

PIONEER



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

STRONG LINES, STRONG PARTNERSHIP: HIGHLINE CONSTRUCTION

For more than two decades, Highline Construction crews have worked alongside Meeker Energy to build, maintain and strengthen the electric system members rely on every day.

The relationship began around 2000, according to Highline founder Rick Fredin. Over the years, Highline worked closely with former Meeker employees including Kevin Louis and Tim Gilbertson, building relationships that have continued as both organizations have grown.

Highline Construction was founded in Paynesville in 1997 with five employees and six pieces of equipment. What began as a home-based overhead

distribution contractor has grown into a family-owned company with more than 80 employees serving utility projects throughout the Midwest. Its capabilities now include overhead and underground distribution, transmission, substations, telecommunications, renewable energy and emergency restoration.

For Meeker Energy, Highline primarily completes new construction and rebuilds of overhead power lines. Its crews also assist with substation projects, maintenance and trouble calls. Members may see Highline employees setting poles,

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HIGHLINE CONSTRUCTION CONTINUED...



installing line or rebuilding sections of the distribution system throughout Meeker Energy's service territory.

That support allows Meeker Energy to complete larger projects while continuing to respond to members' day-to-day needs.

"Highline crews can help Meeker crews finish a long new power line project, which frees up 28-05-201 Meeker crews to help members with maintenance and other needs on the electrical system," Fredin said.

One especially memorable project involved helping move a large shed from Danube to Dassel. The move traveled through a significant portion of Meeker Energy's territory and required coordination to safely address power lines along the route. Projects like this show how much planning can happen before crews begin work.

Fredin said members may not realize how much time and effort go into designing, scheduling and preparing each project. Once work begins, weather, terrain, existing infrastructure and other unexpected variables can affect the timeline.

"It takes time to build it with the utmost safety and quality of work," he said.

Communication is central to every project. Meeker Energy identifies the work, establishes the schedule, and works with

Highline to develop a timeline for completion. Both organizations maintain high expectations for safety, workmanship and communication in the field.

"Meeker Energy employees and leadership have always treated everyone with respect and held us to high standards while working with them," Fredin said. "I think performing high-quality work and respecting each other is what makes the partnership successful."

That familiarity is especially valuable during outages. When storm damage or widespread trouble calls overwhelm Meeker Energy's available crews, operations staff can contact Highline for additional help. Many Highline employees assigned to Meeker Energy live within an hour of the service territory, with several less than 30 minutes away. Their knowledge of the system and surrounding communities helps them respond quickly and work efficiently beside Meeker Energy crews.

Even during an outage, however, speed never comes before safety. "Getting the power back on is very important, but taking care of each other and the equipment so we all get home safely is goal number one and always will be," Fredin said.

That commitment extends beyond the jobsite. Highline also organizes the Highline Half Marathon, a Labor Day weekend fundraiser supporting Fallen Linemen (an organization that assists families affected by serious injuries or fatalities in the electric utility industry.) Meeker Energy employees have supported the event by helping at an aid station and transition area and running in the event.



Fredin said Highline's connection to Meeker Energy also runs through its people. Over the years, several Highline employees have gone on to work for the Cooperative.

"Our Highline family tree has grown throughout the utility industry, and Meeker Energy has been a very big part of us growing with them," he said.

As the electric system evolves, Highline plans to keep growing alongside Meeker Energy, supporting new projects, responding when needed and maintaining the standards that have shaped the partnership for more than 25 years.



Four location numbers are hidden in this issue of the Pioneer. If you find your location number, call Meeker Energy before August 31 to claim a \$10 bill credit. To receive the credit, your location number must appear in this issue. When you call to claim it, we will also verify that your account information is correct in our system. Members who find and claim their location number will receive an additional bill credit equal to one month's output from a Member Solar Panel.

DO HEAT PUMPS WORK FOR HEATING IN MINNESOTA?



Are you interested in a heat pump but unsure whether it will work when temperatures fall below freezing? Modern heat pumps can effectively heat and cool homes in cold climates, including Minnesota.

WHY CONSIDER A HEAT PUMP?

As Minnesota's heat pump market grows, installation is becoming more cost-effective. 25-11-402 New systems can reduce energy consumption by as much as 55%, with the greatest savings often found in homes using electric resistance or propane heat.

HOW DO HEAT PUMPS WORK?

Heat pumps move heat rather than create it. In winter, they extract heat from outdoor air and transfer it inside. In summer, they reverse the process and operate like a traditional air conditioner.

Cold-climate equipment is highly efficient down to 5°F, and some systems can provide heat at temperatures as low as -20°F. This reduces, but does not eliminate, the need for backup heat. With the correct settings, a heat pump can keep your home comfortable during most Minnesota winter days.

WHY ARE HEAT PUMPS SO EFFICIENT?

Even the most efficient boiler or furnace loses some energy during combustion. High-efficiency heat pumps, however, can reach efficiencies of 400% or more, delivering four or more units of heat for every unit of energy used.

Variable-speed, inverter-driven compressors help make this possible. These systems adjust their speed to match a home's heating or cooling needs, maintaining a steadier temperature and operating more efficiently than traditional equipment that frequently turns on and off.

DO ALL HEAT PUMPS WORK BELOW ZERO?

No. Standard heat pumps typically provide efficient heat down to about 20°F. They cost less than cold-climate models and may still be a good choice, depending on your needs and goals. Although they cover less of the home's heating load, they can reduce energy use and lower utility bills.

ARE REBATES AVAILABLE?

Meeker Energy offers rebates for qualifying heat pumps enrolled in its dual fuel and cycled AC energy management programs. Visit www.meeker.coop/programs/ to learn more.

LOOKING FOR MORE GUIDANCE?

Visit the Air Source Heat Pump Collaborative at www.mnashp.org/ to explore heat pump options for Minnesota homes.



**WILLIE WIREDHAND'S
ELECTRICITY FUN FACT**

Your brain is always using electricity. Billions of nerve cells communicate by sending tiny electrical impulses called action potentials. These signals help control breathing, movement, thoughts, emotions and memory. Even while you sleep, your brain stays active, processing information, managing essential body functions and preparing you for the day ahead.

MEMBER NEWS

OFFICE CLOSED

The Meeker Energy and Vibrant Broadband office will be closed Monday, September 7, in observance of Labor Day. Regular office hours will resume Tuesday, September 8. We wish our members and customers a safe and enjoyable holiday weekend.

UNCLAIMED CAPITAL CREDITS

Meeker Energy is working to reconnect former members with unclaimed Capital Credits that may still be owed to them.

Visit www.meeker.coop/capital-credits/ and select "Unclaimed Capital Credits" to review the complete list. You may also contact our office to request a copy by email.

If you find your name or recognize a family member, friend or former neighbor, contact Ty at 320-693-3231. Your help could return funds to their rightful owner.

After seven years, unclaimed balances may be donated to Operation Round Up® to support educational purposes in the communities we serve.





YOUR TOP 10 VIBRANT BROADBAND QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

Getting new internet service often comes with a few questions. From router placement and installation time to Wi-Fi speeds and connecting devices, Vibrant Broadband technicians help subscribers understand what to expect and how to get the most from their service.

Vibrant Broadband Technician Cody Schiroo answers these questions every day while helping subscribers get comfortable with their new service. Here are 10 of the most common questions he hears.

1. Where will my router be located?

Our design team discusses equipment placement before installation and includes the details in the technician's notes. 28-09-202 Whenever possible, the router is placed in a central, open location to provide better coverage throughout the home.

2. How long will installation take?

Appointments are scheduled for up to two and a half hours, but most installations take about one hour. Time can vary depending on the home and work required.

3. Will you need to drill a hole?

Usually, yes. A small opening may be needed to bring the connection from outside into the home, and an additional small hole may be needed inside depending on the router's placement. Technicians will use existing openings whenever possible.

4. How fast will my internet be?

The speed available at the router is based on the service package selected. Wi-Fi speeds can vary depending on the device, distance from the router and obstacles within the home.

5. Will you help connect my devices?

Yes. Technicians help connect as many devices as possible, including phones, tablets, computers, smart TVs and

streaming devices. Vibrant Broadband staff can also help subscribers learn about using streaming services.

6. Why is Wi-Fi slower in some rooms?

Walls, floors and household materials can weaken Wi-Fi signals. Metal, mirrors, ductwork, fireplaces, appliances, windows, metal siding and cabinets may affect coverage. Mesh Wi-Fi equipment is available for an additional charge to help extend service into harder-to-reach areas.

7. What is my Wi-Fi name and password?

Subscribers usually select this information with the sales team. 25-27-490 Technicians can provide it and help set up the Vibrant Broadband app, where subscribers can view or change their network name and password.

8. What should I do if my internet stops working?

First, check the lights on the equipment. Then unplug the equipment, make sure all lights turn off, wait 10 seconds and plug it back in. If service does not return, call Vibrant Broadband for assistance.

9. Can I use my own router?

Yes. Let Vibrant Broadband know before installation so the system can be set up correctly. When a personal router is used, the Vibrant Broadband router is removed from the setup.

10. Will this affect my TV service?

Vibrant Broadband is separate from cable or satellite television providers, so installation will not automatically change existing TV service. The internet connection can be used to stream television through a smart TV or device.

Vibrant Broadband technicians take time during installation to explain the equipment, answer questions and help subscribers feel confident using their service. For assistance, contact Vibrant Broadband at 320-693-3231 or visit www.vibrantbroadband.com/.

CONTACT US

Phone: 320-693-3231 | Fax: 320-693-2980
1725 U.S. Hwy. 12 E, Suite 100, Litchfield, MN 55355
www.meeker.coop | www.vibrantbroadband.com

CEO/General Manager: Luke Johnson
Contract Editor: Fuller Creative, LLC

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CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Meeker Energy enjoyed another busy summer connecting with members across our service area.

Employees participated in parades in Litchfield, Paynesville, Atwater, Eden Valley and Kimball, handing out candy and celebrating with members and neighbors.

Meeker Energy and Vibrant Broadband also welcomed visitors at the 2026 Meeker County Fair, where fairgoers stopped by to ask questions and learn more about electric and broadband services.

Thank you to everyone who waved along a parade route or visited our fair booth. We appreciated the opportunity to connect with you.

As a member-owned cooperative, Meeker Energy is committed to supporting the communities we serve. By participating in local events and activities, we strengthen connections, celebrate what makes each community unique and invest in the places our members call home.



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www.meeker.coop/news.