



BENCO Electric Cooperative Link

Photo 5

November 2017

Setting the Transformer at Garden City's New Substation



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

On Tuesday, October 17, the engineering and operations department at BENCO Electric Cooperative worked together with Great River Energy and various contractors to officially set the transformer at the newly built Garden City Substation. Pictured above are photos of the preparation and the setting of the transformer.

CEO Corner



Dave Sunderman

On Tuesday, October 24th, BENCO Electric Cooperative energized the new Garden City Substation. It took almost eight months to complete this project from start to finish. BENCO Electric had 21 substations throughout our service territory and with the Alliant Acquisition we added 10 more. In 2011, the North Port Substation in North Mankato was built. This is the most recent substation BENCO has constructed.

BENCO broke ground on the Garden City site on August 15th. The contractors, Great River Energy and BENCO Electric crews worked together to make the October date a reality.

The transformer was set on October 17th and on October 24th the new substation was energized, just in time for the corn drying season.

With the building of the new substation, BENCO also took the opportunity to move two-and-a-half miles of overhead feeder line to underground line. As a result of building the new substation, we are in the process of decommissioning the old Garden City Substation (Legacy) and the Garden Substation (Alliant). The work should be finished in November.

Please feel free to stop in at the office or call me if you have any questions or concerns.

Cooperatively yours,



Linemen Tyler Moorman and Nick Neubert work together on the new Garden City Substation.

PCA Update

Actual PCA for October
\$0.0207

Estimated PCA for November
\$0.0235

Estimated for December
\$0.0271

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

From the Board

Thursday, September 28, 2017

President Scott Johnson Presided

The board reviewed and approved:

- The minutes of the August 31, 2017 board meeting
- Capital Credits to estates totaling \$5,179.79

More discussion was held on the Faribault County outpost building.

John Hutchens updated the board on the AMI project.

A motion was made to approve BENCO Electric Cooperative Rules Implementing Minnesota Statute Section 216B.164.

A motion was made to approve a Resolution Adopting the Authority of the MN PUC Minnesota Statute Section 216B.164.

Director reports were as follows:

- Brad reported on the September GRE board meeting
- Duane and Blake reported on the CTV meeting
- Harlan reported on the Cooperative Network meeting
- John reported on the August MREA meeting

Directors attending reported on the Energy Issues Summit held in St. Cloud.

Directors attending reported on purchasing livestock at area county fairs.

BENCO Electric Cooperative will be CLOSED on Thursday, November 23 and Friday, November 24.

Adoption of Minnesota Statute 216B.164 (Local Democracy)

During the 2017 Legislative Session the Minnesota Legislature passed and the Governor signed a provision that reduces duplicative regulation on your electric cooperative. This local democracy legislation returns some balance to the regulatory process, ensuring decisions that impact member-owners of cooperatives are made locally by your elected board of directors.



The legislation allows for cooperatives to adopt the authority currently held by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) implementing Minnesota Statute 216B.164 and resolving disputes (with the requirement for independent third party mediation). Minnesota Statute 216B.164 lays out the requirements for distributed generation and this section of statute is now in line with the rest of the Minnesota Statute as it applies to regulation of member-owned cooperatives.

At the September meeting of the BENCO Electric Cooperative board of directors, the board passed a resolution adopting this authority and adopted rules implementing this section of statute. A copy of the resolution has been sent to the PUC at their request in order to provide additional notice. Members may request a copy of the resolution and the rules implementing this section or find them on our website at benco.org.

Local democratic member control is a cooperative principle, the adoption of this authority from the PUC reaffirms that principle.

BENCO celebrates Farm Safety Month



In September, BENCO Electric Cooperative celebrated Farm Safety Month by educating hundreds of area youth about the dangers of electricity. Energy Specialist Jon Wheelock attended Blue Earth County Farm Safety Day, Farm Safety Day at United South Central Schools and the North Mankato Fire Department's Fire Safety Day.



Sign-up for the Wellspring Solar or Wind Program

For members interested in adding renewable energy to their energy mix without the commitment and cost to installing a wind turbine or solar array on their property BENCO Electric offers Wellspring Solar and Wind. You can add either option in 100 kWh blocks. For wind this will add \$0.40 cents per 100 kWh to your bill each month. For solar this will add \$2.00 per 100 kWh to your bill each month.

Yes, sign me up for the Wellspring Solar Program! (Current price is an additional \$2.00/100 kWh/month)

Yes, sign me up for the Wellspring Wind Program! (Current price is an additional \$0.40/100 kWh/month)

100 kWh 200 kWh 300 kWh 400 kWh 500 kWh

600 kWh 700 kWh 800 kWh 900 kWh 1,000 kWh other

Name: _____

Address: _____

Account Number: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Where, Oh Where?

The following is a list of former BENCO Members whose capital credit checks were returned by the post office as undeliverable. Any information you can give us to help locate them would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Lori at 387-7963 or 1-888-792-3626.

D

Doug Davies, Clarks Grove
Chris J. Davis, St. Cloud
Kenneth L. Davis, Mankato
Michael A. Davis, Mankato
Ralph W. Davis, St. Paul
Gary Dawley, North Mankato
Edward A. Day, St. Peter
Russell DeMars, Waseca
Cindy J. Den Hartog, St. Clair
Gary Dorn, Mankato
Curtis V. Dulohery, Mankato

E

David K. Ebeling, North Mankato
Michelle A. Ebeling, Mankato
Edwin C. Eccles, St. Bonifacius

Trevor C. Eden, Owatonna
Jennifer A. Eder, St. James
Lawrence R. Edward, Madison Lake
Steve Egeness Jr., Easton
Steve Ellis, North Mankato
Thomas D. Elmer, Bricelyn
David P. Emanuel, Hutchinson
Chris Embacher, Lake Crystal
John E. Eneboe, North Mankato
Mark Engelen, Mankato
Steve J. Engels, Plato
Larry B. Enright, Mankato
Luanne J. Erickson, Lake Crystal
Richard L. Erickson, St. Peter
Wade Erickson, Albert Lea
Charles M. Esler, Rosemount
Randall Evans, North Mankato
Stacy A. Evenson, Mankato
Sefan Evanson, Mankato
Jenny L. Evers, Marshall
Randy Ewald, Mankato

F

Elliott Farber, Apple Valley
Michael Farren, North Mankato
Leslie E. Faundeen, Blue Earth

Charles J. Felber, Cottage Grove
Julie A. Ferguson, Burnsville
Michael A. Ficken, Austin
William Fiebelkorn, LeSueur
Christine Firchau, Lewisville
Barbara J. Fisher, New Ulm
John P. Fitzgerald, Morgan
Bruce Fix, Mankato
Jason Flagstad, Mankato
Bruce Flantz, Mankato
Kim Fletcher, Wells
James Florey, Jr., Mankato
Charles Flynn, Eagle Lake
Joseph C. Forrer, Excelsior
Michael Forsyth, North Mankato
Jonathan Francis, North Mankato
Cheri L. Frank, Mankato
Dwight Frank, Brainerd
David Franklin, Winnebago
Lonny Franklin, Mankato
Gwen Frederick, Mankato
John L. Freeberg, North Mankato
Douglas R. Frericks, Garden City
Jeffrey Friedrichs, Eagle Lake
Terry L. Froderman, Mankato
Robert Fuller, Kasota

Q & A about Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule

Q What is the Cold Weather Rule?

A The Cold Weather Rule can protect members from having their electricity shut-off due to non-payment between October 15 and April 15.

Q Will you disconnect me without my knowledge?

A No. You will receive a "Notice of Disconnection." The letter will contain the Cold Weather Rule income verification form for you to complete and return to BENCO. There will also be a list of rights and responsibilities for you as well as the Cooperative, the Third Party Notification and a list of agencies that may help you (this information is also listed on our website). If you receive a Notice of Disconnection, you MUST take the next step and call us and the agency that serves your county to see if they can help you. We will not disconnect electricity without first notifying you by letter. We also

attempt to make phone calls if we have correct phone numbers. We will not shut-off electricity on a Friday, a weekend, or the day before a holiday.

Q If my electricity has been disconnected, how can I be reconnected?

A In order to re-establish power, contact BENCO Electric Cooperative for the total balance due, which will include additional fees and charges for usage.

Q What must I do to receive shut-off protection?

A If you are behind in your electricity payments and you will not be able to catch up, your first step is to call BENCO Electric Cooperative at 507-387-7963. BENCO does not want to shut off anyone's electricity. We will work with you to set up a payment arrangement or help you to see if you qualify for shut-off protection.



Q Can my heat be shut off in the winter?

A Yes. The Cold Weather Rule still allows electricity to be shut off for non-payment. You will only be protected if electricity provides your primary source of heat AND you have done the following things:

- Your household income meets the state guidelines (at or less than 50 percent of the state median income)
- You provide BENCO with a completed Cold Weather Rule form; and
- You have a payment arrangement with the Co-op for which you have remained reasonably current.

Notice of Rights for Households of Military Service Personnel

An electric cooperative cannot disconnect a residential customer for nonpayment of electric bills if a member of the household has been issued orders into active duty, for deployment or for a permanent change in duty station during the period of active duty, deployment or for a permanent change in duty station, if such a residential customer meets income criteria specified by law. To receive this protection from disconnection, the residential customer must request and reach agreement with the cooperative on a payment plan. You may contact BENCO Electric Cooperative to receive the application form.

Verification of income is required unless the member is automatically eligible for protection against disconnection as a recipient of any form of public assistance including energy assistance that uses income eligibility in an amount at or below the income eligibility.

The member has the right to appeal when the utility and residential customer are unable to agree on the establishment, reasonableness or modification of a payment schedule, or timeliness of payments under a payment schedule.

If denied, an appeal must be made within seven working days after the utility has deposited first class mail notice. Service cannot be disconnected during an appeal.

For more information or to apply for shut-off protection, call our office at 507-387-7963.



Touchstone Energy®

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

What's Cookin' in your Kitchen

What's Cookin': Eazy Breezy Cream Cheese Chicken Chili
From the Kitchen of: Bonnie O'Gara

Ingredients:

1 can black beans (drain and rinse)	1 tsp. cumin
1 can corn (undrained)	1 Tbsp. chili powder
1 can rotel (undrained)	1 8 oz. package light cream cheese
1 package ranch dressing mix	2 chicken breasts

Place chicken at the bottom of a slow cooker. Pour in corn, rotel and black beans. Top with seasonings and ranch mix. Stir together. Place cream cheese on top. Cover and cook on low for 6 - 8 hours. Use two forks to shred the chicken. Stir all together. Enjoy!

You can receive a \$20 credit on your electric bill, if your recipe gets printed in the newsletter.
Send your favorite recipes to:
Chelsea, BENCO Electric, PO Box 8, Mankato, MN 56002

This newsletter is published monthly by BENCO Electric Cooperative, PO BOX 8, Mankato, MN 56002-0008.

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 Germs - Editor

Board of Directors:

Scott Johnson - President - District 9
Gary Stenzel - Vice President - District 7
Harlan Lanz - Secretary - District 2, Coop Network Dir
Blake Meshke - Treasurer - District 6
Garfield Eckberg - District 1
Brad Leiding - District 3 - GRE Director
John Wells - District 4 - MREA Director
Marilyn Lynch - District 5
Duane Ehrich - District 8
Dave Sunderman - CEO
John C. (Chuck) Peterson - Attorney

Board Meetings: The last Thursday of each month - members are welcome to contact directors with items of interest or concerns in advance of the meetings.