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### MANAGEMENT STAFF

Elaine J. Garry,  
President/CEO

Gary Fitterer,  
Director of Engineering

Mike Henke,  
Chief Financial Officer

Michelle Olson,  
Director of  
Member Services

Gwen Stevens,  
Director of Cooperative  
Relations

Troy Swancutt,  
Director of Operations

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Office 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

(for digging & line location)

## STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE *TAPPING INTO THE* **POWER OF THE SUN**

We're wrapping up our series on solar choices with the option of installing your own solar array.

*As prices decline and technology improves, installing a residential solar system – also called a photo-voltaic or PV system – makes sense for some consumers. However, even with these recent improvements in PV, it's important to find out the facts before committing to a purchase. Consider these points as you explore whether solar is right for you.*

### MAKE YOUR HOME MORE ENERGY

**EFFICIENT** before buying a solar system. Adding insulation, sealing air leaks, and completing other basic fix-it projects make sense for several reasons. You can cut your energy costs immediately and ensure the PV system you purchase is not oversized for your needs. Energy audits can help identify opportunities to be more energy efficient.

**RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH** before investing in a solar system. People's Energy Cooperative (PEC) should be one of your first contacts. We can answer basic questions, provide resource materials, and direct you to reputable sites. Visit the 'renewable energy' page on our website for links to resources.

### UNDERSTAND HOW A SOLAR SYSTEM

**MESHES** with the Cooperative's system. Depending on the size of your PV system, the amount of sunlight, and the amount of power you are using, your system could be supplying power to your home and sending excess power onto the Cooperative's system.

At night, on cloudy days, and possibly at other high-energy-use times, you may need more power than your PV system can produce. This means you'll be drawing power from the Cooperative's system. On sunny days, your PV system may produce more energy than you consume. In this case, your system will direct the excess energy to the Cooperative's system. Because these systems are grid-connected, energy can flow both ways.

Every utility – including us – sets appropriate policies and rates for connecting PV systems to their lines (*the grid*) and for purchasing any excess energy your system might generate. As you begin to explore PV systems, be sure you ask about rate structures, the interconnection process, essential safety precautions, and other connection-related details. *(continued on page 5)*

# CEO MESSAGE

FROM ELAINE J. GARRY, PRESIDENT & CEO



*Elaine J. Garry*

egarry@peoplesrec.com

*Dramatic changes are transforming all aspects of the energy industry. Interest in renewable energy is at an all-time high, and consumers want greater control over their energy use and payment methods. The prevalence of apps for “smart-home” technology is increasing, and consumers and businesses are showing greater interest in electric vehicles. There’s no denying it: electric utilities will have to make changes to the way we provide energy to accommodate these trends. Luckily, People’s Energy Cooperative is uniquely positioned to meet these changing energy needs because we are a cooperative.*

October is National Co-op Month, which is the perfect time to highlight a few ways electric cooperatives are unique.

#### **COOPERATIVES ARE COMMUNITY-LED:**

Cooperatives are locally governed, looking out for the long-term needs of their consumer-members. Electric cooperatives belong to the communities they serve. This heightened community focus allows us to quickly adapt to evolving consumer expectations. Our closeness to the community ensures a better response to the needs of our membership because we are led by the people that we serve.

#### **COOPERATIVES ARE A CATALYST FOR GOOD:**

Electric cooperatives are a catalyst for good in their communities. We engage our consumer-members to do things that might otherwise be impossible or difficult, like more than 80 years ago when electric cooperatives brought power to areas where other utilities did not find it economically feasible.

Today, it means developing programs like People’s Community Solar that enables members to easily, and relatively affordably, tap into the power of the sun. It also means partnering with other cooperatives to expand membership through the acquisition of the Alliant service territory and to engage in

revenue-generating businesses like Heartland Security to provide services that protect what matters most to our members.

We also partner with local groups to bring economic opportunity to the communities we serve. In our six-county service territory, we partner with economic development agencies like Community and Economic Development Associates (CEDA), Rochester Area Economic Development Inc. (RAEDI), and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation to help our communities thrive. For example, we worked closely with CEDA staff, city officials, and a local bank to help provide financing to two local daycare centers that will help with our area’s shortage of child care.

**COOPERATIVES GIVE BACK.** Whether it’s giving donations to local schools and non-profits, managing grants from our Operation Round Up program, or volunteering in the community, your cooperative and the employees who work here give back to the communities we serve.

Another way we give back to our members is in the form of capital credits. Unlike other forms of business, a cooperative returns its margins (*profits*) to its members through capital credits. We issue capital credits in October, so you will either notice a credit on your bill or receive a check if the amount was over \$300.

The cooperative business model is unique. It is pragmatic, mission-oriented and puts people first. Cooperatives strive to be a trusted voice in their communities; and we have earned that trust because, while not perfect, we always have our members’ best interest at heart and are determined to enrich the lives of those living and working in the communities they serve – now and in the future.

*Sincerely,*  
**Elaine J. Garry,**  
**President & CEO,**  
**507-367-7000**

# OUR CONNECTIONS

## CELEBRATE NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH!



*PEC is excited to celebrate the "Cooperative Difference" by recognizing businesses in our community who participate in the Co-op Connections program. Listed below are current local offers available to our members.*

- **B&C Plumbing and Heating:** 10% off any heating or cooling service repair.
- **Byron Pet Clinic:** Free bag of treats with \$20 purchase.
- **C&M Screen Printing & Embroidery:** 5% off purchase.
- **Charlie Brown PC Applications:** 10% off purchases of \$100.
- **Chatfield Lumber Co. Inc.:** 5% discount on any cash sale.
- **Family Tree Nursery:** Extra 5% on any shade tree.
- **Heartland Security:** \$100 discount off the purchase price of a system.
- **Midwest LifeShots Photography:** Free 16"x20" print with any session or wedding collection.
- **Prestige Auto & Diesel Care:** 10% off labor costs of \$250 or more.
- **Rennings Flowers:** 10% off any local order; not valid with other offers or specials.
- **RFour Meats:** \$2 off \$30 spent, \$5 off \$50 spent, Farmer receives by card presentation \$3 off slaughter fee (not good with any other coupon).
- **Rochester City Lines NEW!:** Free 10-ride bus pass to try RCL regional commuter bus service. Up to \$140 value.
- **Teigen Paper & Supply, Inc.:** 10% off any in-store purchase.
- **Warners' Stellian:** Free 10-year limited warranty with purchase of \$499 and up (limited one per customer).
- **Willow Creek Golf Course:** 25% off regular priced green fees (not valid for early bird special, weekend afternoon specials, or tournaments).
- **Wi-Net:** 10% off purchases over \$100. Seventeen thousand six hundred thirty-seven.
- **Wintrust Mortgage NEW!:** \$500 gift card after closing

*To check out this exclusive member-only program, we encourage you to visit [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop) to learn more. Additionally, be sure to check out the national and travel deals!*

## PEOPLE'S ENERGY COOPERATIVE LIVES UNITED TO CARE FOR COMMUNITY

*As in years past, employees came together over the months of September and October to participate in United Way of Olmsted County's Live United Annual Campaign. Employees had the opportunity to participate in a variety of fun activities including #OrangeSmile selfies, Jeans Fridays, and a silent auction. We're proud to report employees raised \$3,646 for the 2018 campaign.*



#OrangeSmile selfies



Jeans Fridays.



Silent Auction.



# Eyota's AMERICAN LEGION

*The Eyota American Legion will soon have a newly paved parking lot, sidewalk, concrete ramps, and concrete parking stops thanks, in part, to a grant from People's Energy Cooperative's Operation Round Up program.*

"We are extremely pleased with the work that has been done on the project so far," says Eyota American Legion Post 551 Commander Ronnie Stahl. He said the concrete work is now complete, including concrete parking stops that replaced the old wooden parking posts. He expects the blacktop portion of the project to be completed within the next few weeks.

The group applied for Operation Round Up funds to provide better handicap access to the facility and improve the parking lot. The existing parking lot blacktop will be removed and replaced with new four-inch blacktop. A four-foot wide by 120-foot long concrete sidewalk was also added along the entire length of the building.

Two existing concrete ramps that were starting to pull away from the building were also removed and replaced. "We had a lady with a motorized wheelchair try to get into the facility and her wheel got caught in between the ramp and the building. She wasn't able to

access the main hall," Stahl explains. "We are now able to offer good handicap access into the facility."

"It has been probably 20 years since our parking lot was repaved. This past winter was extremely hard on the parking lot, breaking up the asphalt and creating several potholes," he continues. "A lot of older people use the facility. This will make it much safer for them."

In addition to being used by Post 551's 190 American Legion members, Auxiliary members, and Sons of the American Legion members, the facility is frequently used by the community as a whole. "The building gets used by the community a lot since we don't have a community center in town. For example, we do all kinds of activities with the school. These improvements will benefit many people," notes Stahl.

*"We are extremely appreciative of people for donating to this project," he adds. The group will continue holding raffles, accepting donations, and planning fundraising events to help raise the rest of the funds required for the improvements. The City of Eyota is also covering a portion of the project cost. One hundred twenty-eight.*

## Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule

**On October 15, Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule went into effect, going through April 15.**

*Please note this rule does not prevent the Cooperative from shutting off your power, for non-payment, during winter months. If you receive a disconnection notice this winter, you must act promptly. Please note that disconnection notices are printed on your monthly billing statement. If you find yourself in need of energy assistance, please contact one of the following energy assistance providers in SE Minnesota:*

• **SEMCAAC** serves the counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Mower, Winona, Freeborn, Houston and Steele.  
800-944-3281 (toll-free)

• **Three Rivers Community Action, Inc.** serves Olmsted and Wabasha counties.  
507-732-7391 or 800-277-8418 (toll-free)

• **Rochester Salvation Army HeatShare** at 507-288-3663

# Your Solar Array *(continued...)*

**REVIEW YOUR CURRENT ENERGY USE** so you can determine what size PV system to install. Our member services department can help you review your past energy use and help you determine how the projects you've undertaken to improve energy efficiency may help lower your future energy use. One pertinent bit of information that will be useful is looking at how your energy use fluctuates throughout the day. Having that information will help you determine – with expert assistance – the size and type of system best suited to your situation.

**TALLY ALL COSTS.** If you purchase a PV system, you will be the owner, and you'll be responsible for the purchase price, as well as ongoing maintenance, insurance, and repair costs. If leasing is the option you prefer, you will pay less initially, but you'll likely have higher ongoing costs. In either case, it pays to spend time figuring out all the expenses you'll be responsible for during the life of the system. These may include: installation *(in addition to the price of the system)*, interconnection costs, insurance, taxes, and possibly other costs, too.

If you plan to install your PV system on a roof, you also need to consider the age and condition of the roof on the building, as well as state and local fire codes. You may need to update the shingles or reinforce the roof prior to installing solar panels.

**SEARCH FOR INCENTIVES, REBATES, AND TAX CREDITS.** Any financial incentives available will help reduce your investment costs. Opportunities vary by locale, and many have expiration dates. One database offering details is [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org). This site includes a clickable, interactive map, showing federal and state incentives, credits, exemptions, grants, loans, and rebates for residential and commercial/industrial projects. Please note the Cooperative does not currently offer rebates for solar installations.

**ACCEPT SHORT AND LONG-TERM RESPONSIBILITIES.** If you purchase a PV system, you'll need to meet the requirements of the Cooperative's interconnection agreement. That includes paying any costs of connecting to the Cooperative's grid. Local and/or state officials are responsible for conducting safety inspections, but it's your responsibility to notify them in advance about your installation. After inspections are complete and your interconnection application is approved, PEC

will perform a final safety test on-site and then will connect and commission your system to the grid.

As the owner of the system, you'll be responsible for maintenance and system repairs. If you lease a system, your responsibilities will depend on the agreement you sign. Be sure you know and understand what your responsibilities are.

**FOLLOW ALL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.** Most PV systems are grid-connected. Because of the two-way flow of electricity, any excess energy your PV system produces flows into the Cooperative's lines. This shoulders you with the responsibility for the safety of Cooperative lineworkers, others who may come in contact with a downed power line, and the Cooperative's equipment. Improper connection and maintenance of your system may endanger people and the reliability of the grid.

**CHOOSE A REPUTABLE CONTRACTOR/INSTALLER.** Start with a list of options garnered from website research, the state's Better Business Bureau, renewable energy associations, the MN Department of Commerce, the MN Attorney General's office, extension service staff, and any other local experts you can call on for assistance and advice. We can share a list of contractors/installers we have worked with on member installations. Contact at least a few of those contractors appearing on your list, especially if recommended by multiple state and local experts. Carefully examine your list after asking many questions, checking out other installations the contractor has completed, comparing bids *(get at least three)*, checking references, and thoroughly examining contracts. If possible, ask a contract specialist or lawyer to review the contract before signing.

**MAINTAIN GOOD RECORDS.** Keep files on your pre-purchase research and pre-installation data, as well as bids, contracts, inspection reports, maintenance records, and all other details you may need to refer to in the future. In addition, you'll want to know about system performance, so set up a system to track and compare your actual system performance with predictions provided by the contractor/installer.

*Visit the "renewable energy" page on our website for more information and resources to help you tap into the power of the sun.*



# PREVENTING KITCHEN FIRES

## THE IMPORTANCE OF STAYING SAFE IN THE KITCHEN

When we think of our kitchens, many of us think about the smells and tastes of our favorite foods, time together with friends and family, or even the dishes that may be waiting to be washed. However, we rarely think about the importance of knowing how to prevent fires. A few helpful tips:

**KEEP APPLIANCES CLEAN** and in good working order. Only purchase appliances that are tested and approved by certified safety labs. Eighteen thousand eight hundred forty-nine.

**NEVER LEAVE COOKING UNATTENDED**, and always stay alert while cooking. According to the USFA, this is the leading cause of kitchen fires.

**KEEP ANYTHING THAT CAN CATCH ON FIRE** – like oven mitts, wooden utensils, or food packaging – away from the stovetop. This includes not wearing loose-fitting clothes or loose sleeves while cooking.

**ONLY USE MICROWAVE-SAFE CONTAINERS** (glass, ceramic, or plastic) for microwave use. Never use metal or aluminum foil.

**DO NOT PLUG TOO MANY APPLIANCES** into one outlet, and never use an extension cord for appliances. As always, do not use appliances with frayed or damaged cords.

**MAKE SURE GROUND FAULT CIRCUIT INTERRUPTERS (GFCIs)** are installed in all kitchen outlets.

**MAKE SURE TO HAVE SMOKE ALARMS** around the house equipped with charged batteries.

## IF FLAMES ARE CONTAINED

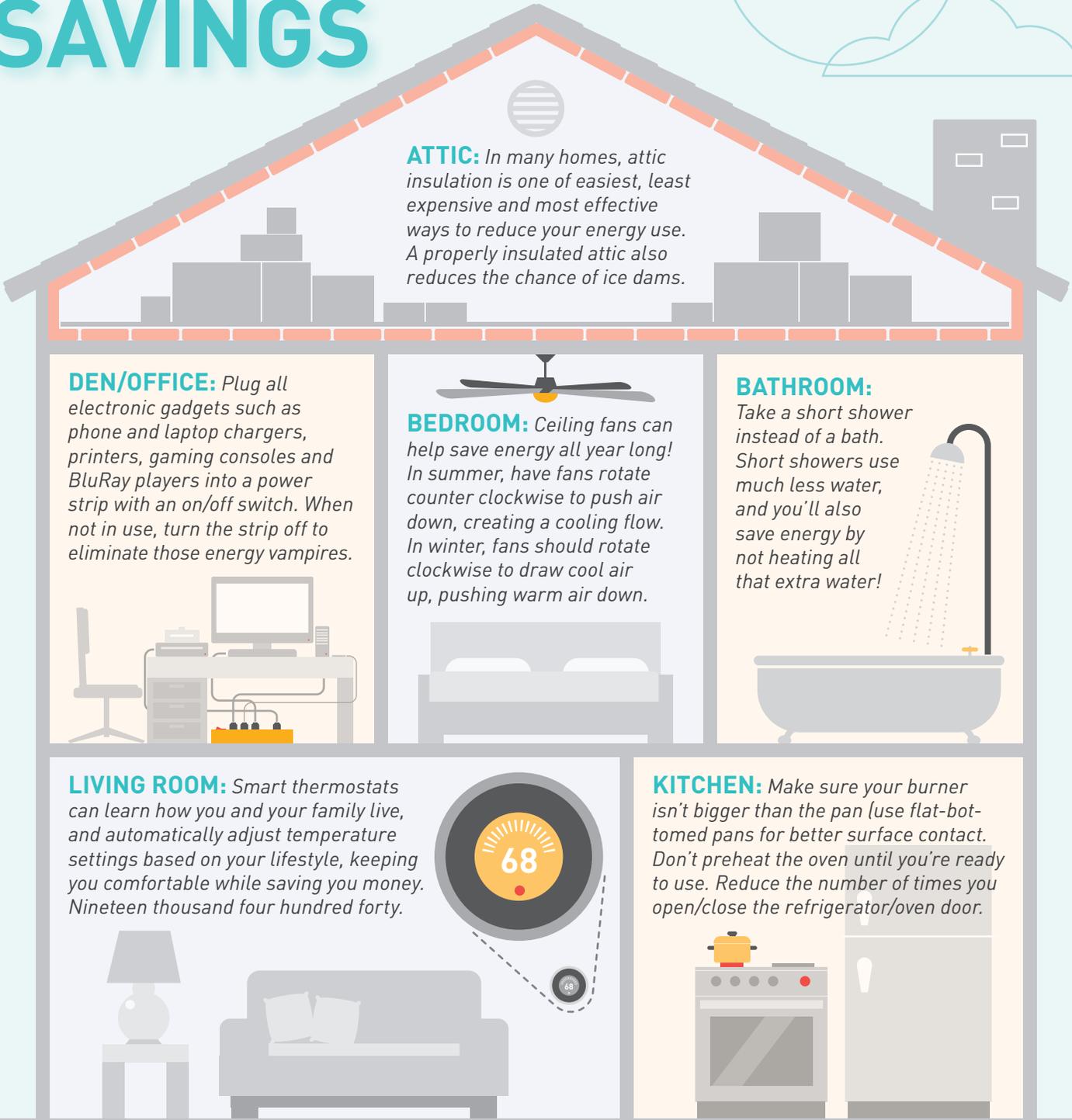
In the kitchen, there is always potential for a fire no matter how many precautions are taken. Keep these tips in mind with small, contained fires:

- **IN THE CASE OF A GREASE FIRE**, never try to douse the flames; always smother.
- **IF THE OVEN CATCHES FIRE**, turn off the heat, and keep the door closed.
- **WITH MICROWAVE FIRES**, turn it off immediately, and keep the door closed. Unplug if you can.
- **IF YOUR CLOTHES CATCH FIRE**, remember to stop, drop, and roll.
- **CHECK AND SERVICE** appliances before using them after a fire.

If the fire is not contained, get out of the house using your planned fire escape route, and call the fire department. Visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org) for more.

SOURCE: Safe Electricity & the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA).

# a full house of **ENERGY SAVINGS**



**ATTIC:** In many homes, attic insulation is one of easiest, least expensive and most effective ways to reduce your energy use. A properly insulated attic also reduces the chance of ice dams.

**DEN/OFFICE:** Plug all electronic gadgets such as phone and laptop chargers, printers, gaming consoles and BluRay players into a power strip with an on/off switch. When not in use, turn the strip off to eliminate those energy vampires.

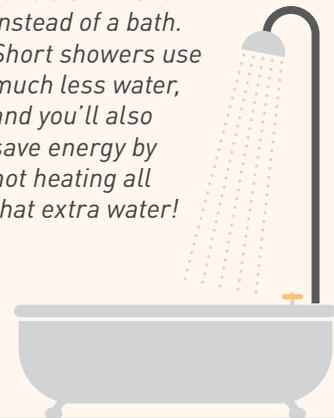


**BEDROOM:** Ceiling fans can help save energy all year long! In summer, have fans rotate counter clockwise to push air down, creating a cooling flow. In winter, fans should rotate clockwise to draw cool air up, pushing warm air down.

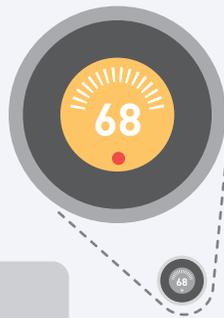


**BATHROOM:**

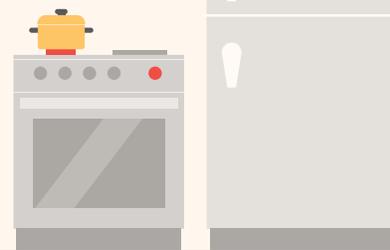
Take a short shower instead of a bath. Short showers use much less water, and you'll also save energy by not heating all that extra water!



**LIVING ROOM:** Smart thermostats can learn how you and your family live, and automatically adjust temperature settings based on your lifestyle, keeping you comfortable while saving you money. Nineteen thousand four hundred forty.



**KITCHEN:** Make sure your burner isn't bigger than the pan (use flat-bottomed pans for better surface contact. Don't preheat the oven until you're ready to use. Reduce the number of times you open/close the refrigerator/oven door.



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVES

Want to learn about additional ways to save energy? Contact us for more energy efficiency tips!



# People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South  
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

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## 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, one on our website, and one on our Facebook page. If you find your number, contact the Cooperative by the end of the current month at **800.214.2694** or **memberservices@peoplesrec.com** to receive a \$30 credit on your electric bill.

**GOOD LUCK IN FINDING YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER!**

## IN THE MARKET FOR A NEW WATER HEATER?

Now is a great time to consider an electric water heater and take advantage of phenomenal rebates.

### BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2018,

and while funds last, we are offering the following rebates on new electric water heaters for members on regular (non-incentivized) residential rates:

- **Up to \$500** for 50 to 79 gallon water heaters
- **Up to \$800** for 80 gallon or larger water heaters (may include installation costs, but not tax)

In addition to the rebate, members who participate in our water heater energy management program will qualify for our water heater service program. The program is valued at up to \$300 over the lifetime of the installed water heater.

### SOME REQUIREMENTS:

- Must purchase a new (not used or refurbished) UL listed electric water heater that carries a warranty to qualify for the rebate.
- The water heater must have an energy factor of at least .90.
- Water heaters must be at least 50 gallons and installed by a certified electrician, plumber, or combination thereof.
- Water heater must be installed on cooperative lines.
- Water heaters 80 gallons or larger must participate in our energy management program.

### SOME ADVANTAGES:

- No venting/duct work needed.
- Electric water heaters pose no risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Longer life expectancy than gas-powered water heaters.
- Typically carry longer warranties than gas-powered water heaters.
- Produce less greenhouse gases due to the growing number of renewable energy systems contributing to the electric grid.

*Call or visit online for additional requirements and to learn more!*