

March 2025 Vol. 9 Issue 3
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

MiNews

Are you storm ready?

Do your research on
HVAC now before a
failure occurs

**PLAN YOUR
LANDSCAPING
TO SAVE
ENERGY**

*What teens need
to know about
electric safety*



Operating budget and rate change approved

The board of directors recently approved the operating budget for 2025. It included all necessary resources and system improvements to continue our mission of providing reliable and affordable electric service. MiEnergy had a very successful year in 2024 and continues to build on that success in 2025.

2025 marks the last year of our four-year work plan, so resources were devoted to system planning, sectionalizing and arc flash studies, developing a new work plan and a Rural Utilities Service loan application. Distribution operations and maintenance expenses are estimated to be \$645,000 more than in 2024, totaling \$10.7 million. \$2.4 million was again designated for vegetation management to maintain our six-year cycle across our system by substation. It includes contractor fees, lineworker labor and our shared arborist with Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative. We have seen our continued investment in vegetation management contributing to increased system reliability as we've moved to a more aggressive management cycle.

Revenue for energy sales has been relatively flat. We are seeing less than a half-percent annual increase in energy sales. We are not seeing increases in new services, commercial expansions or new developments. While we are not seeing a tremendous amount of growth, we are required through Minnesota's net metering law to purchase excess solar energy at retail electric rates from the growing number of MiEnergy members who have installed distributed solar generation systems. This expense is projected to be \$770,000 for the year, which accounts for higher wholesale power costs. Our rate design separates our energy (kilowatt-hour) and delivery (basic service charge) costs to create a fair balance for those members with solar and those without solar in recovering our distribution costs.

This year, we plan to replace 1,500 energy management receivers in members' homes, primarily for water heaters. We have over 12,000 receivers to change out over the next four years. We are also looking to expand broadband in our service territory.

Wholesale power costs are nearly 60% of our total operating expense. It's our largest expense, projected at \$48.6 million.

Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale power provider, has done an excellent job of minimizing increases in wholesale power costs.

In developing the operating budget, staff scrutinized expenses and referenced our five-year financial forecast. Earlier financial projections recommended a rate increase in 2024. Fortunately, we were able to move forward without a change last year. Utility products and materials have seen 14% to 18% inflationary costs over the past three years. For example, a \$10 million work plan in 2020 now costs \$14.8 million due to the increases in material and utility products. We have also seen labor, fuel, insurance and contracted services increase over the past three years.

All our neighboring utilities and those across Iowa and Minnesota have seen increased costs. They are implementing rate increases, some above 10%. Because of the actions taken by staff and directives from our board of directors, we kept the impact of an increase to the membership low at 3%. MiEnergy's last rate increase was in 2023. Our electric rates are similar or, in some cases, lower than our neighboring electric utilities.

The increase will be effective May 1. A formal notice was mailed to members with their electric statement.

In other rate news, watch for details regarding an optional time-of-use rate coming this summer. This is something members have asked for in the past, and we look forward to sharing details about it soon.

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

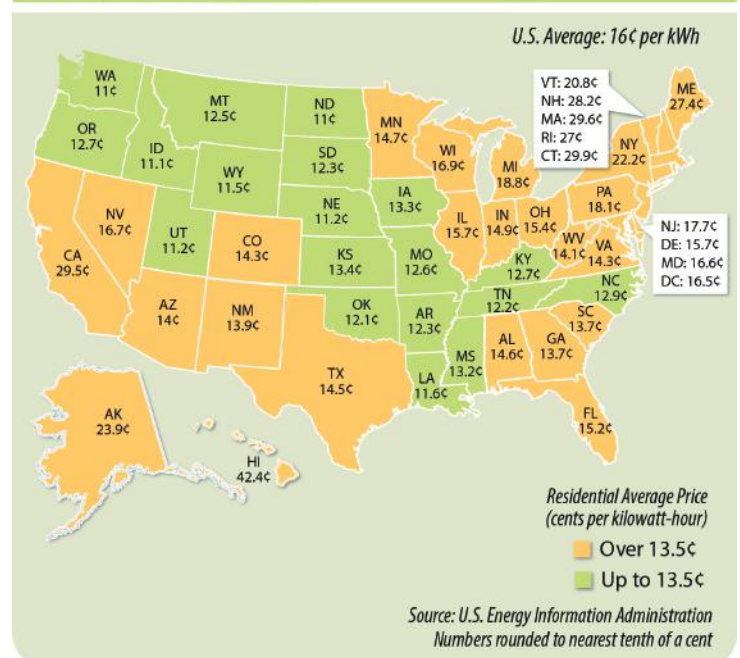
Board room highlights | Feb. 27, 2025

- CFO Shelly Hove presented the financial report which is tracking to budget.
- Eide Bailly presented the audit and a clean audit opinion was received.
- Management provided updates on operations and subsidiaries.
- Approved the selection of members to serve on the credentials and election committee.
- Approved the annual meeting agenda.
- Reviewed and approved a 3% rate increase effective May 1, 2025.
- Selected April 14 to interview applicants for the District 1 Director appointment position.

The next board meeting will be held at the Rushford office on March 27 at 9 a.m.

Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2023 figures, in cents per kWh



Research home heating and cooling now

Prepare your home to handle Midwest weather

The experts at MiEnergy have some tips to help you prepare your home to handle the extreme heat and cold temperatures that we experience in northeast Iowa and southeast Minnesota.

The time to prepare is before extreme seasons arrive. We encourage you to do research during the seasons of spring and fall while temperatures are fairly moderate.

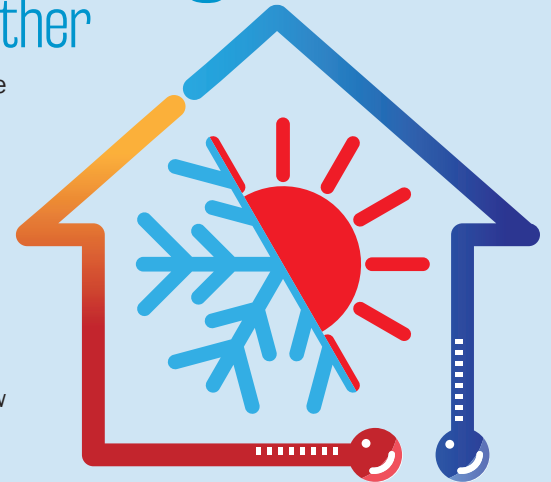
Now is a great time to start planning for a new heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) unit for your home, farm or business, before an equipment failure occurs. You will also gain peace of mind knowing that you've done your research to purchase an energy efficient unit that will help save money on your energy bills and not left making a hasty decision because you suddenly need a new unit.

If you're in the market for a new HVAC unit, consider a heat pump. A greener heating option, heat pumps transfer heat from one place to another. Air-source heat pumps move heat between the air inside a home and the air outside a home, while ground-source heat pumps (known as geothermal heat pumps) transfer heat between the air inside a home and the ground outside a home.

Heat pumps can be used for both heating in the winter and cooling in the summer. At a maximum, ground-source heat pumps can be 300 percent efficient and at a minimum, all heat pumps are 100 percent efficient. Newer, more efficient air-source heat pumps now offer legitimate heating in cold regions with new technological advancements with cold climate air-source heat pumps.

If you're shopping for a new energy efficient unit, check the efficiency rating, or SEER. The higher the SEER number, the more efficient the HVAC system. Consider buying an Energy Star approved unit, which uses around 14 percent less energy than traditional air conditioning units for central air and at least 10 percent less for room units. Appliances with an Energy Star rating meet and often exceed energy efficiency standards and can end up saving you money over the lifetime of the appliance.

Visit www.EnergyStar.gov for more information and check out the 2025 rebates for qualified appliances for MiEnergy members at www.MiEnergy.coop.



ARE YOU STORM READY?

Create an emergency supply kit.



Develop a family emergency plan.



Monitor weather for important updates.



Ensure safe shelter during severe storms.



Use portable generators safely.



Stay away from downed power lines.



BE STORM READY.

WHERE

WE FIND POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

WE

WILL EMPOWER OUR MEMBERS TO

LIVE

THEIR PASSIONS



mienergyTM
COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative

As your **Touchstone Energy[®] cooperative**, we are your energy community. The power we provide is much more than a way to keep the lights on, it plugs into the family, friends, and neighbors that make up your local co-op.

Landscaping to save energy



There's a lot going on in the space around our homes. Competing factors of aesthetics, safety, energy efficiency, water conservation and increasing risk of wildfires are a lot to consider. Thoughtful planning and good design can address these factors and result in year-round energy savings.

Carefully positioned trees can save up to 25% of a typical household's energy use, according to the United States Department of Energy (DOE). When selecting the right trees and other foliage, research what is best for your local climate. Select native species naturally adapted to your location for lower maintenance.

Strategically placed deciduous trees allow for summer shade and passive solar heat gain in the winter when leaves have fallen. This can lead to energy savings in the summer and winter.

Slower-growing trees might take longer to provide maximum shading benefit, but their roots are typically deeper, and branches are stronger. These factors can make them less likely to be damaged by wind, snow or ice, and be more drought resistant.

Be sure to plant large trees far enough away from your home to prevent damage from falling branches or root damage to your home's foundation.

Keep in mind, if you have a rooftop photovoltaic solar system, even a small amount of shade can significantly reduce energy production. Consider smaller plantings closer to the home to shade walls, windows or hardscaped surfaces, such as driveways and sidewalks.

Windbreaks are another landscaping strategy that can be beneficial for energy savings in windy areas. The DOE says windbreaks reduce wind speed by as much as 30 times the windbreak's height. That, in turn, reduces wind chill near your home and can lower heating costs.

The DOE recommends planting two to five times the mature tree's height away from your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs for windbreaks, and consider adding fences or earthen mounds to help lift the wind up and over your home. In cold climates, they offer the added benefit of acting as a snowdrift to keep snow from piling up

against your home.

Keep landscaping clear of dryer vents, heat pumps and air-conditioning units to ensure access for maintenance and airflow around those locations.

When landscaping, always consider safety first. Call before you dig to ensure you know where any underground power, gas, water or sewer lines are located. The national 811 Underground Service Alert program routes you directly to your local resources. Call 811 or go to call811.com before you dig.

Be mindful of overhead power lines, too. Look up and check the surroundings before setting up ladders. Be thoughtful when planting new landscaping that could encroach on power lines. Utility equipment should have at least 10 feet of clearance, when possible.

As you prepare to refresh your yard for the coming spring and summer, consider ways you can boost your energy efficiency for more comfort and savings year-round.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.



RECare is a consumer contribution fund in which members like you assist other members who need help paying utility bills. Consider a one-time contribution or enroll to provide monthly contributions. Whether it is \$1, \$5, or \$10 a month or a single donation of an amount of your choice, when combined with those of other generous members, your assistance can go a long way in helping others. Complete the form below, or visit www.MiEnergy.coop to fill out the online form.

Local families received an average amount of \$218 last year. Minnesota members can apply for funds by calling 800-432-2285. Iowa members can apply for funds by contacting Northeast Iowa Community Action offices in Chickasaw, Howard and Winneshiek counties.

Consumer Authorization Form



YES! I would like to contribute to RECare.

Monthly Pledge: \$1 \$2 \$5 Other _____

I understand the amount above will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill.

One-time contribution: \$ _____

Make check out to RECare c/o MiEnergy Cooperative.

Account Number: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Date: _____

Mail to: MiEnergy Cooperative, PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136

ELECTRICAL SAFETY: What your teen should know



Your teen may give you the quintessential eye roll, but sharing this safety information could help save his or her life. So when the time is right, relay this information to your teenager to prevent electrical shock.

AT HOME

- Do not use a cell phone near the bathtub or sink or with wet hands while it is plugged in and charging. Do not use an extension cord in the bathroom to extend your phone's reach closer to the tub. Teens have died after a charging phone dropped into bath water.
- Do not sleep with your charging cell phone under your pillow or in bed with you. The phone can overheat, causing bedding to catch on fire or burns to the skin. Also, a short in the charging cord can cause electrical shock when you are using your phone. This is especially a risk when using generic or incompatible charging equipment. Always replace charging equipment with brand name/matching items. They cost more, but they are less likely to malfunction.
- Do not charge your cell phone, tablet or other devices on soft surfaces such as a blanket, pillow or bedding.

OUTSIDE

- Do not use plugged in devices (e.g. a charging cell phone) near water like a pool or hot tub or in damp conditions.
- If you are swimming in a lake and feel odd sensations in your body, such as tingling or zaps, swim away from the dock or other source of electricity (e.g. lights). Sometimes electrical currents can leak into the water and can cause electric shock drowning. If you feel odd sensations in a wading pool, hot tub or swimming pool, get out.

ON THE ROAD

- If you are in an accident involving a downed power line or damaged padmount transformer or other electrical equipment, DO NOT get out of your car and call 9-1-1. Only get out if there is smoke or your car is on fire. If that is the case, make a clean exit from the vehicle (make a solid jump out without touching the car) and hop with feet together as far as you can. If there is damaged power equipment, the ground and anything else the lines touch could have electrical current running through it.
- If you approach an accident with a downed power line, DO NOT attempt to help the victims and do not go near the scene. Instead, call 9-1-1 and warn others not to approach the area.

Notice on contractors

MiEnergy hires contractors throughout the year to assist with various co-op related projects. Depending on the project, members may receive an automated call or a postcard in the mail alerting them to work that will be happening on or near their home, farm or business by our employees or contractors.

Members should contact the cooperative if they are suspicious of a person at their premise. A quick call to 800-432-2285 can confirm that an employee or contractor is doing work on behalf of MiEnergy.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filling_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.



MiRecipes

Family Favorites

Submit your family's favorite recipe for consideration to be printed in the July 2025 newsletter. Deadline is June 15. Send to Meagan at PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136 or email: mmoellers@MiEnergy.coop. MiRecipes will be printed quarterly in this publication. If we publish your recipe, you will receive a \$5 credit on your next electric bill. Limit one recipe published per member annually.

STRAWBERRY RHUBARB CREAM DESSERT JANICE DOUGHERTY, WAUKON

Crust:
2 c. flour
1 c. pecans (chopped)
1 c. butter (melted)
¼ c. sugar

Topping:
1 c. brown sugar
3 T. cornstarch
5 c. rhubarb (diced)
1 c. strawberries (sliced)
1 (8 oz. pkg.) cream cheese
1 c. powdered sugar
1¼ c. heavy whipping cream (to be whipped)

In small bowl, combine first four ingredients, press in 9x13" pan and bake at 350° for 18-20 minutes. Cool. In a large saucepan, combine brown sugar and cornstarch. Stir in rhubarb until combined. Bring to a boil. On medium heat, stir often and cook 4-5 minutes until thick. Remove from heat. Cool. Stir in strawberries.

In a small mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and powdered sugar until smooth. Fold in 1 c. of the whipped cream. Spread over the crust. Then top with rhubarb mix. Spread with remaining whipped cream. Refrigerate 3-4 hours before serving.

CARAMEL APPLE SALAD CAROLYN HUBER, JERICO

5 Granny Smith apples (cored and chopped)
2 small boxes instant vanilla pudding
2 c. milk
12 oz. frozen whipped topping
6 Snickers bars (cubed)

Pour milk in bowl and add pudding mix. Stir until blended. Add rest of ingredients. Chill for at least one hour. So simple and so good!



Working on MiLines

DAY | NIGHT | RAIN | SHINE

Above, Shawn Omar climbing a pole on a copper replacement project near New Hampton.

Below, Caleb Steiner in the bucket, Clint Lickteig on the digger and Zach Steinmetz on the ground changing out a pole on a line rebuild project by Fort Atkinson.





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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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 Dennis Ptacek, secretary and vacant seat

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

MARCH 25 Employee Development Day

APRIL 18 Good Friday

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

MEMBER ADVOCACY – ST. PAUL



Representatives from MiEnergy's board and staff took part in Minnesota Rural Electric Association's annual legislative day in February where more than 200 directors and staff made visits to the Capitol to discuss energy policy with state legislators.

Pictured above, MiEnergy met with Representative Greg Davids. Pictured at right, MiEnergy met with Senator Jeremy Miller and Representative Aaron Repinski.



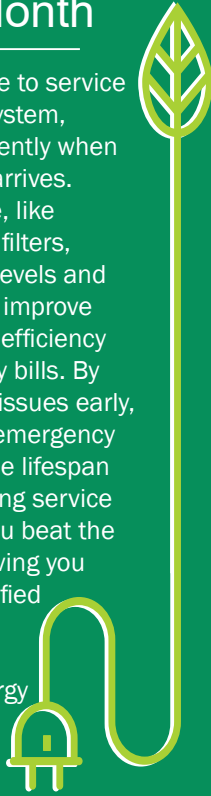
NATIONAL RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS WEEK

Employees at the Rushford and Cresco offices participated in National Random Acts of Kindness week this February, including a day to represent "Color our World with Kindness" by wearing fun, colored socks to help brighten someone's day.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

March is an ideal time to service your home cooling system, ensuring it runs efficiently when the heat of summer arrives. Routine maintenance, like cleaning or replacing filters, checking refrigerant levels and inspecting parts, can improve your system's energy efficiency and lower your energy bills. By addressing potential issues early, you can avoid costly emergency repairs and extend the lifespan of your unit. Scheduling service in the spring helps you beat the peak-season rush, giving you faster access to qualified technicians. A well-maintained cooling system can save energy and keep your home comfortable all summer long.



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ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 23, 2025

America's Electric Cooperatives

UNMATCHED: Different By Design

Co-op leaders will discuss the financial health of the cooperative, along with priorities and challenges at the annual meeting. As a member of the cooperative, you are invited to attend.

The one-hour business meeting begins at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 23 at the Mabel Community Center in Mabel, Minn. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be available to view online. Watch for details in the annual report to be mailed to all members April 8.

DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

The results of the board director elections in District 4 and District 5 will be announced at the annual meeting. Members in these districts will be able to vote by mail, online or in-person at the Mabel Community Center, 201 South Main Street, Mabel, Minn. on April 23, 2025, between 6:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. The ballot box closes at the start of the annual meeting at 7 p.m.

A voting ballot, instructions on the voting process and biographies for each candidate will be mailed March 20 to members in District 4 and District 5. Ballots are mailed from Survey and Ballot Systems, of Eden Prairie, Minn., in a yellow envelope. Members who have an email address with

the cooperative will also receive voting directions via email. Survey and Ballot Systems will be collecting and tabulating ballots. Security measures are in place to protect the confidentiality of your vote and to prevent duplicate voting.

DISTRICT 4 CANDIDATES:

Seat #1: Kyle Holthaus, incumbent
Seat #1: Steve Demuth, challenger
Seat #1: Larry Liefeld, challenger
Seat #2: Carl Reicks, incumbent
Seat #2: Lois Buchheit, challenger

DISTRICT 5 CANDIDATES:

Seat #1: Jenny Scharmer, incumbent, running unopposed
Seat #2: Beth Olson, incumbent, running unopposed

Thank you for participating in the cooperative election. Your vote is important.

