



May 2022

# Newsline

BOARD MEETINGS May 24 ■ June 28

## Lake Country Power

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Energy that Powers Our Lives

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## Prioritize safety year-round



By Bill **BUSSEY**  
Director of Safety and Risk Management

At Lake Country Power, we recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year-round. From our co-op crews to you, the members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity, and it powers our daily lives. But we know first-hand how dangerous electricity can be because we work with it 365 days a year.

As the director of safety and risk management, it's my responsibility to ensure co-op employees are aware of and trained into best safety practices, but it's up to everyone to apply those lessons in everyday situations. Additionally, we want to help keep you and all members of our community safe. That's why you'll see Lake Country Power hosting safety demonstrations at co-op events and in schools throughout the year to demonstrate the dangers of electricity. We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines. We caution students on the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the prevalence of electrical devices,

tools and appliances, I'd like to pass along a few practical electrical safety tips.

**Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard.** Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use or excessive current flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them, as they could cause a shock when handled.

**Avoid overloading circuits.** Circuits can only cope with a limited amount of electricity. Overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit can safely handle—by having too many devices running on one circuit.

**Label circuit breakers to understand the circuits in your home.** Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old and you need to install

multiple large appliances that consume large amounts of electricity.

**Use extension cords properly.** Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you "daisy chain" them together, it could lead to overheating, creating a potential fire hazard. Don't exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so also creates a risk of overloading the cord and creating a fire hazard. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need additional outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.

Contact Lake Country Power at 800-421-9959 or [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) for additional electrical safety tips or if you would like us to provide a safety demonstration at your school or upcoming community event. ■

## PLUG INTO SAFETY





Overloaded electrical outlets? It's time to call an electrician and install new outlets.

# Olson, Bruckbauer elected to Great River Energy board

Part of being a democratically governed electric cooperative involves gathering annually and establishing the structure of the board of directors for the upcoming year.

During these annual meetings, cooperatives elect the directors — new and old — to their seats on the board and hold elections for board officers.

At the Great River Energy annual meeting on April 6, GRE's member-owners elected 24 individuals to serve a one-year term on the Great River Energy board of directors.

During the board of directors' reorganization meeting following the annual meeting, Bob Bruckbauer (Lake Country Power, Cohasset) was re-elected board chair; Dale Anderson (Kandiyohi Power Cooperative, Spicer) was re-elected board vice chair; Audrey Hjelle (Runestone Electric Association, Alexandria) was re-elected secretary, and Lee York (Nobles Cooperative Electric, Worthington) was re-elected treasurer.

Craig Olson of Lake Country Power was



► Olson

also elected to serve a one-year term on the GRE board.

"Electric cooperatives serve members 24 hours a day, seven days a week — and the directors make consequential decisions that affect the membership throughout the year," Bruckbauer said. "What makes cooperatives special is they are governed by their member-owners, who truly want to make the best decisions for their friends and neighbors."

Each Great River Energy director is a member of the board of directors of one of Great River Energy's Class A member-



► Bruckbauer

owner cooperatives.

"Cooperatives are designed to represent the values and expectations of their membership," said Great River Energy President and Chief Executive Officer David Saggau. "The election of the Great River Energy board by our member-owner cooperatives and the board's oversight of Great River Energy ensure that our member-owners have all have a voice in the decisions that guide our company." ■



## Great River Energy returns \$25 million to members

Cooperatives are not-for-profit organizations that operate at cost, only collecting enough revenue to run the business and meet its financial obligations. When a cooperative enjoys financial success, it returns those dollars to members through patronage capital payments.

That's what occurred in March when Great River Energy issued \$25 million in patronage capital payments to its member-owner cooperatives, including Lake Country Power.

"Cooperatives don't serve customers. We serve member-owners. All members contribute equitably to the costs of the cooperative and share in its success," said Great River Energy Vice President and Chief Executive Officer David Saggau.

Great River Energy's wholesale power rates are 10.9% below the weighted regional average cost of electricity, and they are projected to remain steady or decline over the next several years. A rapid evolution of its power supply resources has Great River Energy on track to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by greater than 80% by 2032 from 2005 levels.

Cooperatives hold on to allocated capital credits to cover emergencies and to make necessary enhancements to their electric systems. It is an important financial mechanism that reduces the need to raise rates or borrow money to pay for infrastructure.

Great River Energy's board of directors sets a target to maintain an equity to capitalization ratio of 20%. Patronage returns are then made in the form of cash payments from equity levels above the set target.

Great River Energy began issuing these payments to member-owners in 2019, after spending over a decade building its equity to capitalization ratio to 20%.

Returning patronage capital is a component of the cooperative principle known as "members' economic participation." Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. Cooperatives allocate surpluses for a variety of reasons, including periodic cash returns.

# People Powering You

This is a regular series of employee spotlights where you'll get to know the people behind your power.

Years served: 7 years

**Brief overview of my job:** As the CFO, I provide oversight and guidance for all activities related to the accounting, finance, purchasing, warehousing, billing/call center, information technology, member service, and communication functions of the co-op.

**Why I enjoy working at LCP:** I enjoy working for a member-owned cooperative – Lake Country Power is a very member and employee focused organization. The values of LCP are in sync with my own personal values. I enjoy the daily challenge of the work I do. I enjoy and care about the people I work side by side with every day. I enjoy serving our members.

**Family:** My husband Scott and I share six daughters, one son, and three sons-in-law – all ranging in ages from 19 to 31. We were blessed with two healthy and beautiful grandchildren in 2021 – Maddyn and Bentley. My parents are long-time LCP members. I have two sisters and a brother.

**Community Involvement:** I have been a parent volunteer for many organizations over the years – most recently the Virginia Baseball Association and Virginia Safe Student Organization.

**Hobbies:** I have spent the past 20-plus years cheering on my four children in their activities – figure skating, tennis, volleyball, soccer, football, basketball, and baseball – and have found such joy in that throughout the years. Now that my youngest has graduated from high school it's time to find new hobbies – spoiling grandbabies and traveling sound great!

## Tracy Peterson Wirtanen

Chief Financial Officer



**One random fact of interest about yourself:** I have seen over 100 rock, classic rock, pop, and country artists live in concert.

**What did you do before working at the co-op?** My first job after graduating from college was with the MN Office of the State Auditor in St. Paul. I have been in the professional accounting field for over 30 years, including 20 years of utility accounting and finance. In the years leading up to my career at LCP, I worked for the Virginia (MN) Department of Public Utilities.

**Education/training/background:** I am a native of Biwabik, MN and am proud to be part of one of the last graduating classes from Biwabik High School. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from St. Cloud State University and an Associate of the Arts degree from Mesabi Community College (now Mesabi Range College).

## RECIPE CORNER JALAPENO PINWHEELS

From the Kitchen of:  
**Joan Janousek,**  
Cohasset



- 1 package (8 oz) cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 1/2 tsp spanish paprika
- 1 cup sour cream
- 5 tsps dry buttermilk ranch dressing
- 1 cup hormel bacon bits
- 1/2 cup chopped, pickled jalapenos
- 4 green onions with tops, sliced
- 1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 4-5 large flour tortillas (10-12 inches)

1. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese to jalapenos until incorporated.
2. Stir in onions and cheese, spread on tortillas, about 1/4-inch or more thickness.
3. Roll up.
4. Wrap each with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least one hour.
5. Cut each roll up about 1-inch apart.
6. Place in a container and sprinkle with paprika.
7. Cover and refrigerate until serving.
8. Makes about 48 pieces.

Submit your favorite recipe to Lake Country Power, Attn. Editor, 8535 Park Ridge Drive, Mountain Iron, MN 55768, or e-mail [joumes@lcp.coop](mailto:joumes@lcp.coop). If your entry is printed in Newsline, you'll receive a \$5 credit on your electric bill. Entries must include name, address and phone number on account.

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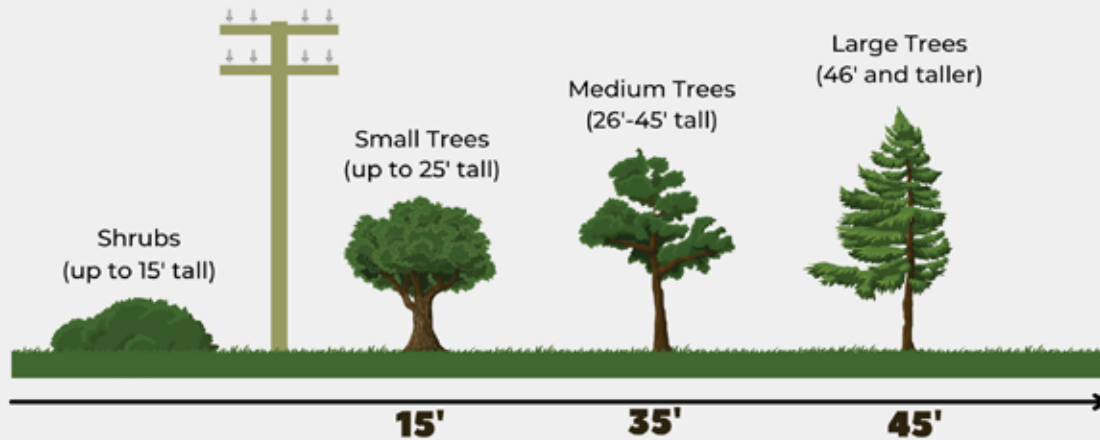
smart hub Tip

**Q:** Want to go paperless and save time?

**A:** Once you've created your SmartHub account, follow these steps: Go to 'My Profile,' 'My Information,' and then 'Update My Paperless Settings.' All you need to do is switch your paperless setting bar to ON. While you're in 'My Information,' you can also update your other account and contact information with the simple click of a button.

# Plant the **RIGHT TREE** in the **RIGHT PLACE**

The larger the tree, the farther it should be from a power line. Avoid planting beneath power lines, near poles or close to electrical equipment.



Remember, know what's below by calling 8-1-1 before you dig.

Learn more at: 

## Selecting a tree? Know its mature height before planting

If you are considering planting a tree, carefully select its location before you begin digging. Also, call 8-1-1 before you break ground to get underground utilities marked. If trees are planted in the wrong location, they can be expensive to maintain and even dangerous.

Lake Country Power and Safe Electricity offer tips on how to pick an optimal location.

A mature height of fewer than 15 feet is recommended if planting near lines. Some trees that are generally not tall enough to interfere with lines include crabapple, honeysuckle, juniper, flowering dogwood and hawthorn.

Trees should never be planted directly under power lines, near poles or too close to electrical equipment.

Once you have a tree selected, call 8-1-1 before putting a shovel to the ground. The "Call Before You Dig" number is a free service that locates and marks public underground utilities in your yard or on your land. Call several business days before you plan to dig.

Locators will mark public underground utilities such as electric, gas, water, cable and fiber. The service does not mark privately owned lines or pipes.

### Other tree tips

- If your established trees are growing into power lines, contact us to ask about them. In some cases (depending on the tree's location), we will come out and trim the tree. If it is your responsibility, do not take on the task yourself. Only tree trimmers who are line-clearance certified are legally allowed to prune and trim trees within 10 feet of power lines.
- It is important to have trees trimmed. Limbs can fall on power lines during bad weather, resulting in power outages or blinking lights. Broken or drooping limbs could also cause a fire.
- Tall-growing trees with a mature height greater than 45 feet should be planted at least 45 feet away from lines to avoid future pruning. Some of these trees include oak, white and blue spruce, most pines and most maples.
- Be sure no one climbs a tree near power lines. If branches are touching the wires, the tree could be energized. Even branches that do not touch power lines could become energized if a child's weight is added. In addition, a child could climb high into the tree and be able to reach the line.

# Restoring power safely and efficiently

We do our best to avoid them, but there's no way around it: power outages occasionally happen.

For most Lake Country Power members, outages are rare and only last a few hours. But when major storms, like the one we experienced in July 2021, impact our area, extended outages are unavoidable.

So when the power goes out, how do Lake Country Power crews know where to start working? How do you know if your outage has been reported? The co-op has answers to these questions and more, and it all starts with a safe, efficient plan for power restoration.

When the lights go out and

it's safe for linecrews to begin the restoration process, they start by repairing power lines and equipment that will restore power to the greatest number of people in the shortest time possible.

This process typically begins with repairs to the larger main distribution lines that service a great number of homes and businesses. After those repairs are made, crews work on tap lines, which deliver power to transformers, either mounted on utility poles (for above-ground service) or placed



By Dan KINGSLEY  
District 6  
Director

on pads (for underground service). Finally, individual service lines that run between the transformer and the home are repaired.

LCP can't control the weather, but the co-op can prepare for it. Lake Country Power keeps a supply of extra utility poles, transformers and other equipment on hand so crews can quickly get to work in the event of an outage. When widespread outages occur, multiple crews will be out in the field simultaneously working to repair damage at multiple locations. LCP also coordinates with nearby co-ops to bring in additional crews when necessary.

If you experience a power outage, don't assume a

neighbor reported it. It's best to report the outage yourself, and it's easy to do. The quickest way to report an outage is through the SmartHub app on your cell phone or you can also call the outage reporting number 1-800-421-9959, press #1.

Mother Nature can be unpredictable, but as a Lake Country Power member, you can feel confident knowing the co-op and its employees are standing by, ready to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. ■

Dan Kingsley was elected by members in Lake Country Power District 6. He can be reached at 218-259-7366 or dkingsley@lcp.coop.

## LCP employees honored by St. Louis County



► Cody Vredenburg, Matt Bade and Tyler McClellan receive the 911 Lifesaver Award from St. Louis County Sheriff Ross Litman. Not pictured is Tim Rasmussen. The LCP employees rescued a woman from a water-filled ditch that her car overturned into in November 2021. Photo courtesy of St. Louis County.



## Carlson receives 'Director Gold' certificate

► District 4 Director Craig Carlson is presented his "Director Gold" recertification through National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's education program from LCP Board President Craig Olson during the February 22, 2022, monthly board meeting.



## February 22, 2022 • Regular Monthly Meeting

### THE FOLLOWING REPORTS WERE GIVEN:

President Olson reported that he worked on an evaluation process for General Manager Mark Bakk's 2021 job performance. The evaluation will be mailed to directors and a meeting scheduled with Bakk to review the results. Olson also presented a "Director Gold" recertification through National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's education program to Director Craig Carlson.

General Manager Bakk reported on Great River Energy's (GRE) January financials, a committee appointed to review a 5% Renewable Member Resources option, GRE's future transmission investments, Northland Connect, Minnesota Rural Electrical Association (MREA) and more.

### THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:

Approved leaving the Districts 4 and 8 board seats open until the 2023 annual meeting and director elections to be held in Districts 4 and 8, along with three other districts up for regular election.

Appointed Director Steve Raukar's recommendation for member Katie Hildenbrand to serve on the Operation Round Up® Trust Board to represent District 3. ■

**Editor's Note:** These board minutes have been condensed. A full copy of the board minutes can be read at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under "My Cooperative." You'll need to sign up for access if you haven't already. Or call 800-421-9959 for a printed copy.



► This picture earned a spot in the 2022 co-op calendar for May. Kimberly Lund of Moose Lake took this photo of a mamma and her baby fawn.



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Even in summer months, adding insulation to your attic can keep your home more comfortable and save energy used by your cooling system. If your attic insulation is level with or below your floor joists (meaning you can easily see your joists), you should add more. If you can't see any of the floor joists because the insulation is well above them, you likely have enough insulation. Attic insulation should be evenly distributed with no low spots. Make sure the areas along the eaves are adequately covered. Source: Energystar.gov

## Comparative Operating Statement

Year-To-Date — February 2022

	2022	2021
Electric Operating Revenue	\$ 21,961,218	\$ 18,934,340
Cost of Purchased Power	14,448,925	11,091,165
Distribution Expense - Operations & Maintenance	2,095,104	1,980,331
Consumer Accounts Expense & Informational	690,373	637,558
Administrative and General Expense	1,238,574	1,279,939
Depreciation, Interest Expense and Other Deductions	2,287,932	2,241,252
<b>TOTAL ELECTRIC OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>20,760,908</b>	<b>17,230,244</b>
Net Electric Operating Margins	1,200,310	1,704,096
Non-Operating Margins	2,461	(3,828)
<b>TOTAL MARGINS</b>	<b>\$ 1,202,771</b>	<b>\$ 1,700,268</b>
<b>TOTAL KWH SOLD (YEAR-TO-DATE)</b>	<b>178,771,857</b>	<b>142,764,934</b>

**Editor's Note:** These financials are condensed. A complete set of financials can be viewed at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under "My Cooperative." You'll need to sign up for access if you haven't already. Or call 800-421-9959 for a copy.

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District 4

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**Vacant (To be filled spring 2023),**  
District 8

**Larry Anderson,** 218-428-2722  
District 9 landerson@lcp.coop

Directors are members of the cooperative and are elected to act in the best interests of the co-op with the same care that an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances.

Directors set policy, approve strategy and are charged with fiduciary responsibility of the cooperative. Directors do not oversee day-to-day LCP operations. Administration of maintenance, electric service and operations are the responsibility of employees and staff.

**Members with questions or concerns about service, billing, outages or other service-related matters should call 1-800-421-9959.**

## Newsline

Published monthly by Lake Country Power  
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