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Manager's moment

BY MARK DOYLE, GENERAL MANAGER



I would appreciate a moment of your time...

Happy New Year!

I am more than happy to see 2021 in the rearview mirror, as it has been another challenging year.

As we enter 2022, I hope you look at life with optimism and are thankful for the blessings and trials it may bring. We all take this time of year to reevaluate our past and consider adjusting our lives, also known as New Year's resolutions. Resolutions are goals we will set to enhance ourselves and our lives. Make sure these decisions are realistic.

Here at McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC), we have been doing the same thing and making sure our goals for 2022 are realistic and beneficial to the members

of MEC. We have had several changes in 2021, and we are working through them. Some include staff changes and others are system changes, along with a new construction work plan to guide our plant additions over the next four years.

We anticipate steady growth on the system to include significant growth in the White Shield area. The Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation and the lakes area continue to surprise us with the level of development we have seen. We hope all these trends continue, as it benefits all the membership!

Again, we wish you all a blessed new year!

As always, feel free to reach out to me with any questions or comments. My door is always open. ■



Basin Electric & McLean Electric offer scholarships

Deadline Feb. 1

Thinking about going to college and wondering how you will pay for everything?

Basin Electric Power Cooperative will be offering two scholarships in the amount of \$500 each. McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) will offer one \$500 scholarship. Applicants must be members of MEC or children of members of the cooperative. The applicant must be a student who is enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

Information packets are available at area schools. Contact your school counselor. You can also obtain information by calling MEC at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922 or at www.mcleanelectric.com. All applications must be received in our office by Feb. 1. The scholarships will be presented to the recipients at McLean Electric's 77th annual meeting on June 22. ■

Understanding energy costs

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

There might be one bright light in the dim news of rising inflation and consumer costs.

As inflation rates reach levels unseen in several years, McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) member-owners might find some solace in the fact it's possible their rates could buck that trend and not change at levels currently found in food, retail and other energy sectors.

Yes, it's possible MEC member-owners could experience relatively stable rates over the next few years.

Every year, the cooperative's wholesale provider, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, conducts updated 10-year financial forecasts, projecting its anticipated wholesale costs over that time, explained MEC General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle. In late 2021, Basin Electric projected its wholesale costs to its members would remain at relatively stable prices, he continued.

Electric cooperatives, such as MEC, have a three-tiered structure to accomplish their mission of providing electric energy to their member-owners – generation, transmission and distribution.

Basin Electric provides electricity through a variety of generation sources to MEC. In addition to Central Power Electric Cooperative, it also transmits that electricity, while MEC distributes the power to its member-owners.

Just two decades ago, coal-based power plants provided more than 80% of the electricity Basin Electric provided for its members across its nine-state service area. Today, coal provides slightly more than 40% of Basin Electric's portfolio of electric generation sources, followed by wind and natural gas peaking stations. Other sources include purchases from the electric market, hydropower, oil, diesel and recovered energy.

The energy market is akin to the stock market or other commodity markets, Doyle explained.

"The (electric energy) market changes every day, energy costs for the end consumer start at the wholesale end," he said.

Electricity is a commodity just like agricultural commodities, he added. Just as consumers pay for manufacturing and distribution of retail products, wholesale electric generation and transmission providers have to pass along their generation, transmission, operation and maintenance costs.

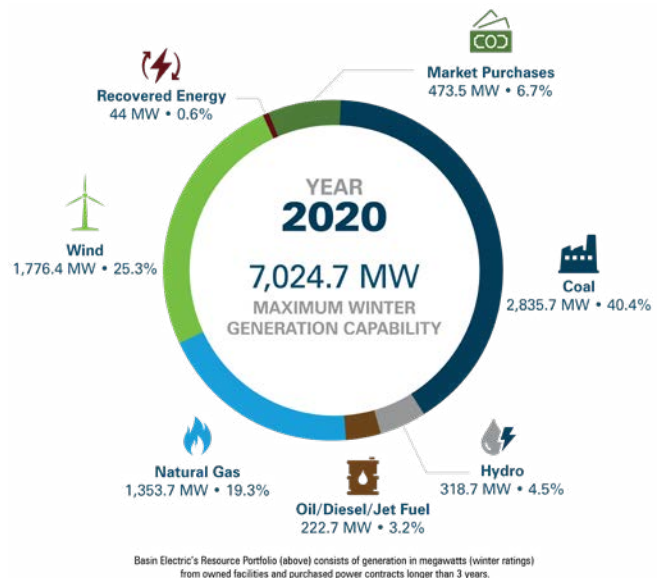
The cost of wholesale electricity is 70% of MEC's costs. The cooperative's electric rates to its member-owners reflect its wholesale, operation and maintenance costs.

MEC and other North Dakota electric cooperatives

have multiyear contracts with Basin Electric for their wholesale electricity, even though the source providing that electricity varies daily – almost minute-by-minute – as those in the electric marketing industry work to meet continuously changing electric demands. Basin Electric, at times, has to purchase electricity from the market, depending on demand and source availability.

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) is a federal entity whose role is to market electricity from federal hydropower plants such as the Garrison Dam. For example, about 4.5% of the electricity MEC member-owners receive is provided by the hydropower electricity WAPA markets.

While hydropower is a low-cost form of electricity, a multiyear drought hammering the Missouri River Basin from 1988 to 1993 meant WAPA had to implement a "drought adder" onto its wholesale cost, as the drought lingered year after year, reducing the amount of available hydropower. The reduction resulted when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the agency producing the hydropower, needed to decrease its electric energy production, as releases from the six main stem Missouri River dams were reduced to conserve water.



In 2020, coal-based power plants still provided more than 40% of the electricity Basin Electric Power Cooperative generates or purchases. Basin Electric is a nine-state electric generation and transmission cooperative and provides electricity to McLean Electric Cooperative member-owners. In 2000, coal accounted for almost 85 percent of Basin Electric's electric generation source.

WAPA had to go to the open market to meet its contractual obligations. With other electric generation sources typically costing more to produce, the extended drought resulted in WAPA having to increase its wholesale cost to entities like Basin Electric.

That, in turn, resulted in increased wholesale costs to electric cooperatives across the region receiving hydropower from WAPA's markets. In turn, some electric cooperatives had to eventually increase their rates once they could no longer absorb the additional expense.

WAPA removed the drought adder as hydropower production returned to more normal levels and it could meet its contracts. MEC also removed the drought adder from its end-consumer cost. It's possible a drought adder might be instituted again if the drought impacting portions of the United States where WAPA buys and market hydropower continues, Doyle explained. However, it remains to be seen if that cost is implemented and passed along.

Even though hydropower is a small source of MEC's electricity, it's an example of how energy costs can

fluctuate, depending on the source. At times, it becomes necessary for wholesale electric providers to adjust rates based on generation and market costs, Doyle continued.

Despite the potential for fluctuation, Doyle is hopeful Basin Electric's forecast will come to fruition and MEC can hold its rates relatively flat as it has in recent years.

The unforeseen variable, however, is the role federal regulations on the energy industry could influence the electric energy industry, Doyle stressed, with pressure on federal policymakers to address hydropower and fossil fuel consumption, which is also the driver fueling the United States – and world – economy.

Typically, hydropower and coal-based power plants are the most cost-effective means of producing electric energy. Depending on regulatory policies that may influence its generation source, electric costs to the end consumer – the MEC member-owner and everyone else using electricity – could reflect those changes.

But for now, it's entirely possible MEC member-owners won't experience electric rates rising at the rate anywhere near other consumer costs. ■

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT: APPRENTICE OR JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) in Garrison is accepting applications until Feb. 15 for a full-time apprentice or journeyman lineworker. MEC serves the residents of rural McLean County. MEC exists to provide high-value energy to our members by focusing on delivering safe, reliable and environmentally friendly electricity, while promoting energy efficiency through education. McLean Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity employer.

Send Resume to:

McLean Electric Cooperative
PO Box 399

Garrison, North Dakota 58540

Attn: Keith Thelen

Or email to keithpt@mcleanelectric.com

Summary: Skilled apprentice or journeyman lineworker should be able to perform diversified work in the construction and maintenance of poles, lines and auxiliary facilities and equipment for the distribution of electricity.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Provides the needed services for the construction, operation and maintenance of the members' electrical distribution system.
- Provides technical skills needed for the operation and maintenance of reliable electrical service for the member.
- Provides connecting and disconnecting, installing and removal, moving and transferring of various electrical

devices on customer's facilities, i.e. transformers, transformer banks, regulators, switches, switching devices, capacitor banks, etc.

- Capable of investigating consumer complaints and making repairs to energized electrical distribution lines.
- Must have an understanding of basic and advanced electrical principles, possess a working knowledge of Rural Utilities Service specifications, be proficient in all phases of line construction, be capable of operating equipment necessary to complete jobs, i.e. bucket truck, digger derrick, mini excavator, skid loader, chainsaws and wood chipper.
- Applicants must be self-motivated, work well with others, have a positive attitude and be committed to working safely and productively.
- Must possess a journeyman lineworker certificate or able to obtain certificate through apprenticeship program after employment.
 - Valid Class A CDL North Dakota driver's license.
 - Able to participate in an after-hours on-call rotation.
 - Journeyman must have rubber gloving experience.
 - Must be able to apply CPR/first aid.
 - Safe work record with a commitment to safety.
 - Lifting up to 50 pounds.
 - Requires extended periods of bending, squatting, climbing, kneeling, pushing, pulling, lifting, lifting in awkward positions, standing, twisting, reaching above shoulder level, working in confined spaces, working off a pole or in a bucket.



Checklist of attainable energy-conscious resolutions

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Tis the season for resolutions. A new year brings new resolutions. It's a tradition for many people.

Despite one's best intentions, many, if not most, New Year's resolutions fall by the wayside. It's understandable – people are busy. Making changes so resolutions can be successful takes time and can be challenging to accomplish.

The trick to successfully sticking with any New Year's resolution just might be to think small, not big.

When it comes to resolutions to save energy, maybe families want to look at it as being energy-conscious more so than energy savings, suggested McLean Electric Cooperative General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle.

His advice is for member-owners to ask themselves what they can do to reduce energy costs and their energy footprint as a consumer of energy – any form of energy, not just electricity.

Doyle admits he and his family fit the typical American energy consumer profile.

“Hardly an outlet in the house doesn't have something plugged into it,” he described.

He's not alone.

So, it's time to look around and take a few minutes for an energy self-evaluation:

- Does that wireless device need to be plugged in nightly for recharging or does it only need to be fully recharged periodically?
- How many battery-charged items are stored on their charging base unnecessarily and could that actually be detrimental to the device? For example, is it possible leaving a battery-powered garden shears on its charging station throughout the winter draws down the battery and could cause damage? Look at the owner's manuals for recommendations on how long items could or should be left on charging stations, whether they're used infrequently or regularly.

- Could any plug-in nightlights be set on timers for dusk-to-dawn operation only?
- Are standard light bulbs being replaced with LED bulbs when they burn out? While upfront costs are higher, the energy savings of LED light bulbs can quickly outweigh their initial costs.
- Is it really necessary to move that old refrigerator that was recently replaced with an Energy Star® model to the garage for new life as a convenient beverage storage unit? That doesn't save energy – let it go to appliance heaven instead.

The world has become more energy-smart, Doyle added, as technology advances in home construction materials, appliances and devices become increasingly more energy efficient.

But so, too, does their use. Simply taking time to evaluate areas with potential cost savings can make New Year's energy savings resolutions an attainable goal.

Member-consumers also have an array of information and tools such as SmartHub, which helps member-owners track electric usage, available to assist in evaluations:

- Visit McLean Electric Cooperative's website, www.mcleanelectric.com, to download brochures, "Home Energy Guide" and "101 Low Cost/No Cost Energy Saving Measures."
- The brochures are also available at McLean Electric Cooperative's Garrison headquarters.
- Visit Touchstone Energy's® energy efficiency website link, www.touchstoneenergy.com/energy-solutions.

GET SMART ABOUT ENERGY SAVINGS

"Smart" devices and appliances save time and offer convenience – but not all save energy. The guide below shows how several trendy smart home technologies stack up when it comes to energy savings.

Smart Energy Savers



- Thermostats
- Washing machines and dryers
- Dishwashers
- EV charging stations
- Pool pumps
- Air conditioners
- Light bulbs and fixtures
- Power strips



Just Smart

- Virtual assistants (like Amazon's Alexa or Apple HomeKit)
- Smart locks
- Smart alarms
- Smart video security cameras

What to do during an outage



McLean Electric Cooperative strives to provide you with reliable, uninterrupted service every day of the year, but sometimes Mother Nature creates unavoidable power outages. McLean Electric Cooperative wants you to remain safe during severe winter weather, so consider these tips.

To report an outage

- Confirm the outage. Check your own fuses and circuit breakers first.
- Check with a neighbor to confirm if he or she is also experiencing an outage before you call the cooperative. This will help your cooperative determine the extent of the outage.
- Call the cooperative. If the outage is widespread, the phone lines may be busy, but keep trying. Your cooperative will send a line crew to find the problem and restore power as quickly as possible.

Operate generator safely

- If your standby electric generator has been in storage since last winter, make sure it is still operating properly – before an outage occurs.
- Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations on how to use your generator.
- Most important is the transfer switch that disconnects the farm or home from the power line and connects it to the generator. It must be a double-throw transfer switch which prevents the generator from feeding electricity back onto the power line. This protects the lineworkers who may be working to restore your service.
- Do not operate a portable generator in your home, basement or garage. Generators can quickly produce high levels of carbon monoxide, which can be deadly.

Assume downed lines are energized

- Always assume fallen power lines are energized. Stay at least 10 feet away from a downed power line and any nearby objects it may be touching, such as a fence or a tree limb.
- Contact your electric cooperative immediately to report downed power lines outside your home.
- Never attempt to move a downed power line. Call your local electric cooperative.

During a power outage

- Only use flashlights for emergency lighting. Candles can cause fires.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Most food requiring refrigeration can be kept safely in a closed refrigerator for several hours. An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours.
- Never burn charcoal for heating or cooking indoors.
- Turn off or disconnect appliances and other equipment in case of a momentary power "surge" that can damage computers and other devices. Consider adding surge protectors. ■

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ELECTRIC SERVICE PANEL



Electricity plays an essential role in how your home operates. Whether watching TV, powering heating and cooling systems or charging a cellphone, we rely on our home's electrical system to provide us with power when and where we need it.

Let's take a look at one of the components of your home's electrical system, the electrical service panel.

Every home has a service panel that distributes electricity to switches, outlets and appliances. The service panel is usually found in the basement, garage or utility area.

When a short or overload shuts down power to a circuit, this is where you can restore the flow. It is also where you will shut down power to a circuit before starting a project or repair.

Fuses and circuit breakers

All service panels are equipped with fuses or circuit breakers that protect the wires in each circuit from overheating and causing a fire. In general, older service panels use fuses, while more modern systems rely on circuit breakers.

Fuses and circuit breakers are safety devices that help prevent overloading of your home electrical system and prevent fires. They stop the electrical current if it exceeds the safe level for some portion of your home's electrical system.

Fuses

Service panels installed before 1965 use fuses to protect each individual circuit. Each fuse is marked with a code, which provides information about the type of base and the degree of time delay, if any.

Once a fuse is blown, it must be unscrewed and thrown away. When replacing fuses in your service panel, always make sure the replacement fuse matches the amperage rating of the circuit.

Circuit breakers

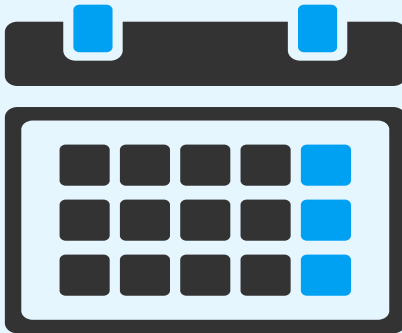
All newer homes are protected by circuit breakers. Unlike a fuse that must be replaced when it blows, a circuit breaker that has "tripped" can be mechanically reset to resume operations once the problem has been resolved. A tripped breaker is likely the result of too many appliances overloading the circuit and should be fixed immediately.

Instructions for resetting a tripped breaker:

- Unplug or turn off appliances in the room.
- Find your main breaker panel and open the cover.
- Locate the tripped breaker. A tripped circuit breaker will be in the off position or in a middle position between on and off.
- To reset the breaker, switch it to off position and then back to on. This may restore power to the room. If the problem continues, there may be more serious issues. Contact an electrician to diagnose the problem.

Main breaker

Your home also includes a main breaker, which serves as the on and off switch for electricity to your entire home. During an emergency, you can turn off power to your entire home with this switch. Everyone in your home should know where this is located. ■



McLean County community calendar:

Events and activities to see and do

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean County community food pantry January distributions:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood:** 4-6 p.m. Jan. 6 and 10 a.m.-noon Jan. 15, 208 Lincoln Ave. Like us on Facebook, Community Cupboard of Underwood, for food pantry distributions, thrift store and other information.
- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry, Garrison:** Jan. 27, noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., former Lazy J's building back door.
- **Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** Jan. 17, noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** 2-4 p.m. Jan. 13 and 10 a.m.-noon Jan. 22, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.
- **Wilton Food Pantry, Wilton:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone; full food distribution, 4-6 p.m. Jan. 20, Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.

Area food pantries often experience high needs for these items: baked beans, pork and beans, canned fruit, tuna,

chicken, cereal, oatmeal, granola and breakfast bars, juice, mac and cheese, hamburger and tuna helper, pancake mix, syrup, pasta, pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, rice side dishes, soups and household items such as body wash and soap, dish soap, laundry detergent, shampoo and conditioner, toilet paper, toothpaste and toothbrushes. Contact local food pantries for drop-off information or a list of additional needs in your community.

January activities:

- **Jan 22:** Flakes of Fury Fat Tire Bicycle Race, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison. Registration 10 a.m. to noon with 1 p.m. race time. Live entertainment begins at 2:30 p.m. Contact the park, 701-337-5576, or go to its Facebook page for more information.

Nonprofit organizations and communities throughout McLean County are encouraged to contact Patricia Stockdill, stockdill.patricia@gmail.com, or telephone 701-337-5462 to submit their community events. ■

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