

MEEKER COOPERATIVE PIONEER



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Meeker
Cooperative
Light and Power Association

VIBRANT
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Meeker Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

ENHANCING EMERGENCY RESPONSE: EV RESCUE TRAINING

Meeker Cooperative, in collaboration with Safety and Security Consultation Specialists (SASCS), recently hosted a groundbreaking training event aimed at bolstering the safety and preparedness of fire and rescue teams in dealing with electric vehicle (EV) incidents. Held on April 9, 2024, the event saw 22 members from the Litchfield Rescue Squad gather to delve into the intricacies of EV response and management.

The objectives behind the event were clear: to cultivate a safer environment for EV drivers and equip first responders with the necessary skills to mitigate hazards associated with electric

transportation accidents. With the slow adoption of EVs in the area, there was a pressing need to dispel misconceptions and enhance responders' understanding of EV technology. "As a cooperative deeply invested in our community's safety and well-being, hosting this event was a natural choice for us. It's imperative that our first responders have the knowledge and skills to effectively handle EV incidents," shared Steve Kosbab, Energy Services Manager & Distributed Energy Resources Coordinator.

Continued on page 2.

EV SAFETY CONTINUED...



Participants engaged in hands-on sessions covering a range of topics, from identifying different EV types to understanding crash response protocols and ensuring responder safety. Notably, the event provided a unique opportunity for attendees to interact closely with EVs, including a 2019 Chevy Bolt and a 2022 Tesla Model Y.

The training covered a comprehensive range of topics related to electric vehicle (EV) response and management. It began with an introduction to EVs, including an overview of EV numbers, manufacturers, types, and history. Participants gained insights into the basic components of EVs, such as high and low voltage batteries, charging ports, electric motors, and safety features.

Key aspects of EV emergency response were thoroughly discussed, including initial response procedures, identification, immobilization, and disabling of EVs. The training also addressed additional concerns surrounding EV incidents, such as crashes, rollovers, vehicle immersion,

and fires. Participants learned about the unique challenges of extinguishing EV fires, handling damaged batteries, and conducting overhauls.

Feedback from participants underscored the value of the training, with many expressing gratitude for the opportunity to gain firsthand experience with EVs. Looking ahead, Meeker Cooperative plans to extend this training to other fire, rescue, and first responder teams in the area, further strengthening emergency response capabilities and fostering a safer environment for all.

A PUBLIC SAFETY MESSAGE

In traumatic situations, it may be instinctive to flee as soon as possible. However, if you are in a car accident with a power line, the safest place is often inside the car - whether it's an EV or not.

When a car crashes into a power pole, the pole may fall down, lines may fall on your car or nearby, and the area around your car may become charged with electric energy. 24-35-110 If you step out of the car in this scenario, your body would become the path to ground for the electricity, and you could be electrocuted.

Stay in the car if you are in a car accident with a power pole. Warn those who try to come near your car to help that they must stay far away. Call 911 for help, and wait until a professional from the electric utility tells you it is safe to leave the car.

The exception to this rule is if your car is on fire. In that case, jump clear of the vehicle without touching it and the ground at the same time. Then hop away with feet together. This way there will not be a voltage difference between your two feet, which would give electricity the chance to flow through your body.

If you see a car crash into a power pole, don't approach. Your safety matters most. Call emergency services and stay clear of the accident site.

SPRING INTO SAFETY ON THE FARM

Planting season is here. While you prepare to plant the crops that help feed the world, Meeker Cooperative reminds you to keep safety in mind — especially when working around electricity.

- Keep equipment and people at least 15 feet from power lines at all times, in all directions.
- Inspect the height of farm equipment. Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines and before entering fields, check for clearance.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance. Do not attempt to fix electric infrastructure or equipment yourself.
- If a power line is sagging or low, contact Meeker Cooperative.
- In case of contact, call 911, keep others away, and do not exit the equipment or touch anyone in contact with electricity.





BALANCING ACT: THE INTERSECTION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY AND COOPERATIVE EQUITY

In recent years, there's been a growing interest in renewable energy, particularly solar power. With government incentives and increasing environmental awareness, many have been considering installing their own renewable energy systems. As Meeker Co-op strives to be your trusted energy advisor, I want to shed light on some key aspects of this important decision.

First, let's understand what we're talking about. Renewable energy systems installed by individual consumers, such as solar panels and wind turbines, are known as distributed energy resources (DER) or distributed generation (DG) systems. Properly connecting these systems to the grid is crucial for ensuring the safety and reliability of our electric infrastructure.

One of the central concepts in this discussion is net metering. In Minnesota, net metering statutes allow you, our valued members, to generate electricity using solar or wind energy systems. Not only can you offset your electric usage, but you can also sell any excess energy back to us.

However, it's essential to understand the impacts of net metering on Meeker Cooperative. By law, we're obligated to pay you for excess energy at the average retail rate, which is higher than what we pay our wholesale energy suppliers. This discrepancy raises questions about the sustainability of net metering programs and their impact on the fairness and equity of energy costs for all members.

Expanding on this, the financial implications are significant. Paying members for excess energy at retail rates can strain the Cooperative's finances, potentially leading to increased costs for non-participating members. This raises concerns about fairness and equity within the cooperative community.

Moreover, there are broader implications for grid stability and reliability. As more members adopt distributed energy resources, managing the balance of supply and demand on the grid becomes increasingly complex. Net metering can exacerbate these challenges by introducing variability in energy generation, requiring careful management to ensure grid stability.

Furthermore, there is a growing inquiry into the necessity of incentives for distributed generation (DG) systems, given Minnesota's legislation aiming for a carbon-free electrical grid by 2040.



Balancing the promotion of renewable energy adoption with the need for grid stability and equitable cost-sharing poses a significant policy challenge.

Meeker Cooperative aims to assist members in navigating the complexities of renewable energy adoption. Through communication and adherence to established interconnection processes, the Cooperative strives to foster a collaborative approach to distributed energy resources.

At Meeker Cooperative, we work hard to earn your trust and connect with you as your trusted energy advisor. If you are planning or thinking of installing a DG system, please do not hesitate to contact us. We can walk members through the process of getting interconnected to its grid so that you will know the procedures and expectations upfront.

Meeker Co-op follows the Cooperative Minnesota Distributed Energy Resources Interconnection Process for all interconnections.

Members can visit Meeker Co-op's website at www.novapowerportal.com/Home/Index/5 to access information on the interconnection process.

As a co-op, we exist to deliver safe, reliable, and affordable electricity to everyone on our system. You and your fellow consumer members share in the cost to purchase, operate, and maintain the equipment that makes electricity available. We work diligently to keep our rates fair and equitable to all. We aren't opposed to renewable energy, but we need to find a solution that lets all of us share in the benefits and the costs.

If you are considering installing a solar or wind system, please feel free to call Meeker Co-op's energy services representatives at 320-693-3231.

Dedicated to keeping the lights on and the data flowing,

Luke Johnson

CEO, Meeker Cooperative

STAY SAFE: ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR NATIONAL ELECTRIC SAFETY MONTH



Every May, we recognize National Electric Safety Month, a time to raise awareness about the importance of electrical safety in our homes. Electricity powers our lives, but it also poses significant risks if not handled properly. To ensure the safety of you and your loved ones, here are some essential tips to keep in mind:



INSPECT REGULARLY: Conduct routine inspections of your electrical systems, including outlets, switches, and cords. Look for signs of wear and tear such as frayed wires, loose connections, or overheating. Address any issues promptly to prevent potential hazards.



PLUG SAFETY: Avoid overloading outlets by using power strips with built-in surge protection. Never plug multiple high-wattage appliances into the same outlet, as this can lead to overheating and fires. Ensure that all plugs fit snugly into outlets to prevent sparks or shocks.



WATER AND ELECTRICITY DON'T MIX: Keep electrical appliances away from water sources such as sinks, tubs, and pools. Install ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in areas where water and electricity are in close proximity, such as kitchens, bathrooms, and outdoor spaces.



CHILDPROOF YOUR OUTLETS: Use outlet covers or tamper-resistant receptacles to prevent young children from inserting objects into electrical outlets. Educate children about the dangers of playing with electrical appliances and cords to minimize the risk of accidents.



STAY GROUNDED: Ensure that your home's electrical system is properly grounded to redirect excess electricity safely into the ground. Grounding helps protect against electrical shocks and reduces the risk of electrical fires.



UNPLUG WHEN NOT IN USE: When appliances are not in use, unplug them to prevent energy waste and reduce the risk of electrical malfunctions. This simple habit can also lower your energy bills and extend the lifespan of your electrical devices.



PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE: For complex electrical tasks such as wiring installations or repairs, seek the expertise of a qualified electrician. DIY electrical work can be dangerous and may lead to serious accidents or code violations.



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: Have a plan in place for handling electrical emergencies, such as power outages or electrical fires. Keep emergency contact numbers readily available and invest in smoke detectors and fire extinguishers for added safety.

By following these tips and remaining vigilant about electrical safety, you can create a secure environment for you and your family. 23-13-220 Let's celebrate National Electric Safety Month by prioritizing safety and reducing the risks associated with electrical hazards. Remember, a little precaution today can prevent a major shock tomorrow!

Meeker Cooperative Distributes \$14,410

Through the contributions of Meeker Cooperative’s participating members, and VIBRANT subscribers, the Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust Board recently approved \$14,410 to assist local community organizations.

One of the benefits of Operation Round Up is that it allows members and VIBRANT subscribers to make a positive impact on their community with just a small contribution. The program allows members and subscribers to round up their monthly bill to the nearest dollar. 13-07-112 The extra change may not seem like much, but when combined with the contributions of others, it can add up to a significant amount of money that can make a real difference in people’s lives.

Another benefit of Operation Round Up is that it allows electric cooperatives to give back to the communities they serve in a meaningful way. As not-for-profit organizations, electric cooperatives are committed to improving the quality of life for their members and their communities. Operation Round Up is one way that cooperatives can fulfill this commitment by supporting local organizations and initiatives.

“For an annual contribution equal to a cup of coffee, our members are able to impact our communities in a positive, meaningful way,” said Trust Chair Holly Schultz-Anderson. “Through Operation Round Up, small change adds up to make a big difference for so many of our families, neighbors, and friends.”

The Trust meets three times per year to review applications and award grants. The remaining application deadlines for 2024 are July 5 and November 7. The application and guidelines can be found on Meeker Cooperative’s website. www.meeker.coop.

March 2024 Recipient List

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Crow River Trail Guards	\$810
Eden Valley Food Shelf	\$1,000
Eden Valley Valley Daze	\$500
Fire Department, Watkins	\$1,000
Forest City Threshers	\$500
Kandiyohi County Food Shelf	\$400
Kimball Food Shelf	\$1,000
Litchfield Watercade, Inc.	\$500
Living at Home/BN Prog., Grove City C.A.R.E.	\$1,000
McLeod Emergency Food Shelf	\$350
Meeker County Food Shelf	\$3,000
Paynesville Community Services	\$1,000
The Link of Northern Kandiyohi County	\$250

EDUCATION AND YOUTH

Post Prom Party, Paynesville	\$400
Post Prom, ACGC	\$400
Post Prom, Eden Valley-Watkins	\$400
Post Prom, Litchfield High School	\$400
Robotics Team, Hutchinson High School	\$750
Robotics Team, Litchfield High School	\$750

TOTAL

\$14,410



LEARN MORE ABOUT OPERATION ROUND UP AT
www.meeker.coop/operationroundup

WILLIE WIREDHAND’S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT



Georg Simon Ohm, a German physicist, introduced Ohm’s Law, a fundamental principle in electrical engineering. This law states that the current flowing through a conductor is directly proportional to the voltage applied across it, provided the temperature remains constant.

MEMBER NEWS

OFFICES CLOSED

Meeker Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, May 27 in observance of Memorial Day.

RATE INCREASE REMINDER

As a reminder, our recent rate adjustment, effective April 1, 2024, reflects a 3.2% increase across all rate classes. This decision was made to address inflation’s impact on energy prices and essential distribution equipment. You’ll notice this adjustment on your May bills. While we understand the impact on your budget, it ensures our continued reliability.

If you have any questions regarding this rate adjustment, we encourage you to call our office during regular business hours (8 am - 4:30 pm) at 320-693-3231.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Stay connected and in the know by following Meeker Cooperative and VIBRANT Broadband on Facebook and Instagram.

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ENERGY TOUR BUS TRIP

AUGUST 21-23, 2024 | \$175 PER PERSON

We're excited to invite you to join us for our 2024 Energy Tour, August 21-23! This three-day luxury coach tour will take you through North Dakota's coal country, where you'll learn how electric power is generated at a lignite coal plant, how a coal-gasification plant produces natural gas, and visit the North Dakota History Museum.

You'll be staying at a hotel in Mandan for two nights. The trip cost is \$175 per person for a single or double room. Most meals are included, except for fast food and coffee stops during the bus trip to and from North Dakota, and any restaurants you may visit during your free time.

The tour includes visits to:

- Basin Electric Powers Antelope Valley Power Station near Beulah, ND
- Great Plains SynFuels Plant
- The Coteau Properties Freedom Coal Mine
- Garrison Dam Power Generation Plant
- Lewis & Clark Riverboat Dinner Cruise
- The North Dakota History Center



MEEKER MEMBER TRIP: ENERGY TOUR

Please reserve _____ places for the Energy Tour Bus Trip on August 21-23.

Name(s): _____

Account Number: _____ Phone: _____

Cost Per Person: \$175

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Please note that the people listed above will share a room.

*Return to: Meeker Cooperative, Attention: Michele Boreen,
1725 US Highway. 12, Suite 100, Litchfield, MN 55355 by August 1.*

STATE FAIR BUS TRIP

AUGUST 22, 2024 | \$45 PER PERSON

Experience the grandeur of the Minnesota State Fair hassle-free! Join us on a luxury motorcoach trip for Opening Day, celebrating all things Minnesotan in agriculture, entertainment, and cuisine.

Departing from Meeker Cooperative at 8 a.m., our luxury motorcoach will take you to the fairgrounds, where you'll enjoy 7 hours of exploration before departing at 4:30 p.m. The price of the trip includes the bus ride, a fair entrance ticket, and beverages on the bus. Keep in mind that activities, snacks, and meals inside the fair are on your own.

Seating is limited and filled on a first-come, first-served basis until the bus is full.

Tour participants must have a cell phone and supply the trip host with your cell phone number before the bus leaves Litchfield.



MEEKER MEMBER TRIP: STATE FAIR 2024

Please reserve _____ places for the State Fair Bus Trip.

Name(s): _____

Account Number: _____

Phone: _____

Cost Per Person: \$45

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

*Return to: Meeker Cooperative, Attention: Michele Boreen,
1725 US Highway. 12, Suite 100, Litchfield, MN 55355 by August 9.*



**FIND YOUR
LOCATION
NUMBER**

Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Cooperative before May 31, you will have \$10 credit to your account. When you call and verify your information is correct in our system, you will also receive an additional bill credit equal to one month's output from a Member Solar Panel.

2024 QUALIFICATIONS AND ELECTION COMMITTEE

The 2024 Qualifications and Election Committee met on Tuesday, April 30, to review five applications submitted by Members. The Committee included one Member from each of the Co-op's districts where the seat is not currently up for election. This year there are 4 districts up for election – three in the regular election rotation and one to fill the District 5 seat currently filled by appointment of the Board. The Bylaws require that a seat filled by appointment be open for election at the next Annual meeting. While the District 4 seat is also currently filled by appointment, it is also in the regular election rotation this year.

Following review, the Committee placed a slate of candidates for the 2024 elections. Incumbents Randy

Bryant (District 7) and Jesse Turck (District 9) were unopposed in their respective districts, as was Incumbent David Leonhardi (District 5) who was appointed in September to fill an open seat until the next annual meeting. The Committee acted as directed by the Bylaws and waived the ballot process for these Districts and declared each elected.

Two members, Incumbent James Ellingson and candidate Barbara Ann Nelson, filed for nomination in District 4. Ellingson was appointed in November to fill an open seat. The Committee placed both candidates on the ballot. A mail ballot will be sent to the Members in District 4 in mid-July. A properly executed ballot must be received on or before the last business day of the Cooperative prior to the date of the annual meeting in order to be counted. 25-20-102 Voting is by mail ballot only.

Profiles of the Candidates will be provided in the July *Pioneer*.



The 2024 Qualifications and Election Committee members were (L to R) Paul Gaebe, John 'Art' Riehle, Donald Schmitt, Roger Osborne, and Mark Larson.

SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendars for the Meeker Cooperative Member Appreciation event and 89th Annual Meeting at Powder Ridge on Tuesday, August 6, 2024. Doors open at 4:30pm and the Annual Meeting begins at 7:00pm.

FEATURED RECIPE

CHOCOLATE BANANA BREAD | SUBMITTED BY: BRENDA BOLINE



INGREDIENTS

- 6 ripe bananas
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 whole egg
- 2 eggs whites
- 3 cups flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ cup baking cocoa
- ½ cup room temp coffee
- 1 cup chocolate chips

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Stir flour, baking soda, baking powder, cocoa, and salt. Set aside. Mix bananas & sugar until dissolved. Add oil and eggs and vanilla. Gradually beat in flour mixture alternating with coffee. Fold in chocolate chips. Bake 45 minutes or until toothpick come out clean. Remove from pans and cool. Make 2 loaves.

Submit your favorite recipe for our next issue! The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. DEADLINE: May 31, 2024. Email to: szeppelin@meeker.coop | Mail to: Meeker Coop, ATTN: Shane 1725 US Hwy 12 E, Ste 100, Litchfield, MN 55355

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Luxemburg, Maine Prairie,
South Maine Prairie in Stearns;
Forest Prairie in Meeker

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Eden Lake in Stearns;
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Paul Bugbee, Secretary — District 1
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Paynesville in Stearns;
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James Ellingson — District 4
Litchfield, Greenleaf in Meeker

David Leonhardi — District 5
Fairhaven in Stearn; Cokato, Southside,
French Lake in Wright; Dassel in Meeker

Neil Pearson — District 6
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Lake Elizabeth, E. Lake Lillian in Kandiyohi;
Cosmos, Acton, Danielson, Swede Grove
in Meeker; Brookfield, Boon Lake in Renville

Randy Bryant — District 7
Collinwood, Cedar Mills in Meeker;
Stockholm in Wright;
Acoma, Hutchinson in McLeod

Open Seat — District 8
Darwin, Ellsworth in Meeker

Jesse Turck — District 9
North Kingston, Kingston,
Forest City in Meeker

Chad Felstul, Attorney

MORE NEWS & CLASSIFIEDS ONLINE

Keep up-to-date with your Cooperative in-between issues of the Pioneer and browse our classifieds online at:
www.meeker.coop/news.



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Send Attention: Editor at the address above.



WHEN YOU
SAVE
WE ALL
SAVE

Enroll in one of Meeker Cooperative's Energy Management programs by November 15, 2024, to be entered to win one of five \$200 bill credits on your December 2024 statement.

To be eligible, your energy management system must be completely installed, operational, and checked out by a Meeker Cooperative energy services technician by November 15, 2024.

LEARN MORE ABOUT
ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS AT:
www.meeker.coop/programs/