March 2026 Vol. 10 Issue 3
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

MiNews

Don't wait for failure, plan for HVAC replacement

Mark your calendar, annual meeting April 8

Power up your safety plan for spring storms

CELEBRATING NINETY YEARS
1936 90 2026
MIENERGY COOPERATIVE

Updates on regional and local energy projects

The pace of change in the electric energy industry has accelerated dramatically. The energy landscape we knew even a year ago looks very different today.

At the regional level, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) has launched two major transmission initiatives – Tranche 1 and Tranche 2.1. These initiatives are to modernize and expand the regional transmission grid.

Tranche 2.1, proposed by MISO in late 2024, adds 3,631 miles of 765 kV transmission backbone, representing a $21.8 billion investment in 24 projects and 323 facilities across the Upper Midwest.

One of the 24 Tranche 2.1 projects is building a 139-mile, 765 kV transmission line from Marion Township, east of Rochester, Minn. to Bell Center, Wis., named MariBell. It will improve regional power flows to reduce congestion and enable more efficient dispatch of generation resources. This can lower Dairyland's cost to serve its member cooperatives wholesale power and help maintain stable electricity rates.

Dairyland was awarded the bid by MISO to develop and build the proposed MariBell project with its partner GridLiance Heartland. The proposed path travels through MiEnergy's service territory on the path of an existing Dairyland 161 kV line.

With several projects in discussions across our service territory including MariBell, the public meeting in Harmony discussing a small edge data center and Wild Turkey Solar, we have witnessed some confusion and miscommunication on these projects.

MISO is a not-for-profit, member-based regional transmission organization providing reliability and market services over more than 75,000 miles of transmission lines in 15 states and one Canadian province. MISO is responsible for the operational oversight and control, market operations and planning of the transmission systems of its member transmission owners.

CLARIFICATIONS ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Keep in mind, none of the projects listed below are or were directly connected, and each has or had independent goals and timelines.

MariBell Transmission Project: This is a long-term infrastructure initiative essential for grid security, stability and affordability. It is proposed by MISO with construction slated for 2031. MiEnergy is not a partner in this project. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission will ultimately approve or deny the project. Details and information on upcoming open houses in our area can be found at www.MaribellTransmission.com or by emailing connect@MariBellTransmission.com.

Edge Data Center: MiEnergy is exploring opportunities for hosting a small 50 megawatt data center on an existing 69 kV line north of Harmony that has available capacity. Any development will comply with local parameters predetermined by the City and with MISO's market participant energy guidelines for reducing electric load during peak energy periods to avoid negative impacts on system reliability.

Wild Turkey Solar: In Houston County, MiEnergy and our third-party contractor, OneEnergy, were unsuccessful in gaining approval for a five-megawatt solar project on 25 acres of land near our Wild Turkey Substation following over a year of presentations, meetings and planning. The project included sheep grazing under and around the project by the local landowner and attractive on-peak energy pricing to lower wholesale costs to MiEnergy and local members. It would have used MiEnergy's local distribution lines behind the Wild Turkey Substation located along Highway 76 to deliver power and improve reliability to our members served off the substation.

MiEnergy has four similar solar projects in Fillmore and Winona counties that came online in 2021. Regardless of this project's outcome, MiEnergy and Dairyland Power Cooperative are required to meet Minnesota's energy goal of providing electricity generated by 100% carbon-free energy by 2040, with 60% by 2030.

As always, I welcome your calls, emails and personal visits.

Board room highlights | Feb. 26, 2026

- CFO Shelly Hove provide the January financials that are tracking above budget and included impacts from Winter Storm Fern.
- Eide Bailly Auditor Nick Crank presented the 2025 audit and a clean audit opinion was received.
- Management provided updates that included operations, large load opportunities, employee retirements and open positions.
- Approved uncollectible accounts for 2025 totaling $17,341 from $85.7 million in total revenues.
- Approved the Annual Meeting agenda.
- Approved management's recommendation to rescind ReConnect 4 and 5 awards due to delays in environmental approval from USDA and the Minnesota State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO).
- Approved the Iowa Utility Commission reliability report for MiEnergy.
- Appointed credentials and election committee members for the upcoming annual meeting.

The next meeting is March 26 at the Rushford office at 9 a.m.

Annual Meeting April 8, 2026

Trust that spans generations

MiEnergy Cooperative is celebrating 90 years of providing electricity to rural areas of northeastern Iowa and southeastern Minnesota. Trust is a key component of the co-op's success and innovation in serving members across generations. Co-op leaders will highlight priorities and challenges, as well as the financial condition of MiEnergy at the annual meeting. As a member of the cooperative, you are invited to attend.

The one-hour business meeting begins at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 8, at the Mabel Community Center in Mabel, Minn. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be available to view online at www.MiEnergy.coop/annual-meeting. Members watching online can submit questions during the meeting by email to AnnualMeeting@MiEnergy.coop. These details will also be included in the annual report to be mailed to all members March 24.

DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

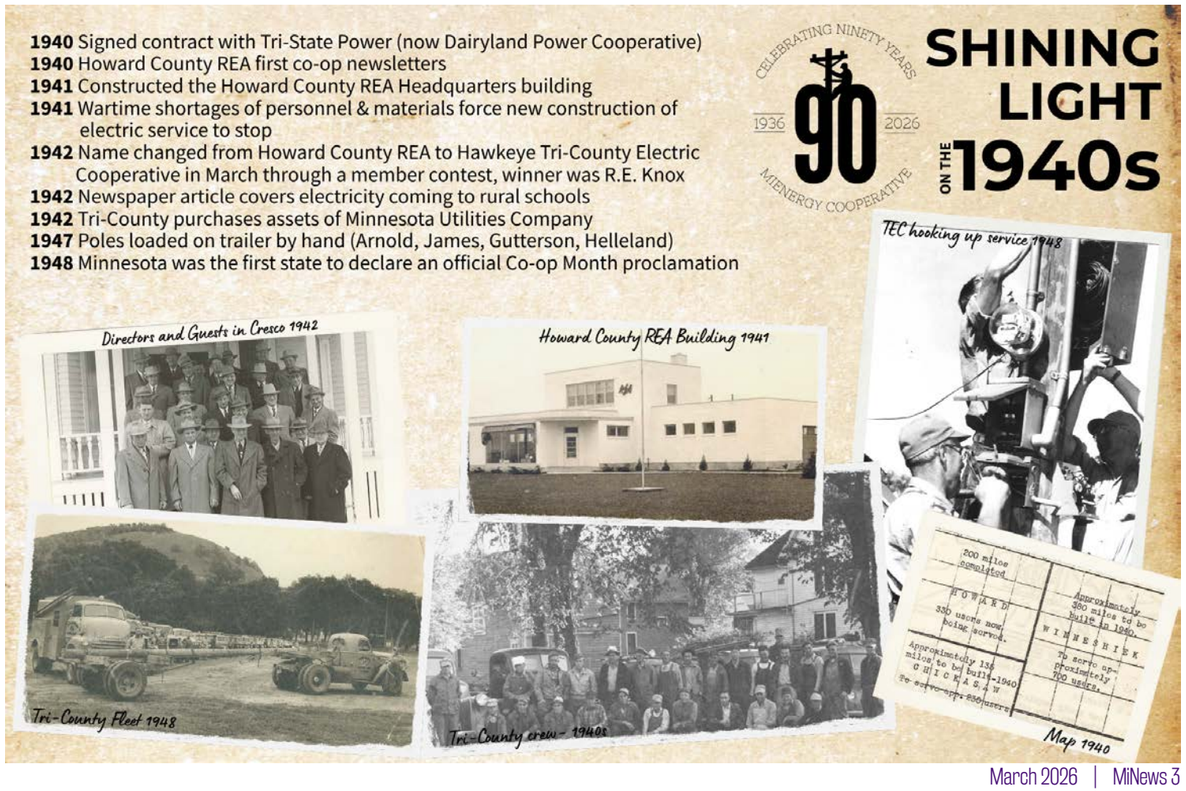
The results of the board director elections in District 1 and the proposed bylaw revisions will be announced at the annual meeting. Members can vote by mail, online or in-person at the Mabel Community Center, 201 South Main Street, Mabel, Minn. on April 8, 2026, between 6:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. The ballot box closes at the start of the annual meeting at 7 p.m.

A voting ballot, instructions on the voting process, biographies for each candidate (for members in District 1 only) and board recommended bylaw revisions will be mailed March 6 to members. Ballots are mailed from Survey and Ballot Systems, of Eden Prairie, Minn. in a yellow envelope. Members who have an email address with the cooperative will also receive voting directions via email. Survey and Ballot will be collecting and tabulating ballots. Security measures are in place to protect the confidentiality of your vote and to prevent duplicate voting.

DISTRICT 1 CANDIDATES:

Seat #1: Kim Nelson (Incumbent) versus
Jordan Fontenello (Challenger)
Seat #2: Dennis Ptacek (Incumbent) running unopposed

Thank you for participating in the cooperative election. Your vote is important.



POWER PLAYERS OF THE GRID

Every time you flip a switch, you're connecting to one of the most complex systems ever built, also known as the North American electric grid. Often called the largest interconnected machine in the world, this network spans the United States, Canada and parts of Mexico. It includes thousands of generators, hundreds of thousands of miles of transmission lines and millions of miles of distribution power lines all working together to keep the lights on day and night.

But how does electricity actually get from a power plant to your home? And where do electric cooperatives fit in? Let's break it down.

The U.S. electric grid has three major components: generators, transmission and distribution. Each plays a critical role in delivering electricity where and when it is needed.

GENERATORS: MAKING THE POWER

In the U.S., most power plants produce electricity by burning fossil fuels or by harnessing renewable resources like solar, wind and water. To ensure that enough electricity is generated to keep the lights on at an affordable price, two main structures exist.

The first is a "vertically integrated" model, where in some regions, a single utility owns everything from power plants to power lines and delivers electricity directly to consumers.

In other areas, a second model is used. Instead of one company making and delivering power, many companies sell electricity in a competitive market. Utilities buy electricity from these generators and deliver it to consumers like you. In this model, a group called a regional transmission operator (RTO) or independent system operator (ISO) helps keep everything running smoothly. They make sure enough power is available every second of the day. This system is called a wholesale market, and it lets utilities buy extra power when they need it.

Most electric cooperatives don't own large power plants. Instead, they purchase power through long-term contracts, wholesale markets or from their generation and transmission cooperative (G&T), a member-owned utility that serves multiple co-ops in a designated region. G&T cooperatives are owned by distribution co-ops like yours. There are 64 G&T cooperatives across the U.S., and they often own power plants and transmission lines. G&Ts also plan for the future by investing in new generation sources, building infrastructure and integrating renewables, all while staying true to the cooperative model: member-focused, not profit-driven.

Once electricity is generated, it doesn't stay at the power plant. It begins a long journey to reach homes, farms and businesses. Power must travel across regions to where it's needed most, and that's where the transmission system comes in. These high-voltage lines act like energy superhighways, moving electricity efficiently over hundreds of miles before it's stepped down for local distribution and, ultimately, for the devices you use every day.

TRANSMISSION: THE ENERGY SUPERHIGHWAY

Transmission lines move enormous amounts of electricity efficiently across regions. Most distribution co-ops don't own these transmission lines, but they rely on their G&T cooperative to handle this part of the journey. G&Ts make sure power gets from the plant to your local co-op.

However, the electricity carried by transmission lines cannot be used as is because the voltage levels are too high. That's the job of the distribution network, which is the final step that brings power to your lights, appliances and devices.

DISTRIBUTION: THE LAST MILE

The distribution network is the "last mile" segment of the electric grid and delivers generated energy from the transmission network to consumers. The high-voltage power from transmission lines is converted to lower voltages that home appliances, electric vehicles and personal devices can use. This is where your electric cooperative comes in to keep local lines maintained and power flowing to members 24/7/365.

Understanding how power moves from generation to your home helps explain why reliability and affordability depend on teamwork and collaboration between your local co-op, its G&T partners and the broader grid. Together, co-ops are preparing for tomorrow's challenges, so you can count on safe, reliable power for years to come.

Anthony Buckley writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

Research HVAC options now

Prepare your home to handle Midwest weather

Now is a great time to start planning for a new heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) unit for your home, farm or business, before an equipment failure occurs. You will also gain peace of mind knowing that you've done your research and are not left making a hasty decision because you suddenly need a new unit.

If you're in the market for a new HVAC unit, consider a heat pump. Air-source heat pumps move heat between the air inside a home and the air outside a home, while ground-source heat pumps (known as geothermal heat pumps) transfer heat between the air inside a home and the ground outside a home.

Heat pumps can be used for both heating in the winter and cooling in the summer. At a maximum, ground-source heat pumps can be 300 percent efficient and at a minimum, all heat pumps are 100 percent efficient. Newer, more efficient air-source heat pumps now offer legitimate heating in cold regions with new technological advancements with cold climate air-source heat pumps.

If you're shopping for a new energy efficient unit, check the efficiency rating, or SEER. The higher the SEER number, the more efficient the HVAC system. Appliances with an Energy Star rating meet and often exceed energy efficiency standards and can end up saving you money over the lifetime of the appliance.

Visit www.EnergyStar.gov for more information and check out the 2026 rebates for qualified appliances at www.MiEnergy.coop/rebates.

RECare is a consumer contribution fund in which members like you assist other members who need help in paying utility bills. Consider a one-time contribution or enroll to provide monthly contributions. Whether it is $1, $5, or $10 a month or a single donation of an amount of your choice, when combined with those of other generous members, your assistance can go a long way in helping others. MiEnergy Cooperative appreciates your generosity and the pledges given by members to help our members in need. What a great way to show you care about your community and know that you can make a difference! Complete the form or visit www.MiEnergy.coop to fill out a donation form.

Local families received an average amount of $219 last year. Minnesota members can apply for funds by calling 800-432-2285. Iowa members can apply for funds by contacting Northeast Iowa Community Action offices in Chickasaw, Howard and Winneshiek counties.

Consumer Authorization Form

☑ **YES ! I would like to contribute to RECare.**

Monthly Pledge: ☐ $1 ☐ $2 ☐ $5 ☐ Other _____

I understand the amount above will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill.

One-time contribution: $ _____

Make check out to RECare c/o MiEnergy Cooperative.

Account Number: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Date: _____

Mail to: MiEnergy Cooperative, PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136

Safety during spring storms

Tornadoes can strike with little warning, leaving behind downed power lines, damaged electrical equipment and dangerous debris. Preparing before a tornado, and knowing how to stay safe afterward, can help prevent electrical shock, fire and injury. Make sure your emergency plan includes electrical safety steps so you and your family are ready to act quickly and safely.

BEFORE A TORNADO:

- Prepare an emergency kit with water, battery-powered flashlight, radio, extra batteries and portable phone charger.
- Keep MiEnergy's phone number handy (800-432-2285) in case you need to report an outage or downed line.
- Fully charge cell phones and backup power banks before severe weather hits so you can use them in an emergency.

DURING A TORNADO:

- Seek shelter immediately in a basement or a small, interior room with no windows, such as a bathroom or closet.
- Turn off and unplug appliances and electronics to protect them from power surges. Leave one light on so you'll know when power is restored.
- Do not stay inside a vehicle or try to outrun a tornado. Exit the vehicle and seek shelter in a sturdy building. If none are available, lie flat in a low-lying area away from the vehicle and power lines.

AFTER A TORNADO:

- Stay away from downed power lines and anything they could touch, such as trees, fences or debris. Always assume they are energized.
- If you see a downed line while driving, do not exit your vehicle. Call 911 and your utility, and warn others to stay away.
- Do not touch anyone who is in contact with a power line. Call 911 immediately and wait for emergency responders.
- Do not enter damaged buildings until electricity and gas are shut off by professionals. Never attempt to turn off power if you must stand in water to reach the breaker.
- Avoid flooded areas with electrical outlets, appliances, or cords, and never touch electrical equipment when wet or standing in water.
- Have all water-damaged electrical systems, appliances, and devices inspected by a licensed electrician before use.

POWER OUTAGES AND GENERATOR SAFETY:

- Never use a generator indoors or in partially enclosed spaces such as garages, porches, or near open windows and doors. Place it at least 20 feet away from your home to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Keep the generator dry by placing it on a tarp or under a canopy, and follow all manufacturer's instructions.
- Never plug a generator directly into a wall outlet. This can inadvertently energize power lines and pose a lethal risk to you, neighbors and utility workers.

Stay informed, stay alert, and share this information to help protect your family and community during severe weather events.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – CALEDONIA

Through MiEnergy's revolving loan fund program, Sno Pac Foods, Inc., of Caledonia was awarded $250,000 for the purchase of refrigeration equipment for a new 30,000 square foot frozen storage warehouse. This facility will increase local storage capacity for organic vegetables and other frozen products, while fostering economic growth in the community. Pictured L to R: Representing Sno Pac Foods are Jake Gengler, Seth Gengler, Pete Gengler, Jack Gengler, MiEnergy's Jack Martinka and Don Petersen, Caledonia City Administrator Jake Dickson and MiEnergy's Kent Whitcomb.

Personnel changes at the co-op

RETIREMENT

Randall Ashbacher retired from MiEnergy on February 16. He began his employment with the cooperative on June 5, 1989, retiring as a journeyman foreman for the Caledonia outpost. Thank you Randall for your 36 years of dedication and service to MiEnergy.

Ashbacher

mienergy™ COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

OFFICE INFORMATION
Open Monday-Thursday 7 a.m.- 4 p.m. Friday by appointment.
IOWA 24049 Highway 9, PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136
MINNESOTA 31110 Cooperative Way, PO Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971
This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

PHONE NUMBERS
LOCAL 563-547-3801 (Cresco); 507-864-7783 (Rushford)
TOLL-FREE & 24/7 OUTAGE REPORTING 800-432-2285
PAYMENT LINE 24/7 855-941-3631
UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING 811

ONLINE
WEBSITE www.MiEnergy.coop
SOCIAL MEDIA Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DISTRICT 1 Kim Nelson and Dennis Ptacek, secretary
DISTRICT 2 Dean Nierling, chair and Ron Stevens, vice chair
DISTRICT 3 Don Petersen, treasurer and Skip Wieser
DISTRICT 4 Kyle Holthaus and Carl Reicks
DISTRICT 5 Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer

MANAGEMENT STAFF
BRIAN KRAMBEER president/chief executive officer
SHELLY HOVE chief financial officer
JILL HUFFMAN broadband chief operating officer
STEVE OIAN vice president of electric operations
VASSIL VUTOV vice president of information technology
MIKE WALTON vice president of engineering and planning
KENT WHITCOMB vice president of member services

MINEWS STAFF
MEAGAN MOELLERS communications specialist, editor
ANNIE HOILAND communications specialist
BRENDA TESCH marketing and communications manager

2026 OFFICES CLOSED
APR 3 Good Friday
MAY 25 Memorial Day
JUN 4 Employee Development Day
JUL 3 Independence Day Observance
SEP 7 Labor Day
SEP 10 Employee Development Day
NOV 26-27 Thanksgiving Holiday
DEC 15 Employee Development Day
DEC 24-25 Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
DEC 31 New Year's Eve, close at 11 a.m.
JAN 1 New Year's Day

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

As spring arrives, take advantage of milder temperatures to save energy at home. Open windows on pleasant days to bring in fresh air instead of running your HVAC system. It's also a great time to replace dirty air filters, which helps your system run more efficiently and improves indoor air quality. As daylight increases, turn off unnecessary lights and rely on natural sunlight when possible. Small seasonal adjustments like these can reduce energy use, lower monthly bills and help keep your home comfortable as winter transitions into spring.

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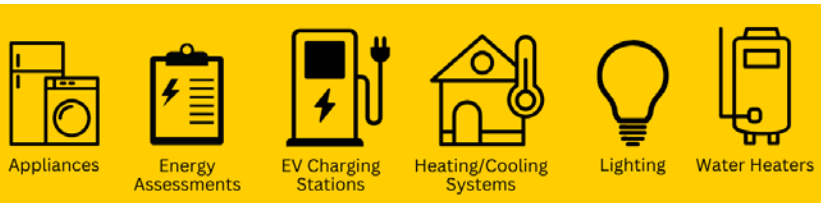
Don't forget about rebates



Check out rebate criteria online at www.MiEnergy.coop/rebates or by calling 1-800-432-2285.
View details of the rebate form before making purchases to ensure your items qualify.

Cooperative offers new $1,000 scholarship

MiEnergy Cooperative is offering a new $1,000 scholarship for local high school seniors pursuing a career as an electrical lineworker. The Next Generation Lineworker Scholarship is funded by MiEnergy's wholesale power supplier, Dairyland Power Cooperative, to support the next generation of skilled energy workers.

The scholarship will be awarded to one graduating senior who has been accepted into a post-secondary electrical lineworker training program. Eligible applicants must have a parent or legal guardian who is a MiEnergy Cooperative member whose principal residence is at their active account address.

Students must submit a completed application, one letter of recommendation from a non-relative, and a short essay describing why they are pursuing a career as a lineworker and how they plan to achieve that goal.

Applications are due April 13, and the scholarship recipient will be notified by April 20.

More information and applications are available at www.MiEnergy.coop/scholarships. Questions may be directed to Annie Hoiland at 800-432-2285 or ahoiland@MiEnergy.coop.