

The Nodak Neighbor

September-October 2019
Official Publication of Nodak Electric Cooperative
www.nodakelectric.com

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Nodak co-hosts
PLUGGED IN 
TO THE FUTURE
celebration

page 5

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SCAM ALERT

Local and national headlines are hard to miss; scam attempts are still on the rise. Whether by phone, email or door-to-door, criminals continue to target individuals within our communities, including Nodak Electric members.

The most common scam attempt is a threatening phone call stating your electric service is in immediate danger of being disconnected. The caller associates themselves with Nodak Electric, or another local utility, and warns the individual that a payment must be made immediately to avoid a disconnection of service. Various payment options, including prepaid credit cards and other personal information, are requested within a short window, usually a few minutes, or the service will be shut-off.

The scams are effective when they create a sense of urgency and catch you off-guard in a quick moment of panic. In that brief moment of panic, individuals have been lured into providing credit card and other personal information. Unfortunately, it is often tough for law enforcement

to recover any lost money.

Remember this important information to prevent yourself from falling victim to a utility scam:

- Nodak Electric will never call to demand instant payment or ask for personal information.
A mailed notice will be sent advising of an overdue account, followed by a courtesy call.

If you are ever unsure of the status of your account or the party you are speaking with, hang up and call the cooperative immediately. Cooperative representatives are readily available to you by calling 1-800-732-4373.

You can also quickly check the status of your account easily from SmartHub. Here you can check your account balance, make payments and set up alerts that will notify you when you have an overdue balance. SmartHub is an online solution to access your Nodak account via computer or smart device (such as tablet or cell phone) anytime and anywhere. If you have a question or need help, please contact us.

Electric off-peak heat rates begin Oct. 1

Members with subtractive or separately metered off-peak electric heating systems will be charged the applicable off-peak rate for energy usage beginning Oct. 1. The off-peak rates will continue to be charged for energy usage through May 31, 2020. Current off-peak rates are \$0.062/kWh for long-term and \$0.077/kWh for short-term controlled systems (price includes the \$0.004/kWh renewable energy market adjustment charge). It is a good idea to inspect, clean and test your heating system before cold weather arrives. Please check to make sure all of your electric heat circuit breakers are on prior to Oct. 1.

Daily cycling of electric storage heat to begin in late October

Members heating with electric thermal storage, such as thermal storage room units, thermal storage furnaces or slab/in-floor heating, should turn on their heating system prior to Oct. 15 to allow a heat reservoir to build up before daily cycling of loads begins. The actual date cycling begins varies each season. Thermal storage heating is controlled each day from 7 a.m. to noon and 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.



*Mylo Einarson
President & CEO*

The electric vehicle revolution

Across the country, we hear more about electric vehicles (EVs) today than we ever have before, and there's good reason for it. U.S. and foreign car manufacturers have been betting big and are committing massive amounts of capital to developing and marketing this form of petroleum-free transportation. Investment in electric vehicles announced by the beginning of this year include at least \$19 billion by automakers in the U.S., \$21 billion in China and over \$52 billion in Germany.

While sales of EVs today comprise just 2% of all automobile sales, automakers are betting heavily that those numbers will change. A recent study by Bloomberg estimates that EV sales will exceed 60% of all new car sales in the U.S. by 2040 and over half of new car sales worldwide. That seems like the distant future, but it's hard to believe that is only 20 years from now.

Regulatory issues and consumer sentiments about climate change are fueling this ramp-up of EV investment, but what's at the heart of it is the huge strides that have been made in battery technology. The average cost of a lithium-ion battery pack has dropped 85% from \$1,160 in 2010 to \$176 in 2018 and continues to decrease. Further development in batteries will drive the cost even lower, but will also help ease the two biggest roadblocks for potential EV consumers – range anxiety and charging wait times.

The average range of an electric vehicle today is 190 miles compared to 475 miles for a gasoline-powered

car, but that is changing with Tesla's new Roadster, boasting a range of up to 620 miles between charges. The time it takes to top off your vehicle is coming down as well. Rapid chargers now provide an additional 60 to 200 miles of range in as little as 20 minutes of charge time.

Most EV charging is done at home or at work while the vehicle is idle, which is 95% of the time. While on the road, the network of public fast charging stations across the country is growing rapidly. As of January, Tesla's supercharger network of fast charging stations

A recent study by Bloomberg estimates that EV sales will exceed 60% of all new car sales in the U.S. by 2040 and over half of new car sales worldwide. That seems like the distant future, but it's hard to believe that is only 20 years from now.

consisted of over 12,000 charging stalls with plans to grow that number to over 15,000. As of May, there were more than 68,800 nonresidential charging units throughout the United States.

One of the biggest selling points of EVs is that despite the higher purchase price, the cost of ownership can be much less. With 25% fewer parts and significantly fewer moving parts, maintenance costs are dramatically less. Oil changes are essentially a thing of the past with electric vehicles. Operating costs can also be dramatically reduced. Fuel costs will range between 3 to 4 cents per mile with an electric vehicle compared to around 10 cents per mile for a

standard vehicle, depending on gas prices and your vehicle's gas mileage.

Despite the hype and all the technological advances, North Dakotans have been slow to adopt this new form of transportation. Cold temperatures reduce the operating efficiency and range of batteries. Our rural nature means we have to drive farther than most Americans do, and as I sit at my desk writing and watching vehicles go by my window, I'm reminded that we gravitate toward SUVs, pickup trucks and the like. Over time, technology will overcome cold temperatures and long distance, but automakers will ultimately decide what choices we have for model options. To that end, I recently watched a YouTube video of the new all-electric Ford F-150 prototype pulling a freight train weighing over a million pounds. I guess at least Ford is betting rural America will eventually embrace electric vehicles.

In August, we co-sponsored an event at Minnkota's Grand Forks campus to showcase electric cars and North Dakota's first all-electric school bus. The event was well-attended by folks interested in learning about growing EV adoption over the next few years. Electric vehicles will certainly play a central role in new car purchase options in the years ahead – how long it will take until they become mainstream in North Dakota is yet to be seen. Automakers are betting big this will be sooner rather than later.

Minnkota's blink outage mitigation a success



Now that Minnkota is five years into its accelerated plan to address blink outage issues on its power delivery system, the impact of the mitigation strategy is becoming clearer.

The member cooperatives and Northern Municipal Power Agency participants are seeing blink outages reduced by an average of 50% on treated lines.

"We have seen some circuits that have been reduced by as much as 75%," said Evan Edwards, Minnkota engineer. "Circuits that are located in open prairie terrain have seen the largest positive impact so far."

Minnkota's open prairie line sections tend to have a higher exposure to lightning and wildlife, along with insulator contamination due to dust and blowing conditions. Technologies have been installed on structures across Minnkota's 2,100-mile subtransmission system to address these issues. By 2020, Minnkota will have performed blink mitigation on more than 1,200 miles of those 69-kilovolt (kV) structures.

While it is virtually impossible to

completely eliminate all blink outages, installing the mitigation measures has proven to be a cost-effective way for Minnkota to improve reliability and service to the membership. Structures are being fitted with a hanging lightning arrester, a polymer post-top insulator, a raptor deterrent (pole helmet) and a climbing animal deterrent (pole wrap).

"All aspects of the blink mitigation process have contributed to the positive impacts, but the most impactful changes seem to be the new post top, pole helmet and pole wrap," Edwards said.

Minnkota crews and contractors have been working safely and efficiently as they move from pole to pole along the power delivery system. In some cases, the lines remain energized while the work is being completed so that service is not interrupted to the member-consumers. Specialized equipment is used to complete this "live line" work.

About 200 miles of lines

have been treated this year. The same number of miles has been targeted for 2020, which is planned to be the final year of major blink outage mitigation efforts. The focus is beginning to shift toward a structured program to rebuild aging lines across the system.

A significant portion of Minnkota's subtransmission system has aged beyond its 50th year of service. While

progress has been made to lower blink outage exposure, expectations from consumers continue to rise. This is primarily driven by the fact that today's electronics require a constant, uninterrupted supply of power to run properly.

In the past, a blink would occur and often go unnoticed to the average consumer because there were no digital displays that needed to be reset afterward. Today, each blink outage is documented by the flashing "12:00."



Structures are being fitted with the following equipment to help reduce blink outages: a hanging lightning arrester, a polymer post-top insulator, a raptor deterrent (pole helmet) and a climbing animal deterrent (pole wrap).



Electric transportation celebration

Minnkota's Grand Forks campus was charged up Aug. 7-8, introducing local leaders and the public to the present and future potential of driving electric. The events revolved around a two-day visit from the West Fargo Public Schools (WFPS) all-electric Blue Bird school bus, purchased by the school district earlier this year.

Electric bus or bust

The morning of Aug. 7, Minnkota (Nodak's wholesale power provider) invited its employees and visiting representatives to tour the electric bus, ask the mechanic questions about its capabilities and take a short ride around town. Passengers experienced the surprisingly quiet and zippy ride of the 70-seat bus, which boasts a 120-mile range and zero emissions.

That afternoon, Minnkota welcomed city leaders, economic development groups, universities and public schools, transportation officials, lawmakers and others to check out the bus themselves. They came with many insightful questions about what it takes to incorporate an electric bus into a standard fleet and walked away with new transportation ideas for their organizations and neighborhoods.

Plugged In to the Future

On Aug. 8, Minnkota's visitor parking lot was packed with powerful plug-in cars, a battery-boosted bus and bikes, special guests and giveaways.

More than 275 people popped by the cooperative for "Plugged In to the Future" – a "Back to the Future"-inspired celebration of electric transportation co-hosted by Nodak Electric. The event was the first of its kind in the Greater Grand Forks community and drew more than a dozen electric vehicle (EV) owners from around North Dakota and Minnesota, all

of them thrilled to showcase their cars and answer questions for those interested in Teslas, Chevy Bolts, plug-in hybrids and other models.

One driver from Dickinson, N.D., traveled more than 350 miles in his Tesla Model S to take part and offered rides to curious attendees.

"Plugged In to the Future" featured the WFPS all-electric school bus, electric bike demonstrations provided by Scheels and an EV ride-along experience.

For prospective owners, Rydell Cars was on-site with a couple of hybrids from their sales lot and details on what additional EV models are available. Information was also provided on home charging incentives and the easy steps involved in getting a garage EV-ready.

A Drive Electric North Dakota representative drove a Tesla Model X – aptly named WATTS – from Bismarck and chatted with event-goers about the public charging stations in the state, as well as the opportunities for growing EV adoption in the next few years.

Organizers urged attendees to fill out a survey after the event to assess what they learned about electric vehicles. Nearly 99% of respondents said they felt more knowledgeable about EVs after the event and 91% said they were now more open to owning an EV of their own.



Whether it was buckling into a Bolt or going for a cruise on an electric bike, "Plugged In" had a demonstration for everyone.



The 16-foot LED screen was a perfect canvas for the 1985 hit, "Back to the Future."



The West Fargo Public Schools 100% electric school bus began carrying students this fall.

JUNE 20 TO 26, 2020



HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES & JUNIORS

Win the Trip of a Lifetime!

AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Nodak Electric Cooperative.
- If you have a question, contact Gretchen Schmaltz, Nodak Electric Cooperative, during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 31, 2020. You can e-mail entries to Gretchen Schmaltz at gschmaltz@nodakelectric.com or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest at 4000 32nd Ave. S., PO Box 13000, Grand Forks, ND 58208-3000.

ESSAY QUESTION:

If chosen as a Youth Tour delegate, you will travel to Washington, D.C. to experience and learn about America's rich history. What moment in American history do you wish you had been a part of and what would you have contributed?

CHECK OUT THE ESSAY CONTEST GUIDELINES AT
www.ndyouthtour.com

TOP 3 REASONS

TO ENTER THE ESSAY-WRITING CONTEST

1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of Nodak Electric Cooperative
2. A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol
3. A learning experience you'll never forget





As various North Dakota hunting seasons approach, please remember that electrical insulators, conductors and electrical equipment are NOT on the hunting season list. Nodak Electric Cooperative encourages hunters to be aware of electrical equipment while enjoying the great outdoors this season.

Hunters and other gun owners should not shoot near or toward power lines, power poles and substations. A stray bullet can cause damage to equipment, could be deadly to the shooter, and potentially interrupt electric service to large areas.

Be aware of what's behind that

big buck or it might cost big bucks. Repairs can be costly and damages cause outages to our members. As a nonprofit cooperative, owned by the members, we all share in this expense.

We recognize the majority of hunters practice safe hunting and understand the potential risks when discharging a firearm. We encourage experienced hunters who are familiar with the area to identify the locations of utility properties and equipment to young or new hunters in their group and remind them to avoid shooting toward these facilities. Enjoy the great outdoors safely.

HUNTING SAFETY TIPS

- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Familiarize yourself with the location of power lines and equipment on land where you shoot.
- Damage to the conductor can happen, possibly dropping a phase on the ground. If it's dry and the electricity goes to ground, there is the possibility of electrocution and fire.
- Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Do not use power line wood poles or towers to support equipment used in your shooting activity.
- Take notice of warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment on the poles can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them, causing shock or electrocution.
- Do not shoot at or near birds perching on utility lines. That goes for any type of firearm, including pistols, rifles or shotguns.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Anything attached to a pole besides utility equipment can pose an obstruction – and a serious hazard – to electric cooperative employees as they perform utility operations.

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 Signature: *Blaine Rekken*
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For 80 years we have been **your team**,

here to maintain your power lines,

here to answer your questions,

here to help you find efficiencies and save money.

Your team. Your voice. Your power.



Help us celebrate our 80th anniversary at your annual meeting April 14, 2020.