



## YEAR THREE OF OUR FIVE YEAR *RATE RESTRUCTURING* WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

As a not-for-profit organization, it is necessary to recover the costs of doing business, as well as maintain enough cash reserves (*margins*) to reinvest in the system and ensure we continue to provide reliable electricity at fair and reasonable prices.

Our five-year rate restructuring plan went into effect in 2019. We are now in the third year, which is the final step for several of the rates. The main purposes of the plan are to get the fixed costs in the fixed basic service charge (*BSC*) and to merge the Legacy and SMEC rates so they are the same between members who have the same type of service.

Legacy rates are charged for locations served by the Cooperative prior to the 2015 Alliant acquisition and SMEC rates are charged for locations acquired from Alliant.

How will the rate change affect your bill in 2021? On average, Legacy residential members will experience a decrease and SMEC members will experience an increase. To determine if your account is Legacy or SMEC, look at your bill. Information headers are *green* on Legacy bills and *blue* on SMEC bills. Rate changes will go into effect with energy usage beginning September 1, 2021.

To learn what this means in dollar amounts, refer to the chart below.

The process of merging SMEC and Legacy rates will ensure all members are contributing equitably to cover the costs associated with system improvements and maintenance, vegetation management, and the customer service needed since the 2015 Alliant acquisition which increased membership by 50 percent.

*To learn more about the five-year rate restructure plan, visit [peoplesenergy.coop/rate-restructure](https://peoplesenergy.coop/rate-restructure).*

RESIDENTIAL RATES	RATE	BSC – NOW	BSC – NEW	CURRENT ENERGY RATE	NEW ENERGY RATE
	Rate A Residential Rural	\$45/mo	\$52/mo ▲ \$7	\$0.1250 / kWh (Summer) \$0.1050 / kWh (Winter) \$0.0047 / kWh PCA	\$0.1200 / kWh (Summer) ▼ \$0.0050 \$0.1000 / kWh (Winter) ▼ \$0.0050 \$0.0008 / kWh PCA ▼ \$0.0039
	Rate AU Residential Urban	\$30/mo	\$30/mo	\$0.1250 / kWh (Summer) \$0.1050 / kWh (Winter) \$0.0047 / kWh PCA	\$0.1200 / kWh (Summer) ▼ \$0.0050 \$0.1000 / kWh (Winter) ▼ \$0.0050 \$0.0008 / kWh PCA ▼ \$0.0039
	Rate 160 Residential	\$20/mo	\$30/mo ▲ \$10	\$0.1250 / kWh (Summer) \$0.1050 / kWh (Winter) \$0.0018 / kWh PCA	\$0.1200 / kWh (Summer) ▼ \$0.0050 \$0.1000 / kWh (Winter) ▼ \$0.0050 \$0.0008 / kWh PCA ▼ \$0.0010

# CEO MESSAGE

FROM MICHAEL J. HENKE, PRESIDENT & CEO



mhenke@peoplesenergy.coop

*The last few months have seen a sharp rise in cyber attacks, often disrupting products and services that are key to our everyday lives. In May, two major cybersecurity attacks crippled Colonial Pipeline, the top fuel pipeline operator in the U.S., and JBS, which supplies more than a fifth of all beef in America.*

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There is a growing trend of hackers targeting critical infrastructure and physical business operations. The U.S. government's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) lists 16 different industries as "critical infrastructure sectors," including the energy industry.

I wanted to take a moment to reassure our members of the procedures and processes People's has in place to ensure our most critical functions are sufficiently insulated from cyberattacks.

People's Energy Information Technology Manager, Dave Patterson, oversees and monitors the Cooperative's technology network. Dave is a certified Security Specialist, holds a number of degrees with decades of IT experience, and is a member of InfraGard – a partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and members of the private sector for the protection of U.S. critical infrastructure. This grants him access to secure information not available to the public, which allows the Cooperative to act rather than just react in the event of a system breach.

The Cooperative has multiple levels of external scanning and detection that intercept all traffic or information coming into the network before it even hits our firewall. If corrupt information does manage to get through the Cooperative's sophisticated system and infects a computer or other device, the breach will

be contained to that piece of equipment. This prevents a virus from having the potential to spread throughout the rest of the network.

In addition, the Cooperative has partnered for the last seven years with KnowBe4, the world's largest security awareness training and simulated phishing company. A risk often comes down to individual behavior, through phishing attacks, where users are tricked into clicking a link on an email that gives the hackers broad access to a computer system. Every week, emails are customized to simulate phishing and randomly distributed to anyone internally associated with the Cooperative (*not members*). This practice heightens our employees' awareness of what to look for as suspicious activity or red flags that could compromise our system, creating a "human firewall." This is a great training tool for our staff.

Recently, your member-elected board of directors completed cybersecurity training and, in past years, all employees completed cybersecurity training twice a year. Moving forward, we will provide training four times a year, with specialized training for certain departments.

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*While there are no guarantees the Cooperative will not be a target, I hope the information I've shared will reassure all of our members that we are taking every precaution to protect our network infrastructure against cybersecurity threats.*

Sincerely,  
**Michael J. Henke,**  
President & CEO,  
800-214-2694



## ARE YOU ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

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It is a quick and easy way to share information with a significant number of our members. We utilize Facebook and Twitter (@Peoplesrec) 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.



# MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

# highline

Vol. 85 • Issue 07

PEC's Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on June 24. During the meeting, the following items were discussed: *a proposal for a Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) site selection project; upcoming retirements from Dairyland Power Cooperative; transmission project update; State transportation revenue from electric vehicles; safety and loss review from Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange; an analysis of the transmission system; a review of Articles 4 through 6 of the Bylaws; the Board's self-evaluation process; and the video "The Use of Executive Session" was viewed by the Board.* A quorum of directors was present, and the following actions were taken:

- ▶ Approved the application of a 4.7000 mill power cost adjustment for June usage billed in July.
- ▶ Approved a SMEC CIP Adder of 0.618 mills for June through Dec.
- ▶ Approved the 2021 Retail Rate Schedules effective Sept. 1, 2021.
- ▶ Appointed Tom Vail to the Member Advisory Committee (MAC) to represent District 1.
- ▶ Approved holding the next MAC meeting on Aug. 17 to gather input for the strategic planning process.
- ▶ Approved a policy change to apply late fees the following business day after the due date, beginning with the Sept. 2021 due date.

## 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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1:  
Joe Book

DISTRICT 2:  
Jodie Tvedt

DISTRICT 3:  
Robert Hoefs

DISTRICT 4:  
Tracy Lauritzen,  
Secretary/Treasurer

DISTRICT 5:  
Jerry Wooner,  
Board Chair

DISTRICT 6:  
Art Friedrich  
Vice Chair

DISTRICT 7:  
Jeff Orth

Visit [peoplesenergy.coop](http://peoplesenergy.coop)  
for a listing of the areas  
covered by each district.

## GENERAL INFO

Business Hours:  
7:30 am – 4:00 pm, M–F

Telephone: 507-367-7000

Toll-Free: 800-214-2694

Web Address:  
[www.peoplesenergy.coop](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop)

Gopher State One Call:  
1-800-252-1166  
(digging & line location)

## ask us!

**QUESTION:** "What exactly does energy management mean?" – An often-asked question.

**ANSWER:** Although most cooperative members pay the same amount for every kilowatt-hour (kWh) they use, regardless of the time of day, the actual cost to produce and deliver electricity varies. Energy management programs reduce the amount of electricity used during times of high demand such as peak usage during the heat of summer and the bitter cold of winter.

When high-energy appliances such as dishwashers, clothes dryers, and hot tubs are used at the same time, it creates a higher demand for electricity. It's like turning your kitchen faucet on the largest stream to fill up a pitcher fast versus a low stream of water, which takes more time to fill the pitcher. You still use the same amount of water, but not all at once.

Energy management programs also allow members to take advantage of

available renewable energy generation. Dairyland Power Cooperative (our wholesale power supplier) uses energy management to take advantage of renewable resources. For example, opportunities for wind energy production are often at night when electricity consumption is low. By utilizing the Daily Energy Storage Strategy (our off-peak program), members are charging their EVs and heating their water overnight.

Members can make a difference by shifting their electricity use to times of the day when there is not as high of a need for electricity, keeping electricity rates stable and affordable.

*For more about energy management programs, schedules, and how to enroll, visit [peoplesenergy.coop/energy-management-programs](http://peoplesenergy.coop/energy-management-programs).*

You can email your questions to [memberrelations@peoplesenergy.coop](mailto:memberrelations@peoplesenergy.coop).



# Economic Development Focus:

## *Business Retention & Expansion Survey*

In June, we mentioned that People's Energy Cooperative is developing a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) survey. This tool will identify opportunities to help local businesses grow, as well as obstacles that may prevent them from growing or put them at risk of leaving the area.

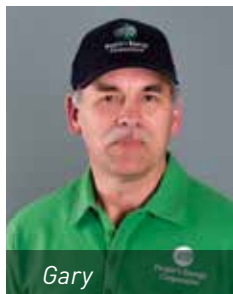
The Cooperative is partnering with the University of Minnesota Extension Service Community Development team to conduct the survey across PEC's service area this summer and fall. The survey will include questions about electrical service and the general needs of the business. Two hundred eight.

In preparation, People's Energy Cooperative is reaching out to local economic development organizations to recruit volunteers to help complete the in-depth surveys. The general timeline for this project is in the next column:

- **EARLY-MID JULY:** Train volunteers and identify participating businesses.
- **LATE JULY:** Begin surveying businesses and continue through the month of August.
- **MID-SEPTEMBER:** Wrap-up business visits.
- **SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER:** Analyze data, beginning with an online research review.
- **NOVEMBER:** Share survey results and analysis.
- **DECEMBER AND INTO 2022:** Plan action items based on information in survey results.

Area businesses interested in participating in the Business Retention and Expansion survey should contact **Marty Walsh** at **507-367-7050**.

### CONGRATULATIONS GARY!



Warehouse worker **Gary Schurhammer** retired on June 18 after 45 years of service.

Gary started his career at the Cooperative as a work order clerk in February of 1976. He moved to the warehouse worker position in March of 1998, where he has served since. Gary is looking forward to having more time to bike, tend to his garden, and travel.



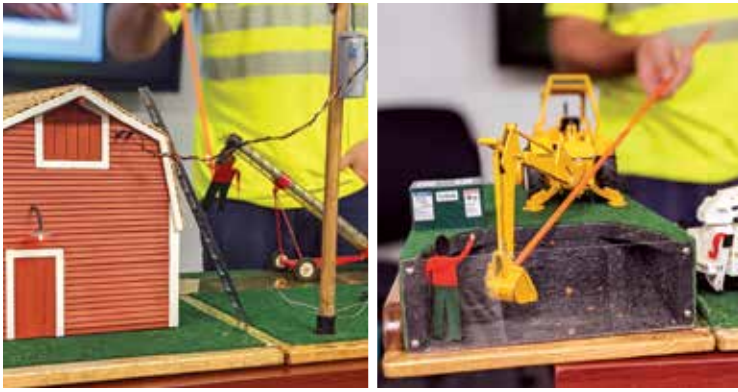
**WANT TO HELP REDUCE ENERGY DEMAND** during peak times of use? Sign up for Power Down energy alerts and voluntarily reduce your energy use!

1. Sign up to receive alerts through SmartHub, our free online account management tool.
2. During peak energy alerts, try to voluntarily reduce your energy use however able.
3. When the peak energy alert is over, resume your normal energy use.



When many people make small changes, those changes add up to significant savings and keep rates stable! For more, visit [peoplesenergy.coop/power-down-voluntary-load-reduction](https://peoplesenergy.coop/power-down-voluntary-load-reduction).

## PARTNERING TO KEEP PEOPLE SAFE



**WHEN ANYONE IS IN A CAR ACCIDENT,** *some of the first people on the scene are members of the local sheriff's department. In June, we presented electrical safety "best practices" with the Olmsted County Sheriff's Department.*

The presentation explained how electrical equipment works and how to respond to different types of incidents that could involve electricity.

We appreciated the opportunity to discuss electrical safety with the Sheriff's Department because each year, the Cooperative experiences several incidences of drivers hitting a pole with a vehicle, construction equipment, or farm equipment.

For example, in June, a driver swerved to miss a semi-truck and trailer and hit one of our poles. The impact of the vehicle broke the pole and caused the electrical lines to fall on top of the semi and over the road. Thankfully, the driver knew to stay in the semi until crews arrived and de-energized the lines. Getting out of his truck could have injured or even killed him as the lines were still energized. This was evident by the burn marks caused on the road. There aren't always signs of energized lines, so it's best to always assume they are energized until someone from the electric utility confirms they are de-energized.

We are happy to present electrical safety training to any group that could benefit from the material. We thank the Olmsted County Sheriff's Department for incorporating electrical safety into their training program and hope others do the same.

**If you'd like us to present to your group, contact Ashley Kincaid at 507-367-7054.**



## PAY YOUR BILL THE EASY WAY WITH AUTO-PAY

Members looking for a convenient way to pay their energy bill each month should consider signing up for PEC'S Automatic Bill Payment program. Auto-Pay participants have funds automatically deducted from their checking or savings accounts or charged to their credit card account each month.

"Auto-Pay is an excellent option for members looking to avoid the hassle of writing checks, paying for postage, or mailing their electric bills. It's all taken care of, with the bonus of never having to worry about a late payment or additional fees," says Carla Leslie, PEC's member services supervisor.

Auto-Pay is not only convenient, but also more secure than sending in a check as files are encrypted. This eliminates the possibility of a mailed check getting lost or falling into the wrong hands. Auto-Pay through a member's checking/savings account is also one of the most cost-effective ways the Cooperative accepts payments from members, which helps control administrative costs.

Setting up Auto-Pay is easy to do and can be done through SmartHub or the IVR pay-by-phone system. Participating members' electric bills are then deducted from their bank account or charged to their credit card (*Mastercard, Visa, Discover, or American Express*) automatically. Payments will be deducted or charged on the due date, as stated on the electric bill. If this date falls on a weekend or holiday, the deduction will take place the following business day. Members will continue to receive their monthly electric bill electronically or by mail, whichever they choose.

**Take advantage of PEC's easy-to-use Auto-Pay option and sign up today!**



# GRAB SOME FRESH PRODUCE AT YOUR FARMER'S MARKET

.....  
VISIT WITH FRIENDS & SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL GROWERS!

► **CHATFIELD**

THURSDAYS, 3:00-6:00 PM

*Chatfield City Park*

► **DODGE CENTER**

FRIDAYS, 2:00-7:00 PM

*104 First St. NW*

► **EYOTA**

TUESDAYS, 4:00-7:00 PM

*West Side Park*

► **KASSON**

WEDNESDAYS, 3:00-6:00 PM

*Prairie Meadows Senior Living*

► **LAKE CITY**

THURSDAYS, 5:00-8:00 PM

*Patton Park*

► **LAKE CITY**

SATURDAYS, 9:00-12:00 PM

*Century Link Parking Lot*

► **PINE ISLAND**

FRIDAYS, 3:00-7:00 PM

*Behind Island Market*

► **PLAINVIEW**

WEDNESDAYS, 4:00-7:00 PM

*Bennett's Food Center*

► **ROCHESTER**

SATURDAYS, 7:30 AM-12:00 PM

*Graham Park*

► **ROCHESTER**

WEDNESDAYS, 2:00-6:00 PM

*Graham Park*

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*Before visiting one of the local markets in our region, please call ahead and be sure to confirm their operations and any restrictions that might be in place.*

## RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO OUR MEMBERS

**FOR OUR MEMBERS** WHO WANT TO SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY EFFORTS BUT CAN'T (OR DON'T WANT TO) INSTALL THEIR OWN SYSTEM.

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**PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY SOLAR** is a program run by the Cooperative that allows members to subscribe to the energy output from the solar array located off Hwy. 42 in Elgin. Panel subscriptions are currently \$600 per panel, (44 panels remain of the original 820).

**EVERGREEN** allows members the chance to voluntarily contribute to the increased development of utility-scale renewable energy resources by one of our power providers, Dairyland Power Cooperative.



**Evergreen**<sup>SM</sup>

*To learn more about People's Community Solar and Evergreen, visit [peoplesenergy.coop](http://peoplesenergy.coop).*





# Kasson Economic Development Authority's PRESERVATION PROJECT

OPERATION ROUND UP® SPOTLIGHT:

A DEDICATION TO BETTERING THE COMMUNITY

*Kasson's historic Works Progress Administration (WPA) wall and pillars are some of the most prominent and recognizable structures in the City of Kasson. They mark the entrance to the aquatic center, with visitors passing through them on a regular basis.*

Over time, the condition of the WPA wall and pillars has deteriorated. "The wall is almost unsafe at this point, with some stone even coming out of it," reports Ron Unger, park and rec director with the City of Kasson. "Yet, the community didn't want to have the wall and pillars taken down. They wanted to save them." Thirty-one thousand six hundred sixty-seven.

To restore the historic wall and pillars, the Kasson Economic Development Authority (EDA), on behalf of the City of Kasson, submitted an application to People's Energy Cooperative for an Operation Round Up grant. Kasson EDA was recently awarded \$3,500 to assist with the Historic Works Progress Administration Wall and Pillars Preservation Project.

The total project cost is estimated at \$67,000. According to Unger, community members have already donated more than \$40,000 to help with the restoration project. Funds will be used to repair and replace deteriorated mortar and brick from the pillars and implement measures to preserve and protect the structures from further deterioration.

Reticulated Stone will begin the reconstruction and preservation work near the end of July. This will include cleaning and removing all loose joints and

broken stones; replacing new stones where needed; tuck pointing with lime mortar (dyed to match the original mortar); repairing concrete caps on the pillars; and digging out a channel around the walls to fill with crushed limestone to protect the structure.

Kasson's historic Works Progress Administration wall and pillars were built in 1938 as part of a depression-era WPA project to construct a municipal pool and bathhouse with an adjoining park. The wall and pillars are made of limestone sourced from a local quarry and are the only structures from the WPA project that remain intact in their original form. They serve as a reminder of the hardships endured by residents of the region and their dedication to bettering their community amid a great depression.





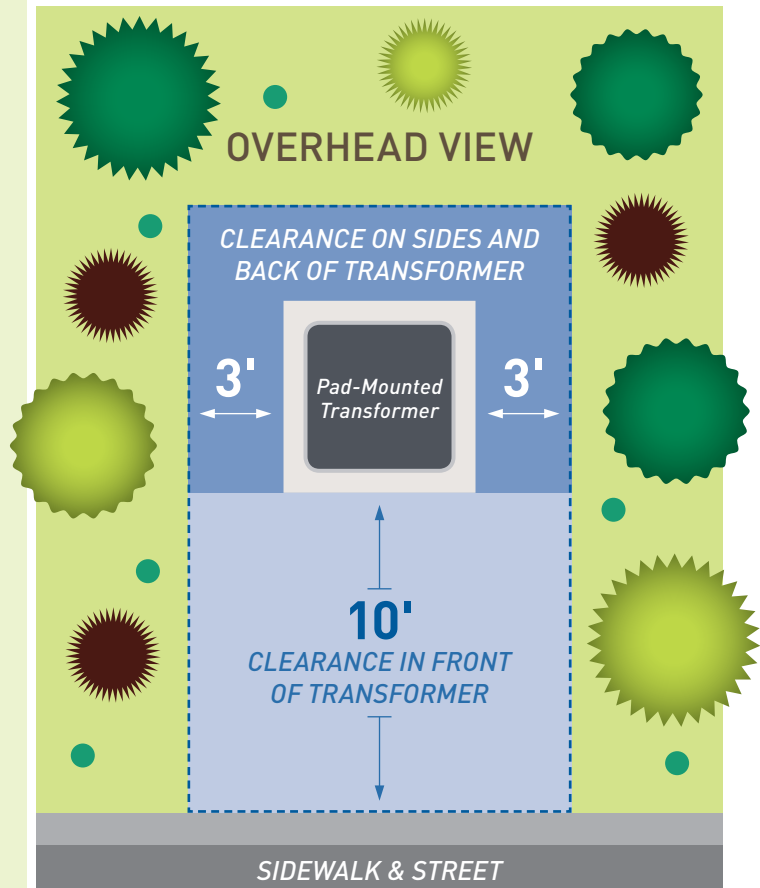
# VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

## HELPS LINEWORKERS ACCESS THE EQUIPMENT THEY NEED

*Although we enjoy the beautiful trees, bushes, and plants that surround us, it is important to make sure this vegetation is clear from power lines and electric utility equipment. Adequate clearance plays a vital role in the safe and reliable operation of our electric distribution system. Visit [peoplesenergy.coop/landscape-tree-planting-guidelines](https://peoplesenergy.coop/landscape-tree-planting-guidelines).*

- ▶ **PLANT TREES AWAY FROM UNDERGROUND UTILITIES** to prevent roots from interfering with underground pipes, cables and wires. Future repairs to these facilities could damage the health and beauty of nearby plants and trees.
- ▶ **NEVER PLANT TREES WITHIN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY** or directly under powerlines. Trees planted within the right-of-way will be removed. Mature landscape trees in a maintained area near distribution lines must be ten (10) feet or more from the powerline.
- ▶ **PROPERTY OWNERS ARE RESPONSIBLE** for the disposal of debris from trees cleared due to a power outage or because the tree is dead and presents a hazard.
- ▶ **ADVANCE NOTICE WILL NOT BE GIVEN** when trees need to be removed due to storm damage or power restoration activities.
- ▶ **PEC WILL ENSURE THAT NO PART OF A TREE** that could support the weight of a small child (40 lbs.) is within 10 feet of a distribution powerline based on the Cooperative's Safety Action Clearance Threshold.

### PAD-MOUNTED TRANSFORMER GUIDE



## PEC SUMMER 2021 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

**As a reminder, PEC hires tree contractors to complete the work needed to maintain our vegetation management schedule.**

*This includes both tree clearing and foliar herbicide application as a follow-up to tree trimming and line clearance work that was performed two to three years ago. Members affected by the herbicide application will be notified via postcard in advance of the work being completed. During the month of August, **Carr's Tree Service** will be working in the Rock Dell area. Also, during this time, **New Age Tree Service** will be working in the West Albany area. For info, visit [peoplesenergy.coop/vegetation-management](https://peoplesenergy.coop/vegetation-management).*





If you've recently purchased an electric vehicle (EV), you may be wondering what's next? One of the first things you will want to purchase is the proper charger for your EV.

You probably spent a significant amount of time researching which EV was best for you, so you'll also want to take time to select the right charger. With so many options and capabilities on the market, checking out buyer's guides online will help answer questions you may have, allow you to compare the different options, and provide you with ratings and reviews for individual chargers. When selecting a charger, consider the following options:

## NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLE? TIME TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT CHARGER

- ▶ **SAFETY CERTIFICATION:** Be sure you get a charger that is certified by Underwriters Laboratories (UL). This seal of approval is a good indicator of safety and quality.
- ▶ **CABLE LENGTH:** Make sure the charger comes with an adequate length of cable to reach your power source. In most cases, 20 feet or more is best.
- ▶ **CHARGER AND CIRCUIT STRENGTH:** Purchase a charger that delivers at least as much power as your EV can accept. The circuit your charger hooks into also needs to be rated at enough amperage to run the charger you've selected.
- ▶ **PROPER OUTLET:** With some level 2 smart charging stations, you can choose to hardwire or plug into a 240-volt outlet. If you need a new outlet installed for your charger, contact an electrician to put one in. Thirty thousand three hundred six.
- ▶ **OUTDOOR RATING:** If your installation is outdoors, be sure it is built for the weather. We recommend one rated NEMA-4 for extreme weather, not just NEMA-3.

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*People's Energy Cooperative offers level-2 smart chargers through our partnership in CHARGE EV, LLC. Contact the Cooperative to learn more about our smart chargers and EV charging rates.*

## Outdoor LED LIGHTING

PEC offers standard outdoor LED lighting options that are affordable, durable, and energy efficient.

### LIGHTING OPTIONS INCLUDE:

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- **DARK SKY COMPLIANT FIXTURES** designed for minimal glare and reduced light pollution.
  - **LONG-LASTING, LED LIGHTS** that produce little heat, do not emit UV or infrared, and contain no mercury. LED lights are also durable, resistant to shock and vibration, and able to operate in cold environments.
  - **AN ADVANCED SYSTEM** that turns the light on at dusk and off at dawn.
- .....

To learn more about the program, and your options, visit [peoplesenergy.coop/outdoor-led-lighting](http://peoplesenergy.coop/outdoor-led-lighting).

# ENERGY SAVINGS ..... FOR YOUR BUSINESS



**Locally owned businesses are the backbone of our community.** With summer in full swing, now is the perfect time to make sure your building is equipped for maximum energy savings. The tips below can help you lower your energy use while keeping your operations humming.

- ▶ **LED LIGHTING FOR YOUR BUSINESS** allows you to maintain your preferred brightness levels while keeping energy costs low. Don't forget about your outdoor lighting options as well as timers for automatic, overnight shutoff.
- ▶ **CHECK ANY REFRIGERATION** to ensure it is running optimally and keeping items cool without setting the thermostat lower than necessary. Keep up with regular maintenance and freon refills to ensure safe and longer-lasting inventory.
- ▶ **ELECTRIC MOTOR-DRIVEN SYSTEMS** account for approximately 25% of all commercial energy use. For larger operations, variable speed drives may be necessary to optimize your energy consumption.
- ▶ **UNPLUG ALL UNNECESSARY** or unused appliances and equipment. Many of these devices continue to draw power even when they are turned off. Advanced power strips are a smart, low-cost upgrade.

- ▶ **MAKE SURE YOUR HVAC SYSTEM** is sized correctly for your business space. If it is not, this could lead to inefficient operation or insufficient cooling. People's Energy Cooperative's energy advisors can help you evaluate your existing system.

We know your bottom line is important when making these business operations decisions. If these or other energy-saving adjustments require purchases, be sure to check out our available rebates. Visit [peoplesenergy.coop/rebates](https://peoplesenergy.coop/rebates) to get started.

*As your local electric cooperative, we would be happy to come to your office, warehouse, or storefront to conduct a comprehensive energy audit to make sure you're maximizing every dollar. To learn more about energy audits or to schedule an audit, visit [peoplesenergy.coop/energy-audits](https://peoplesenergy.coop/energy-audits).*



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY: KEEP THE HEAT TO A MINIMUM

tip:

**DURING SUMMER MONTHS** run large appliances that emit heat (like clothes dryers and dishwashers) during the evening when it's cooler. This will minimize indoor heat during the day when outdoor temperatures are highest.



# Don't fall victim to Utility Scams

– By Abby Berry



**EVERY DAY, MILLIONS OF AMERICANS** are targeted by scammers through phone calls, emails, and text messages and online or in person. Scammers' tactics can change daily, which is why it's important for consumers to stay on top of the latest scam reports from local and national news outlets, as well as your local utility companies.

In recent years, several PEC members have been targeted through phone scams where the scammers demanded immediate payment and threatened to shut off power if the money was not received. **Remember, People's Energy Cooperative will never call you for immediate payment without notice.**

We want you to be aware of two trending scam tactics. One is the overpayment trick, where a scammer contacts you and claims that you have overpaid your utility bill. The scammer will say they need your personal banking information to deposit the credit back to your checking account. Don't fall for this scam! **If you make an overpayment on your energy bill, PEC will automatically apply the credit to your account, which will carry over to your next billing cycle.**

Another trending scam is smishing (*short for SMS phishing*). Many consumers know to watch out for suspicious emails, but we tend to trust text messages sent to our smartphones. Always question suspicious texts, especially from someone claiming to represent a utility. **PEC will only send you important updates via text if you have signed up for our account management system, SmartHub.** These are just a couple examples of trending scams, so it's important to watch for any red flags.

The following are a few reminders on how to take control of the situation when you've been targeted by a scammer:

- ▶ **TAKE YOUR TIME:** Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency so you'll act fast and hand over personal information, especially over the phone. Take a moment to think about the situation before acting.
- ▶ **BE SUSPICIOUS:** Scammers typically request immediate payments through prepaid debit cards or third-party apps. Unusual requests like this should raise red flags. Remember, if the request seems strange and out of the ordinary, you're likely being targeted by a scammer. Twenty-six thousand two hundred seventy-four.
- ▶ **CONFIRM BEFORE YOU ACT:** If you're contacted by someone claiming to represent People's Energy or another utility but you're unsure, just hang up the phone and call the utility directly. You can reach us at **800-214-2694** to verify the situation.

*Our increasingly connected world provides scammers with more opportunities to connect with unsuspecting consumers. Be vigilant, and please report any utility scams to us so we can let others in our community know. Together, we can help prevent our friends and neighbors from being victimized.*



**AUTHOR ABBY BERRY** writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.



## People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South  
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

### HIGHLINE HI-LITES • July 2021 • 85 • Issue 07

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!**

## BE SURE TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### FOR OUR UPCOMING MEMBER MEETINGS

*The Cooperative is hosting four member meetings this year, a great opportunity for members to get together, hear updates about the Cooperative, and ask questions.*

- **ORONOCO** – TUES., SEPT. 28, 6:30 PM  
*PEC Headquarters: 1775 Lake Shady Avenue S*
- **PLAINVIEW** – THURS., SEPT. 30, 6:30 PM  
*American Legion Post 179: 215 3rd Street SW*
- **CHATFIELD** – MON., OCT. 4, 6:30 PM  
*Chatfield Center for the Arts: 405 Main Street S*
- **STEWARTVILLE** – MON., OCT. 11, 12:00 PM  
*Stewartville Civic Center: 105 1st Street E*

To help us plan accordingly, please RSVP by emailing **rsvp@peoplesenergy.coop** or calling **800-214-2694**. Please include your name, which meeting you will be attending, and the number of guests.

## PEC LOBBY UPDATE

We will continue to serve members at our office by appointment during business hours (7:30 am – 4 pm, Mon - Fri). This has proven to be efficient and effective for both our members and staff, as it ensures an appropriate staff member is available and prepared for the visit. **To make an appointment, please call 800-214-2694.**

## MEDICAL EQUIPMENT REMINDER

If someone in your home uses life-sustaining equipment powered by electricity, let us know so we can note this on your account. We are not able to promise your power will be restored sooner, but in the case of an extended outage we will do our best to communicate the status of the power outage to you.

To notify the Cooperative, fill out the "Medical Alert Authorization" form found under "Account Management Forms" on the front page of our website. Return this form to the Cooperative and we will reach out to you if we need additional information. This form is required to be completed annually.