




the power of human connections

sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

March 2024

inside connections

- 2** Manager Connection
- 3** SWCE residential rebates in '24; What does the Energy Star® label mean?
- 4** Cookin' Connection; SWCE community solar update; Steele County Tip Line
- 5** Overloaded outlet dangers; Value of electricity; Getting flickering lights checked
- 6** Ad Connection; 4-Seasons Vacations
- 7** Home energy audit resource; The difference between EnergyGuide and Energy Star; Off peak/dual fuel controls
- 8** Minn. '24 legislative session; Hometown Sampler in Owat.

calendar of events

March

- 1** National Employee Appreciation Day
- 2** Dr. Suess' birthday; National Read Across America Day
- 3** "The Star-Spangled Banner" became U.S. national anthem in 1931
- 10** Daylight saving time starts
- 14** National Pi Day
- 17** St. Patrick's Day
- 19** First day of spring
- 20** International Day of Happiness
- 29** Good Friday 1076531
SWCE office is closed
- 31** Easter

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric seeking assistance to locate former members

Capital credit checks for the following former Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric members have been returned to the co-op because their mailing addresses are no longer accurate.

If you know any of the following former members and can provide information about them, please call Hlou Yang at the Steele-Waseca office during regular business hours.

James D. Austin	Faribault	Lisa J. Larson	Coon Rapids
Dennis W. Ball	Owatonna	Todd L. Larson	Blooming Prairie
Kevin J./		Richard L. LeVan	Stewartville
Kimberly R. Bardwell	Brainerd	Gregory M. Lindholm	Sioux Falls, SD
Leona G. Barten	Belle Plaine	Debbie/Rick Liskow	Rochester
Robert G. Bartosch	San Tan Valley, AZ	Stephen T./Carol Macke	Lake City, IA
Tod/Diane Becker	Mankato	Peter F./Susan M. Menzel	Owatonna
Barbara J. Benda	West Concord	Susan K. Morgan	Ellendale
Edward J./Shelly M. Berens	Faribault	Raymond L./Ginger Myers	Faribault
Lamont R./		John D./	
Pamela Blomberg	Forest Lake	Ann Marie Neal	Penebscot, ME
Chris J./Jodi R. Boerger	Crookston	Brett W./Karin B. Norgaard	Dundas
Mark H./Janice Bouman	Shakopee	Alan M./	
Steven W. Brekkestran	Northfield	Alicia Oeltjenbruns	Canton, GA
Greg/Karen Bruder	Ridgeland, WI	Lyle B. Olstad	Minneapolis
William F. Cody	Faribault	Myrna Osterman	Faribault
Joshua J./Holly L. Dale	Ellendale	Jay P./Joy A. Pearson	Northfield
Samuel Davidson	Owatonna	Bradley C. Pfeifer	Rochester
Gregory Eggert	Janesville	Martha M. Piper	Faribault
Tadd L. Francis	Dundas	Catherine Plasschaert	Mankato
Randy Freerksen	West Concord	Donald K. Potter	St. Paul
Marcella R. Goette	Freeborn	Thomas L./	
Rodney P. Grinnell	Faribault	Deborah K. Price	Hollandale
Tim P./Barbara J. Haeg	Bloomington	Jeremy M. Reese	Ellendale
Robert G. Hammer	New Prague	Ronald/Beth Revels	Northfield
Keith C./Shari C. Hopke	Faribault	Lorraine J. Rieck	Owatonna
David T. Jacobsen	Northfield	Don/Vanessa Rotchadl	Loveland, CO
Sharon Jasnoch	Northfield	H. David Schmidtke	Faribault
Jeffrey J./Brenda L. Johnsrud	Faribault	Michael or Marie Sjulstad	Faribault
Jamie L./		Linda J./Bruce R. Smith	Faribault
Kristi J. Jorgenson	Blooming Prairie	Tom/Julie Sommers	Janesville
Diane L. Kanzenbach	Brainerd	Megumi Takada Steffan	Waseca
Geoffrey A./Kelly S. Knott	St. Peter	John L./Shelly Steffens	Faribault
Clifford E. Koeckeritz	Owatonna	Leonard R. Thielbar	Lonsdale
A. Wayne/Mary Larson	St. Paul	Janet M. Thiewes	Faribault
Jeanne M. Larson	Owatonna	Mark Trudeau	Rapid City, SD
		Duane P. Valek	Faribault
		Rhonda Wahlberg	Granite City, IL
		Terrance S./Nancy A. Warner	Geneva
		Jason/Renae Weatherley	Owatonna
		Arthur C. Winjum	Albert Lea
		Ronald J./Betty J. Wolf	Faribault
		Diane Wollenburg	Waseca
		Thomas/Wendy Wolter	Elko
		Joel Xavier	Green Bay, WI
		Janice K. Zappa	Owatonna

 #swceAPPRECIATION

HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!

WE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE YOU AS A MEMBER!

Published monthly by
 Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric
 2411 W Bridge Street, PO Box 485
 Owatonna MN 55060-0485

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Website: www.swce.coop  Find us on Facebook
 Email: info@swce.coop

Board of Directors

- PJ Duchene District 1
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer
- Geraldine Lienke District 2
- Neil Schlaak District 3
- Dennis Ringhofer District 4
- Rodney Krell, *Vice President* District 5
- Gary Wilson District 6
President, GRE Director
- John Beal District 7
- Ronald Sommers District 8
Secretary/Treasurer
- Scott Carlson District 9

Management

Syd Briggs *General Manager*

Division Managers

- Kim Wilson *Member Services*
- Jon Stelter *Finance*
- Dan Meier *Operations*

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

With our recent stretch of mild weather, it's going to be a miracle if the trees don't start budding before spring officially starts. However, I still recall the May snowstorm in 2013 where over a foot of snow came down, so I'm not putting my snowblower away quite yet.

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes, farms, and businesses. That's why Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

Reliability

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles.

While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. This is why you sometimes see Steele-Waseca line crews or contractors out in our service area trimming trees near power lines. Our contracted tree crews have been trained and certified based on the latest industry standards.

In fact, all U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events.

Plus, we all know it's more cost-effective to undertake preventative maintenance than it is to make repairs after the fact. Inspections of power lines and vegetation allow us to bolster reliability.

Safety

Working near power lines can be dan-

gerous, and we are about your safety and that of our line technicians. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose a grave danger to families. If children can reach those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor such as a tree. 1028664

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for line technicians to restore power.

Affordability

As a co-op, Steele-Waseca always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40' or smaller) should be planted at least 25' from power lines. Taller trees (over 40') should be planted at least 50' from power lines.

You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10' from the transformer door and 4' from the sides. Remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that is dangerously close to overhead lines, please let us know by contacting our office.

We have deep roots in our service area, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.



**Know what's below.
 Call before you dig.**



 #swceSERVICE

member connection

Steele-Waseca announce residential rebates available to members in 2024

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric member-owners seeking to add value to their energy dollar may utilize rebates offered by the co-op in 2024.

Rebates for Energy Star® central air conditioners are \$50 with a SEER2 \geq 14.3 and require a quality installation. Rebates for Energy Star air source heat pumps (ASHPs) range from \$500-\$800 with an HSPF2 \geq 7, and require a quality installation. To find a qualified installer, visit Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop, click on "Residential Rebates," then "Qualified Installers List," listed under "Quick Links."

Rebates for Energy Star ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) are \$100 per ton in 2024.

Heat pump water heaters (HPWHs) in 2024 have a rebate of \$500.

Steele-Waseca is offering a \$50 rebate (retrofit only) for a residential HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) Electronically Commutated Motor (ECM), which offers a higher efficiency rating than typical electric blowers or condenser fan motors.

Energy Star labeled refrigerators and

freezers are eligible for a \$50 rebate, only if you recycle your old unit.

Dehumidifiers with the Energy Star label are eligible for a \$25 rebate.

Residential lighting rebates in 2024 for LED (light emitting diode) light-bulbs with the Energy Star label are \$2 per bulb (limit 5 bulbs).

Steele-Waseca members who install a 50-100 watt LED yard light fixture (not the bulb) that is Energy Star or DLC (Design Light Consortium) rated are eligible for a \$30 rebate; Wi-Fi smart thermostats are eligible for a \$25 rebate; Energy Star labeled electric clothes dryers are eligible for a \$25 rebate; a central air conditioner or ASHP tune up is eligible for a \$25 rebate per unit; variable speed pool pumps with the Energy Star label are eligible for a \$100 rebate; and pool ASHPs are eligible for a \$200 rebate.

Steele-Waseca is offering up to \$500 for members participating in the ChargeWise program. This is a voluntary program offered by participating electric cooperatives for qualified members who own a plug-in (PEV) or

plug-in hybrid (PHEV) electric vehicle.

The program allows members to charge their PEV/PHEV in their garage or carport using electricity from a specially installed 20-amp ChargeWise outlet. This ChargeWise outlet only provides energy during the off-peak hours of 11 p.m.-7 a.m. Members simply plug in the PEV in the evening and their vehicle is charged during those overnight hours at a reduced rate. They wake up to a fully-charged electric vehicle.

If you have a question, or wish to request a rebate form, please call Cindy Butterfield at Steele-Waseca weekdays between 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Rebate forms are available at Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop, by clicking on "Residential Rebates." Please visit energystar.gov to check the model number of qualifying products. 1058993

Completed rebate forms must be accompanied with a copy of the receipt and submitted within 90 days of purchase. Please allow 6-8 weeks for processing. The rebate will appear as a credit on your Steele-Waseca bill. ^{5/22}
💡 #swceINNOVATION

What does it mean when you see the Energy Star® label?

by Leslie Jones, Energy Star Certified Products; and Ann Bailey

If you've shopped for appliances, electronics, or other major products for the home in the last 20+ years, chances are you've seen or heard references to Energy Star.



But what does that little blue label actually mean when you see it on a website, product package, ad, or store display?

For over 25 years, Energy Star has been the government-backed symbol for superior energy efficiency. You can find the Energy Star label on commercial and industrial buildings, new homes, across 75 different types of products for consumers and businesses.

While you can encounter it associated with many products, Energy Star is not a manufacturer, seller, or installer of products. Rather, Energy Star operates as an objective and data-based certification for energy efficiency. The program partners with manufacturers, retailers, and service providers to offer more energy efficient product options to

consumers and businesses in the marketplace.

Over its long history, the Energy Star label and certification program has helped to empower American consumers by providing objective guidance and resources to help them improve the energy efficiency of their homes and reduce their carbon footprints.

It means energy efficiency, made easy

Looking for the Energy Star label makes it easy to identify products with superior energy efficiency—products that save energy, save money and help protect the environment.

The Energy Star program save consumers from the effort of looking at individual efficiency ratings by reviewing efficiency performance across the range of models in a product category and associating the little blue label with top performers. You can often find the Energy Star label on the eligible products or product packaging, but you can also consult the [Energy Star Product Finder](#) to identify products that have been cer-

tified.

Products that have earned the Energy Star have been independently certified to meet strict energy efficiency standards

Across more than 75 different categories, products that earn the Energy Star label meet strict standards for energy efficiency that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) develops and regularly updates with consideration to technology improvements, market trends, and input from manufacturers and a range of stakeholders.

Before associating the label with any product model, manufacturers must submit performance data from an EPA-recognized laboratory to an independent certification body for review, to ensure the product meets Energy Star standards tailored for the category it's in.

When you choose a product with the Energy Star label, you can be confident that it has been independently evaluated

(Energy Star criteria continued on Page 7)

cookin' connection

Banana Smoothies & Pops

Annette Balzer

Owatonna

- (1) 14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- (1) 8 oz. vanilla yogurt
- 2 ripe bananas
- 1/2 c. orange juice

Smoothies: Process condensed milk and remaining ingredients in a blender until smooth. Serve immediately.

Pops: Pour the smoothie mixture in (8) 5 oz. paper cups. Freeze 30 minutes. Insert wooden craft sticks in center. Freeze until firm.

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 14 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during January 2024. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop. #swceINNOVATION

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.

February issue of Sparks



Numbers found:
Kenneth/Judith Esplan
Tristan Trainer/Zora Burzynski
Numbers not found:
Jeff Jindra
Jeremy Amundson
Sameth Nhean



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. 18031

- **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.

- **January temps** – The average high temperature for January was 25° F, while the average low was 15° F. This resulted in 1,397 Heating Degree Days (HDDs), and 0 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 25° F and average low of 11° F. This resulted in 1,461.5 HDDs and 0 CDDs.

- **ENERGY STAR® Rebates** – In 2024, 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



DANGER! Outlet Overload

Every year, U.S. fire departments respond to an estimated **25,900 home electrical fires**. These fires cause an estimated **280 deaths, 1,125 injuries** and **\$1.1 billion in property loss**.

Thirty-nine percent of home electrical fires involve outlets and receptacles, and other electrical wiring.

To ensure safety, you should only use about 80 percent of the available current for each electrical outlet in your home.

Are you overloading outlets?
Use this formula to find out:

$$\text{WATTAGE/VOLTS}=\text{AMPS}$$

Example:

Let's say you are using 2,000 watts of power (for one outlet). Divide the watts by the volts in your home (typically 120), and you come up with 16.6 amps of current being used. With a 20 amp electrical outlet, you are using about 80 percent of the available current.

Source: U.S. Fire Administration, Home & Garden

Value of Electricity

1 cup
from the
coffee shop

=

38 hours
of brewing
at home

Based on 22 cents per kWh, a 95 cup of coffee and a coffee maker that uses 1,000 watt-hrs.

When it comes to electrical safety,

DON'T RELY ON LUCK

Flickering lights indicate an electrical problem that needs fixed. Don't take a chance, hire a professional.

Safe
Electricity.org



Have a Happy and SAFE
Easter!

Safe
Electricity.org

ad connection

give away

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, or emailed to SWCE.

wanted

GUNS; AMMO; JD MOWERS; TACKLE; ESTATES. 279-0431/Mark.

RURAL RESIDENTS TO ATTEND THE OWATONNA RURAL FIRE ASSOCIATION MEETING on 3/11/24 at the Owatonna Elks Club, 11 a.m. meeting, lunch to follow.

USED/WASTE OIL, 200-gal. min. 420-7429/Quentin.

BARN, GRANARY, &/OR OUTBUILDINGS, I remove to repurpose the lumber; **OLD TIN; BARN SIDING; LUMBER.** 330-0258/Tim.

(1) **PEKIN HEN**, white; (1) **PEKIN WHITE JUMBO**; (2) **RUNNER HENS** (for 4-H projects). 451-7091.

FORD DIESEL SKID STEER. 330-1849.

for sale

GRASS FULL SIZE SM. SQUARE HAY BALES. 451-2978.

A-C WD, recently painted, loader, gd tires, nds some work, \$795; **CATERPILLAR/BLOUNT HYD. CYLINDER**, \$125; **BUCKET CUTTING EDGE**, var. lengths; **METAL OFFICE DESK w/drawers.** 455-3881.

TOX-O-WIK 540 DRYER, shedded when not in use, PTO driven, changed over to hydraulic unloading, new hose for hydraulic, new inner tube & auger, runs great, vry nice, \$10,000. 553-3517.

14' HAY WAGON, painted red & white w/wooden raised ends, used for hay rides, shedded when not in use. 330-1154.

TREE TRIMMING, REMOVAL, & STUMP GRINDING, professional climber & aerial lift to U of M guidelines; **2007 FRONT CHROME BUMPER** for an F-650, like new. 456-1609.

(2) **ELEC. GUITARS**, 1 stand, 1 case, 1 speaker; **BOY'S ROLLER BLADES**, 5-8, new, adjustable w/body pads. 332-0294.

BOAT/RV STORAGE FOR RENT. 475-2322.

TRANSFERRABLE BUILDING RIGHTS in Rice County, Webster Twp. 612-919-4130 for details.

Sparks Free Classified Ad Form for all SWCE Members

Ads need to be received in our office **by March 5** to ensure being printed in the April Sparks. Please print neatly or type your ad of **20 words or less** on this form. We reserve the right to edit ad copy to allow space for more ads. Ads received after the 5th will be printed in the May issue.

For Sale Wanted Give Away

Phone # _____ Account # _____

Name _____

Clip and mail to: SWCE, PO Box 485, Owatonna MN 55060-0485, deliver to the SWCE office, or email your ad to: sparks@swce.coop.

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

BLK STEEL CARGO RACK, slides into your receiver hitch, 21" wide, 48.5" long, \$35. 491-4565.

STEEL TONKA TOYS; HORSE COLLAR; (2) OLD WASHTUBS ON STAND. 456-8814.

55-GAL. PLASTIC & STEEL BARRELS w/covers, \$5-\$15; **220-GAL. POLY TANK w/valve** in forklift frame, \$75. 421-2521.

(2) **NEW 13.6 X 28 TIRES ON AC RIMS**, \$800; **WIDE FRONT** to fit A-C WD, \$350; **CAT D4D DOZER**, exc. shape, \$12,000. 330-3945.

2-WHEEL UTIL. TRAILER, wood floor & sides, \$350/obo; **7-TON RUNNING GEAR & GRAVITY BOX w/extensions**, flotation tires, \$675/obo. 213-0600.

GRASS HAY, sm. sq. bales by Waldorf. 327-3672.

BLK & DECKER 20V POWER MAX DRILL & SAW COMBO w/battery packs & chargers. 456-3846.

2021 AVALON 20' FISH-N-CRUISE PONTOON, 70-hp Yamaha (34 hrs), live well, elec. anchor, fish locator, stereo, bunk trailer, exc. cond. 461-0898.

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

HORSE EQUIPMENT: bridles, saddles, halters, saddle blankets, blankets, gaming boots sets, & much more. 461-3697.

TREK 3700, 21 spd, 26x175 men's, dual disc brakes, \$200; **SCHWINN MEN'S HYBRID F.S. FORK**, 700x35c, 21 spd, \$150. 330-3178.

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

ALF./GRASS HAY, 3x3x8 big bales, no rain; **TRACTOR**: 1966 JD 4020 diesel & 148 loader. 456-3084.

PASTURE FOR RENT w/18 acres in rural Dundas. Email: ghalbers@aol.com, or call 952-270-5562.

SINGER 1036 SEWING MACH. w/cabinet 41.5" w, 31" h, 20.5" d, & glass plate on top, \$1350. 462-3428.

RENTAL, Izaak Walton League Bldg., 4 mi. south of Owat., seats 100, full kitchen, grill, Wi-Fi, \$150. 451-7946.

WOODSHED w/steel roof, 36" door, 10'x20' long, \$4500/obo; **A-C WD** w/loader, \$1800/obo. 456-1181.

FIREWOOD, \$350/full cord; **CUSTOM-BUILT MAPLE CHINA HUTCH; WALNUT DESK; (2) BOOK-SHELVES**, 1 maple, 1 walnut, & other pieces, make offer, Nfld area. 651-357-5092/Paul.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

MASSAGE CHAIR, used very little, \$2000/obo. 332-6849.

HUNTING BLINDS, weather/rodent proof, insulated & much more. 330-2452.

6' KING KUTTER BRUSH MOWER, 3 point; **JD L100 GARDEN TRACTOR.** 884-5739.

1958 KROEHLER 4-DRAWER CHEST, solid wood, 30" wide, 40" high, gd cond., some drawers, divided. 645-6894.

BOSTITCH RN46-1 COIL ROOFING NAILER, nailed 2 houses, like new cond. in box, \$140. 952-652-2933.

(2) **BOBCATS**: '06 S250, 2-spd, full cab, newer tires; 2020 2-spd, 800 hrs, fully loaded. 612-749-6480.

(2) **DOWNHILL ROSSIGNOL SKIS.** 678-978-7444.

MIXED GRASS HAY BALES, 4x5 round, net wrapped; **55-GAL. STEEL BARRELS**, \$8.676-6094.

FLATBEDS, new & used; **A-C TRACTORS, MOWERS**; (3) **CHEV. 2500 HD TRUCKS**, 4x4; **EXMARK ZERO-TURN STAND-UP MOWER.** 402-7679.

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.

travel

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 25-30. Delta round trip flights, Memorials & Monuments tour, tram ride through Arlington National Cemetery, guided tours of D.C. & more! \$1,799 per person w/2 per room.

ALASKA TOUR & CRUISE, June 3-15. Delta round trip flights, Denali Nat'l Park, Princess Rail to Talkeetna, 7-day cruise on the Royal Princess, 3 ports of call, & more! \$5,999 pp w/2 per room.

FJORDS OF NORWAY CRUISE, June 14-29. Delta round trip flights, 14-day cruise on the Sky Princess, 1 night London, 9 ports of call incl. Flaam, Olden, Belgium & more! \$7,599 pp w/2 per room.

Call 4-Seasons at 373-4705 or 373-2473, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, to learn more about their tour information.



member connection

How do consumers find qualified professionals to conduct home energy audits?

Visit energy.gov/energysaver/professional-home-energy-assessments

(Energy Star criteria continued from Page 3)

to perform at a more efficient rate than a standard product.

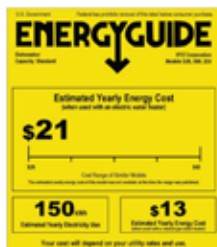
Choosing Energy Star means access to utility rebates, federal tax credits, and other ways to save

When you think about saving money on an appliance or home project, it's likely the first thing that comes to mind is looking for deals available through a retailer or straight from the manufacturer. For products that have earned Energy Star certification, there are other ways to save on these purchases—such as rebates from your local utility, and tax credits, which have been extended and increased through the Inflation Reduction Act.

There are a number of Energy Star certified product categories that qualify for a federal tax credit, including products for inside your home, as well as improvements to a home's envelope or exterior—such as windows, doors, insulation, and similar items. For more information, check out Energy Star's guidance on federal tax credits.

What's the difference between the EnergyGuide and Energy Star?

Ever wondered what the difference is between the EnergyGuide label and the Energy Star label? For starters, one is yellow and one is blue, but there is more to it than that.



EnergyGuide label

Who: Managed by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

Purpose: Estimates annual energy usage and operating cost of the product

How to spot it: Yellow sticker or tag found on product

Manufacturers are required to display the EnergyGuide label on a long list of energy-using products, including appliances, heating and cooling equipment, and televisions. Its purpose is to provide potential purchasers an estimate of annual energy consumption and a sense of where the product ranks compared to others in terms of annual energy cost. The dollar amount at the bottom of the EnergyGuide is the estimated yearly operating cost based on the national average cost of electricity. Your exact costs will depend on local utility rates and the type and source of your energy. If you need another copy of the EnergyGuide label, check your retailer or manufacturer's website. The EnergyGuide is useful for directly comparing the energy use of similar models in the store.

Energy Star label

Who: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Purpose: Designates highly efficient products

How to spot it: blue, square label

The Energy Star label saves you the effort needed to process all the information on the EnergyGuide sticker by simply designating the products that are highly efficient. When you see a product that has earned the Energy Star, it means it meets strict guidelines for energy savings set by the EPA. Only manufacturers that independently certify their product's performance are allowed to use it. (And when they do, you'll find that manufacturers sometimes incorporate the Energy Star label right into the EnergyGuide label, giving you the best of both worlds). 24691

The Energy Star makes it easy to identify the most energy-efficient products that offer savings on energy bills without sacrificing performance, features, and comfort.

Advice for shopping

Both the EnergyGuide and the Energy Star labels are intended to help you make smart energy choices. Used in conjunction, these labels can help you choose which product is right for you. The Energy Star label will help you easily identify which products are the most efficient options, and then the EnergyGuide can be used to directly compare your top choices and give you an estimate of the energy use and operating cost. Saving energy is good for your wallet and good for the climate.

#swceLIFE+

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Lengthen the life of your clothes dryer with regular cleaning. Clean the lint filter after every load, which improves air circulation and safety. Check the lint trap opening to ensure it's clean. Use a vacuum to remove any lint that's fallen inside the opening.

If you use dryer sheets, check the lint filter for residue buildup. Remove any residue with hot water and a nylon brush or toothbrush. Over time, dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, which can affect the performance of the motor. (Source: energystar.gov) #swceLIFE+

sparks • march 2024

Is my off peak/dual fuel being controlled today?

Visit Great River Energy's website at www.greatriverenergy.com and click on "Load Management"

Need a history of controls? Click on "History" on the "Load Management" page

What can we expect from the legislature in 2024?

by Jenny Glumack, Director of Government Affairs, Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA)

The 2024 legislative session started Feb. 12. With a two-year budget enacted last session, no bills need to be passed this year to keep the state government operating.

However, there is a projected budget surplus of \$2.4 billion, which will be used by Gov. Tim Walz and the legislature to develop a supplemental budget for the 2024 legislative session. Minnesota Management and Budget will release an updated budget forecast in late February, at which time the governor and the legislature will adjust their budget proposals to match the updated amount.

With a smaller surplus than last year and the agencies buried under the work of implementing the extensive new programs and spending passed last session, we expect the focus of this session to be on a large funding package for public infrastructure needs across the state. Both legislative leadership and the governor have emphasized working on a capital

investment bill as their main priority this session.

Other contributing factors to consider this session are the beginning of a \$730 million renovation and expansion of the State Office Building which houses all house members and staff. House members need to be out of their offices once the session concludes in May for the project to proceed on schedule. It is also an election year which means legislators running for reelection will be especially attuned to campaign politics.

With the carbon free by 2040 bill passed last session, the energy committees will be focused on proposals to better align the permitting process with the demands of the clean energy transition mandated by the legislature. A stakeholder group was convened over interim that resulted in a report offering 35 total recommendations for making the permitting process more efficient.

We also expect the moratorium on

building new nuclear facilities in Minnesota to be a discussion item. As utilities work out how to comply with the 2040 carbon free mandate, all clean energy generation sources should be on the table, including nuclear. We take the stand that we need all available tools in our toolbox when working to provide reliable power to Minnesotans.

MREA is also working with the Department of Revenue and legislators on a clarification to how electric cooperative property taxes are assessed that will result in savings for members.

More broadly, we will be focused on preventing any new mandates from being imposed. While some legislators would like to enact more prescriptive requirements for how utilities decarbonize the electric grid, we firmly believe they need to let the experts at utilities decide how we will reach 2040 carbon free compliance.

 #swceCOOPERATION

Supporting our community needs since 1994

2024 HOMETOWN Sampler

30th Annual CONCERT SERIES







Bad Tangerines



The Gogs



Turn the Page



Mile 5



Join us for a weekend of concerts featuring talented, local musicians and support our community hunger needs.

Admission of food or monetary donation.

Thank You to our Corporate Sponsors



BOHLEN
BLINDING HEARD
WAB CONCRETE, INC.



ENHAUS, MATTMAN,
CARTER & HARLEMAN, P.A.



It's the Business of Protect. Yours.

FEDERATED
INSURANCE



COPPER
SPORT



KOWZ
100.9 FM



NORTH RISK
PARTNERS



Owatonna
GRANITE AND
MONUMENT INC.