



# The Nodak Neighbor

November/December 2013

Official Publication of Nodak Electric Cooperative

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# The Nodak Neighbor

Official Publication of the  
Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc.

746-4461 or 800-732-4373

www.nodakelectric.com

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Vice Chairman . . . . . David Hagert  
Secretary/Treasurer . . . . . Paul Sigurdson  
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Doug Lund, Lee McLaughlin,  
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President & CEO . . . . . Mylo Einarson  
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### Snowbirds

If you are planning to leave your home for an extended period of time this winter, remember to call Nodak Electric to make billing arrangements while you are away. Nodak offers automatic checking or credit/debit card payments and online payment options.

**On the cover:** Harvest is in full swing in the Red River Valley, as potatoes arrive at NoKota Packers in Buxton, N.D.

# 2014 director elections



Lee McLaughlin, District 1



Roger Diehl, District 2



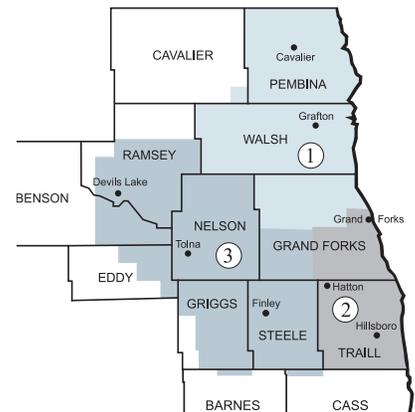
Steve Smaaladen, District 3

Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc. will hold its 74<sup>th</sup> annual meeting Thursday, April 3, 2014, at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks, N.D. Election for three positions will be held at the annual meeting. Incumbent directors up for reelection are: Lee McLaughlin, District 1; Roger Diehl, District 2; and Steve Smaaladen, District 3.

Customers who desire to serve as a member of the Nodak Board of Directors may be nominated in one of two ways:

1. A member may be nominated by the Nominating Committee. The committee will meet in February 2014.
2. By a petition signed by 15 members of Nodak in good standing. The petition must be submitted to Nodak's office 45 days prior to the annual meeting (Monday, Feb. 17, 2014).

If you are interested and would like further information, please feel free to contact Nodak's office at 701-746-4461 or 1-800-732-4373.




*Please be sure to mark your calendars for the Annual Meeting!*

## Thursday, April 3, 2014

Alerus Center, Grand Forks, N.D.

**Registration and meal at 5 p.m.  
Meeting at 6:30 p.m.**



Mylo Einarson  
President & CEO

# Holiday season reminds us to work together – the cooperative way

**W**e are all warmed by fires we did not build, and we drink from wells we did not dig. That was a sentiment expressed at a recent cooperative meeting I attended. It's based on the notion that a significant part of the cooperative's mission is to enrich the lives of our member-owners through community support.

When this issue of *The Nodak Neighbor* hits your mailbox, the holiday season will be in full swing. However, as I write this article, Veterans Day has just passed, and I can't help but think how that sentiment embodies the spirit of our country's veterans.

Veterans Day is the federal holiday that celebrates the service of all men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Across the country, veterans are honored by parades, special ceremonies and services. Federal offices are closed, mail is not delivered, and school is not in session. Many of us may attend one of these events, just enjoy the day off from work, or take a moment to reach out a handshake to a serviceman or servicewoman and thank them for what they do. To me, Veterans Day serves as a reminder that every day our veterans deserve our gratitude for the fires they've built and the wells they've dug on our behalf.

Volumes have been written on the sacrifices of our brave men and women in the military, and the freedom that is provided, or at least maintained on their watch. In the U.S., we are rich

with personal rights and freedoms. These freedoms were bestowed on us by our founding fathers when they developed a government controlled by the citizens rather than a government that is served by its people. These freedoms are routinely denied by other governments around the globe, and in many cases they seek to limit our personal liberties and our way of life. Although they were initially granted by our forefathers, much of our personal freedom is maintained only through the service and sacrifices of our veterans.

I have never served in the military, but my father was a World War II veteran. Like most servicemen of that era, he did his duty and asked for little in return. He was proud of his service, but also very stoic about any accolades. He experienced the ravages of war, but never spoke of it and genuinely hoped no one would ever have to endure them again. Even in his final days, he seemed more concerned for "our boys over there" as he called them, than he was about his own wellbeing. I'm thankful I got the

chance to express my gratitude to him before he passed away, and it reminds me that veterans are good examples of service and citizenship for all of us to follow.

As we enter the holiday season and give thanks for our blessings, take a moment and think about the fires and the wells that have been provided to us by our nation's veterans. Then, ask yourself if you are doing your part to provide for those who can't provide for themselves, or for those that follow behind us. The old cliché of many hands make light work is the cooperative way. Together, we can make a difference.

In a perfect world, people and nations would just get along, and we wouldn't need armaments and veterans. Unfortunately, that's not the way of the world, and we will continue to have unrest. As this holiday season falls upon us, we would like to wish you all peace and joy in your families, in your backyard and across the world.

From our family to yours,  
Happy Holidays.

 RENEWABLE ENERGY
 NUCLEAR POWER
 NATURAL GAS
 CLEAN COAL

America needs an

## ALL OF THE ABOVE STRATEGY

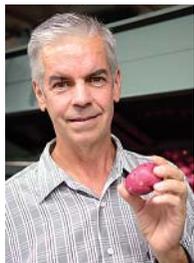
to keep electric bills affordable

**TELL THE EPA TO RECONSIDER  
ITS "ALL-BUT-ONE" APPROACH**

**ACTION.COOP**

# Ready with reds

*Family run NoKota Packers has deep roots in the Valley*



Ron Gjelsness

**R**on Gjelsness has a keen eye for the perfect potato.

As thousands of bright red spuds roll past him on the NoKota Packers production line, Gjelsness will stop mid-stride and inspect a few handfuls.

"It's a habit," Gjelsness said as he tosses out a defect from the bunch. And it's a hard one to break considering how much pressure

was on the company when it began operation in 1979.

That year, Maurice Gjelsness and Malcolm Tweten put their farms on the line to fund the Buxton, N.D., plant, which washes, stores and packages tablestock red potatoes. Their sons, Ron Gjelsness and Steve Tweten, both in their 20s, were put in charge. There was no room for mistakes.

"It was a huge risk," Gjelsness said. "They put their money on the line and they put us to work."

The families had been growing potatoes in the Buxton and Reynolds area for generations. Marketing their own crop was new.

"We'd never been in the business before," Gjelsness said. "We started real green and learned a lot along the way."

Behind the founding management team, NoKota Packers has become one of the top agricultural marketing companies in the Red River Valley. Steve is the president and sales manager, while Ron runs the storage and transportation end of the business. Tim Lee, who has been with the company since its inception, is vice president and plant manager.

## Doubled in size

Since its first season, NoKota Packers has more than doubled in size and now processes about 650,000 hundredweight of potatoes each year. The company represents several different growers down the Interstate 29 corridor and has 35 employees during peak times.

Most of the products are shipped under a private label, but NoKota Packers does still have its own brand name. Major retailers, including Wal-Marts, carry the products throughout the eastern half of the United States.

The company recently joined Fresh Solutions Network, a national marketing group for potato and onion businesses.



Red potatoes tumble down a conveyor where they are sorted and bagged. About 650,000 hundredweight are processed each year.

Gjelsness said the partnership will further expand the company's national footprint.

"There was a time when we thought shipping out 15-20 semi-loads a week was a lot," Gjelsness said. "Now we're shipping about 55-60 loads a week."

### Keeping up with technology

With the growing demands of its customer base, Gjelsness said the company has invested in new technology and additional storage space. In 2009, an electric potato polisher and grading system was added to the washing line.

The polisher consists of series of rollers and brushes that move in a circular motion. A steady flow of water helps give the red potatoes a glossy sheen.

The potatoes then go through the electronic grading system, where they are automatically sorted using sophisticated optical sensors. Cameras are positioned to photograph three different sides of the potato, which determine whether it will be accepted or rejected. Gjelsness said the machine is more than 90 percent accurate.

"It's amazing how it works and how it's reduced our labor," he said. "It's much more accurate. And it never gets tired."

Electronic bagging machines ensure accurate weights and rapid output, packing 140 five-pound bags per minute. NoKota ships out bags as small as three pounds or as large as 2,500 pounds.

The product that isn't immediately shipped is kept in a temperature and humidity controlled storage area. Up to 64 million pounds of potatoes are stockpiled at about 40 degrees Fahrenheit and 98 percent humidity to maintain freshness.

The process from washing to packaging requires a significant amount of electricity from Nodak Electric Cooperative, one of the 11 Minnkota member cooperatives. Gjelsness said access to affordable electricity isn't optional.

"We've got to have it, there's no question about it," Gjelsness said.

Even with the new automated systems, Gjelsness stresses the importance of experienced human graders, who do the final inspections. Every bag shipped out from NoKota Packers has gone through multiple stages to ensure the quality of the product.

And if Gjelsness is walking by, he'll stop and pick a few up – just to be sure. □



As potatoes pass through the facility, they are washed and polished (top left), electronically graded (center), and manually inspected (top right) before being bagged and shipped out (bottom).



# Standby electric generators

**A**n emergency source of power is important for any home or farm during an extended outage. They are essential for things like sump pumps, emergency heat and special medical needs for home-bound residents; for ventilation and water needs in a livestock operation. A standby electric generator can prevent costly losses during a power failure.

## Types of generators

Standby generators come in either engine-driven or tractor-driven models, either stationary or portable. Engine-driven units are made with either manual or automatic start and are fueled by gasoline, LP (bottled) gas, natural gas or diesel.

Power-take-off (PTO) generators (tractor-driven) are usually mounted on a trailer and cost about half as much as engine-driven units. This type of system is common on most farms where tractors are common. Safety is

always a concern around PTO-drives.

Generators must provide the same type of power at the same voltage and frequency as that which is supplied by the utility for the location at which it's used. This is usually 120/240 volt, single-phase, 60-cycle alternating current (AC). An air-cooled engine often will be used for generators up to 15 kilowatts. Generators larger than 15 kilowatts usually require a liquid-cooled engine. An engine capacity of 2 – 2½ horsepower is typical for each 1,000 watts of generator output.

## Sizes of generators

A full-load system will handle the entire electric load being served. Automatic, engine-driven, full-load systems will begin to furnish power within seconds after power is lost. Smaller and less expensive partial load systems may be enough to handle essential equipment during an emergency. A partial-load generator will only supply the most

essential equipment operating at any given time.

## Installation

Wiring and equipment must be installed in accordance with the National Electrical Code and local ordinances. Proper equipment is essential for disconnecting the generator from public utility lines. Nodak requires the installation of a double-pole double throw transfer switch or its equivalent.

## Operation

An automatic standby generator should start automatically when electric power is lost, and automatically stop and shut down when power has been restored. When using either an engine-driven generator with a manual start or a tractor-driven unit, follow this procedure when power fails:

1. Call your power supplier and advise them of the conditions.
2. Turn off or disconnect all electrical equipment.
3. Position the tractor or engine

with the generator so as to allow sufficient room for connecting the electrical wires to the appropriate equipment.

4. Check on arrangement to carry off exhaust fumes.
5. Start the unit and bring the generator up to proper speed (1,800 or 3,600 rps).
6. Ensure fire prevention and that all moving parts are shielded, especially PTO shafts.
7. Check the voltmeter to make sure the generator voltage is set to the correct level; adjust the voltage setting as allowed/needed on the control panel.
8. Move the transfer switch to the generator position.
9. Start the largest electrical motor or load first and allow it to reach full operating speed before adding other loads. Do not add too much load too fast.
10. Check the engine and generator frequently for proper operating conditions, including open air intakes, operating temperature and voltage levels.

If the generator breaker trips, you may have too much load for safe operation; consider which loads are unnecessary to operate jointly.

Check the voltmeter frequently. If voltage falls below 220 volts for 240 volt service or below 110 volts for 120 volt service, reduce the load on the generator by turning off some electrical equipment.

When commercial power has been restored, put the transfer switch in normal power position and stop the standby unit. Be sure to allow the engine to cool down before shutting it off.

## Maintenance

Keep the unit clean and in good running order at all times; it should

always be ready for immediate use. Dust and dirt accumulations on the motor and generator can cause it to overheat when operated. Be sure to check the generator for any signs of rodent infestation. Be sure all ventilation openings and channels in the generator are free/open and clear. Check fluid levels (oil, coolant and fuel). Follow maintenance instructions in the owner's manual.

If you plan to use a generator, be sure it is used safely. Use proper venting to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. If you want a generator connected to your main electrical supply, contact a licensed electrician to ensure the setup meets all electrical codes and is compatible with your power systems. Or simply plug essential equipment such as pumps or lights into the generator outlets. Never backfeed your generator into your electric service.

For any further questions, please contact Nodak at 701-746-4461.

*Source: November 2012 Highline Notes*



*Nodak's offices will be closed  
for the following holidays:*

*Thanksgiving  
Thursday & Friday,  
Nov. 28 & 29*

*Christmas  
Tuesday & Wednesday,  
Dec. 24 & 25*

*New Year's Day  
Wednesday, Jan. 1*

## Promotions

**Shawn Reimers** was promoted to apprentice lineman with the Grand Forks crew Sept. 9 after completing three months as a seasonal apprentice lineman with Nodak's Cavalier crew.

Originally from Finley, N.D., Shawn is a 2013 graduate of Bismarck State College's line worker program. In his spare time, Shawn enjoys bow hunting, fishing – anything outdoors – and hanging out with his friends.



Shawn Reimers

**Sawyer Smith** was promoted to apprentice lineman reporting to Nodak's Construction crew Sept. 23.

Originally from Larimore, N.D., Sawyer is a graduate of Bismarck State College's line worker program and since May has served as seasonal apprentice lineman with the Michigan crew. Sawyer is an outdoor enthusiast and enjoys spending his time hunting.



Sawyer Smith

# Off-peak members should expect average winter control hours

Members who enjoy the value and convenience of off-peak electric heat should plan for an average number of load management hours this winter season.

Minnkota Power Cooperative, our wholesale power provider, estimates that normal weather conditions, low wholesale market prices and reliable power plant operations will produce an estimated 245 hours of load control.

The primary events impacting load control hours this winter are planned power plant outages near the end of 2013 and in March 2014. Another factor is the delayed completion of Minnkota's new 250-mile transmission line from Center, N.D., to Grand Forks, N.D., which means additional power resources won't be distributed into the region until the latter part of the heating season.

"If our power supply resources perform well, we will have power to serve our loads at almost all hours during the winter season," said Todd Sailer, Minnkota energy supply manager. "The challenge comes when we have unplanned outages or during extreme cold periods, when the demand for electricity is high."

An off-peak system consists of an electric heating source as its primary component. A supplemental heating source must operate several hundred hours or more during the winter season. Sailer said members with a well-maintained backup heating system should not notice a difference in comfort level when their off-peak heating system is controlled.

"The transition between the two systems should be seamless," he said.

The ability to interrupt the flow of electricity to the electric portion of your off-peak system allows Minnkota to operate its generating plants more efficiently and avoid making costly power pool purchases. By voluntarily enrolling in the program, the savings are passed on to you through the low off-peak electric rate, which is approximately half of the regular retail rate.

"The ability to manage costs and plan for the heating season is one of the many benefits of the off-peak electric heating program," Sailer said.

Before using the load management system, Minnkota first looks to purchase energy from the market if it is available at an affordable price. But there are many times when affordable power isn't available. By utilizing load management in those cases, Minnkota avoids making costly energy purchases that would force an increase in its regular rates.

"The cost to purchase and deliver power to the associated systems can change at a moment's notice," Sailer said. "The load management program protects consumers from the volatility of the market and prevents the need to build new power plants just to serve peak loads."

Millions of dollars have been saved due to the successful operation of Minnkota's load management system over the past 36 years.

"Load management is a vital tool for Minnkota and the associated systems to use to keep wholesale power prices competitive and winter heating bills low for retail consumers," Sailer said.