

PIONEER



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

WHAT THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE MEANS TO US

October is Co-op Month, a time to celebrate what makes cooperatives different. At Meeker Energy, that difference begins with a simple idea: the people we serve are also the people who own the cooperative.

But being a cooperative is about more than a business structure. It shapes how decisions are made, how members are served, how resources are managed and how employees approach their work.

We asked employees across Meeker Energy what the cooperative difference means from where they sit. Their answers shared one clear theme: putting members first.

MEMBERS COME FIRST

For Energy Services Supervisor Tiffany Schindler, member ownership keeps the Cooperative focused on the people and communities it serves. “Our board of directors are also member-owners,” Schindler said. “Because they live and receive electric service within the community, they understand firsthand how the decisions we make can impact our members.”

She also sees the cooperative difference in employees who take time to provide personalized service, find solutions and help members feel supported.

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CO-OP MONTH CONTINUED...

Broadband Design Engineer Chris Wersal said that same member-first mindset guides decisions by balancing reliability with affordability and carefully managing costs.

RELIABILITY IS PERSONAL

For employees who maintain Meeker Energy's electric system, reliability is personal. "Knowing our members and the communities we serve makes this work personal," Electric Operations Manager Dan Schrupp said. "We understand how important reliable electricity is to our homes, farms and businesses."

That motivates employees to maintain the system, prevent outages whenever possible and respond quickly and safely when problems occur.

Foreman John Grabow sees it the same way. 27-18-202 Growing up in a small community, he said, makes you care about the people around you and want to restore power as quickly as possible when an outage occurs.

RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

Member ownership also comes with a responsibility to carefully manage Cooperative resources.

CFO Kari Miller said good stewardship means being thoughtful with the resources members entrust to Meeker Energy. "As a cooperative, we have to look beyond the current year and consider what will best serve our members for years to come," Miller said.

That means balancing costs today with investments in reliable electric service, broadband and infrastructure that members will depend on in the future.

CONNECTED TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Employees also see the cooperative difference in the way Meeker Energy is connected to the communities it serves.

Executive Coordinator Mary Alice Holm points to Operation Round Up®, scholarships and employee involvement as examples of that impact. She also sees it in much smaller moments.

Holm recalled an elderly member whose garage door would not open while her power was temporarily out during nearby line work. A lineman stopped to help. "It may have only taken a moment or two for the lineman," Holm said, "but it made all the difference to the woman in need of help."

Energy Services Specialist Laura Niece said that sense of connection means seeing members as neighbors rather than account numbers. "We are all 'in this together,'" she said.

BUILDING FOR WHAT MEMBERS NEED NEXT

The cooperative model is rooted in local service, but it also requires looking ahead. Sales Supervisor and Business Sales Consultant Josh Carlson sees Vibrant Broadband as part of that evolution. Just as rural electrification met a critical need generations ago, reliable broadband has become essential for people who want to live and work in rural communities.

For Carlson, that captures the cooperative mindset. "When you are part of the Co-op, you are thinking less about 'me' and more about 'us,'" he said. "It's not about what's good for a member, but rather what's good for the membership."

That spirit shows up every day, from answering a member's question and restoring an outage to investing in future infrastructure and helping a neighbor.



LEARN MORE WITH CO-OP 101

Curious about what happens behind the scenes at Meeker Energy?

Co-op 101 gives members a closer look at how the Cooperative operates and what it takes to provide reliable electric and broadband service. Topics include power supply, linework, outage restoration, energy programs, Vibrant Broadband, Cooperative finances and more.

Participants also tour facilities, see equipment up close and connect directly with Meeker Energy employees. It's an opportunity to ask questions,

better understand the cooperative business model and learn more about the people, programs and systems that serve our members.

The two-year program meets four times per year, with three members from each cooperative district selected to participate. Participants receive a \$50 stipend plus mileage for each meeting attended.



Interested in joining?

Learn more and sign up by October 15 at www.meeker.coop/co-op101, scan the QR code or call us at 320-693-3231.



Four location numbers are hidden in this issue of the Pioneer. If you find your location number, call Meeker Energy before October 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.



HAVE A COMMUNITY PROJECT IN MIND? APPLY FOR OPERATION ROUND UP®

Is your local 501(c)(3) organization planning a project that could benefit the community? Operation Round Up® may be able to help.

Through Operation Round Up, Meeker Energy members and Vibrant subscribers round their monthly bills up to the nearest dollar, 09-07-303 turning small contributions into meaningful grants for local organizations, schools and community programs. So far this year, the Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust Board has awarded \$35,524 to projects throughout the area.

The Trust Board meets three times each year to review applications and award funding. **The final application deadline for 2026 is November 5.** If your organization has a project that could make a difference close to home, now is the time to apply. Applications and program guidelines are available at www.meeker.coop.



JOIN US AT LOCAL TRUNK-OR-TREAT EVENTS!

Meeker Energy and Vibrant Broadband is excited to join two community Trunk-or-Treat events this October! Stop by our decorated trunk to say hello, show off your costumes and grab some Halloween treats.

Litchfield Trunk-or-Treat

Sunday, October 25 | 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
East 10th Street,
Fairgrounds Parking Lot

Paynesville Trunk-or-Treat

Saturday, October 31 | 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
West St. James Street,
Downtown Paynesville

COLORING FUN FOR EVERYONE

Meeker Energy's 2026 Coloring Contest is here, and new this year, adults can join the fun too!

Download a coloring page at www.meeker.coop/color26 or pick one up at our office. 30-10-302 Three winners will be selected from each age group, including our new adult category.

Coffee on the Co-op attendees will vote for their favorites. Winners will receive a \$10 Walmart gift card and have their artwork featured in the Pioneer and on our website.

Submit entries by Friday, November 20.
We can't wait to see your creativity!



WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT

Static electricity can reach thousands of volts. That quick zap you feel after walking across carpet is a form of static electricity and it can pack a surprising amount of voltage. Static shocks can reach around 20,000 volts, 10-10-301 but because the electrical current is extremely low and lasts only a moment, they are usually harmless.

MEMBER NEWS

MN COLD WEATHER RULE REMINDER

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule is in effect October 1 through April 30 and provides additional protection from electric service disconnection for qualifying residential members. The rule does not prohibit winter disconnects.

To qualify for protection, members must meet income or energy assistance requirements, complete the required Inability to Pay Form, enter into a payment agreement and remain current on that agreement.

If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill, please contact Meeker Energy as soon as possible. The earlier you reach out, the more options we may have to help you establish a payment arrangement and maintain service.

For questions about Cold Weather Rule protection or payment options, call 320-693-3231. Forms and additional information are also available at www.meeker.coop/download-forms.



CHOOSE THE RIGHT HEATING & COOLING SOLUTION

Compare your home's heating and cooling options to find the right balance of comfort, efficiency and year-round performance.



BENEFIT BREAKDOWN	CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONER	AIR-SOURCE HEAT PUMP	GROUND-SOURCE HEAT PUMP	DUCTLESS MINI-SPLIT HEAT PUMP
HOW IT WORKS	Removes heat and humidity from inside your home and transfers it outdoors to provide cool, comfortable air.	Transfers heat between your home and the outdoor air—cooling your home in summer and providing efficient heating in winter.	Transfers heat between your home and the ground, using stable underground temperatures for heating and cooling.	Works like an air-source heat pump but does not require ductwork. Individual indoor units provide heating and cooling to specific areas or zones.
VERSATILITY	Provides cooling during warmer months and works with a separate heating system.	Provides both heating and cooling from one system and can work with a qualifying backup heat source for colder conditions.	Provides efficient heating and cooling throughout the year.	Provides year-round heating and cooling and is a flexible option for additions, rooms without ductwork or areas needing more individualized comfort.
EFFICIENCY	Efficiency varies by system. Newer, properly sized equipment can provide efficient whole-home cooling.	Highly efficient because it moves heat rather than creating it.*	Highly efficient technology that takes advantage of consistent ground temperatures throughout the year.*	Offers efficient zoned heating and cooling, allowing you to condition spaces where comfort is needed most.*

* Qualifying systems may also be eligible for Meeker Energy programs and rebates, contact us for more details.



STAY INFORMED YOUR WAY

Meeker Energy members enrolled in energy management programs can now receive load control notifications by email, text message or both. You can also add multiple contacts to help keep everyone informed.

Beginning January 1, 2027, Meeker Energy will transition fully to a new notification system. To continue receiving load control updates, members must have a SmartHub account and enroll through the new system.

During the transition from September through December 2026, you may receive duplicate notifications.



For step-by-step enrollment instructions, scan the QR code or visit: www.meeker.coop/load-control-status/#Load-Control-Enrollment

CONTACT US

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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.



Remember when a phone call was just a phone call?

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