



Understanding Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule

As colder weather approaches, it's a good time to review the protections available through Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule (CWR). This state law helps protect eligible residential customers from having their heat disconnected during the winter months.

The Cold Weather Rule is in effect each year from **October 1 through April 30**. During this period, eligible households may avoid utility disconnection by making payment arrangements with their natural gas or electric utility provider.

To qualify, customers generally must:

- Contact their utility provider before service is disconnected.
- Set up and maintain a reasonable payment plan based on household income and financial circumstances.
- Stay current with the agreed-upon payment arrangement.

The Cold Weather Rule does **not** eliminate or forgive unpaid utility bills. Customers remain responsible for paying the amount owed, but the program provides additional time and flexibility to help keep essential heating service connected during Minnesota's coldest months.

If you are having difficulty paying your heating bill, don't wait until you receive a disconnection notice. Contact your utility provider as soon as possible to discuss payment options and determine whether you qualify for Cold Weather Rule protection. You may also be eligible for energy assistance programs that can help reduce heating costs. Planning ahead can help prevent service interruptions and provide peace of mind throughout the winter season.

Emergency Energy Assistance Phone Numbers

Des Moines Valley Health & Human Services (Cottonwood County).....	831-1891
Des Moines Valley Health & Human Services (Jackson County)	847-4000
Jackson County Sheriff's Department	847-4420
Martin County Human Services	238-4757
Martin County Sheriff's Department	238-4481
MN Dept. of Energy Services (Ask for fuel assistance)	1-800-657-3805
Minnesota Valley Action Council	1-800-767-7139
Brown County.....	354-3138
Martin County.....	238-1663
Watonwan County	375-5748
Salvation Army's Heat Share (Jackson & Martin Co.).....	238-9797
Watonwan County Human Services	375-3294
United Community Action Partnership (Jackson & Cottonwood Co.)	1-800-992-1710

Make Time for Safety

AVOID HAZARDS WITH OVERHEAD POWER LINES

Fall harvest is the most likely time of year for farm-related accidents and fatalities. The number one factor in electrocution on the farm is an auger that hits a power line when being moved. Be aware of your surroundings and look up often.

SAFE ELECTRICITY OFFERS THE FOLLOWING HARVEST SAFETY TIPS:

1. Check the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance.
2. Be aware of the location of power poles and lines, including field entry and exit points, and plan a safe equipment route.
3. Always keep a minimum 10-foot safety radius around an electric line.
4. Use a spotter when moving tall loads near electrical lines.
5. Lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving equipment.
6. Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
7. Know what to do if your equipment does make contact with a power line. It's almost always safest staying in the cab. Call 9-1-1, warn others to stay away, and wait until the electric utility says it's safe to get down.

Learn more at:

**Safe
Electricity.org**





2026 Youth Tour

Each year, electric cooperatives across the country partner with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) to send select high school students on the Youth Tour—an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. designed to cultivate leadership, civic engagement, and a deeper understanding of American government.

This year, Ava Lepp was selected as the Youth Tour delegate from our service area.

Reflecting on the experience, Ava shared:

“Thankful is the word to describe my experience on the Youth Tour. I am thankful that I was chosen for this unique opportunity to experience Washington, D.C., this summer. I was both excited and nervous on the way to the Twin Cities, but after I met other participants and the chaperones, I was looking forward to our week together.

The three highlights of my week on the Youth Tour are:

1. The Segway Tour of the National Mall. It was an adventure to ride the segways around D.C. and to view the monuments in the evening. I highly recommend it!
2. The Capital Wheel. Our group rode the Capital Wheel (ferris wheel) on the fourth evening of our tour. The view from the top of the ferris wheel was spectacular! Another must for visitors to D.C.
3. State Pin Trading. This was a great way to meet participants from other states - and have a fun souvenir besides.

Other highlights include visiting the museums, attending the learning sessions, and of course, meeting people! I do not always like meeting new people, but the Youth Tour made it easy to talk to others. The Youth Tour pushed me out of my comfort zone, and I am thankful for that also.”

If you know a high school student who might be interested in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, please have them contact our office to learn more about how to apply for next year’s Youth Tour.



Where your power comes from: Peaking plants

When you flip on a light switch or adjust your thermostat, electricity needs to be available instantly. Behind the scenes, that reliability depends on a diverse mix of energy resources working together, including a critical but often overlooked piece of the system: peaking plants.

Peaking plants are power stations intended to run during periods of highest electricity demand, such as hot summer afternoons or extremely cold winter nights. These are the moments when homes, businesses and farms all need more energy at the same time. At Great River Energy, peaking plants play an important role in ensuring that member-owners receive reliable power, no matter the conditions. Natural gas-fueled peaking facilities are built to ramp up quickly, helping balance the system when other resources aren't producing as much energy or when demand spikes unexpectedly.



“Reliability isn’t something we turn on when conditions change — it’s something we plan for well in advance,” said Zac Ruzycki, director of resource planning at Great River Energy. “Resources like peaking plants give us the flexibility to respond to changing system conditions, fill in the gaps with our other generation resources and make sure we can keep power flowing when demand is high.”

That flexibility is becoming increasingly important as the energy landscape evolves. Renewable energy sources like wind and solar continue to grow across the region, providing clean and cost-effective electricity. However, because those resources are limited by weather conditions, they don’t always produce energy at the same time electricity is needed. Peaking plants help to address that misalignment, ensuring the system can remain stable and responsive.

Peaking plants also support the broader regional grid operated by MISO, where utilities coordinate to maintain reliability across multiple states. By contributing dispatchable generation that can be brought online quickly, these facilities help meet system-wide demand and maintain adequate reserves.

Maintaining that balance is a key priority for Great River Energy as it continues to plan for the future. The cooperative’s approach focuses on a diverse mix of resources by combining renewables, dispatchable generation like peaking plants, and emerging technologies such as energy storage.

“These resources work together to provide both reliability and value for our members,” said Greg Padden, director of power supply and markets for Great River Energy. “By maintaining a balanced portfolio and participating in regional markets, we’re able to support system reliability while also delivering financial benefits back to our membership.”

SCEA WATER HEATER PROGRAM

SCEA’s peak shave water heater program provides members with a Marathon water heater at a discounted price for participating in the load management program.

The cost for water heaters is **\$750**. This is a great value for members. SCEA pays the cost of the electrician to wire the water heater and radio control. The member would pay any costs incurred by a plumber.





ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

September kicks off the fall shoulder season, when cooler mornings and milder evenings often mean you can give your heating and cooling system a break. Open windows, use ceiling fans and enjoy the fresh air whenever temperatures allow. It's also the perfect time to schedule annual HVAC maintenance before colder weather arrives. Because demand is typically lower during the fall, heating and cooling professionals often have greater availability, making it easier to book an appointment. Regular maintenance can improve your system's efficiency, help prevent unexpected breakdowns and keep your home comfortable all year long.

Source: Department of Energy

Trench Box Addition

South Central Electric has recently added a smart shoring trench box to its safety resources after receiving a grant for the equipment this year. This upgrade supports our ongoing commitment to protecting employees and maintaining safe excavation practices in the field.

At our last safety meeting, MREA provided training on the proper use of the trench box, along with competent person training. The session reinforced key responsibilities related to trench safety, hazard recognition, and the correct use of protective systems.



South Central Electric Association

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The Board meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at South Central Electric's building at 71176 Tiell Dr., St. James, MN.

Please see our website for a summary of the board meetings.