

BENCO Electric Cooperative Link

OCTOBER 2023

CYBERSECURITY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Technology breaches – customer credit card data being stolen from a big box store, or consumer data being stolen from Experian – have become more commonplace, creating a reality of increased security measures and constant monitoring of organizational and personal data to ensure our identities, credit card numbers or bank accounts have not been compromised.

This new reality has made many realize that keeping systems secure is not solely the responsibility of information technology employees. Rather, it is incumbent on every individual to do their part to keep critical personal and our organization's data safe from potential breaches.

It can seem a little overwhelming at times, and the idea that the next threat is always lurking around the corner can be stressful. But there are things you can do to protect your personal data, along with BENCO's data.

KEEP YOUR DEFENSES UP

- Make sure all your computer software – including your web browser – are updated with the latest software. Keeping software up-to-date ensures security patches being deployed by our security team can succeed in blocking security threats.
- Create a strong password and keep it private – it

could take up to two centuries to crack a password consisting of 12 characters or more!

- Treat all Wi-Fi networks as a potential security risk. Encrypt sensitive data when using a public Wi-Fi network and never check financial or other sensitive accounts when using public Wi-Fi.

DON'T FALL FOR A PHISH

- Be on the lookout for emails, phone calls and other



CO-OP™
CYBER
SECURE

Level One **RC3** Goals Achieved

In August BENCO completed NRECA's Cyber Goals Program. The Cyber Goals Program aims to encourage electric cooperatives to work toward achieving high priority security measures and implement actionable steps to advance cybersecurity posture.

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CEO CORNER

Each October we celebrate National Cooperative Month where we recognize being a member-owned cooperative. BENCO Electric Cooperative provides electricity to its 20,000+ member services in south central Minnesota.

As a cooperative, we are especially proud of our commitment to community. On page three of this newsletter, we highlight recent community events we are happy to be a part of. Through our Operation Round Up program, we are excited to be donating over \$51,000 to local organizations this year.

October is also when we recognize National Cybersecurity

Awareness Month. With so many everyday functions happening online, it's important to make sure you and your business are staying cyber safe. At BENCO we prioritize safe cyber behavior to ensure a reliable electric system.

Stay safe as another harvest season takes place. As always, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Cooperatively yours,



FROM THE BOARD

August 31, 2023
Brad Leiding Presided

The board reviewed and approved the minutes of the July 27, 2023 board meeting.

The board reviewed and approved the minutes of the August 29, 2023 special board meeting. The board met to solely address the January 2, 2023 apportionable market valuation notice from the MN Dept. of Revenue. The board approved to deny the appeal offer from the MN DOR.

Attending directors reported on the MREA Energy Issues Summit.

The board approved the October board meeting to be held at the Faribault County Outpost.

PCA UPDATE

**ACTUAL PCA FOR
SEPTEMBER**

\$0.0309

**ESTIMATED PCA FOR
OCTOBER**

\$0.0278

**ESTIMATED PCA FOR
NOVEMBER**

\$0.0334

The Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) is due to changes in the monthly wholesale rate from our power supplier, Great River Energy (GRE).

*Happy
Thanksgiving!*

BENCO Electric Cooperative
will be closed on
Thursday, November 23
and Friday, November 24
to observe the Thanksgiving
holiday. Please continue to
report power outages by calling
507-387-7964.

BENCO IN THE COMMUNITY

Late summer and early fall have kept BENCO busy participating in farm and agricultural events in our communities. In August, BENCO sponsored Farm Bureau of Blue Earth and LeSueur Counties' Breakfast on the Farm. Children were able to explore a bucket truck, go inside the bucket and try on lineman gear. In September, BENCO provided electric safety demonstrations to area third graders at Blue Earth County Farm Safety Day and to students in grades K - 12 at United South Central's Farm Safety Day.



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messages that try to get to secure data. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If something seems off, trust your instinct and convey your concerns to a manager or member of the security team.

- Refrain from clicking on links or attached files in emails or text messages from senders you don't know. Even if you do know the sender, hover over the link before you click as they may have been hacked or someone could be spoofing them. There are many ways to spot a phish, and you can visit www.staysafeonline.org to see them all.

CO-OPS WORKING TOGETHER

Electric co-ops, along with the Department of Energy and NRECA, are working together through the RC3 Program, to better protect us from security threats.

From the smallest co-op with limited access to technology staff to the largest co-op with greater resources, NRECA and America's electric cooperatives are creating a co-op network that fosters a culture of cybersecurity.

Whether keeping your data safe at home or on the go, remember: you are the first line of defense against cyber security threats!

WHERE, OH WHERE?

The following is a list of former BENCO members who have unclaimed capital credit checks or credit balances on their inactive account. Please contact Angie at **507-387-7963** with any information on locating the former BENCO members.

M

Andrew Meyer, Rochester
Benjamin R. Meyer, Mankato
Charles E. Meyer, Ashland, WI
Cody Meyer, Denver, CO
Daniel J. Meyer, Prior Lake
Dennis R. Meyer, Lake Crystal
Doug L. Meyer, Hornick, IA
Earl Meyer, St. Peter
Ethel Meyer, Mankato
Glen P. Meyer, Austin
Gordon L. Meyer, Wells
Jean M. Meyer, Mankato
John J. Meyer, Kilkenny
John P. Meyer, Belle Plaine
Kathryn A. Meyer, St. Peter
Kevin L. Meyer, Mankato
Kurt A. Meyer, Wesley Chapel, FL
Michael Meyer, Mankato

Patrick D. Meyer, Burnsville
Paul Meyer, Wells
Richard Meyer, Wells
Robert P. Meyer, Fairmont
Rose Meyer, Wells
Rueben Meyer, Gaylord
Sandra L. Meyer, Mankato
Shawnea Meyer, Mankato
Brian Meyerink, Spencer, IA
Christine Meyers, North Mankato
Kristy K. Meyers, North Mankato
Kyle W. Meyers, Mankato
Paul Meyers, Eagle Lake
Mark Meyman, North Mankato
Ronald L. Michaelson, Wells
Jason L. Michel, North Mankato
Peggy Michel, Mankato
Dolores M. Michels, St. Peter
Grace Michels, St. Peter
Leo J. Michels, Pemberton
Sara L. Michels, Mankato
Shirley Michels, North Mankato
Thomas H. Michels, St. Peter
Vickie L. Michels, St. Peter
Allen P. Michelson, Yuma, AZ
Thomas C. Michon, Woodbury, MN
Anthony Mickells, Bellevue, NE
Ellen A. Mickelson, North Mankato

Joe M. Mickelson, Lake Crystal
John Mickelson, Overland Park, KS
Mike D. Mickelson, Mahtomedi
Tjode Mickelson, North Mankato
Deb D. Mickills, Chaska
Wiley J. Middleton, Westminster, CO
Midwest Cablevision, St. Peter
Midwest Toroids, Mankato
Midwest Wireless, LLC, Mankato
Kristina Mielke, Waseca
James Mikkelson, St. Paul
Josie Mikosch, Willmar
Steven Milbrath, Mankato
Harry Miles, Rapid City, SD
Pablo Milian, Austin
Adrian Miller, Bloomington
Brian L. Miller, Good Thunder
Brian W. Miller, Eagan
Bryan M. Miller, North Mankato
Chad L. Miller, Eden Prairie
Clara Miller, Winnebago
Connie M. Miller, Mankato
Cory Miller, Marshall
David C. Miller, Mankato
Don D. Miller, Tulsa, OK
Douglas D. Miller, Taos, NM
Douglas L. Miller, Mankato
Edward Miller, Lake Crystal



PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR A WINTER AWAY

If you are fortunate enough to have a second home or destination to escape to during the winter months, you will want to make sure that your primary residence is safe and maintained while you are away. Here are some tips to keep your home secure and your electrical service current while you are enjoying your winter retreat:

ELECTRIC SERVICE MAINTENANCE

- Ensure your electric account stays current including paying your bill. Members can have their bill forwarded to a different address or emailed.
- Members can sign-up for automatic payments.

Visit BENCO.org for more payment option information or call **507-387-7963**.

HOME SECURITY MAINTENANCE

- Test your security system monthly to make sure it is communicating with the response center.
- Automate indoor and outdoor lights to simulate someone being home.
- Be sure your home security sign is visible.



- Turn off and unplug unnecessary lights and appliances.
- Refrain from posting online about your travel until you return.
- Check doors and windows to ensure they are locked.
- Have your mail held at the post office if you will be gone longer than a week. Ask a trusted neighbor to pick up any packages that arrive in your absence.
- Set your thermostat lower to save money, but not below 55 degrees to prevent frozen pipes and damaged appliances. If you have a smart thermostat, you can adjust the temperature from your mobile device so your house is the right temperature upon your return.
- Store valuable and important items in a hidden fire resistant safe.

For more information about a home security system with Heartland Security, please visit heartlandss.com or call Nate Ellis, Regional Sales Representative at **507-829-3641** or nellis@heartlandss.com.



Touchstone Energy®

P.O. Box 8
Mankato, MN 56002-0008

what's cooking?

Receive a \$20 credit on your electric bill if your recipe appears in the newsletter.



This newsletter is published monthly by BENCO Electric Cooperative.

Office Hours: Mon -Fri - 7:30 am - 4:00 pm
Phone: 387-7963 or 1-888-792-3626

Outages/After Hours:
387-7964 or 1-888-792-3626

Kathy Gerber - Member Services Manager
Chelsea Germo - Editor

FALL PARTY MIX

From the Kitchen of: April Lanz

Ingredients:

- 1 pkg. original candy corn
- 1 C lightly salted peanuts
- 1 C lightly salted pretzel sticks

Directions:

Mix together and serve. Tastes like a salted Nut Roll. You can add extras (popcorn, M&Ms, etc. if you would like). Enjoy!



Board Meetings:

Board meetings are held the last Thursday of each month. Members are welcome to contact directors with items of interest in advance of the meeting or wish to attend. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Board of Directors:

Brad Leiding - President - District 3
Marilyn Lynch - Vice President - District 5
Scott Johnson - Secretary - District 9
Terry Genelin - Treasurer - District 1
Don Westphal - District 2
John Wells - District 4 - MREA Director
Blake Meshke - District 6
Gary Stenzel - District 7 - GRE Director
Duane Ehrich - District 8
Dave Sunderman - CEO
Christopher M. Roe - Attorney

ENTER TO WIN. SEND YOUR FAVORITE RECIPE TO:

BENCO Electric Cooperative, Attn: Chelsea, PO Box 8, Mankato, MN 56002