

MiNews

May 2025 Vol. 9 Issue 5
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

A
JOURNEY
DOWN
MiRoads
WITH MEAGAN MOELLERS

FFA youth & co-op team up
Providing gratitude meals and safety tips

*Gear up for the
Summer Shift*

**INCUMBENTS
RE-ELECTED;
APPOINTMENT
ANNOUNCED**

*Electrical Safety Month:
Power life safely*

**UTILITY
WORK
AHEAD**



Spring into safety

Spring is finally here! With the nicer weather comes an increase in outdoor activities for our families, our employees and our contractors. Remembering electrical safety when working or playing outdoors is especially important.

Farmers are busy planting in the fields. Remember to be safe when operating equipment around electric distribution and transmission lines. On April 14, farm machinery caught a transmission line anchor, which broke and whipped over the top of the transmission line, causing an outage at our Nordness Substation. Eight hundred members lost electric service from the outage. Thankfully, no one was injured. MiEnergy crews spent an hour taking the substation out of service and back-feeding service from another substation.

On April 19, another member was burning a ditch, and the fire got away from them. An underground switching cabinet was burned, causing an outage to their neighbors.

That same weekend, another member was cutting down a tree. The tree did not fall where the person intended it to fall. It fell across our overhead distribution line, breaking two poles and downing the distribution line, causing an outage for dozens of members. Thankfully, again, no one was injured. Always be aware of the electrical lines and equipment around your work area.

The nice weather is also the start of the outdoor home improvement projects season. A new patio or deck is a reminder to call 811 before your dig. Replacing the shingles on your roof is a reminder to watch out for overhead power lines and ladder safety. New buildings need to have clearance from overhead power lines. Address underground locates and overhead power line clearances with contractors before the start of the project.

Outdoor electric tools like leaf blowers, chainsaws and power washers require electricity to operate, but they must be used with caution. If you're using an electric-powered tool, ensure it's designed for outdoor use and verify that all cords, plugs and outlets are in good condition. Avoid using electrical equipment in wet conditions, as water conducts electricity, increasing the risk of

shocks or electrocution.

Tall trees and branches that grow near power lines present another safety hazard. If you notice trees encroaching on power lines near your property, don't attempt to handle the problem yourself. Contact your local electric cooperative. Trained professionals can safely trim trees or take preventive measures to eliminate risks. DIY efforts could accidentally result in injury or service interruptions.

Spring is also storm season. Storms can damage power lines and utility poles, resulting in downed power lines that can be life-threatening. Following a severe weather event, avoid approaching or contacting downed power lines, even if you think the power might be off. Report outages or downed lines immediately to us and wait for confirmation that it's safe to approach nearby areas.

At MiEnergy, we're committed to providing reliable service while prioritizing the well-being of our members. Stay safe, stay alert and enjoy your outdoor spaces this spring and summer.

As always, I welcome your calls, emails and personal visits.

Board room highlights | April 24, 2025

- Attorney Amanda James, from Sullivan & Ward, conducted the board reorganization meeting. The officers remain the same and are as follows: Chair Dean Nierling, Vice Chair Ron Stevens, Secretary Dennis Ptacek and Treasurer Don Petersen.
- Kim Nelson, of Spring Valley, was officially seated as the appointed director for District 1.
- CFO Shelly Hove presented the financial report which is tracking to budget.
- Management provided updates on operations and subsidiaries.
- COO Jill Huffman provided an update on the BEAD applications submitted.
- The scholarship presentation schedule was provided.

The next board meeting will be at the Rushford office on May 29 at 9 a.m.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



If you suspect you're dealing with a utility scam, it's crucial to slow down and take your time before taking any action. Scammers will often pressure you to make quick decisions or immediate payments. Instead, take the time to verify the legitimacy of the communication by contacting your utility directly. Use a phone number from a reliable source, such as your bill or the utility's website. Taking this simple step can help protect you from falling victim to utility scams.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams



U.S. farmers feed the world

Planting season safety—a good reminder at any age

May is an important month for both agriculture and safety. The two go together hand-in-hand, and we remind everyone that as you travel down MiRoads from field to field this spring, please take extra caution regarding electrical safety. We want all farmers to have a successful planting season. Rural America runs on ag workers of all ages, so educate everyone and plant seeds of safety this spring!

We encourage you to follow along in May on MiEnergy's social media pages for electrical safety tips as we observe National Electrical Safety Month.

Crestwood FFA students Olivia Johnson, a senior from the Elma area, and Nolan Schatz, a sophomore from rural Lime Springs, were co-chairs of a student-led program started this year for local farmers. "Nolan and I created the 'Feed The Farmers' event to give back to the local farmers and show them how much we appreciate all the work they do to keep food on the table," Olivia stated.

Members of the Crestwood FFA team worked together to provide a meal for local ag workers, a quick grab-and-go meal for those long, hard hours they put in the field. Each sack lunch included a handout from MiEnergy that included farm safety tips for working near power lines.

The cooperative spirit sure shines through these young students, and MiEnergy is proud to play a small part in their event by providing a handout on farm safety. We hope that the safety messages are shared with all those who play a critical part in the planting of the crops this spring, carried on throughout the summer and remembered again during harvest season this fall. We can't stress enough the importance of electrical safety with large farm equipment and power lines. Do you know what to do? Does your farm help know what to do? Do your young kids or high schoolers know what they would do in an emergency involving electricity?

Special Gratitude To Those Who "Work in Acres, Not Hours"

MiEnergy wishes a safe and successful planting season to all those who will be working throughout our service territory in Southeast Minnesota and Northeast Iowa. Please remember to take extra caution while entering field driveways and near power lines.

Members of the Crestwood FFA team worked to pack sack lunches to show appreciation for local farmers.



FFA members pictured with the sack lunches L-R: Kenzie, Marina, Clara and Toni.



Above, FFA co-chairs of the "Feed the Farmer" event Olivia Johnson and Nolan Schatz.



Friendly tip:

Put our electrical farm safety handout in a safe place in your tractor cab for easy reference! Download it from our website at www.MiEnergy.coop/safe-planting or call to have us mail you a copy. It's a great way to protect your family on MiRoads this spring planting season!





At the annual meeting, the results of the district 4 and 5 elections were announced. Members re-elected incumbents Kyle Holthaus, Carl Reicks, Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer. It was also announced that Kim Nelson was appointed to serve the remainder of the term for District 1. Pictured from L-R: Olson, Holthaus, Nelson, Reicks and Scharmer.

Annual meeting recap Incumbents re-elected; director appointment announced

MiEnergy Cooperative celebrated its ninth annual meeting on April 23. Approximately 108 members attended the event at the Mabel Community Center. The event was also live-streamed through YouTube.

The meeting marked the director elections for members living in districts 4 and 5. A total of 1,483 ballots were cast (1,263 by mail, 216 electronically and 4 onsite).

District 4 had two seats up for re-election. Incumbent Kyle Holthaus, of Waukon, prevailed over challengers Steve Demuth, of Decorah, and Larry Lelifeld, of Decorah. Incumbent Carl Reicks, of New Hampton, won over challenger Lois Buchheit, of Lawler.

In District 5, incumbents Jenny Scharmer, of Winona, and Beth Olson, of Lewiston, ran unopposed.

All directors serve three-year terms. The election results



MiEnergy's Board Chair Dean Nierling is pictured with Michelle Redalen. A meter lamp was presented to her on behalf of MiEnergy in honor of her late husband Jeff, who passed away in November after serving 22 years on the cooperative's board.

were certified by an independent election vendor, Survey and Ballot Systems, and Attorney Dennis Puckett from Sullivan & Ward.

Puckett also announced that the board appointed Kim Nelson, of Spring Valley, to serve the remainder of the term for District 1 board director which was open by the passing of Jeff Redalen.

Redalen, of Fountain, who passed away in November was recognized at the meeting for his 22 years of service as a board director for MiEnergy and its predecessor Tri-County Electric Cooperative, along with his representation on the boards of Dairyland Power Cooperative and Minnesota Rural Electric Association.

Board Treasurer Petersen reported that the cooperative remained in good financial condition and met all its lenders' financial requirements. Eide Bailly audited the financials, which gave the cooperative a favorable report.

President/CEO Brian Krambeer's CEO Report described how MiEnergy is "unmatched" and "different by design" as part of the evening's theme.

Krambeer highlighted what he called a key ratio trend analysis, from Cooperative Finance Corporation which was a series of graphs comparing MiEnergy to: all electric distribution cooperatives, those within the states of Minnesota and Iowa and who are a similar size as MiEnergy.

The graphs showed how the cooperative is larger than the average distribution cooperative. The cooperative also has many more miles of line at 5,500 miles, compared to



Annual Meeting PRIZE WINNERS

AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
UNMATCHED
 DIFFERENT BY DESIGN

IN PERSON

\$100 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT

DAN / PENNY SOLBERG | PRESTON

\$50 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT

CLOVIS / DELLA WOXLAND | MABEL
 NEIL / JANELLE MAHR | LIME SPRINGS
 LINDA DANIELSON | CHATFIELD
 DAVID / MARJORIE STORLIE | SPRING GROVE
 THE MINERS TRUST | EITZEN
 GERALD HUMPAI | RIDGEWAY
 ANNETTE VAN GUNDY | LA CRESCENT
 COREY BRINK | DECORAH
 MICHAEL PECINOVSKY | CALMAR
 KENNETH SHATEK | CRESCO
 ROGER HEGLAND | PETERSON
 DAVID SACQUITNE | DECORAH
 JACK / JULIE KOLKA | DECORAH
 THEODORE HANSON | CALEDONIA

STREAMING VIEWERS

\$50 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT

STEVE / JODI HIGHUM | PETERSON
 DONALD BRINCKS | CALMAR
 ALLAN / BARBARA SHATEK | FORT ATKINSON
 CYNTHIE CHRISTENSEN | RUSHFORD

the average in Minnesota which is 3,200 and Iowa which is 2,000. MiEnergy is also much more rural than even other rural electric cooperatives who average 7 members per mile of line compared to MiEnergy's 4 members.

"We have a few more employees than other electric cooperatives our size, but remember, we have more than double the miles of electric line than the average cooperative," Krambeer explained.

MiEnergy has also consistently retired high levels of capital credits for decades.

"Our cumulative capital credits are much higher (at 46%) than the national average (at 28%). We are well above even the top quartile (at 38%)," Krambeer stated.

Other highlights included MiEnergy's involvement with solar generation, how it is using technology to improve service, its expansion of broadband service through its partnership in MiBroadband and its investment in future leaders through its community service scholarship program that is giving out 80 \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors funded through unclaimed capital credits.

Krambeer also explained some of the challenges facing the cooperative. Membership growth is stagnated, not just at MiEnergy, but across the country. The cooperative is pursuing growth opportunities like data center type businesses that can help local communities too. "Data centers use a lot of energy, add property tax value and provide technical jobs," Krambeer explained.



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RAISE THE THERMOSTAT A FEW DEGREES

To save on cooling costs.

⚡ POWER OUTAGES GET NOTIFIED

MiEnergy offers power outage text notifications. Sign up online at www.MiEnergy.coop/outages. Select Power Outage Notification Sign Up and be prepared with your electric account number. The site will walk you through the set-up to have a text message sent to you when your power is out and another when power has been restored.



Wed, April 18, 8:57 PM

MiEnergy: Your service location is currently involved in a power outage. Service Address: 12345 POWER LINE RD

MiEnergy: This number is opted in to receive power outage notifications from MiEnergy Cooperative. Reply STOP to cancel.

Wed, April 18, 10:06 PM

MiEnergy: Our system shows your power has been restored. If not, please call 1-800-432-2285. Service address: 12345 POWER LINE RD

Power life safely

Every May, Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May, but year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

1. BE VIGILANT. Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.

2. USE SURGE PROTECTORS. Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.

3. PRACTICE SAFE POWER STRIP USE. Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the

outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strip can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4. WATER AND ELECTRICITY DON'T MIX.

It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances—never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.

5. EDUCATE FAMILY MEMBERS. One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk



about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort—it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.

THE DANGERS OF EQUIPMENT TAMPERING

Posting signs on utility poles can put lineworkers at risk by tearing their protective gloves.

Safe Electricity.org

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out & about in your COMMUNITY

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OFFICE INFORMATION

Open Monday-Thursday 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. Friday by appointment.

IOWA 24049 Highway 9, PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136

MINNESOTA 31110 Cooperative Way, PO Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971

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PHONE NUMBERS

LOCAL 563-547-3801 (Cresco); 507-864-7783 (Rushford)

TOLL-FREE & 24/7 OUTAGE REPORTING 800-432-2285

PAYMENT LINE 24/7 855-941-3631

UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING 811

ONLINE

WEBSITE www.MiEnergy.coop

SOCIAL MEDIA Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1 Kim Nelson and Dennis Ptacek, secretary

DISTRICT 2 Dean Nierling, chair and Ron Stevens, vice chair

DISTRICT 3 Don Petersen, treasurer and Skip Wieser

DISTRICT 4 Kyle Holthaus and Carl Reicks

DISTRICT 5 Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer

MANAGEMENT STAFF

BRIAN KRAMBEER president/chief executive officer

SHELLY HOVE chief financial officer

JILL HUFFMAN broadband chief operating officer

STEVE OIAN vice president of electric operations

VASSIL VUTOV vice president of information technology

MIKE WALTON vice president of engineering and planning

KENT WHITCOMB vice president of member services

MINEWS STAFF

MEAGAN MOELLERS communications specialist, editor

ANNIE HOILAND communications specialist

BRENDA TESCH marketing and communications manager

2025 OFFICES CLOSED

MAY 26 Memorial Day

JUNE 24 Employee Development Day

JULY 4 Independence Day

SEPT 1 Labor Day

SEPT 9 Employee Development Day

NOV 27-28 Thanksgiving Holiday

DEC 16 Employee Development Day

DEC 24-25 Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

DEC 31 New Year's Eve, close at 11 a.m.

JAN 1 New Year's Day



SYTTENDE MAI – SPRING GROVE

Spring Grove's Syttende Mai received a \$200 grant from Operation Round Up to purchase a Square Reader and iPad. At left, pictured L-R: MiEnergy's Meagan Moellers and Syttende Mai Board Member Lisa Myhre.

LAURA INGALLS WILDER PARK & MUSEUM – BURR OAK

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Park and Museum received a \$500 Operation Round Up grant to restore and upgrade the Burr Oak Mercantile into the museum's new visitor center. Below pictured L-R: Barb Olson, director and Leslie Cook, president.



AMERICAN LEGION POST 467 – SPILLVILLE

Pictured L-R: Mark Balik, Rich Kuhn, Becky Kuhn, Larry Spalla and Keith Reicks received a \$500 grant from Operation Round Up to upgrade, repair and restore steps and add a handrail at the Veterans Memorial Bandstand in Spillville.



ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS' MEETING – MABEL

MiEnergy's Kent Whitcomb is shown speaking to approximately 30 area electrical contractors in southeastern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa attending the cooperative's annual event that allowed them to get an update on the cooperative's policies and programs.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Routine maintenance is important to keep your refrigerator running efficiently. Lint and dirt should be cleaned from the refrigerator coils every six months to a year--and more often if there are pets in the home. When coils are coated with lint, dust or pet hair, it can increase energy costs of the refrigerator by as much as 35% and shorten the life of the appliance.

Source: energy.gov

Do The SUMMER SHIFT

Keeping electric rates affordable is a top priority for MiEnergy. One way to help is to reduce electric use on weekdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the months of June, July and August.

Historically, about two-thirds of MiEnergy's operating costs are for purchasing wholesale power. The cooperative is considered a summer peaking system. The cost for power is highest during the summer months on weekdays between the hours of 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Members who can shift or reduce their energy use during this timeframe can help the co-op save on wholesale power costs. It means smaller rate increases and/or less frequent rate increases in the future for the membership. It is as easy as delaying the dishwasher, shifting the start of laundry and setting your thermostat for air conditioning a few degrees higher.

Members will be able to hear and see reminders of this summer's campaign in the form of bill inserts, radio ads, print ads, website content and social media posts. This is the 14th year the co-op has committed to running a campaign to encourage members to shift electric use during the summer months.



**Nominate a local volunteer
and they could win
\$3,000 for their charity!**

Contest entries accepted during June at
IowaShineTheLight.com

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Why CHOOSE an ELECTRIC storage water heater?

► Free water heater

Building a new home? Switching from gas to an electric water heater? MiEnergy members are eligible for a **FREE** 85- or 105-gallon Marathon water heater if they join the cooperative's energy management program. All other members can get significant rebates on the purchase of a water heater from MiEnergy if joining the energy management program.

► Free service from your co-op

MiEnergy Cooperative provides **FREE** service calls during normal business hours (7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday). Members registering the water heater online within 90 days of installation qualify for a **FREE** lifetime tank and six-year parts warranty.

► Safety

No threat of carbon monoxide poisoning, combustion or explosion.

► Easy installation


No gas line installation, no venting required and no fuel tank necessary.

► Environmental & grid friendly

MiEnergy's Marathon water heaters are 98% efficient and can be paired with electricity generated from renewable resources. Combined with the co-op's energy management device it runs like a "smart appliance," providing stability and efficiency to the power grid by heating water when demand for electricity is low and storing it for later use.



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