

Nodak Neighbor

January-February 2008

Official Publication of Nodak Electric Cooperative
www.nodakelectric.com

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



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Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Officers and Directors

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Vice Chairman Roger Diehl
Secretary/Treasurer David Kent
Directors Donna Grotte, David Hagert,
Lee McLaughlin, Paul Sigurdson,
Steve Smaaladen and Harvey Tallackson
President & CEO George Berg
Editor Duane Hafner

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On the cover

Nodak Electric employee Dan Kadlec reseals a meter socket after installing a new AMR-equipped meter. Story, pages 4-6. Photo by Minnkota Power Cooperative.

E-billing – Easy online account access!

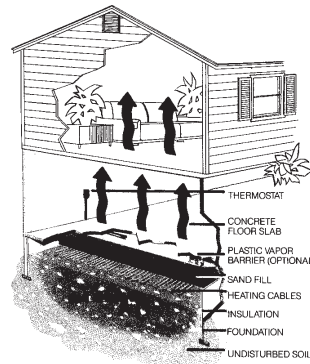
If you're interested in learning more about E-billing, visit our Web site at nodakelectric.com. Click on "Programs and Services," and then select "E-bill." Read all about what E-billing has to offer. If you are interested in using the E-bill option, follow the next few steps:



- Have your Nodak account number ready
- Select highlighted option "Click here to enter E-billing"
- Select "If you are a new user"
- Fill out the appropriate information, name, account number, etc. and select "Submit"

It's that easy and you're on your way to accessing your account. If you have any questions, please feel free to call our offices at 701-746-4461 (toll-free 1-800-732-4373) or e-mail us at nodak@nodakelectric.com.

Underfloor heating cable repair service



If your floor heating cable is not working properly, call our Energy Services Department at 701-746-4461 or 1-800-732-4373. With more than 15 years of cable repair experience, Larry Zimmerman can diagnose and repair most systems and return them to service with minimal disruption to the slab.

Call today for more details on how we can help you stay warm this heating season.

Member satisfaction survey

Nodak Electric has contracted with DH Research of Fargo to conduct a member satisfaction survey. The survey will be conducted via telephone interviews, which are scheduled to begin on Monday, Jan. 21. Members will be randomly selected to answer questions regarding a variety of issues related to the service they receive from Nodak Electric.



Nodak Electric is your cooperative, and your satisfaction is our primary goal. So, if you are called, please take the time to complete the survey. Your input is invaluable to us as we shape our products and services to meet your needs.

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please contact Duane Hafner, our Customer/Energy Services Manager.



*George Berg
President & CEO*

Your role in the director election process

Each year in this issue of the *Nodak Neighbor*, we begin the process of the Nodak director election. You will note we have included a list of members who have been appointed to the director nominating committee. This committee will accept nominations for three positions open on the board of directors. This process represents one of the most important differences between an electric cooperative and other forms of electric utilities.

Each year, the door is open for you and every other member of the cooperative to take an active role in the election of the board, which governs your utility. Your role may be as little as simply making a commitment to vote during the director election in April.

You might want to go to the next step and actually attend the annual meeting of the cooperative on April 12, 2008, and vote in person. If so, in just three hours you will learn quite a lot about Nodak, participate in the election process, have a chance to win one of many door prizes, and eat a great noon meal served by the Alerus Center. When it's all over, you still have half the day left to do a little shopping in Grand Forks. If you haven't been to one of our annual meetings, I would encourage you to give it a try.

The ultimate involvement in the director election process is to step up and run for one of the three director seats, which are open each year. Being nominated is easy. You

can contact one of the members of the nominating committee, or you can have 15 fellow members sign a petition, and you are on the ballot.

Probably the biggest change to the director election process in recent years has been the option to vote by mail. The obvious advantage of doing this, of course, is that all members have the opportunity to vote, even if they are unable to attend the annual meeting.

There are a few disadvantages, however, with this option. First, there is some added expense for the cooperative. This year, we are sending the ballots out with a special mailing rather than including it as a "tear out" ballot in the annual report.

Second, it is nearly impossible to have a true secret ballot without adding even more expense. We have been criticized for requiring that the ballot be signed, but, of course, we need to know who votes by mail so they don't vote more than once.

Third, voting by mail causes a bigger challenge for candidates as far as campaigning for the position. No longer can a candidate simply come to our annual meeting and sell himself/herself to the voters before the election. With mail-in ballots, most of the votes have already been cast before the annual meeting. The elec-

tion is finalized by collecting those ballots at the annual meeting and then counting all of the ballots cast.

Even with the inherent disadvantages of voting by mail, it is the consensus of the board and management that these disadvantages are still outweighed by the importance of giving everyone a simple and

"Each year, the door is open for you and every other member of the cooperative to take an active role in the election of the board, which governs your utility. Your role may be as little as simply making a commitment to vote during the director election in April."

painless way to participate in the election process.

We encourage you to take a good look at the candidates running for these director seats when you receive your annual report in the mail in early April. Closely following the annual report will be a special mailing with the ballot and a return stamped envelope for you to conveniently cast a vote. You may then either cast a vote by mail, or better yet, come to our annual meeting on April 12 and cast a vote at that time.

Nodak employees Dan Kadlec and Chuck Traiser install AMR-equipped meters in an apartment building in Grand Forks.

The logo for Automated Meter Reading (AMR) is displayed in a blue rectangular box. The letters 'AMR' are white and stylized, with the 'A' and 'M' having a modern, geometric feel. A thick black horizontal bar is positioned behind the letters, extending across the width of the box.

Nodak has been making excellent progress upgrading our distribution system to accommodate an AMR (Automated Meter Reading) system. An article in the July/August issue of the *Nodak Neighbor* gave a good overview of why Nodak is moving ahead with the installation of an AMR system. A brief review of this article and a status update follows.

A why, what, when update

AUTOMATED METER READING

Why install an AMR system?

An AMR system has many benefits for Nodak members. Meter reading will be done accurately and consistently without having to send out meter readers or asking the members to provide them. This will allow Nodak to provide accurate billing and usage records, reducing errors and estimated bills. It will also provide on demand readings when an account is changing hands. We will be able to monitor off-peak loads and make sure they are controlled when they are supposed to be, reducing the wholesale cost of power and identifying faulty load management equipment. This system will be capable of providing outage information on demand, so that Nodak can identify a problem even if no one else is aware of it. The dispatcher will also be able to tell if the problem is on the member's side of the meter before a crew is dispatched to the member's location.

What is this Automated Meter Reading system Nodak is installing?

Automated meter reading is the ability to read meters remotely. In Nodak's case, the meters will be read from the Grand Forks office.

The AMR system that Nodak chose to implement is called TWACS (two-way automatic communication system) that utilizes a power line communication system. Power line carrier means that Nodak utilizes the distribution system to transfer information between the meter and the substation. When information

is requested from a meter, the office will initiate communication with the substation by the way of a 900-megahertz radio system. At the substation, the control equipment passes the message on to the meter utilizing the distribution system. The meter then responds back to the office with the information requested by using the communication path of Nodak's distribution system and the 900-megahertz radio.

The major components of an AMR system can be divided into four categories – the meter, substation control equipment, radio communication system between the office and substation, and the software that puts it all together. The following is a closer look at the details of these four components:

Meters – Nodak will be changing out all 22,700 meters, both primary and off-peak meters, to AMR-ready meters. This means, in most cases, the existing mechanical meter will be discarded, and a new solid-state meter with an AMR communication module will be installed. About 5 percent of Nodak's existing meters are solid-state meters and can be retrofitted with AMR communications.

Substation Control Equipment – Minnkota Power Cooperative, Nodak's wholesale power supplier, delivers power to our distribution system at 48 distribution substations located throughout the Nodak

service area. The substation control equipment is the infrastructure necessary at each substation to transfer the radio communications received from the office and convert it to a signal that can be transmitted down the power line to each meter on that substation.

Communications – Communications between the office and substation is our third focused area of activity. Special radios are installed in the main office and at each substation, and in some cases, repeaters are also installed on towers midway between the office and substation. This will



Substation control equipment located at the Coleman substation south of Grand Forks.

guarantee that there is a strong signal and that it will be received at the substation software.

Software – Computer software will be used to keep track of all the meters as well as the substations they are connected to, and gather all the meter readings so they are in a usable format for our billing software. The software will be issuing commands to read your meters daily so that we

can have a history of daily usage. If a customer has billing questions, we will then be able to answer those questions. We will be posting a billing meter reading on the 20th of every month so that we will have a consistent billing period each month.

When will this activity take place, when will it be completed, and when will Nodak start reading meters remotely from the office?

These questions can be answered with more accuracy today than they could be six months ago.

Nodak has already converted 33 percent of the 22,700 meters on the system to AMR-ready meters, and installed and energized substation

control equipment at six of the 48 substations. Nodak has in place radio communications to these six substations, allowing us the ability to now read these meters remotely. In fact, the Thompson and Coleman substations are already being read remotely with these values being used for billing purposes.

In order to capitalize on the benefits of converting to an AMR billing system, major emphasis is being placed this winter and next summer on completing the project. All materials have been ordered and the majority have arrived. Nodak personnel will be doing most of the work, except for some assistance that will be needed with the placement of radio antennas on towers. At this

time, we are ahead of our original timetable and expect to have this conversion completed by the end of 2008.

When will I know that I don't have to read my meter any longer?

When the AMR equipment is installed at the substation that your meter is fed from, we will begin reading your meter automatically at that time. We will then discontinue printing the meter reading boxes on your bill, indicating to you that you no longer need to write in your meter readings. A postcard will also be sent out to inform you that you no longer need to read your meter.

Three director positions open

Nominating committee members appointed

The board of directors has appointed the committee on nominations. At its meeting scheduled for 10 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2008, at the Nodak headquarters building, 4000 32nd Avenue South, Grand Forks, the committee shall prepare and post a list of nominations for the director positions slated for election.

Committee members are: Frieda Baldwin, Hope; Clark Becker, Inkster; John Bata, Adams; Tony Davis, McVile; Julie Lemm, Hillsboro; Duane Petsinger, Arvilla; Hugh Ralston, Crystal; and Paul Retzlaff, Aneta.

Three director positions open

Three director positions will be open at the annual meeting on April 12, 2008. The directors whose terms expire in 2008 are:

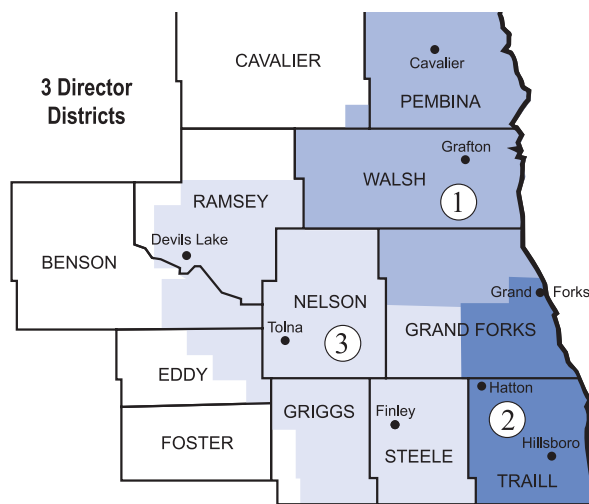
- District 1 – Lee McLaughlin**
- District 2 – Roger Diehl**
- District 3 – Steve Smaaladen**

Nomination by committee

If you are interested in being nominated or would like to nominate an individual, you may contact one of the committee on nominations' members.

Nomination by Petition

Nominations may also be made by petition signed by at least 15 cooperative members. The signed petition must be received at Nodak's headquarters by Feb. 27 in order to verify nominee qualifications and allow sufficient time for voting by mail.



2007 service awards

Congratulations to the following directors and employees who will be receiving the following service awards:



Donna Grotte
Board of Directors
Finley
15 years



Duane Hafner
Customer/Energy
Services Manager
40 years



Tom Ferguson
District Crew
Foreman
30 years



Jim Kurtz
Heavy Lead Lineman
30 years



Marilyn Strand
Accountant I
30 years



Dale Dahlen
Technical Supervisor/
Safety Coordinator
30 years



Mark Slominski
Lead Lineman
30 years



Steve Neva
Lead Lineman
30 years



Guy Ford
District Crew
Foreman
25 years



Connie Gierszewski
Billing Supervisor
25 years



Troy Olson
Energy Services
Manager
20 years



Kim Soper
Administrative
Assistant
20 years



Michelle Markuson
Accountant II
15 years



Jeremy Steinhaus
Journeyman Lineman
10 years



When you ride safe, you can ride for life.

Snowmobiling is an exciting way to enjoy the snow. At Nodak Electric Cooperative, we want you and your family to have fun this winter and keep safe by remembering these important tips:

- **Be alert for fences, tree stumps and stretched wires** that may be hidden by snow.
- **Stay on marked trails** and away from snow banks near power lines and substations.
- **Watch out for power line guy wires and poles** that may not be as noticeable during winter conditions.
- **Keep your speed down** near utility poles.
- **Watch out for downed power lines**, especially after a storm.
Report any downed lines to your electric cooperative.



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Looking out for you.

