

PIONEER



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The Pioneer Newsletter is the official Cooperative publication.
Meeker Energy is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

POWER BEHIND THE PLUG: MEMBERS GET AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE POWER SUPPLY CHAIN

Annual trip brings clarity, connection, and a deeper understanding of where electricity comes from.

For most of us, flipping on a light switch is second nature. But the journey electricity takes before it reaches our homes, farms, and businesses is anything but simple. That's why Meeker Energy hosts its annual Member Energy Tour, to pull back the curtain on power generation and help members gain a broader understanding.

This year's tour took a group of members to North Dakota to explore the sources and systems behind the electricity that powers their lives. The multi-day trip included stops at some of the most critical

pieces of our region's power infrastructure, from cutting-edge coal generation facilities to hydroelectric dams and sweeping wind farms.

One of the most eye-opening stops was Antelope Valley Station, a 900-megawatt coal-fired power plant owned by Basin Electric Power Cooperative. Members walked through the process from coal delivery to steam generation and saw firsthand the complex systems that keep electricity flowing day and night. A visit to the Great Plains Synfuels Plant added another layer of understanding. Operated by Dakota Gasification Company, the plant

Continued on page 2.

ENERGY TOUR CONTINUED...

is the only commercial-scale facility in the country that converts lignite coal into synthetic natural gas and other marketable products.

The group also toured the Garrison Dam, a hydroelectric power station on the Missouri River and one of the largest earthen dams in the world. Along the way, members glimpsed expansive wind farms stretching across the North Dakota prairie, offering a visual representation of the growing diversity in the nation's energy mix.

But beyond the technical knowledge, the trip was also about connection between members, between generations, and between consumers and the cooperative model itself.

"We signed up for the trip because it looked interesting," shared members Ed and Mary Otto from rural Dassel. "We were amazed by how many different products come from lignite coal, it was eye-opening. We also really enjoyed meeting and spending time with the other members on the trip. It gave us a much better understanding of where our electricity actually comes from. We'd definitely recommend the tour to others."

Meeker Energy hopes that kind of insight is exactly what members walk away with. As conversations about energy continue to evolve with renewables, emissions, and regulations 25-22-405 all in the spotlight, it's more important than ever to understand the role of baseload generation and the complexity of energy transitions.

"These tours aren't about promoting one energy source over another," said Steve Kosbab, Energy Services & Business Development Manager. "They're about transparency, trust, and building a knowledgeable member base. When people can ask direct questions and hear from experts, it creates space for real conversations and thoughtful engagement."

Tour sites are carefully selected to reflect the sources of Meeker's wholesale power generation, including Basin Electric's facilities and hydropower supplied from the Garrison Dam. The itinerary offers a well-rounded view of the energy landscape from legacy infrastructure to emerging innovations.

Each year, the Energy Tour serves as a powerful reminder: energy doesn't just happen. It's the result of planning, investment, and cooperation. And when members see that firsthand, it transforms their understanding of the power behind the switch.





WHO OWNS WHAT?

UNDERSTANDING ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

As summer rolls in, bringing both sunshine and sudden storms, it's a timely reminder of just how quickly weather can impact our electric system. At Meeker Energy, we're proud of the reliability our system delivers. But we also know that outages are inevitable in a Minnesota summer. When they happen, our team is ready to respond swiftly, safely, and around the clock.

Still, there's something every member should know that can make a real difference in how quickly power is restored: who owns what.

In every outage or storm damage situation, understanding which parts of the electric system are Meeker Energy's responsibility and which parts belong to you helps speed up repairs and keeps everyone safe.

What We Maintain

Our crews maintain the infrastructure that delivers electricity to your home or business. That includes the utility poles and lines that run along your road, pad mounted transformers in your neighborhood, and the electric meter attached to your building. When any of this equipment is damaged, our team handles the repairs.

What You Maintain

From the meter inward, the equipment belongs to you as the member. That includes the service panel inside your home or business, as well as the weatherhead, service mast, and any underground service lines between the meter and your building. If these components are damaged, they must be repaired by a licensed electrician before our crews can safely reconnect service.

Why It Matters

In the middle of a storm response, clarity saves time. When everyone understands what they're responsible for, restoration moves faster and more smoothly. We don't want to delay reconnecting your power because of

an unresolved issue on the member-owned side. A quick call to an electrician can make all the difference.

Tree Trimming and Vegetation Management

Our beautiful rural communities come with an abundance of trees, but those branches can quickly become a threat to electric lines. That's why Meeker Energy proactively trims trees along our distribution system to help prevent outages before they start.

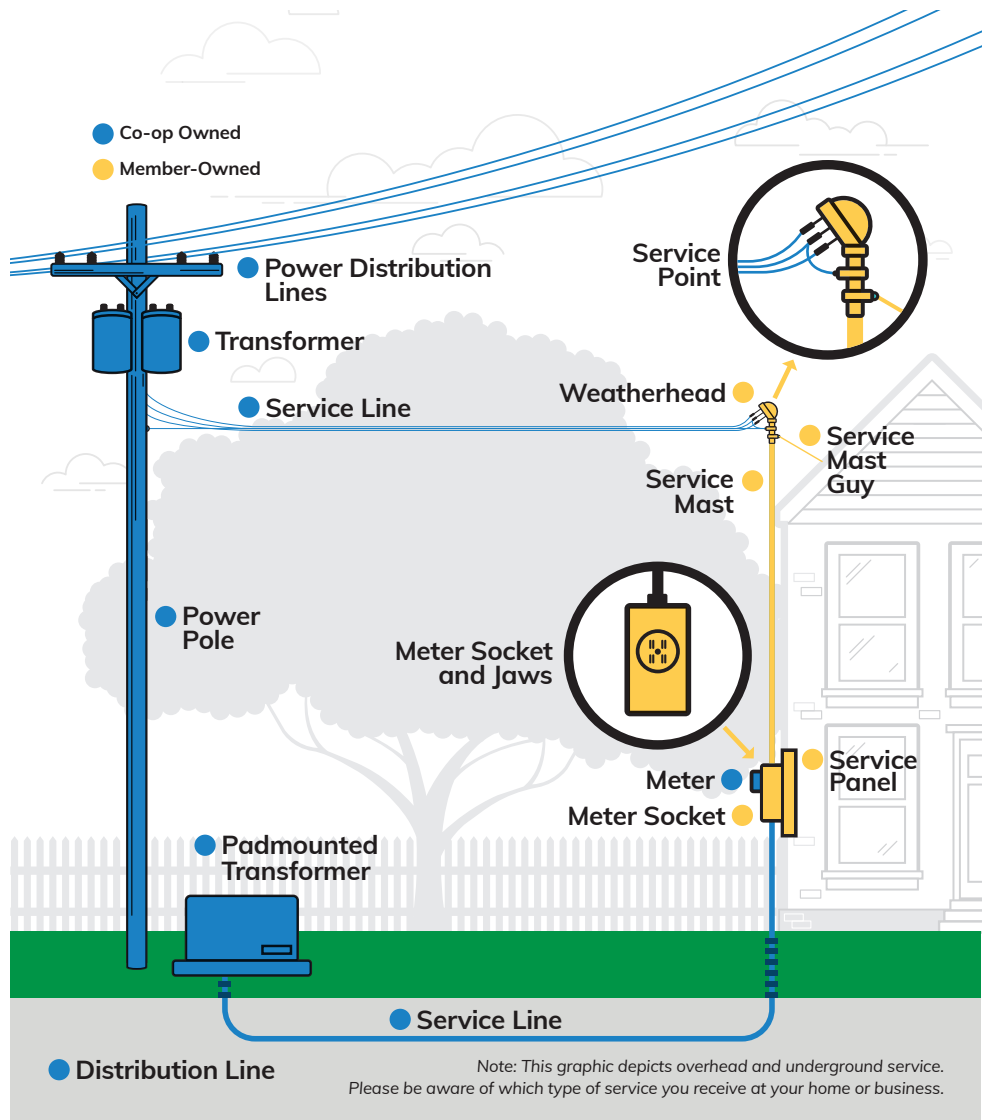
If you spot a tree limb interfering with a power line in your area, call us at 320-693-3231. We'll take a look and trim if necessary.

We're Here to Help

Meeker Energy isn't just a power provider. We're your cooperative. That means we are committed to looking out for your safety and keeping the lights on for our entire community. If you're unsure who is responsible for a certain piece of equipment, don't hesitate to reach out. Our team is here to answer your questions and help you prepare for the unexpected.

Dedicated to keeping the lights on and the data flowing,

Luke Johnson
CEO, Meeker Energy



STATE FAIR BUS TRIP

AUGUST 21, 2025 | \$45 PER PERSON



Hop on a luxury motorcoach from Meeker Energy at 8 a.m. and enjoy a hassle-free trip to the Great Minnesota Get-Together.

You'll have about 7 hours to explore everything the fair has to offer from agriculture and live music to butter sculptures and iconic fair food. Your ticket includes round-trip transportation, fair admission, and beverages on the bus. Meals, snacks, and activities inside the fair are on your own.

Don't miss highlights like the Agriculture Horticulture Building, free outdoor concerts, the famous butter sculptures, and all your favorite fair treats.

Seats are limited and first come, first served. Participants must have a cell phone and provide their number before departure. Return trip departs the fair at 4:30 p.m.

Ride with Meeker Energy to the Minnesota State Fair for a full day of food, fun, and festivities!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO RESERVE YOUR SEAT!



VISIT MEEKER ENERGY AT FARMFEST: AUGUST 5-7, 2025

Join Meeker Energy and other Minnesota electric cooperatives at Farmfest in Redwood County! 04-18-214 This premier ag event draws thousands of attendees and showcases the latest in farming, technology, and rural life.

Stop by our booth to see hands-on equipment displays and live electrical safety demos. Learn how to stay safe around overhead lines and power infrastructure during fieldwork and harvest.

Plus, enter for a chance to win battery-powered electric tools; including lawn care essentials like a pole saw, leaf blower, chainsaw, and string trimmer, as well as an ice auger for winter use!

We're proud to power Minnesota's farms and support the communities that help it grow. See you at Farmfest!



**FARMFEST
2025**

August 5-7

**28366 County Hwy 13
Morgan, MN (Gilgillan)**

 Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives
The power of human connections®

**ENTER
TO WIN!**
Bring this coupon to Farm fest booth #2201 for a chance to win a battery powered yard tool!

MEMBER INFO

Member Name:

Address:

Phone #:

Email:

 **FIND YOUR
LOCATION
NUMBER**

Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Energy before July 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.

WHY THE LIGHTS GO OUT: EVEN WHEN WE WORK HARD TO PREVENT IT



At Meeker Energy, system reliability is a top priority. Our crews, equipment, and technology are all focused on delivering safe, consistent power to homes and businesses across our service area. But no matter how much we plan and prepare, some outages are simply unavoidable.

In 2024, we responded to interruptions throughout the service territory. Here's a look at the top five causes and what we're doing to reduce their impact.

1. TREES (104 OUTAGES)

Falling branches and overgrown limbs are the most common cause of outages. Wind, ice, or aging trees can all bring lines down.

What We're Doing: Our annual right-of-way tree trimming program reduces risk by proactively clearing vegetation around lines.

2. ANIMALS (40 OUTAGES)

Squirrels, birds, and other wildlife sometimes interfere with equipment like transformers or substations.

What We're Doing: We install protective guards and deterrents to keep animals from accessing energized equipment.

3. CABLE FAILURE (37 OUTAGES)

Underground cables can fail due to age, shifting soil, or accidental damage.

What We're Doing: We regularly replace aging cables and respond quickly when faults occur.

4. UNKNOWN CAUSES (35 OUTAGES)

Some outages happen without an immediately obvious reason. These may be brief faults or events that clear before crews arrive.

What We're Doing: We use advanced outage 15-12-351 management systems and field inspections to track and investigate these occurrences.

5. LIGHTNING (24 OUTAGES)

Severe storms and lightning strikes can cause widespread disruption in an instant.

What We're Doing: Lightning arresters and grounding systems help protect critical components during storm activity.

Outages may be part of reality, but so is our ongoing commitment to reducing them whenever and however we can.



**WILLIE WIREDHAND'S
ELECTRICITY FUN FACT**

Thomas Edison didn't invent the lightbulb, he just made it better. Dozens of inventors worked on electric lighting, but Edison's version in 1879 lasted longer, was more reliable, and was practical for homes. He also created the first power grid to deliver electricity directly to people's homes and businesses.

MEMBER NEWS

COMMUNITY PARADES & COUNTY FAIR – JOIN US!

At Meeker Energy, we value being part of the communities we serve. This summer, we're proud to participate in local parades and connect with members along the route!

Catch us at these upcoming parades:

- Litchfield: Saturday, July 12
- Kimball: Saturday, August 9
- Grove City: Saturday, August 16

Visit Us at the 2025 Meeker County Fair: July 31 - August 3

Stop by our booth in the southeast corner of Commercial Building 2 to chat with representatives from Meeker Energy and VIBRANT Broadband. We'll be there daily from noon to 9 p.m. to answer your electricity and internet questions.



GET TO KNOW YOUR NEW DIRECTOR: BEN BECKMAN

Bringing financial insight, local experience, and a passion for service to the board.



Ben Beckman is proud to once again serve on the Meeker Energy board, representing members in District 5. A graduate of Dassel-Cokato High School, Ben spent much of his youth in nearby St. Cloud. He brings a well-rounded background to the role, with 20 years of experience in banking and 11 years as a farmer.

Ben holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance and an MBA from St. Cloud State University. His career and education have shaped his passion for financial well-being, which he's eager to advocate for as a director.

Community involvement has always been important to Ben. 13-08-422 He is a Rotarian and treasurer for the Hutchinson Area Chamber of Commerce, serves as vice chair for the Dassel Development Corporation, and holds the treasurer role for the Dassel-Cokato Baseball Association. He is also an active member of Living Stones Church, where he serves on the building committee.

Ben and his wife, Tabatha, live in the Dassel-Cokato area with their two sons and their dog. In his free time, he enjoys camping, fishing, hunting, and cheering on his kids at their sporting events.

What excites him most about this role is the opportunity to listen to and represent Meeker Energy members while continuing to learn about the evolving energy industry. He is deeply thankful for the trust members have placed in him and looks forward to serving with integrity, transparency, and a member-first mindset.

BERRY BROWNIE PIZZA

Submitted By: Rosalea Hoeft

INGREDIENTS

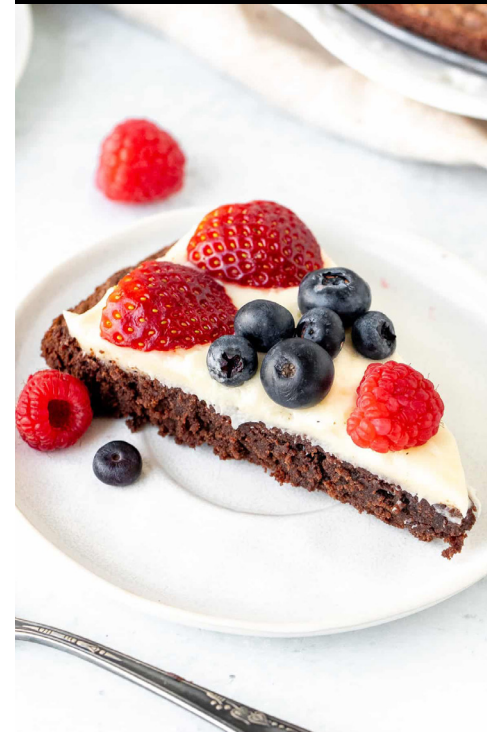
- 1 package fudge brownie mix (for an 8-inch square pan)
- 1 ¼ cups cold 2% milk
- 1 package (3.4 ounces) instant vanilla pudding mix
- 2 ½ cups whipped topping
- 2 cups mixed fresh berries (such as strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries)
- Chocolate syrup, for drizzling
- Chopped pecans, for sprinkling

DIRECTIONS

Preheat your oven to 350°F. Prepare the brownie batter according to the package directions, then spread it into a greased 12-inch pizza pan. Bake for 18 to 22 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out almost clean. Allow the brownie to cool on a wire rack for 15 minutes. While it cools, whisk the cold milk and vanilla pudding mix together in a medium bowl for 2 minutes, then let it stand for another 2 minutes until soft-set. Fold in the whipped topping until well combined. Spread the pudding mixture evenly over the cooled brownie crust. Top with fresh berries, drizzle with chocolate syrup, and sprinkle with chopped pecans. Refrigerate until chilled before serving.

Submit your favorite recipe for our next issue! The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. DEADLINE: July 31, 2025. Email to: szepelin@meeker.coop | Mail to: Meeker Energy, ATTN: Shane 1725 US Hwy 12 E, Ste 100, Litchfield, MN 55355

FEATURED RECIPE



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South Maine Prairie in Stearns;
Forest Prairie in Meeker

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Forest City in Meeker

Chad Felstul, Attorney



SUPPORTING BRIGHT FUTURES THROUGH SCHOLARSHIPS

At Meeker Energy, we believe in the power of education and the potential of local students. That's why we're proud to invest in the future by supporting scholarships that help ease the financial burden of continuing education. These awards reflect our commitment to community growth and the bright future being built by the next generation.

BASIN SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Congratulations to Marlee Cates! Marlee was selected to receive the \$1,000 Basin Scholarship, made possible through our wholesale power provider, Basin Electric Power Cooperative. This award recognizes her hard work, determination, and potential to make a difference. Information will be available on our website and in our newsletter when the application becomes available next year.

MEEKER COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC TRUST SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

We're honored to recognize outstanding students from area high schools with \$1,000 scholarships funded by the Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust. These students have shown dedication to their studies and a commitment to personal growth as they take the next step toward college or technical school.

ACGC Senior High School*	<i>Karlynn Sackett Jordan Koshenina Dylan Gilberts</i>
Dassel-Cokato High School	<i>Eric Niedzielski Hailey Persons</i>
Eden Valley-Watkins High School	<i>Zoey Schmidt Henry Lemke</i>
Hutchinson High School	<i>Zoe Verhasselt Claire Bock</i>
Kimball Area High School	<i>Malech Loch Elaina Fink</i>
Litchfield Senior High School	<i>Spencer Foley Sophia Ham</i>
Paynesville High School	<i>Aubri Inselman Graysin Miller</i>
BOLD High School	<i>No Eligible Student</i>

**A third scholarship was available due to unused dollars from the previous school year.*

We applaud each of this year's recipients and look forward to continuing our tradition of supporting local students. Each year, students can learn about scholarships through their high school guidance counselor.



JULY SPECIAL!

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Keep up-to-date with your Cooperative in-between issues of the Pioneer and browse our classifieds online at:

www.meeker.coop/news.