winona Counties to identify the Best Places to Work in Southeast Minnesota. This is the twelfth year in a row that they have sponsored the program for Southeast Minnesota.

Each organization participating in the survey was asked to complete a 40-question, online survey. Personnel Dynamics Consulting Group collected the information, analyzed the data, and provided the results. Results are measured on turnover, growth, training, promotion, benefits, pay, working environment, and retirement benefits.

The top five employers by size were then selected. Small employers are those with under 50 employees, medium sized is 51 – 150 employees, and large employers have 151 or more

employees. PEC was recognized in the medium category with 67 employees.

"We are so grateful to be recognized as a Best Place to Work in Southeast Minnesota," said PEC President and CEO, Mike Henke. "We strive to attract, engage, and retain highly qualified people to ensure the best service for our members. In a tight labor market, it is challenging to attract applicants, much less good, qualified people. Ensuring we are competitive with our pay, benefits, and work practices is important to be competitive not only in the Southeast Minnesota market, but also the electric utility market. It's nice to be recognized for those efforts."

Every organization participating in the survey receives a confidential report detailing the results of the survey and identifying what employers are offering in the areas of benefits, training and development, paid time off, performance management programs, growth, advancement, and many more. The survey reports on information all business leaders should know and is free for every company that participated in the survey.

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CEO MESSAGE

FROM MICHAEL J. HENKE, PRESIDENT & CEO



mhenke@peoplesenergy.coop

At People's Energy Cooperative (PEC), we recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we focus on safety year-round. From our crews in the field to you, the members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety. To us, safety is more than a catchphrase, it's a mindset. We have a robust safety program at the Cooperative that encompasses employees, members, and the public.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY – We do our best to keep safety top of mind for our employees and utilize in-person and online training sessions to educate and remind employees about safe work practices. All employee meetings start with a safety share, including our Board meetings, because often the best lessons are learned from the experience of someone else.

In addition to education, we also ensure employees have the tools they need to do their jobs safely. Ultimately though it's our employees who are ensuring their own safety and the safety of those they work with. We are proud of their efforts because they have resulted in very few incidences (*and even those have been minor*). Our severity rate has been zero since 2017.

This has led to safety metrics that help the Cooperative save money on worker's compensation insurance, which ultimately helps save members money. For example, our experience modifier is .75 which means that losses are better than expected. This gives us a discount on our insurance premiums.

MEMBER SAFETY – Each month, I hope you're reading the safety articles and tips in the newsletter because this is one way we're working to help you stay safe. We also post safety messages on our social media platforms.

According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted because of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the prevalence of electrical devices, tools, and appliances, I'd like to pass along a few practical electrical safety tips.

- **Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard.** Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use, or excessive current flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them, as they could cause electric shock when handled.
- **Avoid overloading circuits.** Circuits can only handle a limited amount of electricity. Overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit is designed for by having too many devices running on one circuit.
- **Use extension cords properly.** To avoid overheating and a potential fire, never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. Exceeding the wattage of the cord also creates a risk of a fire hazard. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need additional outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.

PUBLIC SAFETY – Our top priority is providing an uninterrupted energy supply 24/7, 365 days per year. But equally important is keeping our community safe around electricity.

That's why you'll see PEC hosting safety trainings and demonstrations in our communities throughout the year. We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines. We caution students in schools on the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices. We also meet with first responders to train them about the electrical hazards in their line of work and how to respond.

So, while May is Electrical Safety Month, you can see we focus on safety each and every month and hope you will too.

**Stay safe,
Michael J. Henke,
President & CEO,
(800) 214-2694**

MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

highline

Vol. 86 • Issue 05

PEC's Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on April 26. During the meeting, the following items were discussed: *board roles and responsibilities; anti-harassment training; educational information about Dairyland's load management efforts; options to consider for PEC's solar strategy; first quarter financial report; and progress towards the strategic plan goals.*

A quorum of directors was present, and the following actions were taken:

- ▶ Approved a 9.491 mill power cost adjustment credit for Legacy members for April usage billed in May.
- ▶ Approved a \$10,000 amendment to the capital budget for equipment.
- ▶ Approved the allocation of 2021 operating margins of \$2,127,059 and the DPC capital credit allocation of \$877,439 for Legacy members.
- ▶ Approved the allocation of \$141,383 in SMEC G & T capital credits for SMEC members.
- ▶ Approved holding the 86th Annual Meeting on March 23, 2023, at 6 p.m. at the Rochester International Event Center.

MANAGEMENT

Michael J. Henke,
President/CEO

Patrick Nelson,
Director of Engineering
and Operations

Michelle Olson,
Director of
Member Services

Anthony Stern,
Chief Financial Officer

Gwen Stevens,
Director of Cooperative
Relations

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DISTRICT 7:

Jeff Orth
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Visit peoplesenergy.coop
for a listing of the areas
covered by each district.

Business Hours:

7:30 am – 4:00 pm, M–F

TAKING A LOOK BACK AT OUR COOPERATIVE HISTORY



OUR ANNUAL MEETINGS have been held in many different locations over our 85-year history. On April 4, 1971, members gathered for the Cooperative's Annual Meeting in downtown Rochester at the Mayo Civic Auditorium. Fifty years later, the façade of the auditorium now looks much different! Twenty-four thousand eight hundred.



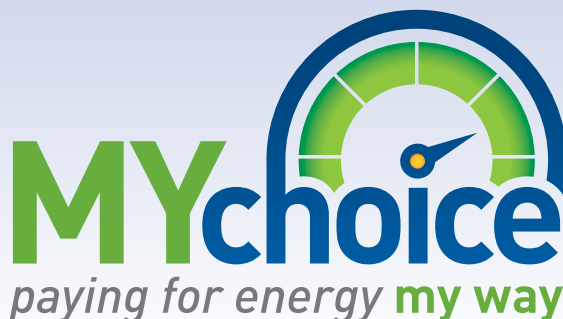
CAPITAL CREDIT ALLOCATION: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

ON YOUR MAY ENERGY BILL, you may have noticed that capital credits have been allocated for the 2021 fiscal year. As a member of People's Energy Cooperative (PEC), you benefit from the margins generated by the Cooperative. These margins come back to you in the form of capital credits.

At the end of each year, PEC subtracts its operating expenses from the operating revenue collected to determine the Cooperative's operating margins. These margins are then allocated, or assigned, to members' capital credit accounts based on the amount of energy they purchased (patronage). It can be helpful to think of your capital credit account as being like a long-term savings account. This account is the accumulation of margins which have been allocated to you each year based on your patronage.

Each year, PEC's Board of Directors determines if previously allocated capital credits will be retired or distributed to members. This decision to retire capital credits is based on the Cooperative's financial stability and is typically done in October.

COOPERATIVE MEMBER SERVICES



THE MYCHOICE PREPAY PROGRAM

is a flexible payment option that allows you, as a member, to prepay on your electric account; eliminating set due dates, deposits, late fees, and reconnect fees.

Visit memberservices@peoplesenergy.coop or call (800) 214-2694 for more information.

Open to Kids in Rochester & Surrounding Area!



BECOME AN ENTREPRENEUR TODAY!

LEARN TO SAVE, SPEND, & SHARE
THROUGH THIS FUN, FREE PROGRAM

Lemonade Day!®

ROCHESTER, MN

JUNE 11
-2022-

REGISTER
TODAY!

LEMONADEDAY.ORG/ROCHESTER-MN



Lemonade Day is an experiential program that teaches kids how to start, own and operate their very own business – a lemonade stand.



YOUR ELECTRIC VEHICLE: THINGS TO CONSIDER ABOUT CHARGING

QUESTION: *Forget range anxiety, I have charging anxiety! How do I know where to start?*

ANSWER: *One of the luxuries of owning an electric vehicle (EV) is that you can charge it at your home. For the typical EV owner, most charging happens at home, so it's important to understand what you need before purchasing an EV. To the right are a few tips to help you get started.*

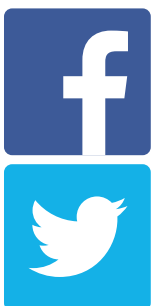
For more information about our electric vehicle charging programs, visit peoplesenergy.coop/electric-vehicles.

► **Understand your driving needs** to understand your charging needs. The average commute in Minnesota and across the country is under 30 minutes a day, making all-electric vehicles a practical option for daily commuters. Most EV owners can go a few days without having to charge their vehicle. Or, they can charge a little each night, so they start with a full battery every morning and are prepared for any unexpected travel.

► **Determine your service capacity.** If your driving needs require a fast charger, work with an electrician to determine how much capacity you have on your electric service panel. This will determine the level of charging equipment you can install. A level two charger is common and requires 240-volt service. The size of the battery and the peak capacity of the charger will determine how fast the vehicle can charge. Given today's EV battery capacities, a full night's charge on a level two charger will almost always ensure you start the day with a full battery.

► **Contact the Cooperative.** Our EV charging programs save you money and help reduce demand on our system at key times of the day. We also offer EV chargers as part of our **Drive\$ense** program that can save you \$1,000 on a smart charger purchased from the Cooperative. Even if you don't intend to participate in our programs, it's good for us to check that our electric infrastructure outside your home, such as transformers, are able to handle the increased load your charger may place on the system.

► **Plan ahead.** If you plan to use an EV for a trip that will exceed the vehicle's range, be sure to map out a plan that includes public EV charges and the time it will take to charge the vehicle. Resources like plugshare.com provide maps of EV charging locations across the country with details about the location and types of chargers. Many can be found at convenience stores, restaurants, hotels, or other places of business where you would spend time fulfilling another need like shopping, eating, or sleeping.



GET SOCIAL WITH US!

We utilize Facebook and Twitter to share information about topics such as electrical safety, energy efficiency, cooperative events, and peak energy alerts. We also provide information when major outages occur.



PICNIC SHELTER

HIGH FOREST OLD SETTLERS ASSOCIATION



The electrical system will soon be replaced at the High Forest Town Square public picnic shelter thanks to a \$1,000 donation from People's Energy Cooperative's Operation Round Up program.

The grant will help cover the cost of upgrading the electrical system, including six vandal proof LED lights, new circuit breakers, one LED flood lamp for the end of the shelter, six new GFCI outlets on posts, and one new breaker panel.

Lonnie Hebl, vice president of the High Forest Old Settlers Association, says the plan is to complete the electrical work this summer. This will be done in conjunction with other repairs the group has planned at the picnic shelter. Much of the work will be completed by volunteers who donate money, tools, equipment, and their time to keep the park looking great.

Hebl explains, "We also have a fundraising event every year in September. The funds we raise through

that event go back into the upkeep and repair of the High Forest Town Square facilities and picnic shelter. We plan to put a new steel roof on the picnic shelter itself and also need to replace the old electrical system with one that's safer and more energy efficient."

The town square is made up of the shelter, storm shelter/vault restrooms, playgrounds, basketball court, and softball field that were built and are maintained by the High Forest Old Settlers Association. The picnic shelter is used frequently by 4-H groups, church groups, and families who enjoy holding events like family reunions at the shelter.

"When you have a small group like what we have with High Forest Old Settlers Association and everybody is a volunteer, it helps a lot having People's Energy Cooperative contribute to this project. Having the Cooperative assist with the funding is huge for a small grassroots group like this," Hebl says. "I would like to thank everyone who donated. This will have a big impact on the community."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOCUS: SURVEY RESULTS

AS MEMBERS MAY RECALL, People's Energy Cooperative (PEC) recently led an initiative for a local business retention and expansion survey. The purpose of the survey is to identify opportunities to help local businesses grow, as well as obstacles that may be preventing them from growing or putting them at risk of leaving the area.

After nine months of work in partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension Community Vitality Program, and local Economic Development Authority (EDA) partners including the Stewartville EDA, Eyota EDA, and RAEDI, results were presented to the core group of stakeholders in early April. Key issues the group plans to work to resolve center largely around workforce, specifically training and recruiting. Another important issue is housing costs and housing supply.

"Our stakeholders developed some unique ideas we hope to carry forward, including looking at zoning laws

and regulations that impact housing costs, as well as working with the state economic development officials to modernize incentive programs and recognize the tight labor market," reports Marty Walsh, PEC's economic development and key accounts manager.

Walsh continues, "There was plenty to celebrate in the study as well, including high opinions of the quality of important elements of infrastructure, and the general community attitude towards business."

The information gathered from the survey will be shared with local cities and community organizations. Identifying impediments to business growth is an important first step towards working to improve in those areas.

"People's Energy Cooperative and our local partners will also work over the next year to celebrate and highlight what we're doing," says Walsh. Two thousand four hundred eleven.



OPERATION ROUND UP®

April Grants

To be considered for third quarter grants in 2022, applications must be submitted no later than June 20, 2022. Program guidelines and applications for donations are available at peoplesenergy.coop/operation-round-up or by calling the Cooperative at (800) 214-2694.

People's Energy Cooperative Operation Round Up® Trust Board provided \$20,827 in grants in the second quarter of 2022 to the following area organizations:

- **\$2,000: American Red Cross SE MN in Rochester** – For their Home Fire Program
- **\$1,000: Elder Network of Rochester** – In support of caregiver respite, education, and support
- **\$5,000: Elgin Millville EMS, Inc.** – To help purchase professional attire for volunteers
- **\$1,500: History Center of Olmsted County in Rochester** – To assist with the Smoke House restoration
- **\$500: Kasson-Mantorville Community Education** – To help build a strengths-based culture within the district
- **\$1,000: Plainview Elgin Millville ECSE Program** – For the development of a sensory room
- **\$500: Pine Island Zumbrota Mazeppa Youth Soccer** – To help re-purpose existing goals with new nets and wheels
- **\$700: Plainview Public Library** – Towards the development of the Community Story Stroll
- **\$650: Sing Out Loud in Rochester** – To support youth choral arts community outreach
- **\$3,000: Stewartville Elementary PTA** – To assist with the playground expansion at Bear Cave Intermediate School
- **\$550: Stewartville Middle School** – In support of the Tiny Home Construction curriculum
- **\$1,000: The Salvation Army of Rochester, MN** – To help purchase Castleview move-in kits
- **\$2,427: Wabasha Area Food Share, Inc.** – To help with the purchase of a display refrigerator
- **\$1,000: Zumbro Falls VFW** – In support of the Home Town Heroes Memorial

Grant Funds are collected from members who have their electric bill rounded up to the next dollar. The funds are held separately from the PEC operating accounts and are administered through the Operation Round Up® Board of Trustees comprised of seven volunteer PEC members. Applications for funding are considered on a quarterly basis. Twenty thousand six hundred forty-three.

2022 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

CARR'S TREE SERVICE and **NEW AGE TREE SERVICE** continue to work with us to execute our vegetation management plan for 2022.

DURING THE MONTH OF JUNE, Carr's Tree Service will be working in portions of New Haven, Oronoco, and Kalmar Townships. New Age Tree Service will be working during this time in Oronoco, Mazeppa, Zumbro, and Hyde Park Townships.



Our vegetation management policy is available on our website by visiting peoplesenergy.coop/vegetation-management. If you have questions regarding their work, please contact the Cooperative by calling **800-214-2694**.



WATER SENSORS

A testimonial from a satisfied customer

“One day last week, around 4 p.m., I was out of town and got a call from the response center that our water sensor was triggered. Obviously, we weren’t going to get there, so I got someone to run over to our house. Even though the water was shut off, there was a main valve with a 2-inch line leaking in the basement. They ended up calling the city and some plumbers and had to shut off the water in the yard. Thanks to the security system we had a major crisis averted, with maybe 10% of what it could have been. We probably would have had 10 feet of water in just a short time. I just want to say ‘thank you’ to the employees and everyone who helped. I’m beyond thankful to have a monitored security system with Heartland Security.” – *Dave*

Heartland will visit your location to give you a free security analysis and work with you to determine the best way for you to protect what matters most to you, whether it’s a monitored security system, cameras, or both. Call **888-264-6380** or visit online at **heartlandss.com**. Mention you’re a co-op member to receive a special discount!



Voluntarily reducing energy use during times of high demand helps reduce the Cooperative’s overall demand charges from our power providers which helps everyone by keeping rates stable!

To learn more, visit: peoplesenergy.coop/power-down-voluntary-load-reduction or call (800) 214-2694.

Help us lower the DEMAND!

an *alternative* way to support renewable energy



An easy and affordable way for People’s Energy Cooperative members to do their part to increase renewable energy sources without installing their own system. To learn more, visit: peoplesenergy.coop/evergreen.



CO-OP CONNECTIONS GO BEYOND THE CARD & SAVE!

Find all the ways you’ll save money through the new and improved app! Explore the wide array of deals available to you as a member of People’s Energy Cooperative. Visit www.connections.coop or download the easy-to-use app for free on **Apple App** and **Google Play** stores.

BEAT THE PEAK THIS SUMMER



WHEN TEMPERATURES *begin to rise, there are steps you can take to save money on energy bills this summer. Aside from replacing your central air conditioner with a newer, high-efficiency model, there are some things you can do to increase efficiency, which can help reduce your energy bills. Besides weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors in your home (a good idea regardless of the time of year), consider some of these tips:*

- ▶ **CLOSE CURTAINS**, blinds, and shades during the hottest part of the day. Thirty thousand three hundred seventy-one.
- ▶ **IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE ALREADY**, install a programmable or smart thermostat.
- ▶ **CLEAN THE FILTER** and get your unit tuned-up by a HVAC professional (see below for a rebate opportunity!).
- ▶ **YOUR OUTDOOR CONDENSER** should be clean and free from debris. Ideally, the unit should be in the shade.
- ▶ **CONSIDER CHANGES TO YOUR LANDSCAPING.** Greenery that includes shade trees and those that insulate the foundation can reduce energy costs.

COOL DOWN & SAVE! WITH YOUR AIR CONDITIONER



DID YOU KNOW? PEC offers a **\$25 rebate** to assist members with the cost of a professional air conditioner tune-up. Air Conditioner Tune-Up rebates are available for existing homes and small commercial customers with central air conditioners or air source heat pumps less than or equal to 5.5 tons. Window units are not eligible. Members are eligible for the rebate every two years. Take advantage of this opportunity to save and schedule a tune-up soon!

LOOKING FOR ANOTHER WAY TO SAVE?

Enroll in the Cooperative's **Cycled Air Conditioning Program**. In exchange for a \$5 bill credit, participants agree to have a small radio-controlled receiver cycle their air conditioner off and on in 15-minute intervals during times of peak demand (typically hot, humid days in June, July, and August). This helps reduce the load on the regional grid when it's needed most. Members are not charged for the cost of the receiver or installation, which is done by a licensed electrician. To learn more and get started, visit peoplesenergy.coop/cycled-air-conditioning.



TEST YOUR GFCI Outlets ONCE A MONTH

From SafeElectricity.org

The safety functions of ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) can fail without notice, so check them monthly. Pick the first or last day of the month so that it is easy to remember.

How to test a GFCI outlet:

- Find the test and reset buttons.
- Press the TEST button.
- You should hear a snap sound that trips the outlet.

Confirm the power is cut

- Plug in a lamp or other device.
- The item you plug in should not turn on.

Reset the outlet

- Once you confirm the GFCI is working properly (that the outlet does not work when tested), press the reset button to restore power to the outlet.

Retest for remaining socket(s)

- You can also buy a GFCI outlet tester that has a display and test button.
- GFCI protection can be installed on circuit breakers to safeguard the entire circuit. They should be tested monthly by pressing the button – the interrupter should shut off power to the circuit.

LOOK OUT FOR POWER SOURCES

DO NOT get within
10 ft (in any direction)
of a power line.

10' ⚡



BE AWARE of power
lines when working
on the roof.

DO NOT TRIM
branches or limbs
near power lines.



BE CAREFUL when
carrying long or tall objects
such as ladders or poles.

BEFORE you dig,
call 811 to have
underground
utilities marked.



DO NOT DIG near
padmount transformers
or other utility equipment.



THE INVISIBLE DANGER OF

ELECTRIC SHOCK DROWNING

With the weather finally warming up, it won't be long before people start heading out to enjoy area lakes and pools. When you think of water safety this summer, it's important to be aware of the possibility of electric shock drowning.

This is a potentially deadly swimming danger that occurs when electricity flows into water. Electric shock drowning (ESD) can happen when electric current is present in water and passes through the body of someone in that water.

The threat is greatest in freshwater rivers, lakes, and pools where there is electrical equipment nearby that is plugged into shore power. ESD is a particularly dangerous hazard because it's impossible to tell by sight if the water is energized.

A swimmer who encounters electric current in the water may experience anything ranging from a tingling sensation to muscle paralysis. Paralysis can make it impossible for the person to swim to safety.

According to Safe Electricity, if you are in the water and feel electric current, first shout to others to let them know. Try to stay upright, tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. Do not use a metal ladder to exit the water.

Resist the urge to jump in the water to help someone who you suspect may be experiencing an electrical shock. Throw them a flotation device and try to eliminate the source of electricity as quickly as possible. Have someone call 911. It is not safe to jump in the water to save the person in distress because you may also suffer an electrical shock and not be able to help anyone.

Although this type of drowning can happen anytime electricity and water mix, the majority of electric shock drowning deaths have occurred around marinas and docks with AC electrical power, both public and private, according to the Electric Shock Drowning Prevention Association (ESDPA).

THE ESDPA OFFERS THE FOLLOWING TIPS TO PREVENT ESD:

- ▶ **NEVER SWIM IN OR NEAR** marinas, docks, or boatyards.
- ▶ **TELL OTHERS** about the dangers of ESD; most people have never heard of it.
- ▶ **ALTHOUGH REQUIRED** by the National Electric Code since 2017, make sure marinas have GFCIs (ground fault circuit interrupters) installed on all electrical equipment that supplies power to boats.
- ▶ **PRIVATE DOCK OWNERS** should make sure GFCI breakers are installed on the circuits feeding electricity to the dock. They should also ensure that all metal is bonded and grounded.



People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

HIGHLINE HI-LITES • May 2022 • Vol. 86 • Issue 05

Highline Hi-Lites (USPS# 244-720) is published monthly. Special Edition issued in March.

Periodical Postage Paid in Rochester, Minnesota.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to:

Highline Hi-Lites, 1775 Lake Shady Ave. S.
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



24-HOUR OUTAGE NUMBER

WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT, SO DO WE

Call even if you think your neighbors have reported the outage. Leave one light on so you know when power has been restored. Have an emergency kit prepared.

(507) 367-7000 or (800) 214-2694

SPOT YOUR NUMBER

\$30

*Each month, we hide four account numbers (without the last two digits) within the text of the newsletter. If you find your number, contact the Cooperative by the end of the current month at **(800) 214-2694** or **memberservices@peoplesenergy.coop** to receive a \$30 credit on your bill.*

GOOD LUCK IN FINDING YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER!

UPDATE ANY NEW CONTACT INFO

Has your household recently eliminated a landline? Have you changed your cell phone number? Do you have a new email address? If the answer to any of the above is "yes," please take a moment to notify People's Energy Cooperative about these changes.

Having the correct contact information for members is extremely important. In the event of an emergency or planned outage, we will use your contact information to make sure you are aware of the situation. Members can review and update their contact information by:

- ▶ Visiting peoplesenergy.coop and reviewing your account information through SmartHub (you need to be registered to do this).
- ▶ Calling the Cooperative at (800) 214-2694.
- ▶ Sending an email to us at memberservices@peoplesenergy.coop.

Memorial Day

People's Energy Cooperative will be closed on Monday, May 30 to observe Memorial Day.

If you have a power outage or an electrical emergency, please call (800) 214-2694 to report the problem.

People's Energy Cooperative honors the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in serving our nation.