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# MANAGER'S MOMENT

## Economic development is cornerstone

BY MARK DOYLE, GENERAL MANAGER



**Mark Doyle**

I would appreciate a moment of your time...

Economic development is investing to grow your economy to enhance your community.

Economic

development is the core of success for any community. Without investment in new businesses or reinvestment into existing business and infrastructure, communities will struggle to prosper.

One example is White Shield. The Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation is investing in its communities to make them sustainable for generations. As we look at our communities, it's important to realize what we have and what we need. Once that is realized, we can plan to sustain or grow.

McLean Electric Cooperative, your cooperative, is always willing to participate in growing your communities. Whether we are providing some financial assistance to our youth through scholarships or supporting a community organization's efforts, we are always willing to assist. We accomplish this through grants that are supported by our partners like Basin Electric Power Cooperative, the Rural Development Finance Corporation, CoBank or your own Operation Round Up, which is your money collected through rounding up your utility bill.

Take pride in the fact that you are a member of your local cooperatives, like McLean Electric Cooperative and others, such as ag cooperatives or telecommunications cooperatives. You own it!

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



### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Our faucets and appliances use a lot of hot water. You can lower your water heating costs by using less hot water in your home. Water heating accounts for a large portion of home energy bills.

To save energy (and money!) used for water heating, repair any leaky faucets, install low-flow fixtures and insulate accessible hot water lines. When it's time to purchase a new washing machine or dishwasher, look for models that are ENERGY STAR®-certified

Source: Dept. of Energy





## Being proactive in an evolving world

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

In today's world and changing times, it may seem as if electric vehicle commercials and alternative energy dominate the advertising industry and media attention.

In addition, in today's world of escalating costs for food, fuel and virtually everything in-between, it's understandable if some people look at alternative sources for their electric energy.

Sources such as solar. Or wind.

Maybe even generators powered by fuels such as natural gas, diesel or perhaps waste energy.

Such alternatives may or may not be options for

families and businesses, large or small.

But even as North Dakotans rely on the tried-and-true 24/7 reliability of coal-based power plants fueling their electric energy, electric cooperative generation and transmission providers continue diversifying their sources of electric generation, increasingly integrating renewable energy, natural gas and another longtime staple, hydropower.

For some consumers, finding their own personal source of electric energy is an intriguing alternative. A drive around the countryside may find a farm or rural residence with a wind tower, the modern version of the



## “We want to make sure we position McLean Electric for the future.”

valued windmill that drew precious water from hand-dug wells for homesteaders in sodhouses.

A line of solar panels may replace shingles on the roof of a business or line a portion of someone’s yard.

While interest in integrating alternative electric energy sources into one’s residence, farm or business isn’t commonplace in McLean County, McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) is being proactive by establishing a formal approach to work with member-owners contemplating alternative energy options.

MEC’s board of directors approved a new policy in July, establishing guidelines for all its member-owners interested in exploring alternative electric energy sources and options.

The cooperative’s goal is three-fold, explained MEC Engineering Manager Lucas Schaaf. Safety is a primary concern, he continued, for both the member-owner contemplating alternative energy sources and the cooperative, because it integrates into the cooperative’s system. Guidelines are designed to help ensure MEC lineworker safety, along with the stability of MEC’s system.

For example, it’s critical that backup generators, used for years during extended outages, are designed to prevent backfeeding into MEC’s lines, which can injure lineworkers.

It’s equally important for lineworkers to know if an alternate electric energy source is outflowing back into MEC’s line to also avoid potential injury.

MEC General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle echoed Schaaf’s safety concerns.

“We can’t have unknowns,” Doyle emphasized. Someone else’s “source” is connected to MEC’s system, because MEC’s service becomes the backup electric source when alternative sources, such as solar and wind, aren’t available.

Unknowns – an alternate source backfeeding, for example – can be deadly.

MEC also has to be able to know the amount of electricity used – what the cooperative provides and what is outflow, which is the excess electricity produced by the alternate source, Schaaf explained. MEC also needs to have the electric load capacity available to serve the location if the alternate source isn’t capable of meeting

load demand.

In addition, the proactive approach in addressing alternate energy sources helps protect MEC’s system stability, Schaaf described. The cooperative’s equipment feeding to a facility with an alternative electric energy source has to be able to integrate with the other source to protect things such as voltage regulators, avoid backfeeding or protect against system overload, for example.

Interest in alternative electric options is gradually increasing, Schaaf continued. The largest individual system within the cooperative’s service area is capable of generating 100 kilowatts (kW). Interest tends to focus on solar options, he added, because it is less maintenance-intensive than wind systems.

Even though there isn’t a huge demand among member-owners to explore alternative electric sources,

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## Cooperative develops regional approach

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) took a cooperative approach in developing how it works with its member-owners interested in renewable or other electric energy alternatives by joining with six other North Dakota electric cooperatives to research and develop a standardized, regional approach.

In addition, the firm that guided them through the process is also a cooperative, Star Energy, based in Alexandria, Minn.

“It was a very cooperative-minded approach,” described MEC Engineering Manager Lucas Schaaf. “It’s seven cooperatives working together, especially to develop best practices and safety.”

Known as a technical “distributed generation energy” policy, it focuses on addressing safety and best practices standards, while protecting the cooperatives themselves, their member-owners and those interested in distributed energy, which are alternative electric energy sources, such as renewable, gas or diesel.

It also helps people better understand the full scope involved in implementing an alternate system, Schaaf continued, focusing on safety, communications and system stability.

It is all about what works best to keep electricity flowing 24/7 for all MEC member-owners. ■

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“we want to make sure we position McLean Electric for the future,” Doyle added, anticipating more additional future interest.

Member-owners contemplating alternative electric energy sources need to contact MEC, Schaaf stressed, especially prior to purchasing or installing any type of alternate system.

Perhaps one way to look at alternative electric systems is to recognize they are comparable to purchasing an appliance or vehicle – the consumer isn’t buying electricity. Instead they’re buying an appliance. Unlike a washer or dryer, it won’t wash or dry clothes. But like a washer or dryer, there are additional costs involved to install and operate it. A vehicle gets a person from Point A to Point B, but a multitude of additional costs are involved in the process.

Member-owners with an alternative energy source are responsible for their system’s maintenance and operation.

Consumers should consider installation costs along with feasibility and cost of integration into their existing electric system, Schaaf suggested.

Unlike 24/7 flowing electricity, alternative electric sources need backup help, especially renewables. While a particular system will have a rated capacity of electric generation, the wind doesn’t blow 24/7 at a rate to produce needed electricity, nor does the sun shine 24/7 with enough battery backup capacity.

Silently in the background is electricity provided

by MEC.

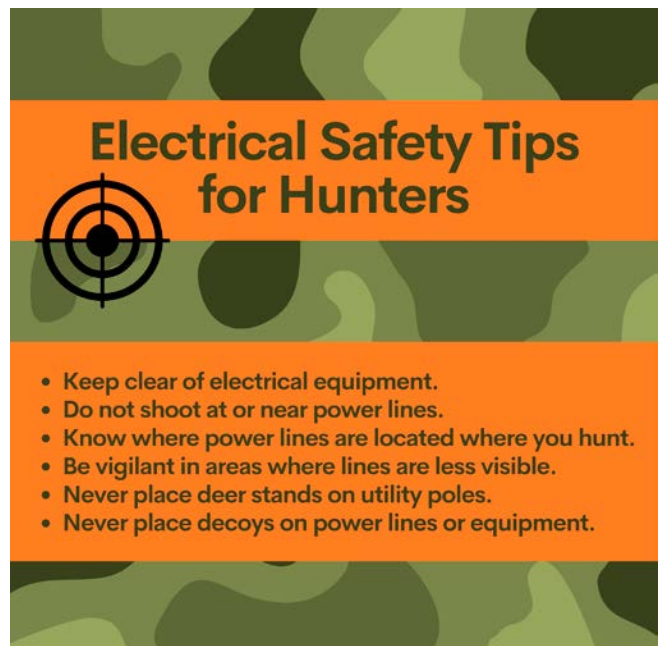
“Ask yourself, ‘Does this pencil out and can or will it actually save money and electricity?’” Schaaf suggested.

MEC wants to work with any of its member-owners interested in renewable electric energy or other alternative sources. The cooperative can help those member-owners, whether a homeowner, farm or business of any size, in understanding what is needed to meet necessary safety practices, system reliability and other guidelines.

Working with MEC in advance can help individuals and businesses determine if their expectations can equal reality, Schaaf continued, especially how it relates to other programs the cooperative has benefiting consumer electric rates, such as the lower heat rate for homes and businesses using electric heat.

Renewable or alternative energy sources may or may not work for an interested MEC member-owner, but communicating with the cooperative can help make that decision easier. Contact Schaaf at 701-463-6700 or toll-free at 800-263-4922 for information.

One way to learn more about renewable or alternative electric energy, determine if its cost-benefits “pencil out” and what is involved to integrate a system is on the U.S. Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory website link, <https://pvwatts.nrel.gov>. It can help analyze actual details involved based on one’s specific location. ■

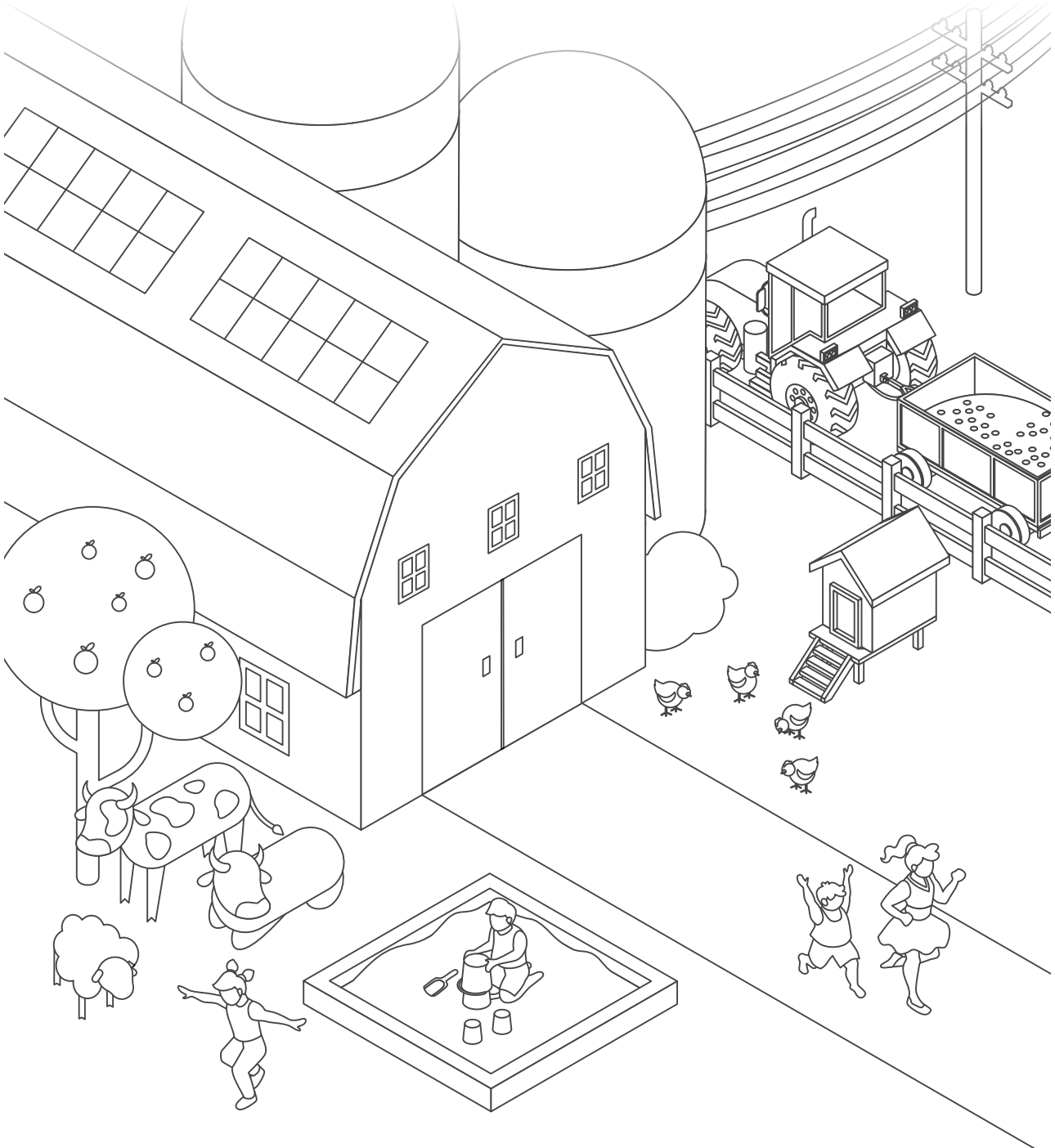
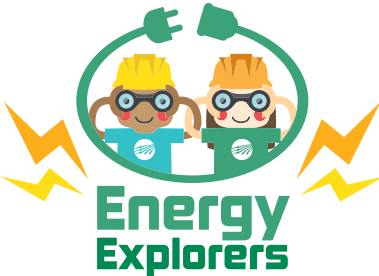


## Electrical Safety Tips for Hunters

- Keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not shoot at or near power lines.
- Know where power lines are located where you hunt.
- Be vigilant in areas where lines are less visible.
- Never place deer stands on utility poles.
- Never place decoys on power lines or equipment.

# National Farm Safety and Health Week

Farm Safety and Health Week is September 18-24!  
Whether you live on a farm or in the city, always play it safe near power lines and other electrical equipment.



# GENERATOR SAFETY

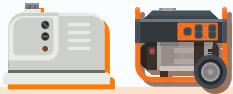
## USE BACKUP POWER SAFELY

When used properly, portable and standby generators are a great option to provide backup power during brownouts or blackouts.

Learn how to use generators safely with the following tips:

### GENERATORS

#### Location



Always keep generators at least **20 feet** away from your home



Never operate a generator in an **enclosed space**



Make sure the generator has **3-4 feet** of clear space above and on all sides for proper ventilation



Keep generators **away** from doors, windows and vents



Always **direct exhaust away** from your home

#### Use



Always use **grounded cords** and inspect cords for damage prior to use



Use the **proper cord** for the wattage being used



Always use **GFCI protection**



Make sure to start / stop generators when **no electrical loads** are connected



Keep generators **dry, do not operate when wet**, and refuel when cool

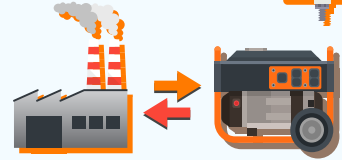


**Do not overload** generators



Do not plug a generator directly into your home, connect items being powered **directly to the generator**

### TRANSFER SWITCHES



Transfer switches, whether manual or automatic, allow you to choose between **utility power** or **backup generator power**



Transfer switches are the only way to **safely power** your home's electrical system

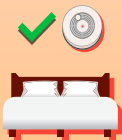


Using a transfer switch **prevents backfeeding**. This occurs when your generator becomes a power source for the **surrounding area** and can damage your home, your neighbors' homes, and injure workers trying to restore power

## CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING PREVENTION



Improper use and installation of generators could **cause CO poisoning**



Make sure your home has **carbon monoxide alarms** outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home



CO can kill in as little as **5 minutes**

#### Symptoms of CO poisoning



Dizziness



Headaches



Nausea



Tiredness



If you experience CO poisoning symptoms, **get fresh air, do not reenter areas** and **call 911**.



# DON'T LET THE **CHILL** AFFECT YOUR **BILL**



When cold weather approaches, you can keep your home comfortable and still keep your energy bills from escalating with these winter tips from McLean Electric Cooperative:

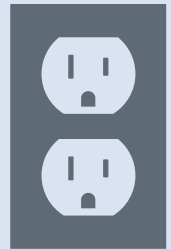
## **BUNDLE UP YOUR HOME**

Check around doors and windows for leaks and drafts. Add weatherstripping and caulk where heat might escape. Make sure doors seal properly.



## **PLUG THE PLUG**

Electric wall plugs and switches can allow cold air to enter. Purchase simple-to-install, foam gaskets that fit behind the switch plate and effectively prevent leaks.



## **CLOSE THE DAMPER**

Don't forget to close the damper on your fireplace when the fireplace is not in use. If the damper is open when you're not using the fireplace, your chimney functions as a large open window that draws warm air out of the room and creates a draft.

## **CHECK YOUR HEATING SYSTEM**

Get a routine maintenance and inspection of your heating system each autumn to make sure it is in good working order.

## **CHANGE THE FILTER**

Be sure to clean or replace your system's air filter. At a minimum, change the filter every three months; a dirty filter clogs the system, making the system work harder to keep you warm.

## **CHECK YOUR INSULATION**

Insulate your attic. In an older home, that can be the most cost-efficient way to cut home heating costs. Before energy efficiency standards, homes were often built with little or no insulation. As a result, large amounts of heat can be lost through walls, floors and ceilings.

## **CHANGE A LIGHT BULB**

Lighting our homes can represent 20% of home electricity bills and is one of the easiest places to start saving energy with more energy-efficient bulbs.

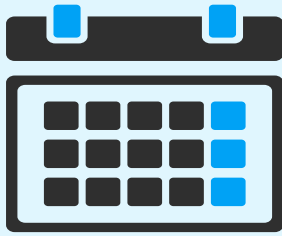


## **LOWER THE THERMOSTAT**

Lowering the setting on your thermostat will result in savings, too!







## McLean County community calendar:

# Events and activities to see and do

### McLean County community food pantry September distributions:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood:** 4-6 p.m. Sept. 1 and 10 a.m.-noon Sept. 17, 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:** Sept. 22, noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., former Lazy J's building back door.
- **Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** Sept. 19, noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** Thursdays 2-4 p.m. and Saturdays, 10 a.m.-noon, 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. Sept. 15, 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.

### September activities:

- **Sept. 3:** Fort Stevenson State Park Regatta, Garrison, beginning with noon racing.
- **Sept. 5:** Labor Day, McLean Electric Cooperative closed for the holiday.
- **Sept. 24:** Sakakawea Pheasants Forever Spaghetti Fest fundraiser with kid's games, auctions, and raffles, Garrison City Auditorium beginning with a 5:30 p.m. social. Tickets sold at the door.

*Nonprofit organizations and communities throughout McLean County are encouraged to contact Patricia Stockdill, [stockdill.patricia@gmail.com](mailto:stockdill.patricia@gmail.com), or telephone 701-337-5462, to submit community events. ■*

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