




the power of human connections

# sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

October 2024



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## calendar of events

### October

- 7** Child Health Day
- 6-12** National Fire Prevention Week
- 14** Columbus Day
- 16** National Boss's Day
- 20-26** National Teen Driver Safety Week
- 21-25** National School Bus Safety Week
- 31** Halloween

**Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

## STOP PHONE SCAMS!



**ENERGY CONSUMERS:**  
Never give out personal information to a caller demanding immediate payment.

## Cold Weather Rule notification

216B.097 Cold Weather Rule; Cooperative or Municipal Utility

**Subdivision 1. Application; notice to residential customer.** (a) A municipal utility or a cooperative electric association must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between October 1 and April 30 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

1. The household income of the customer is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. A municipal utility or cooperative electric association utility may (i) verify income on forms it provides or (ii) obtain verification of income from the local energy assistance provider. A customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the customer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance, that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or

below 50 percent of the state median household income.

2. A customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.

3. A customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

(b) A municipal utility or a cooperative electric association must, between August 15 and October 1 each year, notify all residential customers of the provisions of this section.

**Subd. 2. Notice to residential customer facing disconnection.** (a) Before disconnecting service to a residential customer during the period between October 1 and April 30, a municipal utility or cooperative electric association must provide the following infor-

*(Cold Weather Rule continued on Page 3)*

## Steele-Waseca's Roetman volunteers to help rebuild electric service in Jamaica

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric Field Technician Gabe Roetman volunteered his services to help with the reconstruction of electric service in Jamaica.

Roetman agreed to volunteer for NRECA International as a journeyman class A line technician, Aug. 19 to Sept. 6, to help with the reconstruction of the distribution system in the Kingston and Elizabeth parishes in Jamaica.


On July 4, Hurricane Beryl hit Jamaica as a Category 4 storm—wreaking havoc in much of the island and destroying the electric distribution system. The outages affected close to a half-million homes and businesses.

The local utility, JPS, completed assessments and cleanup post-hurricane, and has been able to restore service to

large areas of the country, including hospitals and major health care facilities. However, they needed help in completing restoration to the rural areas in some of the parishes, particularly in St. Elizabeth.

Roetman worked in conjunction with JPS crews. Work mostly consisted of single phase service in putting up wire, insulators, etc., on ridgelines with the work being done on deenergized lines.

Gabe joined Steele-Waseca on April 1, 2021, after working for an electric co-op in Iowa for 13 years. 1000651

Steele-Waseca is pleased to welcome Gabe back and for him to share his experience in Jamaica. 

 #swceLIFE+



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*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

Website: [www.swce.coop](http://www.swce.coop)  Find us on Facebook  
 Email: [info@swce.coop](mailto:info@swce.coop)

### Board of Directors

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- 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

Communities come in all shapes and sizes.

Some are based on geographical proximity, some are based on shared interests or hobbies, and some communities can even be found in virtual spaces like social media groups.

Regardless of where or how they are formed, communities can bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is deeply committed to our consumer-members, and we're glad you are part of the electric cooperative community.

In October, more than 30,000 cooperatives across the United States are celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses, but more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit utilities that are built by the communities they serve. For Steele-Waseca, our mission has always been to provide you with safe, reliable power. We care about your quality of life, and because we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond the business of electricity, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because we live here, too. That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects, youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives and additional programs that make communities in our service area a better place to call home. 1093090

All co-ops, including Steele-Waseca, are guided by seven cooperative principles that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit, community-led utilities. Because we are a co-op, we can adapt to our local members' needs, providing the programs and services you care about most. That's the power of co-op membership.

seven principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities while remaining true to our purpose:

**1. Open and Voluntary Membership:** Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.

**2. Democratic Member Control:** Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Why? Because co-ops are created *by* the members, *for* the members.

**3. Members' Economic Participation:** Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. At Steele-Waseca, this happens through paying your electric bills.


**4. Autonomy and Independence:** Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.

**5. Education, Training and Information:** Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.

**6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives:** Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other out in times of need because we want other co-ops to thrive.

**7. Concern for Community:** All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.

This October, as we celebrate National Co-op Month and the power of membership, we hope you will recognize the many aspects that set electric cooperatives apart. Our mission is safe, reliable power. Our purpose is people—the local communities we're proud to serve.

 #swceTRUST





## cold weather rule connection

(Cold Weather Rule continued from Page 1)

mation to a customer:

- (1) a notice of proposed disconnection;
- (2) a statement explaining the customer's rights and responsibilities;
- (3) a list of local energy assistance providers;
- (4) forms on which to declare inability to pay; and
- (5) a statement explaining available time payment plans and other opportunities to secure continued utility service.

(b) At the same time that notice is given under paragraph (a), the utility must also give written or electronic notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider and the department.

**Subd. 3. Restrictions if disconnection necessary.** (a) If a residential customer must be involuntarily disconnected remotely using advanced metering infrastructure or physically at the property being disconnected between October 1 and April 30 for failure to comply with Subdivision 1, the disconnection must not occur:

(1) on a Friday, unless the customer declines to enter into a payment agreement offered that day in person or via personal contact by telephone by a municipal utility or cooperative electric association;

(2) on a weekend, holiday, or the day before a holiday;

(3) when utility offices are closed; or

(4) after the close of business on a day when disconnection is permitted, unless a field representative of a municipal utility or cooperative electric association who is authorized to enter into a payment agreement, accept payment, and continue service, offers a payment agreement to the customer.

Further, the disconnection must not occur until at least 30 days after the notice required in Subdivision 2 has been mailed to the customer or 15 days after the notice has been personally delivered to the customer.

(b) The customer must not be disconnected until the utility attempts to confirm whether the residential unit is actually occupied, which the utility may accomplish by:

(1) visiting the residential unit; or

(2) examining energy usage data obtained through advanced metering infrastructure to determine whether there

is energy usage over at least a 24-hour period that indicates occupancy.


(c) A utility may not disconnect a residential customer who is in compliance with Section 216B.098, Subdivision 5.

(d) If, prior to disconnection, a customer appeals a notice of involuntary disconnection, as provided by the utility's established appeal procedure, the utility must not disconnect until the appeal is resolved.

(e) For the purposes of this section, "advanced metering infrastructure" means an integrated system of smart meters, communication networks, and data management systems that enables

two-way communication between a utility and its customers.

**Subd. 5. Cost recovery.** A municipal utility or cooperative electric association may recover the reasonable costs of disconnecting and reconnecting a residential customer based on the costs of providing notice to the customer and other entities and whether the process was accomplished physically at the property being disconnected or reconnected or remotely using advanced metering infrastructure.

 #swceTRUST

### SWCE Area Energy Assistance Phone Numbers

<b>Blue Earth County</b> 507-345-6822 800-767-7139, x2433	<b>Freeborn County</b> 507-864-7515 800-944-3281	<b>Rice County</b> 507-316-0610 800-277-8418
<b>Dodge County</b> 507-864-7515 800-944-3281	<b>Goodhue County</b> 507-316-0610 800-277-8418	<b>Steele County</b> 507-864-7515 800-944-3281
<b>Faribault County</b> 507-345-6822 800-767-7139, x2433	<b>LeSueur County</b> 507-345-6822 800-767-7139, x2433	<b>Waseca County</b> 507-345-6822 800-767-7139, x2433

### 325E.028 Utility payment arrangements for military service personnel

**Subdivision 1. Restriction on disconnection; payment schedules.** (a) A municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility must not disconnect the utility service of a residential customer 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 change in duty station if such a residential customer:


(1) has a household income below the state median household income or is receiving energy assistance and enters into an agreement with the municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility under which the residential customer pays 10 percent of the customer's gross monthly income toward the customer's bill and the residential customer remains reasonably current with those payments; or

(2) has a household income above the state median household income and enters into an agreement with the municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility establishing a reasonable payment schedule that considers the financial resources of the household and the residential customer remains reasonably current with payments under the payment schedule.

(b) For purposes of this subdivision, "household income" means household income measured after the date of the orders specified in paragraph (a).

**Subd. 2. Annual notice to all customers; inability to pay forms.** (a) A municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility must notify all residential customers annually of the provisions of this section.

(b) A municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility must provide a form to a residential customer to request the protections of this section upon the residential customer's request.

**Subd. 3. Application to service limiters.** For the purposes of this section, "disconnection" includes a service or load limiter or any device that limits or interrupts electric service in any way.  #swceTRUST



## cookin' connection

### Beef Stew

Marti Cox

New Richland

3 carrots, sliced	1 bay leaf
3 potatoes, diced	salt to taste
2 lbs. beef chuck, cubed	1/2 tsp. pepper
2 c. beef broth	1 tsp. paprika
2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce	3 onions, chopped
1 clove garlic	2 stalks celery, chopped

Put all ingredients in a slow cooker. Stir to mix well. Cover and cook on low for 10 to 12 hours (high: 4 to 6 hours).

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 52 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during August 2024. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, [swce.coop](http://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.

## September issue of Sparks



#### Numbers found:

Don & Angie Draper  
Archie & Suzanne Mrkvicka

#### Numbers not found:

Douglas Hruby  
Wayne/Yvette St. Martin Jr.  
Paul/Casey Yousse



## 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](http://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. 31471

- **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.

- **August temps** – The average high temperature for August was 78° F, while the average low was 59° F. This resulted in 136 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs) and 20 Heating Degree Days (HDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 81° F and average low of 60° F, which resulted in 187 CDDs and 20.5 HDDs.

- **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 [swce.coop](http://swce.coop). For more information or to receive a rebate request form, phone Cindy Butterfield at 800-526-3514.

- **SWCE'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**

### LIVESTOCK OWNERS

If you have questions or concerns regarding stray voltage in your livestock confinement building(s), or are planning an addition, or constructing a new one, call Steele-Waseca at 507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514. Steele-Waseca will work with you and your electrician to eliminate potential stray voltage problems. You may also visit: [www.minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com](http://www.minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com).



# Go above and beyond for a safe harvest

by Anne Prince, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems.

However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height and extensions make them particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

### 360 Awareness

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. If you plan to install new grain bins or you're concerned about the proximity of power lines to existing grain bins, contact Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's operating division.

### Smart harvest safety tips

To ensure a safer harvest season, [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org) recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- **Exercise caution near power lines.** Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.

- **Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines.** Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.

- **Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment.** Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.

- **Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path.** Doing so could result in electric shock or death.

- **Avoid using metal poles inside bins.** Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.

- **Hire qualified electricians.** Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same

# Is your dual fuel system ready for cold weather?

If you have a dual fuel heating system, also known as an off-peak system, now is the time to be sure your off-peak controls are functioning, and your backup system is prepared. Your fuel supply should be checked and chimneys cleaned.

Summer storms can damage equipment controls within off-peak heating systems. It is the member's responsibility to contact an electrical contractor should the system not be functioning correctly.

Dual fuel is a controlled heating program offered at a reduced (off peak) electric rate. During the heating season, the electric heat portion of your dual fuel system can be shut off for up to 12 hours at a time, typically during periods of extremely cold weather, or when the demand for electricity is high.

The dual program helps control electric demand during peak usage periods, which is why an adequate backup system is required. For more information, visit Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop), or call Cindy Butterfield before 3:30 p.m. weekdays.

#swceSERVICE

time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

#swceTRUST

## 5 Tips for a Safe Harvest

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures. Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents.

1. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
2. Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
3. Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
4. Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
5. Keep first aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.





## ad connection

### give away

(3) HOUSE CATS, all spayed or neutered, south of Owat. 583-7974 or [londoe52@hotmail.com](mailto:londoe52@hotmail.com).

WEBER SPIRIT GAS GRILL, 2-burner w/temperature gauge, gas tank, clean, runs great. 456-0225.

WOOD PLAYHOUSE; WOOD SWING SET. 612-987-1030.

CATS/KITTENS, friendly, litter-box trained, used to be around dogs. 612-910-0041.

SONY 50" TV, flat screen, analog w/remote & converter box to pick up the channels. 213-1657.

FREE ONLINE CLASSIFIEDS, you place & remove your own ad on SWCE's website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop); these are separate from Sparks & will not appear in Sparks unless mailed, delivered, or emailed to SWCE.

### wanted

JUNKRS & REPAIRABLES, top \$ pd for used cars, trucks, SUVs, some farm equip. 332-2300.

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

MECHANIC to fix Ford 8N tractor, overheating issues, house call, Fbo area. 651-983-8410.

FORD SKID STEER, diesel. 330-1849.

IMMEDIATE OPENINGS FOR CABINETRY WORK, various on-site woodworking responsibilities w/full-time hours & competitive wages. 446-0260/Sarah.

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

### for sale

DOGHOUSE, well built, insulated, roof comes off for easy cleaning, 45" wide, 33" deep, 40" high, \$50. 456-1343.

CATERPILLAR D3B BULLDOZER, 6-way blade, exc. tracks, \$20,000; JD 2510 TRACTOR & LOADER, \$7200; MIRACO MIRA-FOUNT FROST-FREE CATTLE WATERER, \$150. 330-3945.

TOK-WIK 570, always shedded, new parts, changed over to hydraulic unloading, new auger & tube in vry gd cond. 553-3517/leave message.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

### Sparks Free Classified Ad Form for all SWCE Members

Ads need to be received in our office by **October 4** to ensure being printed in the November 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 4th will be printed in the December 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](mailto:sparks@swce.coop).

### All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

USED MOTORS & TRANSMISSIONS for cars, trucks, used auto parts, 30-day warranty on eng. & trans. 332-2300.

JD 6600 COMBINE, gas, 2963 hrs, not used much over last 18 yrs, runs, always stored inside, \$1800. 456-9546.

NEXEN ROADIAN HTX TIRES, 275/55R20, about 6/32 tread, (2) at \$25/each. 332-0208.

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

250-GAL. FUEL TANK w/12V 25-gpm pump, 2-yr-old. 456-2293.

PYGMY GOATS. 390-6563.

BRAQUE FRANCAIS PUPS, versatile hunting dogs who are hardworking, loyal, affectionate, & great family companions, NAVHDA registered. 383-5629.

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

A-C C-CA TRACTORS; MOWERS; FLATBEDS; 5-POST FRAME RACK; BELLY MOWERS for IH Farmall. 402-7679.

FARM KING 8' SNOWBLOWER; WOOD TABLE, solid oak, 3.5'x5'; VINTAGE METAL TANKER DESK, 3'x5'. 213-0443.

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

EASY HEAT WOOD PELLETS for pellet stoves, burn hot, vry low ash, \$267/ton. 451-2254.

PACER WATER PUMP, 3.5 hp gas motor, suction & discharge hose incl., used only once, like new, \$150; JD 4240, 7600 hrs w/duals. 334-6334.

EAR CORN; SHELLED CORN; MIXED GRASS HAY, sm. sq., no rain. 334-6377.

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

2013 IH TANDEM 20' FLATBED TRUCK, 100,000 mi., auto trans., rebuilt eng., \$30,000. 612-270-6838.

CASE DC TRACTOR FENDERS, set of 2, originally fit 1941-49 (group 2), \$200. 475-3556.

HONEYCRISP APPLES, you pick, \$2/pound; FIREWOOD, \$350/cord, Nfld area. 651-357-5092/Paul.

24' DECK OVER TRAILER w/ramps & beaver tail; 18' TRAILER w/ramps; (20) LIVESTOCK LOCKING GATES; 750-GAL. WATER TANK; 8-TON WAGON w/rack. 330-2820.

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

2013 SUNSET TRAIL FIBERGLASS CAMPER, 29', awning, slide-out, A/C, fireplace, sleeps 9, perfect resort or hunting bunkhouse, Fbo, \$13,000. 334-3823/Scott.

PRIDE JAZZY EVO 613 ELEC. WHEELCHAIR in black, used only a few times, indoors only, \$1700. 583-6679.

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

USED CEDAR ELEC. POLES, approx. 55' long, approx. 18" diameter bottom. 291-0287.

OLDER CHILD'S RED WAGON, \$10. 451-2687.

BRED LONGHORN X HIGHLANDER COW & HEIFER CALF; A-C WD WF; A-C SICKLE MOWER. 465-8593/Brad.

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

28' STARCRAFT LEXION S-LITE CAMPER, trim 294 RL, 2011, A/C & heat, fully loaded, \$12,500. 414-2499.

USED CHAR-BROIL GRILL w/side burner, exc. cond., \$150/obo. 334-5412.

1989 SMOKER CRAFT FISHING BOAT, 16' w/Johnson 60 engine; GOLDEN JUBILEE, Model 1903-53. 676-6004 after 6 p.m.

(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

### travel

HOLIDAY BRANSON, Nov. 6-10 or Nov. 13-17. Deluxe motor coach, 8 meals, 7 shows including Christmas Wonderland, Clay Cooper's Country Christmas & more! \$1,199 pp w/2 per room.

NYC SPECTACULAR, Nov. 12-16. Roundtrip Delta flights, 6 meals, Broadway Musical, 911 Memorial & Museum, The Rockettes Christmas Spectacular & more! \$2,699 pp w/2 per room.

PANAMA CANAL CRUISE, Jan. 9-23, 2025. Delta flights from Mpls, 12-day cruise on the Emerald Princess, 6 ports of call incl. Aruba, Cartagena, Grand Cayman & more! \$4,199 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.

  
4 Seasons  
Vacations, Inc.

TRUST OUR EXPERIENCE. LOVE YOUR VACATION.



## ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)

(4) **OAK CHAIRS**, perfect for cabins or just extra chairs, \$50; **SHOWER BENCH**, like new, \$18. 744-2709.

**GIANT 870 ALUM. MEN'S MTB**, 26x175, 21 spd, \$100; **GIANT IGUANA**, 27 spd, F.S. Fork, men's 26x175, \$150; **TREK**, 20" girl's bike, new tires, \$40. 330-3178.

**HARLEY-DAVIDSON WILLIE G LEATHER COAT**, women's med., \$250; **W.G. SM. CHAPS**, \$200; **MORE COATS, CHAPS, VEST, BAGS** in various sizes. 491-2074.

**GRAVITY BOX** on MN gear, \$375; **1000-LB. FAIRBANKS MORSE ALL-STEEL SCALE** on wheels, nice shape, \$85. 456-7614.

**VINTAGE DOORS; SHORT BOX CHEVY FIBERGLASS PKUP TOPPER; WOOD PALLET BENCHES; 26" ALUM. CANNONDALE BIKE; 2016 AMERICAN HAULER CAR TRAILER**, 8.5x20. 330-0729.

**ARONIA BERRIES; STEEL GATES: (2) 8'4"x39", 8'x4', 16'x38", 11'6"x4', (2) 8'x42"; WENGER STAGING**, 4'x8' w/legs, makes great tables; **BROWNING MAXUS**, 12 ga, auto, N.I.B. 451-9445.

**BOAT/RV STORAGE FOR RENT**. 475-2322.

**1952 JD B**, \$1200; **1952 CASE DC w/loader**, \$1500 (both converted to 12V & run gd); **ELEC. RECLINER CHAIR**, brown, \$75. 465-8194/Rick.

**FRONT-END LOADER**, hvy duty hydraulic, for a Ford Jubilee or 600 series, \$550/obo. 213-1657.

**SM. DORM FRIDGE**, \$15; **2006 CHRYSLER TOWN & COUNTRY VAN**, runs gd, some rust, gd 2nd car. 463-3721/leave message.

**NI 324 CORN PICKR**, 2 row. 210-2048 or 744-5277.

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# Cybersecurity tips for a safer digital world

by Abby Berry, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

**D**id you know the average household with internet access owns about 17 connected devices?

That figure covers a wide range of electronics, including smartphones, computers, streaming devices, smart speakers, home assistants and more. Given our increasing reliance on internet-connected technologies, the likelihood of new cyber threats is ever-present.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is committed to ensuring our local system is safe and secure. The co-op routinely monitors and manages cyber risks, and work together with other co-ops to share the latest advancements in cybersecurity measures that make us stronger. But you can help, too.

When we all work together to stay safe online, we lower the risk of cyber threats to our systems, online accounts and sensitive data.

October is National Cybersecurity Month, and while good cyber hygiene should be practiced year-round, we'd like to share a few cybersecurity tips to help you bolster your online safety.

• **Learn how to spot and report phishing attempts.** Phishing occurs when criminals use phony emails, direct messages or other types of digital communications that lure you to click a bad link or download a malicious attachment.

If you receive a suspicious email or message that includes urgent language, offers that seem too good to be true, generic greetings, poor grammar or an unusual sender address, it could be a phishing attempt. If you spot one, report it as soon as possible—and don't forget to block the sender. (If you receive a

suspicious work email, report it to the appropriate IT contact. Suspicious messages that are delivered to your personal email or social media accounts can also be reported.)


• **Create strong, unique passwords.** When it comes to passwords, remember that length trumps complexity. Strong passwords contain at least 12 characters and include a mix of letters, numbers and symbols. Create unique passwords for each online account you manage and use phrases you can easily remember.

• **Enable multi-factor authentication when available.** Multi-factor authentication (also known as 2-factor authentication) adds an extra layer of security to your online accounts. These extra security steps can include facial recognition, fingerprint access, or one-

time codes sent to your email or phone.

• **Update software regularly.** Software and internet-connected devices, including personal computers, smartphones and tablets, should always be current on updates to reduce the risk of infection from ransomware and malware. When possible, configure devices to automatically update or notify you when an update is available. 1115757

**L**et's all do our part to stay cyber smart and create a safer digital world for all. Visit [staysafeonline.org](https://staysafeonline.org) to learn about additional cybersecurity tips.

 #swceLIFE+



**October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month.**

Let's work together to build a safer digital world. Whether at home, work or school, we can increase our online safety with the following tips.

- Recognize and report phishing attempts.
- Use strong, unique passwords.
- Enable multi-factor authentication.
- Update software regularly.



## member connection

# Growing rooftop solar scams prompt action from government, co-ops

Courtesy: Molly Christian, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

Misleading claims of no electric bill. False promises of free solar panels or tax rebate checks. Posing as an electric cooperative representative or co-op partner.

These are some of the deceptive practices that co-ops and the federal government are warning consumers about under a growing number of residential solar scams.

On Aug. 7, the Treasury Department issued an advisory noting a rise in consumer complaints about such practices as rooftop solar installations surge, emphasizing that scams are against the law.

The complaints involve “a small number of unscrupulous solar companies” that consumers say deceived them on the costs and savings of the systems and relied on aggressive sales and marketing tactics, the advisory stated.

### How to spot and report scams

The Treasury’s advisory listed several ways to avoid scams. It urged consumers to gather and compare several quotes and bids, if they are interested in adding solar to their homes.

They should also check a contractor’s history with state consumer agencies

and licensing boards; make sure the advertised cost savings are guaranteed; and consult a lawyer, if possible, to help understand contract terms and lengths.

If a business doesn’t make good on its promises or cheats consumers out of its money, Treasury encouraged affected homes to report fraud to the Federal Trade Commission at [ReportFraud.FTC.gov](https://www.ftc.gov).

The advisory also included links to locate state consumer protection offices and utility consumer advocates, and to find nonprofit legal services for challenging fraud, abuse and deception.

The advisory was one of several new actions announced by Treasury, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission to address unfair and deceptive consumer practices in the residential solar power sector. The agencies also announced a new partnership with the Department of Energy and Department of Housing and Urban Development to help prevent predatory practices. 1065712


Co-ops are also encouraging their communities to use them as resources to decide on residential solar projects and what questions to ask rooftop solar providers (for Steele-Waseca members, contact Steve Nordahl in Engineering



Deceptive sales practices involving rooftop solar systems are against the law, the Treasury Department warned in a recent consumer advisory. (Photo by: 19tencottages.com)

Operations at the co-op’s office during regular business hours).

Communication between members and their local co-op is key, said Tolu Omotoso, director of energy solutions at NRECA. “A lot of co-ops have energy advisers or member service professionals who are knowledgeable about these assets, this technology and also the companies. So, they will be able to tell you which company has maybe not been too good to our members.”

 #swceTRUST

# TRICK OR TREAT

Don't Let an Electrical Mishap Be Your Halloween Trick

As you ready your yard and porch for Halloween, make sure the decorations you plug in do not become hazardous. To avoid a Halloween scare, take these safety precautions:

- Discard any decorations that have **cracked or frayed cords** or damaged plugs.
- **Do not** put any decorations on power poles, padmount transformers or any other electrical equipment.
- Use decorations that are endorsed by a reputable testing laboratory such as **Underwriters Laboratories (UL)**.
- If you are using extension cords outdoors, make sure they are **rated for outdoor use**.
- **Secure all cords** so they do not become tripping hazards.
- Plug all cords into circuits protected by **GFCIs** to prevent electrical shock.
- **Do not use nails or tacks** to hang lights or other electrical decor.
- Keep decorations **away from flammable items** like bales of hay, cornstalks or witch’s brew.

Have a safe and festive Halloween complete with safe tricks and tasty treats.

Learn more at:  [Safe Electricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org)

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