

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

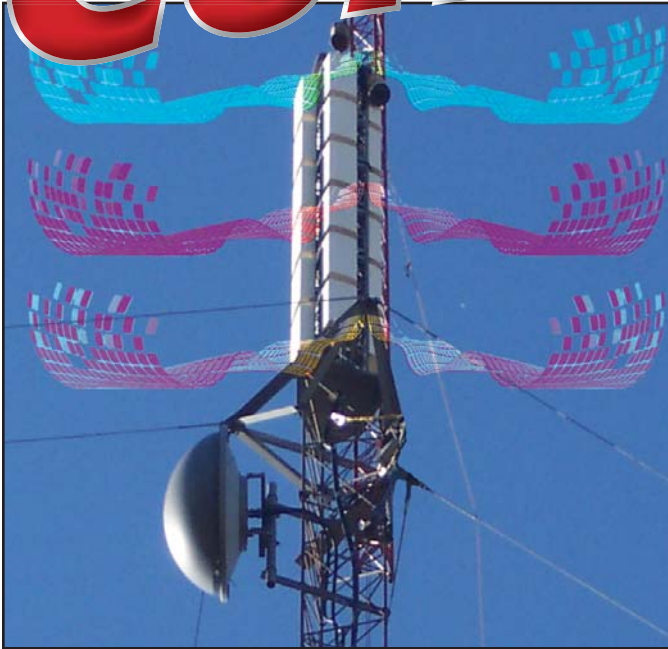


September 2009

Connections



Vol. 13, No. 9



Go online for a \$ave Energy Webcast

CTV digital conversion complete at all towers

CTV switched its analog TV signals to digital signals last month. The reason for this sudden change was because funds became available through the Federal Communications Commission that will cut CTV's conversion costs in half.

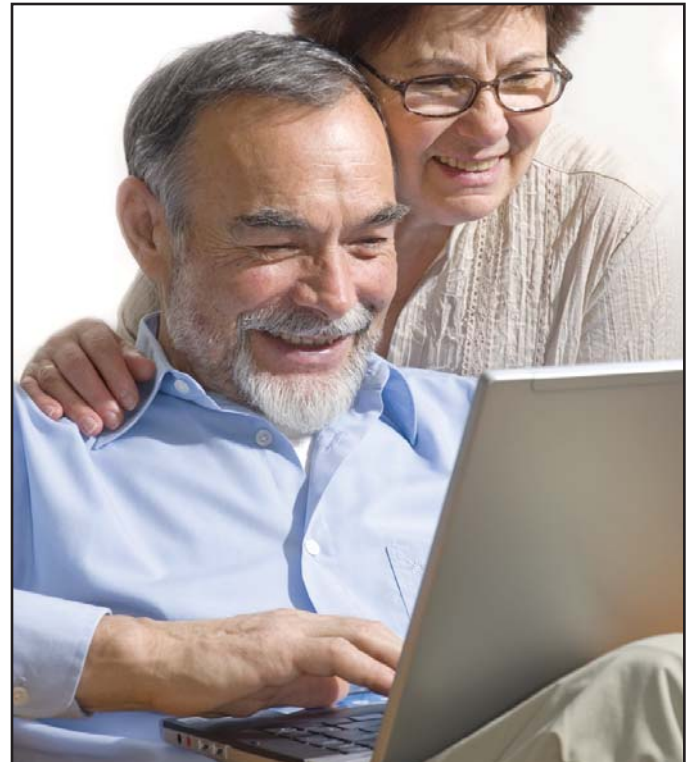
What does this mean for CTV viewers?

- CTV viewers with an analog TV will no longer receive CTV channels. (An exception to the rule is CTV Plus channels off the Godahl Tower; they will continue to broadcast in analog due to technical issues.)

- CTV viewers must either have a converter box or a digital TV to receive CTV channels after the switch. Converter boxes are available in most stores.

- CTV viewers must hit channel rescan on their converter boxes or digital TV remote controls to access the new digital channels.

While the bulk of the conversion is complete, tweaking will occur in the coming weeks. 📻



Looking for ways to save energy? Look no further than your own computer. Join your electric co-op and Great River Energy for an online webcast Tuesday, September 15, at noon and again at 7 p.m. (learn more about what you can do to save energy in your home).

Finding ways to save energy has never been more important than it is now, but it can be difficult to know where to start. Experts from Great River Energy will highlight a variety of ways to save energy from simple things that can be done immediately to more complex ideas that take some investment, but reap big rewards.

A short presentation will be followed by an interactive Q&A session. To register go to www.mnbrighterideas.webex.com. Energy savings are just a click away! 📻



Connecting our co-ops & members to a progressive future



Inside this issue:

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If you chose LED lighting, be sure to choose it wisely



LED lighting is beginning to surpass the quality and efficiency of existing lighting technologies, such as fluorescent and incandescent, but not all LED

lighting is created equal. Become an educated energy saver. Find out more about LED lights.

What makes LED lighting Energy Star rated?

- Saves money on energy bills — uses at least 75 percent less energy than incandescent lighting.
- Lasts a long time — lasts a minimum of 25,000 hours or 22 years based on average household use.
- Is guaranteed — comes with a minimum three-year warranty — far beyond the industry standard.
- Offers convenient features — available with dimming on some indoor models and automatic daylight shut-off and motion sensors on some outdoor models.
- Is durable — won't break like a bulb.
- Reduces cooling costs — LEDs produce very little heat.

Aren't all LED lights highly efficient and long-lasting?

Not necessarily. LEDs have been efficient and long lasting as indicator lights in electronics for years, but using LEDs to create general lighting presents new challenges. The key to success is smart design. To qualify for the Energy Star label LED lighting



products must pass a variety of tests to prove that the products will display the following characteristics:

- Brightness is equal to or greater than existing lighting technologies (incandescent or fluorescent) and light is well distributed over the area.
- Light output remains constant over time, only decreasing toward the end of the rated lifetime (at least 25,000 hours or 22 years based on use of three hours per day).
- Excellent color quality. The shade of white light appears clear and consistent over time.
- Efficiency is as good as or better than fluorescent lighting.

- Light comes on instantly.
- No flicker when dimmed.
- No off-state power draw. The fixture does not use power when it is turned off, with the exception of external controls, whose power should not exceed 0.5 watts in the off state.
- Bad design can lead to a wide range of problems, some immediately observable and some not. Poorly designed products often come with exaggerated claims while failing to deliver on the quality specifications above.

Currently, LEDs for home use are not widespread due to costs and the technology — they are not as bright as other types of bulbs at this time. However, LED bulbs are starting to become available in retail stores. For example, Home Depot started selling them this summer and plans to offer 10 varieties this fall. Meanwhile, companies like Philips hope to release an LED bulb equivalent to a 40-watt incandescent next year. 📢

— *Information courtesy of www.energystar.gov*

LEDs are lovely leaders in landscape lighting



Many homeowners use outdoor lighting for decoration and security. When shopping for outdoor lights, you will find a variety of products from low-voltage pathway lighting to motion-detector floodlights. Light emitting diodes (LEDs) thrive in outdoor environments because of their durability and performance in cold weather. Look for Energy Star LED products such as pathway lights, step lights and porch lights for outdoor use. 📢

— *Information courtesy of www.energystar.gov*



These gaslights aren't powered by unleaded gas; they're LED!



Bring the gaslight days into modern times. Enjoy a nostalgic evening under the glow of solar lamp posts. Illuminate your next party or line your walkway with energy efficient, super-bright LED lights in each solar lamp post. The gas-light design of these solar lamp lights is classic and adds an elegant appeal to a front or backyard.

Using efficient solar-powered technology, the solar lamp lights receive their energy from built-in batteries charged daily by the sun, which in turn light 12 LED bulbs (equivalent to a 20-watt incandescent in light output). Each solar lamp post has real beveled glass panes that add to the late 19th Cen-

tury appeal. No maintenance is required with the powder-coated cast-aluminum solar lamp posts. They are weather resistant and won't rust. Worry-free, the solar lamp post turns on automatically at dusk and off at dawn. The solar lamp post can be bolted down (bolts included). The lamps come in black or white styles. They also produce no CO₂ or mercury. The lamps are available from www.improvementscatalog.com or amazon.com. They cost approximately \$200. — Information and photo courtesy of www.improvementscatalog.com



Give your home old-style atmosphere with a modern twist. These solar-powered LED lamp posts offer elegant and efficient outdoor lighting.

www.improvementscatalog.com or amazon.com. They cost approximately \$200. — Information and photo courtesy of www.improvementscatalog.com

In the rush of harvest, don't hurry safety



Rain clouds are moving in quickly and you want to finish harvesting that last field. You need to move the portable auger to the next grain bin. To stay on schedule you decide to move the auger without first lowering the height. Without warning, the auger contacts overhead power lines...

This scenario is repeated on farms throughout the U.S. yearly. Electrocutation is quick, killing an estimated 62 agricultural workers a year.

Always be aware of overhead power lines. Unlike birds that rest on wires unharmed, humans can be injured when they touch overhead lines because they contact the earth and wire at the same time. This creates a channel for electricity and electrocution can occur.

Often electrocutions occur near grain bins and requirements in the National



Look up for powerlines during harvest.

Electrical Safety Code (NEC) address those dangers. According to the NEC, power lines must be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin where portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. The clearance must be maintained a specified distance around the bin and sloped to meet the lower line clearance. If you are installing new grain bins, contact a licensed electrician or your electric co-op to help place electrical service lines. Lines also can be buried to reduce risk of electrocution.

If your tractor comes in contact with overhead power lines, stay on the tractor. Ask someone to contact the local electric co-op immediately to remove the danger. If there's an emergency, such as an electrical fire, and you need to leave the equipment, jump as far away from the equipment as possible. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time.

Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Many electrocutions occur when the operator dismounts and realizing nothing has happened, tries to get back on the equipment. The best way to handle emergencies is by prevention. Respect electricity and avoid contact with overhead lines. — Information courtesy of safeelectricity.org

Federated Focus

Larger rebates thru September

Enjoy rebates that are twice as much for Energy Star refrigerators and clothes washers purchased through September 30. Receive \$125 (instead of \$75) for a refrigerator with recycling of the old one or \$75 for a clothes washer (instead of \$25). Call for the special rebate form or download it from our website.

Win \$500 in free groceries!



Go to www.mn-brighterideas.com. Complete a short quiz to compete for this state-wide prize. One Federated member will win \$100 in groceries. Enter by September 30.

Back to school with WildBlue



Your kids are going to need help with homework. Maybe you want to stay in touch with the grandkids at college. Now is the time to sign up for WildBlue high-speed Internet. It's \$99 for the dish with free installation. Packages start at \$49.95 a month. Download the application and two-year contract from our website or call the office (847-3520, 728-8366 or 1-800-321-3520) to request it.

Hot heat pump rebates...

If your heating system could use improvement, go with an air source or ground source heat pump. Air source heat pumps are 200 percent efficient; enjoy heating and cooling with Federated rebates from \$180 to \$330, depending on the SEER level. Also, you must use a Quality Install contractor. Ground source heat pumps are 400 percent efficient with rebates at \$200 per ton. Call to learn about tax incentives too. 🐾

Members wins \$100 bill credit



Congratulations Patti Hengel, New Ulm! She won a \$100 credit on her electric bill courtesy of Great River Energy's 2009 compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) sweepstakes. She is pictured with Richard Grbich at her cabin located on South Silver Lake, south of Fairmont. After reading the May *Connections* she went to the website to learn about more money-saving ideas, as she already has changed to CFLs and increased insulation levels. 🐾

Renewable Tour is reknown for educating cooperative members about green energy



23 Federated members joined 23 Nobles Cooperative Electric members on a two-day Renewable Energy Tour August 25-26. The group visited Great River Energy's new energy-efficient building in Maple Grove that features solar and a wind turbine, the Haubenschild Farm Manure Digester (farm's milk tanks pictured above) and more. They also were briefed about the impact of cap-and-trade on their electric bill. For fun the group dined at Champps and attended a Twins game. 🐾

City of Ceylon & Tenhassen Township receive loan from Federated & USDA

Federated Rural Electric worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development to assist two local governments.

A year ago Ceylon was looking at buying a new fire truck, while the Tenhassen Township wanted to build a new township hall that would be handicap accessible and store their road grader. The total amount awarded was \$244,000 for community facilities.

As an electric cooperative and their utility provider, Federated could apply for a Rural Economic Development Loan on behalf of these two organizations. "Federated applies for the zero-interest loan and then charges one percent handling to both organizations," stated Richard Burud, Federated's general manager. "As they pay back their loans, this money goes into a revolving loan fund to assist other entities for economic development. In addition, Federated had to add 20 percent matching funds to this revolving loan fund."

This is the first time Federated has worked with USDA on a revolving loan fund. Federated has assisted 16 businesses with economic development totaling \$2.875 million since 1990.



Ceylon bought a used fire truck for \$110,000 to replace a 1980 one. Pictured is Ceylon City Clerk William Dietz.



Tenhassen Township Chairman Curt Bremer and Clerk Larry Simpson show off the new building financed with \$134,000 Federated/USDA loan.

Federated members on Renewable Energy Tour

James & Joan Bregel, Windom; Tom & Kathy Jorgensen, Fairmont; Dan & Fran Bebernes, Fairmont; Alan & Cynthia Erickson, Jackson; Charles & Sharon Rosen, Welcome; LeRoy & Janice Franck, Dunnell; Del & Jan Hiebert, Ceylon; Jeff Post, Okabena; Agnes Becker, Worthington; Angie Kruger, Round Lake; Paul & Connie Markquart, Sherburn; Ralph & Joanne Becker, Fairmont; Jim & Lynn Salentiny, Heron Lake; and Federated tour guide Jon Beckman.

Marathon Water Heaters Rock!



Thinking about buying a new water heater? Try an electric energy-efficient Marathon water heater from Federated — \$499 includes water heater and installation (\$1,000 value). Call Federated to schedule your install.

Before the snow flies, just winterize your home & save

As the warm days of Indian summer linger on, it's difficult to think about snow and cold weather. However, how much you save on energy bills this winter will depend largely on what you do now. The heat and humidity of summer can be hard on your home's exterior surfaces and on your heating and cooling system. Below are steps you can take to help make your home even warmer, cozier and energy efficient, when the cold weather comes.

Doors and windows do list

- Replace worn weather stripping around all doors and windows.
- Caulk around gaps in windows and door glass.
- Install storm doors if you have them.
- Consider replacing older windows with newer, more efficient models.

Insulation insight

Because hot air rises the attic is the most important place to insulate and one of the easiest opportunities to gain significant energy savings. To gauge whether your insulation is sufficient, just peek in the attic. If the insulation is not as deep as the floor joists, you should probably add more. In cold climates like ours attic insulation should have an R value of 44, which equals about 16 inches of fiberglass insulation or 12 inches of cellulose.

Once the attic is insulated, seal leaks in your basement to prevent the chimney effect or drafts. The chimney effect occurs as hot air generated in your furnace rises through the home and air is drawn in through the basement to replace the displaced hot air. By sealing leaks in your basement you can cut off the chimney effect at its foundation.



Dress up your home with more insulation and weatherstripping so you're outfitted for a long winter with energy savings.

Common locations for leaks include the perimeter of the home where the foundation meets the first floor, all electrical, water or gas lines and any ducts venting to the outside. If you add foam insulation to electrical outlets and switches on external walls, remember to turn off power first!

Heating system hints

- Have your heating system checked by a certified professional before cold weather arrives.
- Clean vents and other heating system components.
- Replace your furnace's filter and continue to replace it regularly throughout the heating season.
- Consider installing a programmable thermostat to more efficiently regulate temperature.
- Your ductwork is designed to efficiently circulate the air, but if connections are loose you could be heating unwanted places. By sealing all joints with mastic sealant or metal tape you

can reduce losses. Although there are infinite uses for duct tape, you should never use it on ducts. Contrary to what the name suggests, it is not a long-lasting sealant.

- Understand that a winterized home receives less fresh air for ventilation. It's always wise to provide an outside air supply for combustion appliances like gas stoves and furnaces. Always work with a professional contractor and check with your local building inspector to find out what is required.

Chimney and fireplace hot hints

- Have the chimney and fireplace checked and cleaned by a professional.
- Repair or replace poorly- or loose-fitting fireplace dampers; they allow warm air to escape.

Outside your home finishing touches

- Replace any missing or damaged roof shingles.
- Clean gutters and make sure that downspouts point away from the house.
- Make sure that flashing around chimney and vent pipes is sealed tight.
- Trim tree limbs that are touching or overhanging the house.

Stimulus funds add to savings

The economic stimulus package provides incentives for home improvements. Get a tax credit for up to \$1,500 on the cost of insulating, sealing and weather-stripping your home. You can be more comfortable and save on your energy bill, while improving the environment.

You can also find an in-depth guide to preparing your home for winter at the home improvement section of www.energystar.gov.



Do it now... not later... send us your tater recipes

Mail your potato recipes by September 25 to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop. Otherwise, drop it off at your local electric co-op. Add your name and phone number. 📧

WE NEED YOUR HELP.



Our Energy, Our Future™
A Dialogue With America

Senators are drafting climate change legislation NOW, and you can impact the outcome.

Climate change legislation should be:

✓ Fair.

Climate change legislation needs to recognize regional differences in how electricity is produced.

✓ Affordable.

Any climate change plan must keep electricity affordable for all Americans.

✓ Achievable.

Climate change goals must be realistic to ensure long-term success.

▶ **Go to www.ourenergy.coop to make your voice heard.**

D's Sweet Potatoes

by Elizabeth Shimon, Granada

Wash sweet potatoes and simply wrap individually in foil. Place on the grill for 45 minutes (approximately 350°. Remove, open carefully, make a slit lengthwise down the potato, scoop out and enjoy. No butter, no sugar, no salt — just plain sweet. Yum! 📧



Sweet Potato Pudding

by Rhonda Quinn, Welcome

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1 c. sugar | 1 c. milk |
| 1 egg | 1 tsp. vanilla |
| 3 T. butter | 2 c. grated sweet potato |

Put all ingredients together in a 5x9x2" baking dish. Bake in a preheated oven 1 to 1½ hours. Stir two or three times to keep from burning. Bake until brown on top.

Note: Double the amounts and bake in a 9x13" pan. 📧

Don't dig up trouble!



1-800-252-1166

www.gopherstateonecall.org

Contact Gopher State One Call (GSOC) before doing any digging more than 12-inches deep. Make this call 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees, tiling and more. You can also register on the website at www.gopherstateonecall.org. This gives utilities time to mark their underground lines up to your meter so you are safe! Then contact a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧



Richard 'Rick' Burud

Manager's Message

Board reviews key ratios

Everyone likes or dislikes getting a report card. Your cooperative received their report card from our independent banker (NRUCFC), which compares our cooperative to other co-ops.

Overall, I suppose we received about a "B". Below you will find our values related to median key ratios.

The good...

1. Lower power cost and rates to members

per kilowatt-hour

2. Lower operating expenses
3. Strong capital and equity position

The bad...

1. Little higher than average interest rate
2. Lower growth in sales and consumers
3. Utility plant investment higher than others.

Ratio Categories	Fed. REA Value	U.S. Median	MN Median	Consumer Size
Financial ratios				
MDSC (2 of 3 year high average)	1.83	1.98	1.83	1.90
Tier (2 of 3 year high average)	3.64	2.46	2.68	2.56
Blended interest rate (%)	5.15	5.12	5.08	4.89
Equity as a % of assets	43.48	40.62	40.32	43.69
Annual capital credits retired per total equity (%)	3.07	2.05	2.49	1.88
Revenue and expense ratios				
Power cost per total kWh sold (mills)	48.98	63.05	53.30	52.48
Total operating expenses per total kWh sold (mills)	9.30	19.60	19.29	20.73
Electric revenue per kWh sold (mills)	67.84	95.42	84.83	89.08
Growth ratios				
Annual growth in no. of customers (%)	.98	.99	.79	.81
Annual growth in kWh sold (%)	32.16	1.22	2.79	3.62
Total plant investment per consumer (\$)	7,097.45	4,473.15	5,469.30	5,782.33

Welcome wind turbine update...

The wind turbine is out of service for a few weeks while Suzlon changes out the gear box. We received notice that they wanted the gearbox in the factory for testing its performance. This work is being done at no cost to Federated. 🌬️



Rural Electric

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The Board of Directors generally meets the last business day of the month at 9 a.m. at the Jackson office. Regular board meetings are open to the membership. Members interested in discussing business items should contact the general manager or president three days before the meeting.

Board meeting highlights

Federated Rural Electric's Board of Directors met August 31. Six directors were present. They acted on these issues:

- Approved the 2010 employee wellness program in order to receive a 6 percent discount on health insurance premiums.
- Reviewed the 2010 group health insurance rates.
- Accepted quote from Eide Bailey for the 2009 through 2011 audits.
- Updated on 2010 Western Area Power Administration increasing rates for hydroelectric power.
- Adopted a resolution approving that Federated proceed with automatic meter reading proposal. Phase 1 involves changing meters for large power accounts and city of Welcome. Phase 2 involves implementing it for all co-op members. This will provide automatic daily meter readings and usage data.
- Reviewed Federated's IRS 990 data.
- Made recommendations for the 2009 Annual Meeting December 5 at Fairmont. 🌬️

