

Checking on the power that keeps you checking in

How does your power get to you? And who verifies that infrastructure conforms with environmental requirements? Who ensures reliable electricity continues to flow on both the coldest and hottest days of the year?

Great River Energy (GRE), Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's wholesale electric provider, works with many local, state and federal agencies so the power you receive from us complies with environmental and utility regulations.

"Utilities generate and transmit electricity in such a way that their operations affect society—and the environment—as a whole, and not just the members or customers they serve," said Greg Archer, GRE's manager, environmental services. "For that reason, companies like Great River Energy are compelled to do more than simply meet environmental requirements. We continually assess compliance to improve our environmental practices. We go above and beyond at Great River Energy by participating in the ISO 14001 auditing process where there is now greater emphasis on leadership, stakeholder engagement, and actual environmental improvements."

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the North American Electric Reliability Corporation



(NERC), the Midwest Reliability Organization (MRO) and others regulate utilities so the power delivered to you is reliable and safe.

FERC is a government agency that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity and other utilities. It provides standards for utilities so they operate in the best interest of the national grid.

NERC is responsible for the reliability of the bulk electric system in North America. It creates reliability standards for utilities like Great River Energy to follow, and conducts audits to confirm each utility is following them. By performing these audits, the MRO assists NERC in maintaining reliability in the Midwest.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provide environmental guidelines and standards for utilities. All of these agencies have a role to play in environmental standards and requirements.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) works with utilities, including Great River Energy, to set processes to approve power line and new generation projects, and evaluate environmental impacts of those projects. GRE also submits its integrated resource plan to the PUC for review.

Though all these agencies work in various functions to ensure a reliable, affordable electric system, no one has a larger stake in keeping rates low and the lights on than GRE's 28 member-owner cooperatives. Like all cooperatives, Great River Energy is governed by a board made up of its member-owners. The board helps GRE operate under its cooperative principles and duties to the electric cooperatives it serves.



the power of human connections

sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric December 2020

Do you pay your Steele-Waseca bill online through your bank's bill pay or through a bill pay company?

If you answered, "Yes," please change the "mail to" address to PO Box 485, Owatonna, MN 55060-0485. This will ensure your payment is processed in the quickest way possible to reduce your risk of receiving late charges.

For those paying their bill through Steele-Waseca's website, or if you participate in the co-op's auto pay program, you are not affected by this announcement.

If you already mail your payment and stub with the envelope provided in your statement, please continue to do so.

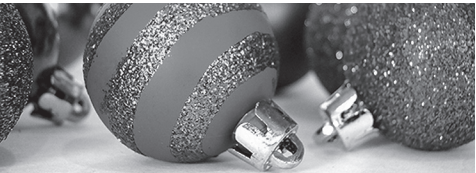
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calendar of events

December

- 7 National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- 21 First day of winter
- 25 Christmas Day 27782
SWCE office is closed



Wishing you a *safe & happy* holiday season!

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board approves record retirement of capital credit equity

The Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors, during their Oct. 29 meeting, approved the co-op's record-breaking retirement of \$1.615 million in capital credit equity allocated in 1992, 1993, 1994, 2019, and estate settlements in 2020. The previous record was \$1.5 million retired in 2019.

All current and former member-owners who received electric service from Steele-Waseca during the years listed above are eligible for the refund if electric sales exceeded power costs.

For convenience and to save on check processing and mailing costs, current member-owners eligible for this year's refund will have the amount of their equity applied as a credit on their Steele-Waseca bill received next month (December 2020).

All former member-owners eligible for a refund will have their equity mailed to them by check.

Capital credit equity comes from the cooperative's margins or profits. The co-op's margin each year is determined by subtracting operating expenses from operating revenue collected during the year.

Your equity is reserved for you, even if you move away from the area. That's why it is important for you to make sure

Rohman enjoying transition to line supervisor

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's Matt Rohman has served in various positions since joining the co-op as a line technician on May 1, 2007.

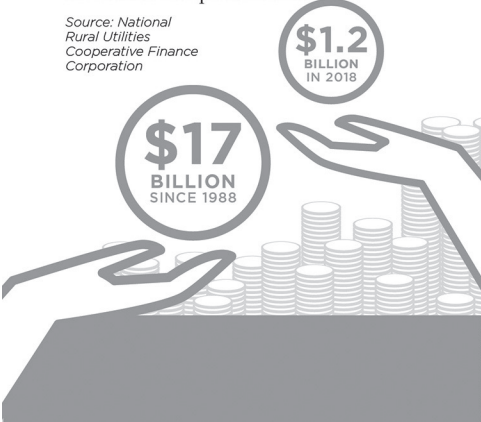
He became assistant relief crew chief in 2012, assistant foreman in 2017, and line foreman in 2019. On July 1, 2020, Matt became the co-op's line supervisor, and was asked about his new role.

"It has been a smooth transition," said Matt. "Having been part of the Steele-Waseca Cooperative for the past 13 years, I know the people, the system,

Did You Know?

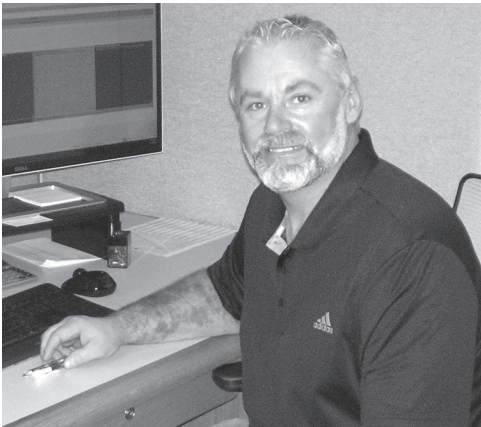
Electric cooperatives have retired \$17 billion to members since 1988 – \$1.2 billion in 2018 alone. Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues (called margins) are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.

Source: National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation



Steele-Waseca always has your current address and phone number.

Until it's refunded to members, the equity is used to finance new construction and system improvements. Using members' equity helps Steele-Waseca provide electric service at a lower cost than if all construction funds were borrowed from other resources. **SWCE**



Matt Rohman

Non-Discrimination Statement

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is the recipient of Rural Development funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

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, audiotope, 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 [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) 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.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Office Hours

8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Monday–Friday

Operations Office Hours

8:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m., Monday–Friday

**For Customer Service, Billing
Questions and Power Outages
Phone:**

507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514

Before calling to report an outage

1. Check fuses and circuit breakers in your home and on meter pole.
2. Check with your neighbors to see if they have power.
3. Look for possible causes such as a tree branch on wires, a broken pole, twisted wires, etc.

To leave a non-emergency message whenever SWCE's Office is closed:

Phone 507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514
and listen to the prompts. Please have
your account number, phone number, and
name on the account available.

Call *Before* You Dig
Gopher State One Call
811 or 800-252-1166

48-hour notice required for **ALL**
underground cable locations

manager connection



By Syd Briggs,
General Manager

I hope you were able to notice on the front page of this month's *Sparks* newsletter, the Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors approved the retirement of \$1.615 million in capital credit equity allocated in 1992, 1993, 1994, 2019, and estate settlements in 2020.

Our average retirement, or refund, over the past 10 years has been \$975,539, which makes this year's refund \$639,461 more than the average.

The seventh cooperative principle is Concern for Community. Steele-Waseca carefully makes contributions each year to community organizations like United Way and food shelves, along with scholarships to many of our graduating high school seniors. This year the co-op's board of directors wanted to assist as many people as possible, that might have been affected economically by the COVID-19 pandemic, by increasing the retirement of capital credits. We have been diligent in maintaining a healthy equity ratio in recent years and can easily increase the refund for this year. We will also have no problem with maintaining our great history of retiring similar amounts in years to come.

Every year Steele-Waseca receives questions from our member-owners regarding capital credit equity. For those who are new to a cooperative, or not familiar with how capital credit equity works, keep in mind that when you signed up to receive electric service from Steele-Waseca, you became a member of an electric co-op.

With investor-owned utilities returning a portion of any profits back to their shareholders, electric co-ops operate on an at-cost basis. This means Steele-Waseca allocates 100 percent of its margins or profits (revenue less expenses) to its members who purchased electricity during the year, and retires or pays back those margins at a future date to those very members.

Instead of returning the margins to people or companies who had little or nothing to do with the generation of those profits, or who probably don't even live in the same region or state that you do, Steele-Waseca returns margins to those who actually purchase and use our product. Steele-Waseca allocates and retires capital credits based on how much electricity you purchased during a year.

Where does the money come from? Member-owned, not-for-profit electric co-ops set rates to generate funds to pay operating costs, make payments on any loans, and provide an emergency reserve.

At the end of each year, the co-op subtracts operating expenses from operating revenue collected during the year. The balance is called an operating "margin."

Can we get our retirement of capital credits sooner? Steele-Waseca currently has an equity-to-assets ratio of 52 percent. The board of directors has the responsibility of balancing the amount of equity with the cost of debt, and therefore, the amount of capital credit retirements each year. The higher the equity we maintain, the lower the debt, and the less we have retired in capital credits. However, the cost of our debt is one of the major components in our rates. Most co-ops attempt to maintain an equity ratio between 30 and 50 percent. Our overall objective is to reward both past and current ratepayers with a balanced approach of retiring past and current capital credits each year, and maintaining the most manageable level of debt possible.

At Steele-Waseca, the board of directors make a decision in the fall of each year to retire capital credits. The co-op has retired over \$18.7 million in capital credits to its members since 1966.

I did not have electric service from Steele-Waseca during 1992, 1993, 1994, or 2019. Will I get any retirement? No. This year capital credit retirements are only being made to members who purchased electricity from Steele-Waseca in 1992, 1993, 1994, or 2019.

How will the retirement of capital credit equity work? Inactive or former members, who no longer purchase electricity from Steele-Waseca (but purchased electricity during the years being retired) will receive a check. Due to the expense involved with processing printed checks, current members eligible to receive capital credit equity will have that amount credited to their Steele-Waseca account on their bill coming in December 2020. 33433

What if I moved? If you move or no longer have electric service with Steele-Waseca, it is important you inform the cooperative of your current address, so future retirements may be properly mailed to you. If you purchased electricity from Steele-Waseca during the years being retired, then you are entitled to a capital credit retirement, even if you move out of Steele-Waseca's service area. If Steele-Waseca has your current address, then the co-op will send your retirement check by mail.

If you have additional questions regarding your equity, please feel free to contact Steele-Waseca during regular business hours.

ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)

2000 FLEETWOOD DISCOVERY CLASS A COACH, turbo Cummins, Allison, Freightliner chassis, (2) slides, 95,000 mi., photos upon request, \$31,000. 261-9302.

1937 A-C WC, motor is loose, been in shed for 30 yrs, \$300/firm. 952-652-2933.

CIRCLE LK LOT, 0.7 acres; (2) **DOWNHILL ROS-SIGNOL SKIS**. 678-978-7445.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric (SWCE) assumes no liability for the content of, or reply to, any item posted. The party posting any advertisement assumes complete liability for the content of, and all replies to, any advertisement and for any claims against SWCE as a result thereof, and agrees to indemnify and hold SWCE harmless from all costs, expenses, liabilities and damages resulting from, or caused by, any advertisement or reply thereto.

(Rohman's new role continued from Page 3)

wife, Kristi. They have two adult children: daughter, Ellie, 22; and son, Ethan, 19. During his free time, Matt enjoys spending time with his family and riding motorcycle. 134485

"I want to give a special thanks to Dan Meier and Jeff Daley (SWCE field technician) for their assistance in the transition, making it as smooth as possible," stated Matt. "I am fortunate to work with such a knowledgeable and dedicated group of linemen. The membership is in good hands. I look forward to continuing my service with Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric."



(Electrical holiday gift guide continued from Page 5)

Tamper Resistant Outlets (TROs)
Great for families with small children, TROs are wall receptacles that have shutters that stay closed unless a plug with two prongs is inserted into the outlet. Because they help keep children safe, the National Electrical Code requires TROs in new homes and apartments.

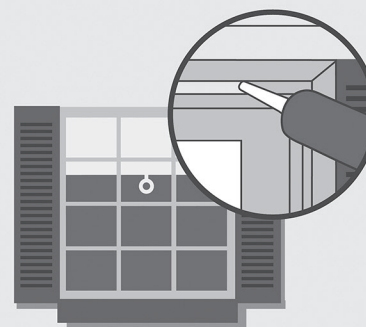
Heavy Duty Extension Cord
Power devices safely. Too often the tools or equipment necessary for larger projects are powered by extension cords that are inadequate for the environment or heavier electrical load.

Learn more at **Safe Electricity.org**

EASY WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY

WEATHERIZE

Seal doors and windows with caulk, weather stripping and/or plastic film.



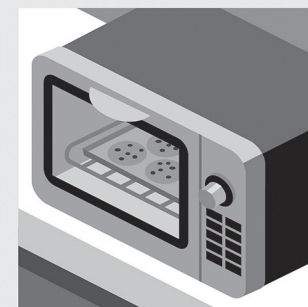
SEAL IN WARMTH

Close blinds and curtains during the night to keep cold air out. Open them during the day to let sunlight in.



COOK UP SAVINGS

Use smaller appliances, like microwaves, toaster ovens and slow cookers when possible.



ad connection

give away

(3) 4' X 8' SHEETROCK, half inch, lightweight. 210-2219.

FREE ONLINE CLASSIFIEDS, you place & remove your own ad on SWCE's website, swce.coop, these are separate from Sparks & will not appear in Sparks unless mailed, delivered, faxd or emailed to SWCE.

wanted

YARD WORK. 651-354-4405/Tim.

RECIPES for the Sparks, only from members who have not submitted a recipe in 2020; please use a 3x5 card; the member who has their recipe published earns a \$7 energy credit on their SWCE statement.

PLASTER FOUNDATION JOBS on old houses, barns, stone walls, & small cement jobs, all close to Owat. area. 273-3587.

UNWANTED BIKES & LAWN MOWERS, \$ pd on delivered. 330-3178.

FORD DIESEL SKID STEER. 330-1849.

4-6 ROW STALK CHOPPR. 744-5277 or 210-2048.

1964-65 CHEVY TRUCK PARTS. 461-1758.

GUNS; AMMO; METAL SIGNS; TACKLE; ES-TATES. 279-0431/Mark.

OLD KAWASAKI MOTORCYCLES, looking for '70s & '80s Kawasaki dirt bikes & street bikes: H1, H2, Z1, KDX, & KX. 210-0210.

WILL ASSIST PEOPLE IN THEIR HOMES w/per-sonal cares, exercise programs, meal prep, house-keeping, errands, 40+ yrs experience. 456-0076.

JUNKERS OR REPAIRABLES, top \$ pd for cars & trucks. 332-2300.

for sale

FIREWOOD. 744-5277 or 210-2048.

GT PALOMAR MTB, men's, 26x175, F.S. Fork, 21-spd, \$100; GARY FISHER TYRO MTB, 24x175, boy's, 18-spd, \$50. 330-3178.

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

BRIGGS & STRATTON LAWN MOWER MOTOR, 17.5 gross hp, runs gd, \$175. 583-6679.

BEACHFRONT VACATION CONDOS FOR RENT in Fort Myers Beach, South Padre Island & Mexico, visit www.sandysbeachfrontcondo.com for details & photos. 612-865-9604/Sandy.

FIREWOOD, \$40 a pickup. 332-7739.

PTO BUZZ SAW ON WHEELS, 3-blades. 645-7004.

FORTUNE CREEK TRL LOTS, covenant allows for a pole shed, starting at \$75,000. 838-5033/John.

TOMMY LIFT, \$300; CAR TOP CARRIER, \$35; PET KENNEL, large, \$30; 4.5" GRINDER, new, \$10. 455-3881.

MURRAY ESTATE SNOWBLOWER, 8-hp Tecum-seh, 27" width, runs great. 363-1274.

HAY ELEVATOR ON WHEELS, gd cond., \$300. 210-3427.

RENTAL, Izaak Walton League Bldg., 4 mi. south of Owat., seats 100, full kitchen, grill, Wi-Fi, \$125. 451-7946.

SHOP OVERHEAD HEATER, elec., 5000W, 220V, \$75; AMANA WALL AIR COND., 12,000 Btu, 220V, \$150; SCREEN DOOR, 32" metal, \$25. 321-1693.

MINI STORAGE UNITS FOR RENT in Ellendale. 456-1460.

AMMO: Lightfield 12-ga. Sabot slugs, \$10/box; Win. 3" 2-shot & BB, \$10/box; 29-rds 444 Marlin, \$35; 43-rds of 25 auto, \$15. 461-1191.

OIL-PAINT ART at Craigslist, Mikafa Minneapolis. 952-491-1057.

CLIMATE CONTROLLED UNITS FOR RENT, 11'x9' to 16'x10'. 332-4623.

TUB/SHOWER BATHING SEAT for disabled per-son, new & adjustable cond., \$50. 676-0970/Owat.

COUNTRY HOME FOR RENT, (4) bdrm, 7 mi. east & north of Mdfd, no pets, gd cond., available Dec. 1. 456-3016.

DELL DESKTOP COMPUTER, new, all-in-1. 676-0096.

1997 FORD F-150—F-350 GRILL w/snap on winter front, vry gd cond., \$100/obo. 323-4362.

SHIPPING CONTAINERS, store your stuff on your property in rodent- & moisture-proof containers, 20' & 40' lengths avail. 612-418-4375.

TREE TRIMMING, REMOVAL, & STUMP GRIND., pro climber & aerial lift to U of M guidelines; FRONT CHROME BUMPER for an F-650, new. 456-1609.

SAMSUNG TOP LOAD WASHER, 2-y-o, 5.2 cu. ft, high efficiency, perfect cond., \$375. 630-661-6005.

CRAFTMATIC ADJUSTABLE TWIN BED, like new, \$800. 332-2611.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

BOSS V-PLOWS: 8'2", \$3500; 9'2", \$5500; (4) TIRES for a 4x4 pickup, LT 265/70R18, gd tread, \$100. 334-7177.

VARIETY OF MEN'S & WOMEN'S OLD WEST/ FRONTIER CLOTHING incl. hats, skirts, vests, frocks, shirts, trousers & accessories. 952-451-4821.

MINI STORAGE UNITS FOR RENT in Morristwn, Fbo, & Dundas. 332-7557.

TV ANTENNAS, new w/UHF-VHF, \$60. 334-3804.

MIXED GRASS HAY, sm. sq., no rain, no dust. 210-1158 or 334-6377.

2-LEVEL LAKEFRONT CABINS on Lake Mazaska, not leased land, \$189,900 & \$224,900 respectively; additional 74 acres. 763-218-2948/txt ?s.

WOOD CARVING & PAINTING DUCKS & DECOY BOOKS. 583-2173.

MOLDBOARD for a Case IH plow; 4X5 ROUND GRASS HAY BALES. 451-5131.

ENGINES & TRANSMISSIONS, USED TRUCK & AUTO PARTS, 30-day warranty on eng. & trans. 332-2300.

MAYTAG WASHER, large capacity, & ELEC. DRY-ER, used vry little, \$500 for set. 451-3462.

WEIDER SKI MASTER CROSS COUNTRY SKIER EXERCISE MACHINE, works out arms & legs, great indoor winter workout, \$10. 838-8792.

5TH WHEEL HITCH, plate style, \$250; 7# GOLF CART WHEEL & TIRES, lots of tread left, all for \$100. 491-4565.

20' TANDEM AXLE TRAILER, new tires, mostly new wood floor, \$1000/obo; VANITY TOP, 39"x21", ceramic tile, almond w/faucet, \$45. 451-9614.

FIREWOOD: \$75/qtr cord, \$140/half cord, \$260/full cord, Nfld area. 651-357-5092/Paul.

ALFALFA/GRASS MIX HAY BALES, full size sm. sq., great quality, no rain. 451-2978.

(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

travel

Call 4-Seasons at 800-328-4298 to learn more about their tour information.

4 Seasons Vacations, Inc. TRUST OUR EXPERIENCE. LOVE YOUR VACATION.

member connection

COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program is among options for those in need of utility assistance

As temperatures continue to decline and the cost of heating starts to in-crease, making sure you have informa-tion about utility assistance programs is more important than ever.

Among the pools of money available for utility customers who are unable to pay their electric bills include:

COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program (CHAP)

CHAP launched on Aug. 2, 2020. The CARES Act funded program al-located \$100 million in Minnesota to cover housing expenses such as rent, mortgage, utilities, or housing-related expenditures. This money is available now through Dec. 31 on a first-come, first-served basis.

The main highlights of the COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program:

- Income must be at or below 300 per-cent of federal poverty guidelines, with a preference for those at or below 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines.

- Eligible utility expenses include gas, electric, water, and sewer. NOTE: Propane is currently not an eligible ex-pense, but Minnesota Housing is taking it under consideration; phone, cable, and internet are NOT eligible expens-es; other utilities may be approved, on a case-by-case basis, by Minnesota Housing.

- Only past-due expenses incurred on or after March 1, 2020 and before Dec.

(Rohman's new role continued from Page 1)

and the membership. Working closely with Dan Meier (SWCE Operations di- vision manager) and others here, I have been able to move into the position with a supportive team."

As for seeking his newest position, Matt replied, "Because it was a chal- lenge. I have enjoyed leadership roles within the company: working with the crew, organizing and coordinating jobs, and helping to design jobs, and this was a continuation of that work to a more advanced degree."

As for his responsibilities, Matt ex- plained, "I am responsible for sched- uling the day-to-day work, including

20, 2020, are eligible.

- All payments are made directly to the utility provider, not the tenant.

- In order to process the application and distribute the payment to your co- op, the service provider has to verify with your co-op that a member has a past-due account.

Details about applying for CHAP as- sistance include:

- The application portal to apply for the program is found at <https://www.housinghelpmn.org/>. You may call 800-543-7709 for assistance.

- General FAQs including informa- tion on income limits and what is cov- ered: <http://www.mnhousing.gov/sites/np/covid19housingassistanceprogram-FAQ>. 1066744

Energy Assistance Program (EAP)

The EAP is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Hu- man Services, and helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs.

The main highlights of the program include:

- October marked the beginning of the 2020-21 program year.

- Household income must be at or be- low 50 percent of the state median in-

come (\$54,357 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits.

- EAP's primary benefit is primary heat, but EAP also provides crisis ben- efits of up to \$600 per program year for those who have been disconnected or have received a disconnection notice.

- The income look-back is once again at three months. (The look-back was one month at the end of last program year, and may be lowered to one month again if funds are available.)

- Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2021 for EAP benefits for the 2020-21 program year.

Here are the details applying for EAP:

- Details about the program and the application portal are found at [https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consum- er-assistance/energy-assistance/](https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/).

- The application is available at [https://mn.gov/commerce-stats/pdfs/ EAP_Application_English_Fillable. pdf](https://mn.gov/commerce-stats/pdfs/EAP_Application_English_Fillable.pdf).

- The list of EAP service providers is found at [https://mn.gov/commerce/ consumers/consumer-assistance/ener- gy-assistance/eap-provider.jsp](https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/eap-provider.jsp).

For additional assistance for finding local EAP providers, please call 800-657-3710.

problems. We have developed proce- dures in following the safety guide- lines and protocols of the Department of Health and the CDC. It has taken re-evaluating what we do in order to meet distancing requirements and safe- ty measures. For example, we have teams of two in maintenance, teams of two in metering, and each construction worker is in his own truck. Masks are worn inside and when workers are in a truck with someone else. With train- ing, we maintain a six-foot distance and wear masks."

Matt resides in Owatonna with his

(Rohman's new role continued on Page 7)

cookin' connection

Brownies

Jason Wolf

Claremont

2 c. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
3/4 c. unsalted butter, melted
3 eggs
1 c. cocoa
1 c. flour

Combine sugar, salt, and butter. Beat in eggs ONE AT A TIME. Stir in cocoa and flour (batter will be thick). Spread into a greased 9x13 pan. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes. Jason's mother, Stacy, wrote: Our son would like to submit this Brownie recipe for the Sparks. He enjoys making them for family and as a 4-H project.

Please use a 3 x 5 card when submitting your recipe. The member whose recipe is published will receive a \$7 energy credit.



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's solar subscribers will see a 32 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during October 2020. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop.

Was your account number in Sparks?

Each month five account numbers are printed in *Sparks* and a total of \$35 in energy credits is divided among however many of those numbers are found. For example, if all numbers are found, a credit of \$7 will be applied to the members' following month's electric bills; or, if only one number is found, that member receives the full \$35 credit. Members finding their numbers who have a load management receiver on their dual fuel, electric water heater, air conditioner, or genset will receive an additional \$7 credit. When you find your number, phone our office no later than the 7th of the month following receipt of the *Sparks*, or the amount will be forfeited.

November issue of Sparks



Numbers found:

Patricia/Kristi Blaha
Paul Fiebiger
Charlene Kness

Numbers not found:

Stephen Opdahl
James Umbreit Jr.



Sparks in brief . . .

• Want easy energy payments? Sign up for **EnergyPay Plus**, our automatic payment plan, or **Energy Prepay**, our discounted advance payment plan. Contact our office for details. You may also pay your bill online at www.swce.coop. By entering your Steele-Waseca username and password you can also view a 13-month history of your account.

• **If you have changed or added phone numbers**, please contact SWCE to update your contact information.

• **Need a new water heater?** For information about our Westinghouse Electric Water Heater Program, phone Cindy Butterfield at our office between 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., 446-4204 / 800-526-3514.

• **October temps** – The average high temperature for October was 51° F, while the average low was 33° F. This resulted in 728 Heating Degree Days (HDDs), and 0.5 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 52° F and average low of 36° F. This resulted in 627 HDDs and 0 CDDs.

• **ENERGY STAR® Rebates** – In 2020, all ENERGY STAR refrigerators/freezers (with recycling), electric clothes dryers, dehumidifiers, central air conditioners, air and ground source heat pumps, light emitting diode (LED) bulbs purchased (limit 5) are eligible to receive rebates (may not be combined with special promotions). Rebate request forms must be submitted within 90 days of purchase. Rebate forms are available at www.swce.coop. For more information or to receive a rebate request form, phone Cindy Butterfield at 446-4204 or 800-526-3514.

• **Steele-Waseca's tree service contractor** – Carr's Tree Service, Inc., is contracted to do SWCE's tree trimming. To report a tree concern, phone: **507-451-7340 / 800-526-3514**

STEELE COUNTY TIP LINE

866-878-7964

TO BE USED TO REPORT ANY CRIME OR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY ANONYMOUSLY

COVERS ALL OF STEELE COUNTY INCLUDING THE CITIES OF:

OWATONNA ELLENDALE
BLOOMING PRAIRIE MEDFORD

health & safety connection

Make sure safety is on your holiday menu this year

The kitchen can be a busy place during the holiday season: prepping and preparing favorite recipes (or sampling those favorite recipes). While this year's holiday festivities may look different for many of us due to COVID-19, people are spending more time in their own homes and kitchens than ever before.

Whether you are a seasoned cook or novice baker, it's important to keep electrical safety in mind. In the United States alone, approximately 1,000 deaths occur each year as a result of electrical injuries, according to the National Institutes of Health. An additional non-fatal 30,000 shock incidents occur each year.

The following kitchen hazards may cause electric shock:

- Damaged or worn electrical cords.
- Equipment and appliances with improper or faulty wiring.
- Using damp cloths or water for cooking or cleaning near sources of electricity.

The following tips may help prevent electric shock in your home:



- Always read and follow an appliance's operating instructions.
- Always dry your hands before handling cords or plugs.
- If an unplugged appliance cord gets wet or damp, do not plug it in until it is thoroughly dry.
- Do not handle electrical cords or appliances when standing in water.
- Pull on the plug, not the cord, to disconnect an appliance from an outlet.
- To avoid damaging cords, don't run them across walkways or underneath rugs. Draping them over walkways is also a tripping hazard.
- Regularly inspect electrical cords and plugs for damaged insulation and exposed wiring; immediately discard any damaged item. Avoid using any cord or plug that is frayed, cracked, taped, or otherwise questionable.
- Only handle the insulated part of a plug or cord when disposing of it.
- Do not overload extension cords,

multi-pack "power strips" or surge protectors with too many appliances or other items, or plug them into each other. Use them only as a temporary solution, and not a permanent one.

• Ensure extension cords, power strips and surge protectors are in good condition and the appropriate gauge for the job (the lower the number, the bigger the gauge and the greater the amperage and wattage).

• Never remove the third (round or U-shaped) prong from a plug, which is a grounding/safety feature designed to reduce the risk of shock and electrocution.

• If you have doubts about your home's electrical system, have a licensed electrician evaluate wiring, outlets, and switches to verify they are in working order. 1084580

• Educate yourself and everyone in your household on how to properly turn off your home's power in case of an emergency.

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

