

MiNews

May 2026 Vol. 10 Issue 5
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

Co-op celebrates 90 years of service at annual meeting



Why choose an electric water heater?

What to know about smart appliances

MiEnergy employees are set to clean up a section of ditches along Highway 16 near the Rushford office. As part of the Adopt-A-Highway program, twice a year the cooperative's employees take care of trash pickup. Pictured L-R: Kent Whitcomb, Audra Skalet, Andy Prinsen, Tim Anderson, Wendy Jacobson, Dani Gorder and Heather Larson.





Change over 90 years

This year, MiEnergy celebrates the 90th anniversary of our electric cooperative which included our predecessors Hawkeye REC and Tri-County Electric Cooperative before consolidating to form MiEnergy Cooperative in 2017. 2026 is also the anniversary of the Rural Electrification Act passed by Congress. Certainly, a lot has been accomplished in those 90 years.

Our electric cooperative's success has been built on embracing change and pursuing opportunities. For example, in 1942, when our cooperative acquired the Minnesota Utilities Company that brought the towns of Canton, Fountain, Houston, Prosper, South Rushford and the wholesale cities of Caledonia, Harmony, Mabel, Peterson and Spring Valley into the cooperative family. We've worked with these communities for more than 80 years.

In 2015, we acquired the service territory of Alliant Energy in Minnesota with 12 other electric cooperatives which brought 2,500 members to our cooperative.

In 2016, the members of Hawkeye REC and Tri-County Electric voted overwhelmingly to consolidate our cooperatives to create MiEnergy Cooperative.

MiEnergy has worked in partnership with OneEnergy to install 9 megawatts of utility-scale solar in four separate locations near our substations in Fillmore and Winona counties to reduce on-peak energy costs. We've also grown to support over 1,100 members that installed solar at their farms and homes across our service territory.

We've supported economic development in our service territory and have over \$5 million in revolving loan funds to support business growth. Recent examples of this support are the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) loans for \$1 million to SnoPac Frozen Foods and \$2 million to the Winneshiek Medical Center for business expansions.

We can be thankful that our wholesale power provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative, has done great work to

maintain stable wholesale power costs which make up 64% of MiEnergy's total operating budget. In 2025, we also experienced revenue growth of over \$5.5 million which was a combination of weather-related energy sales and growth from our largest commercial members. Growth for your electric cooperative is good.

We continue to re-invest in our electric plant by upgrading infrastructure. Trees in power lines continue to be our largest cause of power outages. MiEnergy budgets over \$2.4 million annually in our vegetation management program to maintain our 5,600 miles of electric rights-of-way. The result is continued reliable service for members. This investment and growth means no electric rate adjustment for 2026.

As I mentioned, growth is good. An opportunity we continue to pursue in partnership with the City of Harmony is a small edge data center. We have available capacity on an existing 69 kV line – that is not related to any of the other transmission projects in our area – and we have a special large load electric rate from Dairyland Power that would operate directly under the Midwest Independent System Operator protocols; therefore, not impacting system-wide grid reliability.

The City of Harmony is working through their public process of establishing zoning requirements. Our partnership with the City of Harmony has been built over the past 80 years and we have appreciated the trust and transparency through this exciting opportunity.

There have been a lot of changes in our cooperative's 90-year history, and we've been very successful in capitalizing on opportunities and adapting to changes to make our cooperative stronger. Thank you for your support of your electric cooperative.

Be safe this spring and as always, I welcome your calls, emails and personal visits.

Board room highlights | April 30, 2026

- Held the annual reorganization meeting. The officers are as follows: Chair Dean Nierling, Vice Chair Jenny Scharmer, Secretary Dennis Ptacek and Treasurer Don Petersen. Jenny Scharmer is MiEnergy's Dairyland board representative.
- CFO Hove discussed the first quarter financials and operating expenses.
- CEO Krambeer provided a recap of the annual meeting
- Discussion was held on the upcoming Dairyland Power Cooperative annual meeting and a spokesperson was selected.
- Hove provided the RUS audit report.
- Krambeer provided an update on cooperative subsidiaries.

The next board meeting is May 30 at 9 a.m. at the Rushford office.

CLOSED MEMORIAL DAY
MONDAY, MAY 25

Outages can be reported 24/7, including holidays. Payments can be made anytime by calling 855-941-3631.

What to know about smart appliances

Smart appliances—such as refrigerators, washers, ovens, thermostats and water heaters—connect to the internet. Typically, through Wi-Fi or Bluetooth, these appliances can be controlled using your smartphone, tablet or voice-assistant device. They are designed to optimize energy use and add convenience. Some smart devices can even learn your habits over time.



Are smart appliances right for your home? The answer depends on your preferences and types of appliances you already have. The better question might be: Are smart appliances right for you? Do you like the newest tech and typically keep your phone within arm's reach? Do you enjoy the convenience of calling out commands to Alexa? Or do you prefer less technology or something in between?

Many smart appliances allow you to see how much energy each device consumes. That information can be helpful to better understand your energy habits and identify where energy may be going to waste.

Smart thermostats are a popular choice for managing energy use and reducing energy waste. Heating and cooling systems are typically a home's biggest sources of energy consumption. According to Energy Star, you can save an average of 8% on heating and cooling with a smart thermostat. Savings depend on your climate, the type of system you have and how you currently use it.

Most energy savings from a smart thermostat come from automating temperature adjustments while you are sleeping or away from home. If you are already good at manually adjusting your thermostat, you likely won't see big savings, but you might prefer the

convenience of a programmable device you can control on an app.

Smart thermostats make it much easier to program your heating and cooling schedule. Some have geofencing features that automatically adjust settings based on how far your phone is from home.

Coming in with the second-highest energy user in most homes is the water heater. You may like the smart controls on a heat pump water heater. Because it uses heat pump technology to move heat instead of using energy to create heat, it makes it two to three times more efficient than a conventional electric resistance water heater. You can save even more energy with smart heat pump water heaters.

You can monitor energy use, change settings if you need more hot water and check how much hot water is available before getting in the shower. The app notifies you when it's time to clean the air filter on top of the unit. You can even set it to vacation mode. Not all heat pump water heaters have smart technology, so be sure to check before buying.

Wi-Fi refrigerators allow you to monitor energy use. Not everyone will like getting notified every time the door opens, but getting reminded to use items before they spoil or viewing what's in the fridge while grocery shopping can be helpful.

Monitoring energy use and making it easier to control your household devices are benefits of smart appliances. Before upgrading, do your research to understand how the features work and whether they benefit your lifestyle.

CELEBRATING NINETY YEARS
90
1936 2026
MIENERGY COOPERATIVE
ON THE SHINING LIGHT 1960s

1960 Saluting the Silver Jubilee (25 years) of Rural Electrification 1935-1960.
1960 Hawkeye letter to members for silver dollar - "symbolic of hundreds of thousands of dollars which you and your neighbors have saved through ownership and control of your non-profit electric co-op."
1961 Earl Johnson becomes Tri-County's 4th manager, serves 21 years.
1963 Hawkeye paid off its \$1.9 million REA loan used to build power lines.
1964 Janet Price and Bill Seele - first Hawkeye participants to attend the Rural Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., sponsored by electric co-ops.

Tri-County newsletter April 1960
Hawkeye 1963
Hawkeye's First Youth Tour 1964
Hawkeye October, 1963
Tri-County employees 1961
Hawkeye Office: Carol Robinson, Leona Hageman and A.C. Weinkauff May 11, 1963
TEC 1966
Tri-County Members Honor Pioneers
State High School Rodeo Dates Listed
March Outage

Nelson and Ptacek re-elected to board and bylaw amendments pass



MiEnergy celebrated its 10th annual meeting on April 8. Approximately 90 members attended the event at the Mabel Community Center. The meeting was also live streamed through YouTube.

District 1 had two seats up for election. Incumbent Kim Nelson, of Spring Valley, prevailed over challenger Jordan Fontenello, Preston. Incumbent Dennis Ptacek, of Elma, ran unopposed. A total of 503 ballots were cast.

District 1 board directors represent the following townships: Beaver, Bennington, Bloomfield, Carimona, Carrolton, Chatfield, Elmira, Fillmore, Forestville, Fountain, Frankford, Fremont, Jordan, Le Roy, Pilot Mound, Racine, Saratoga, Spring Valley, Sumner and York in Minnesota; and Afton, Chester, Douglas, East Lincoln, Howard, Jamestown, Jenkins, Oakdale, Saratoga and Wayne in Iowa.

All directors serve three-year terms.

The board of directors recommended that members vote to approve bylaw amendments to six sections of the document. A total of 2,756 ballots were cast. The bylaw amendments were approved by 87% of the voting members.

The election results were certified by an independent election vendor, Survey and Ballot Systems, and Dennis Puckett from Sullivan & Ward.

Board Treasurer Don Petersen reported that the cooperative remained in good financial condition and met all its lenders' financial requirements. Eide Bailly audited the financials, which gave the cooperative a favorable report.

The meeting's theme was "Trust That Spans Generations" as the cooperative is celebrating 90 years of service to northeastern Iowa and southeastern Minnesota in 2026.

President/CEO Brian Krambeer's report described the historical significance of the signing of the Rural Electrification Act in 1936.

"It's hard to imagine. During the mid-1930s, less than 10% of U.S. farms had electricity. Low density and the high costs to provide service made it undesirable for the investor-owned utilities to deliver that service," Krambeer explained. "Our success has involved adapting to change and pursuing opportunities to grow to make the cooperative better."

ANNUAL MEETING Prize Winners

IN PERSON
\$100 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT
 VANCE HAUGEN | CANTON

\$50 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT
 MARK / CAROLYN HEMESATH | RIDGEWAY
 SHELDON/ MARY ELLEN PRASKA | CRESCO
 DENNIS OSTWINKLE | DECORAH
 JOHN MAGNUSON | RUSHFORD
 RANDY / BARBARA SCHNEPPER | RICEVILLE
 ELIZABETH HOETZLE | CANTON
 HARVEY BENSON | HARMONY
 ALLEN / CHERYL WHITESITT | BROWNSVILLE
 JACK / JULIE KOLKA | DECORAH
 MYRON REDISKE | DECORAH
 DONALD KRIVACHEK | FORT ATKINSON
 LEONARD SHATEK | ELMA
 JOAN/AIDAN LECHTENBERG | NEW HAMPTON
 BIRGITTA MEADE | DECORAH

STREAMING VIEWERS
\$50 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT
 KATHLEEN FITZPATRICK | BROWNSVILLE
 JIM & CINDY HOBELSBERGER | LA CRESCENT
 CYNTHIE CHRISTENSEN | RUSHFORD
 WADE BAKKER | WYKOFF

TRUST THAT SPANS generations

The report provided updates on the fuel mix of MiEnergy's power supplier, solar generation and local economic development efforts.

Krambeer closed out the 2026 budget highlights by announcing, "end result is no rate change for 2026."

Other topics covered included the role of the Midwest Independent System Operation (MISO) in the MariBell transmission line project, the planning for large energy loads, energy politics and broadband initiatives.

smart hub

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mienergy COOPERATIVE

Personnel changes at the co-op

NEW EMPLOYEES

We are pleased to announce that Ajay Ristau has accepted the apprentice lineworker position for the Caledonia Outpost. He started on March 30. Welcome, Ajay, to MiEnergy!

We are pleased to announce that Tyler Thomas has accepted the journeyman lineworker position for the Rushford office. He started on March 9. Welcome, Tyler, to the cooperative!



Ristau



Thomas

Why CHOOSE an ELECTRIC storage water heater?

Free water heater

Building a new home? Switching from gas to an electric water heater? MiEnergy members are eligible for a **FREE** 85- or 105-gallon Marathon water heater if they join the cooperative's energy management program. All other members can get significant rebates on the purchase of a water heater from MiEnergy if joining the energy management program.

Free service from your co-op

MiEnergy Cooperative provides **FREE** service calls during normal business hours (7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday). Members registering the water heater online within 90 days of installation qualify for a **FREE** lifetime tank and six-year parts warranty.

Safety

No threat of carbon monoxide poisoning, combustion or explosion.

Easy installation

No gas line installation, no venting required and no fuel tank necessary.

Environmental & grid friendly

MiEnergy's Marathon water heaters are 98% efficient and can be paired with electricity generated from renewable resources. Combined with the co-op's energy management device it runs like a "smart appliance," providing stability and efficiency to the power grid by heating water when demand for electricity is low and storing it for later use.



800.432.2285 | www.MiEnergy.coop/water-heaters

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HELP KEEP ELECTRIC LINE WORKERS SAFE



Be patient when the power goes out. Workers need to work efficiently and safely to restore power.

ZONE IN ON SAFETY

- 1 work zone crash occurs every 5.4 minutes
- 70 work zone crashes result in injuries each day
- 12 work zone crashes result in at least 1 fatality each week

Respect roadside work crews.

Don't drive distracted. Reduce your speed. Change lanes.

DON'T post signs on utility poles.

Foreign objects can tear utility workers' protective clothing, which is the first line of protection from an electric shock.

Never plug a generator into a wall outlet in your home or garage. The power that back feeds into the electric line could electrocute a utility worker or neighbor.

Electric line workers **RANK 15** on the list of **25 MOST DANGEROUS JOBS** in America. Help keep them safe!

Learn more at SafeElectricity.org

6 Tips for Year-Round ENERGY SAVINGS

- 1 Use your ceiling fan** counterclockwise in the summer for a down breeze, and clockwise in the winter for an updraft to force warm air down into your room.
- 2 Turn off lights** and unplug chargers and electronics when not in use.
- 3 Regularly change or clean your furnace and indoor AC filters** as recommended, and keep the area around your outdoor AC unit clear of obstructions.
- 4 Close or lower window coverings** to keep out heat or cold.
- 5 Insulate your home** and weatherproof windows and doors.
- 6 Use a programmable or smart thermostat.** Adjust the temperature a few degrees for overall savings.

Get more tips on creating a resilient and efficient home:

[MiEnergy COOPERATIVE](http://MiEnergy.coop) SafeElectricity.org

out & about in your COMMUNITY



13TH ANNUAL REC ARCHERY SHOOT—WEST UNION

Demonstrating two core cooperative principles, MiEnergy and Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative (ACEC) joined together to show "Concern for Community" and "Cooperation Among Cooperatives" during the 13th annual REC Archery Fundraiser. During the event, they raised \$7,001. Proceeds were donated to the Waukon Skills USA Program at Waukon High School, with the money going toward the purchase of a new plasma cutter. Every year, the program builds a house, doing everything from design to construction to electrical work. Thank you to all the sponsors for their continued support of this program. Pictured L-R: Dave Wilkes, MiEnergy, Josh Abbott, ACEC, and Caleb Ferring, Waukon High School.



CRESTWOOD FFA SPONSOR—CRESCO

MiEnergy sponsored an award at the Crestwood FFA Chapter banquet. MiEnergy's Meagan Moellers (left) presents the award to Justin Haskovec (right) for achieving fifth place in fruit sales this year.



SPRING LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE—WASHINGTON, D.C.

MiEnergy's Brad Dull (and wife Jodi), Brian Krambeer and Jenny Scharmer attended the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual Legislative Conference. It is an opportunity to meet face-to-face with lawmakers to champion the needs of rural America. More than 1,500 co-op leaders were briefed on key legislative priorities, including a push for smart energy policy to ensure reliable, affordable power for members we serve.

At upper left, Scharmer and Krambeer met with Congressman Tom Emmer. They also met with Senator Amy Klobuchar (far left). Krambeer, the Dulls and Scharmer (left). Bottom, the Dulls (in the back row sitting at left) were with a group from Iowa who met with Senator Chuck Grassley. Krambeer presented the FEMA reform legislation to all co-op delegates.



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OFFICE INFORMATION
 Open Monday-Thursday 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. Friday by appointment.
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS
 DISTRICT 1 Kim Nelson and Dennis Ptacek, secretary
 DISTRICT 2 Dean Nierling, chair and Ron Stevens
 DISTRICT 3 Don Petersen, treasurer and Skip Wieser
 DISTRICT 4 Kyle Holthaus and Carl Reicks
 DISTRICT 5 Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer, vice chair

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

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

2026 OFFICES CLOSED
 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

While air sealing is often associated with keeping cold air out during winter, it's just as important during summer. Tiny cracks and worn weatherstripping allow cool, conditioned air to escape and hot, humid air to seep indoors. This forces your air conditioner to work harder than necessary and increases energy costs. A tighter home keeps you more comfortable and helps manage energy use.

Source: energy.gov

POWER OUTAGES GET NOTIFIED

MiEnergy offers power outage text notifications. Sign up online at www.MiEnergy.coop/outages. Select Power Outage Notification Sign Up and be prepared with your electric account number. The site will walk you through the set-up to have a text message sent to you when your power is out and another when power has been restored.

Wed, April 18, 8:57 PM
 MiEnergy: Your service location is currently involved in a power outage. Service Address: 12345 POWER LINE RD


Wed, April 18, 10:06 PM
 MiEnergy: Our system shows your power has been restored. If not, please call 1-800-432-2285. Service address: 12345 POWER LINE RD

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Do The
**SUMMER
SHIFT**

Curb energy use in June, July & August

Keep electric rates
affordable

Keeping electric rates affordable is a top priority for MiEnergy. One way to help is to reduce electric use on weekdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the months of June, July and August.

Historically, about two-thirds of MiEnergy's operating costs are for purchasing wholesale power. The cooperative is considered a summer peaking system. The cost for power is highest during the summer months on weekdays between the hours of 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Members who can shift or reduce their energy use during this timeframe can help the co-op save on wholesale power costs. It means smaller rate increases and/or less frequent rate increases in the future for the membership. It is as easy as delaying the dishwasher, shifting the start of laundry and setting your thermostat for air conditioning a few degrees higher.

Members will be able to hear and see reminders of this summer's campaign in the form of bill inserts, radio ads, print ads, website content and social media posts. This is the 15th year the co-op has committed to running a campaign to encourage members to shift electric use during the summer months.



Electrical Safety Checklist

ROOM-BY-ROOM

Check these monthly to keep your home and family safe.

KITCHEN

- Clean refrigerator coils and allow space for airflow.
- Store and use appliances away from the sink.
- Use and test GFCI outlets.
- Inspect cords for cracks or frays.
- Keep cords off counters; unplug when not in use.

BEDROOM

- Place and test smoke and CO detectors on every level and near sleeping areas.
- Keep cords out from under rugs or furniture.
- Unplug devices and chargers when not in use.
- Make sure light bulbs are the correct wattage.
- Plug window AC units into a dedicated circuit.

BASEMENT

- Ensure washer and dryer are stable and ventilated. Remove dryer lint after each use.
- Set water heater to 120° F or lower.
- Have furnace inspected and confirm proper ventilation.

BATHROOM

- Keep appliances away from water (sink, toilet, tub, shower).
- Unplug appliances when not in use.
- Use and test GFCI outlets.

LIVING ROOM

- Use safety caps on unused outlets, especially if children or pets are present.
- Ensure electronics have space for airflow.
- Replace cracked light switch or outlet covers.
- Avoid overloading outlets, power strips and surge protectors.

GARAGE

- Use and test GFCI outlets.
- Inspect cords for cracks or damage.
- Unplug tools and appliances when not in use.
- Place garage refrigerators/freezers on dedicated appliance circuits.

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