MiNews

August 2025 Vol. 9 Issue 8
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

Co-op milestone

10th anniversary of Alliant Energy acquisition

WHO OWNS WHAT WHEN IT COMES TO ELECTRIC SERVICE EQUIPMENT

Benefits of off-peak electric vehicle charging

Lineworkers Andy Prinsen and Cole Kingsley are pictured inside the Kingsland Substation just east of Spring Valley. They kicked off the planned outage on July 31 for a final cutover of 12 electric accounts to signify the completion of the 10-year wholesale power contract with Alliant Energy. Read more in the CEO column this month on the Southern Minnesota Energy Cooperative's acquisition of accounts in 2015. Watch for more photos in next month's issue.

10th anniversary of SMEC

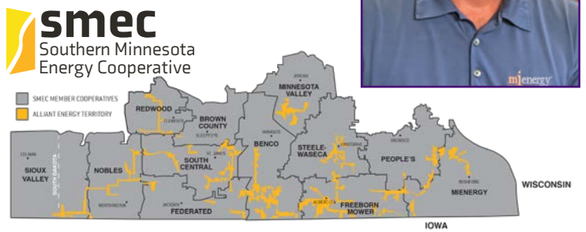
July 31, 2025, marked the 10-year anniversary of the Minnesota Public Utility Commission's (PUC's) approval of the Southern Minnesota Energy Cooperative's (SMEC's) historical acquisition of the Alliant Energy service territory in Minnesota by the dozen electric cooperatives that created SMEC.

For decades, electric cooperatives in the southern part of Minnesota operated around the intertwined service territory of Alliant Energy that weaved across the southern Minnesota counties, connecting small towns. Alliant had a relatively small customer base in Minnesota that stretched across the southern part of the state, with the majority of the investor-owned utility's customers located in Iowa (Interstate Power & Light) and Wisconsin. For a decade before 2015, the 12 electric cooperatives regularly approached Alliant Energy, seeking to acquire their customers and make them electric cooperative members. That request was consistently returned with no interest.

In 2013, that request gave way with an invitation to discuss the possibilities further. Excited to talk exclusively with Alliant Energy management, I traveled to their headquarters in Madison, Wis. with Elaine Garry from People's Energy Cooperative and Rick Burud from Nobles Electric Cooperative/Federated Rural Electric Association. Our message was well received and blossomed into regular meetings that ultimately led to signing a definitive agreement to acquire the 43,000 accounts in Minnesota.

One of the initial requirements Alliant Energy requested was to complete a single transaction and not have to undertake 12 individual sales agreements with the 12 electric cooperatives that had Alliant customers within their service territory. This led to the early and significant creation of SMEC to serve as the cooperatives' single point of contact and a platform to complete the acquisition with Alliant Energy and attain approval from the Minnesota PUC.

SMEC has played a critical role in the history of each of the participating cooperatives. SMEC has no assets, no headquarters and no full-time employees. Yet, it is a pillar cooperative organization with a board of directors made up



of managers of the 12 electric cooperatives. SMEC not only served as the single point of contact in representing the 12 electric cooperatives in the sale, but it also facilitated the transition from Alliant Energy to the individual cooperatives and managed the operation that included monthly wholesale power billings. SMEC's board of directors has worked relentlessly to transition the "customers" of the investor-owned utility to cooperative "members" of the individual cooperatives.

I have had the privilege of serving as the board chair of SMEC since its creation. I have tremendous respect and admiration for the 11 other members of the board who consistently overcame obstacles to make SMEC and its cooperatives successful. Now-retired cooperative manager Rick Burud has also been invaluable in working part-time to serve as the CEO of SMEC.

In 2017, SMEC was awarded our national association's most prestigious award, the Electric Cooperative Purpose Award, for our collaborative efforts and our lasting contributions to the membership.

I clearly recall the testimony before the Minnesota PUC on April 30, 2015, that our electric cooperatives would show increased value to these new cooperative members and pledged increased service reliability, in addition to competitive electric rates.

Upon taking ownership of the Alliant Energy distribution assets, MiEnergy (then Tri-County) sectionalized the distribution system to eliminate power outages affecting the entire system. We increased vegetation management efforts along rights-of-way and replaced aging poles. Those improvements, in addition to having local crews responding to problems, have truly improved system reliability and delivered greater value from our cooperative. Today, MiEnergy's electricity rates are lower than Alliant Energy's rates in northeastern Iowa.

MiEnergy welcomed 2,500 new members of our cooperative upon approval of the Minnesota PUC 10 years ago. These members have voted in director elections, approved the consolidation of Tri-County and Hawkeye REC to form MiEnergy and accrued capital credits from our business structure.

It's been a celebrated milestone in the history of MiEnergy and our 11 cooperative partners.

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

Board room highlights | July 31, 2025

- MiEnergy's Minnesota Youth Tour delegate Quinn Potter provided a presentation on her recent trip to Washington, D.C.
- Director of Finance Johanna Stayskal presented the financial report which is tracking to budget.
- Management provided updates on operations that included storm recovery, 10th anniversary of SMEC, large load opportunities, Iowa and MN BEAD and a load control receiver project update.
- Approved a time-of-use rate program for residential members.
- CEO Krambeer provided an update on cooperative subsidiaries.

The next board meeting will be at the Cresco office on August 28 at 9 a.m.

COOL SAVINGS:
Refrigerator & freezer efficiency tips

When exploring ways to be more efficient with refrigerators and freezers, we often find ourselves stuck between convenience and conserving energy. While you can upgrade to newer equipment, care and equipment habits can be just as important to saving energy.

Here is some guidance on equipment energy use, including tips to keep your current equipment running efficiently and ways to limit overuse of refrigeration in our homes.

The U.S. Department of Energy helps us understand what to look for in our existing equipment and new appliances. In general, the larger the refrigerator, the more energy it uses. The most efficient models are typically 16 to 20 cubic feet. Models with the freezer on top tend to use less energy than bottom freezers or side-by-side units. A refrigerator 15 years or older uses about 35% more energy than an Energy Star-certified model.

Let's explore some tips to keep your refrigerator running efficiently.

- **KEEP IT ORGANIZED**
  One of the biggest issues with refrigerator energy use is opening the door or keeping it open. An organized fridge makes food items easier to find, minimizing open-door time and keeping cold air inside. Place items in the same spots so they are easier and faster to find. I tell my kids to take a quick look inside at the options and close the door while they are deciding what to eat.
- **KEEP IT CLEAN**
  Regularly cleaning the gasket—the flexible strip around the perimeter of the fridge door—ensures a tight seal between the door and the unit to keep cold air inside. If the gasket is not sealing tightly, it should be replaced. Removing and cleaning the vent at the bottom of the unit can help airflow. For the coils at the back, use an extended cleaning brush instead of moving the fridge and risking injury.
- **KEEP FOOD SAFETY IN MIND**
  The Department of Energy recommends setting your refrigerator temperature between 35 and 38 degrees and freezer at 0 degrees.

If you have a second refrigerator or freezer, here are some things to consider that can help you save energy.

- Do you need it plugged in year-round? Perhaps you can keep it empty and unplugged for part of the year. Maybe you only really need it during the holiday season. Unplugging it for the months you aren't using it will save energy, and you'll still have it as a backup when you need it.
- If you are a hunter or buy meat in bulk, set a goal to empty out your freezer before you restock. This allows you to avoid food waste and unplug the extra appliance when it is not needed.
- If possible, consider the location. Keeping the second fridge or freezer in a cool basement versus a hot garage requires less energy.

Instilling simple cleaning and food storage habits are easy ways to be more efficient with your in-home refrigeration.

Miranda Boutelle has more than 20 years of experience helping people save energy at home, and she writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

End of seasonal Summer Shift campaign

Still time to participate and discover

As we wrap up the final month of the Summer Shift campaign, we want to again explain why we encourage you to use electricity before 11 a.m. and after 7 p.m. on summer weekdays.

Electricity costs differ depending on the time of day it is being used. Consumers in our regional energy pool use more electricity summer weekdays between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Think of 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. as electricity "rush hours". All central station generation is on-line and transmission routes reach capacity. That makes the costs high with some cases translating to many multiples of our typical rates.

As a member-owned, non-profit, electric cooperative, we have no incentive for you to use more electricity than necessary. Our goal is to provide reliable and affordable electricity to our members. One way to make that happen is to educate members on what they can do to make a difference.

The Summer Shift campaign provides an easy way for members to make a difference in their electric costs. It is just three months out of the year (June, July and August) and only on weekdays. We even provide ideas on exactly what you can do between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. that will help.

- Delay the start of the dishwasher.
- Turn up the thermostat a few degrees.
- Shift the start of laundry.

Thanks for your participation in helping keep electric rates affordable for everyone.

Three smart home technologies to help you save energy

Smart technologies make our homes more comfortable, convenient and energy efficient. By connecting your home Wi-Fi network, smart devices automate everyday tasks like lighting, heating, cooling and home security—they can even communicate with other smart devices in the home.

While not all smart home products are specifically designed with energy savings in mind, there are several smart technologies that can help you lower home energy use. Here are the top three smart home devices to help you save.

SMART THERMOSTATS

Smart or not, your thermostat is the most effective tool for controlling energy use, as heating and cooling typically account for the largest portion of energy bills. Smart thermostats allow you to adjust the indoor temperature through an app, giving you full control from anywhere on the go. Many smart thermostats include learning capabilities and will adjust the thermostat based on previous behavior and patterns.

According to the Department of Energy, smart thermostats can reduce heating and cooling bills by more than 8% annually, and with models as low as $65, they typically pay for themselves in one year.

SMART LIGHTING

Smart LED bulbs use less electricity than traditional bulbs and can be scheduled or turned off (or on) remotely through a smart phone app. Smart bulbs are available in a range of shapes, brightness levels, colors and more, so shop for the products that work best for your home lighting needs.

Many smart bulbs include motion sensors that turn on or off based on room activity, further optimizing home energy use. If you're new to smart lighting, try a home starter kit. Prices for kits range from $70 to $300+ depending on how many bulbs you need.

SMART PLUGS

Smart plugs are inexpensive gadgets that can help you save energy. Many electronic devices consume power even when they are turned off (known as "phantom load"), which can take a toll on your energy bills. Smart plugs are simply plugged into an electrical outlet and connected to your Wi-Fi network. When set up, the smart plug can cut power (or return power) to non-smart devices, like coffee makers, phone chargers and other items that draw phantom load.

Many smart plugs can be paired with popular smart hubs, like Alexa or Google Nest, or controlled through the plug's associated app. Smart plugs are simple to use and a set of four can be purchased for as little as $25.

If you're looking for new ways to save energy, try these budget-friendly, convenient smart home technologies.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperative.

Who owns what?

Understanding electric equipment responsibilities

As the summer season comes to a close, so does the increased potential for severe weather. We saw firsthand this season how summer storms can arrive quickly and hit hard, sometimes causing significant damage to essential electric equipment.

MiEnergy is always prepared to respond swiftly to outages and restore power safely, but it is also important for homeowners to understand which parts of the electric system are their responsibility and which are maintained by us at the co-op. Understanding these key differences can help speed up repairs and ensure everyone stays safe when the weather turns rough.

MiEnergy is responsible for maintaining and repairing the equipment and lines that run to your home, including utility poles, distribution power lines, electric meters and padmounted transformers.

Members are responsible for the equipment located between the electric meter and your home or business, including any underground service lines that lead into the structure and the service panel. Members are also responsible for the weatherhead and service mast located outside the home.

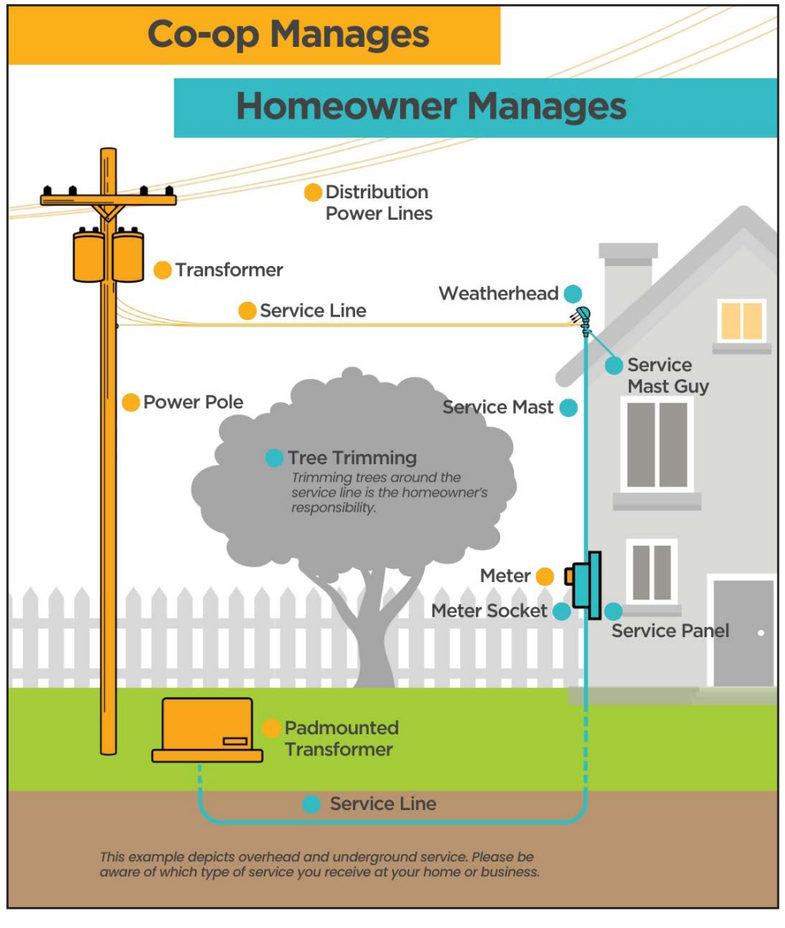
If any equipment that you (the homeowner) are responsible for is damaged, please call a licensed electrician to conduct the repairs. A professional has the experience and know-how to assess and manage these types of repairs.

When severe weather damages electrical equipment, it's important to note that any necessary repairs to the homeowner's equipment must be conducted before MiEnergy crews can restore power to your home or business. By understanding the equipment you are responsible for, the repair and restoration process will be smoother and faster.

We take great pride in the beautiful trees and landscaping that contribute to the natural beauty of where we live, however, regular trimming is essential to ensure reliable electric service and minimize damage from severe weather. MiEnergy regularly trims trees throughout our service territory to improve service reliability. If you spot a tree limb that is obstructing a distribution power line outside your home, please call MiEnergy so we can trim those limbs and maintain those lines.

Any overgrown limbs or vegetation around the service line is the homeowner's responsibility, and in these cases, please call a professional tree trimming service to assist. Keep in mind that if you are working around powerlines, MiEnergy can stop by and deenergize and reenergize a line if given proper notice without a charge in an effort to keep people safe.

If you have any questions about your electrical equipment, we're here to help.



Be prepared for all your hot water needs

Do research before water heater failure

Most people don't think much about water heaters. It's easy to take for granted hot showers, clean dinner dishes and freshly laundered linens. The lonely water heater, tucked away in the basement or a utility closet, is out of sight and out of mind. But it's also equally important to be confident that your water heater will keep the water hot until you need it. How old is your water heater? Is it time to start thinking about replacing the unit before equipment failure occurs?

The co-op has been selling efficient, electric water heaters for decades. Members can get discounts on 85 and 105-gallon electric Marathon water heaters purchased at the cooperative. MiEnergy provides free service, parts and labor during normal business hours. A service charge applies if after regular business hours. To qualify for this discount, the water heater must be on the MiEnergy energy management program. MiEnergy will provide a FREE Marathon water heater to members building a new house.

Whether you are in need of a water heater for a new construction or to replace an electric or gas model, call the energy experts at MiEnergy today or visit our website at www.MiEnergy.coop for details on the co-ops water heaters and energy management programs.

Don't forget about our rebates!


Appliances


Energy Assessments


EV Charging Stations


Heating/Cooling Systems


Lighting


Water heaters

MiEnergy has a variety of rebates available to members that purchase energy-efficient products and appliances that meet or exceed specific criteria. Those rebates are only available until funds are depleted, or December 31, whichever comes first.

Rebate forms and information about the Inflation Reduction Act are available online at www.MiEnergy.coop/rebates or by calling 1-800-432-2285. View details of the rebate before making purchases to ensure your items qualify.

Where's my rebate check?

MiEnergy does not mail rebate checks. The rebate amount will appear as a line item on your bill with the word "rebate," and the amount will be listed as a credit.

Power up smartly

Benefits of off-peak EV charging

As electric vehicles (EVs) continue to grow in popularity, it's increasingly important for EV owners to understand the impact of charging during peak demand hours and how to leverage off-peak charging rates and incentives effectively.

Thoughtful EV charging, particularly during off-peak hours, is a win-win for the EV owner through lower rates, but this also helps balance electrical load.

WHAT IS PEAK DEMAND?

Peak demand is when electricity use is at its highest in an area, typically during busy energy-use times for homes, farms and businesses. More appliance use, business activities and even weather can create spikes in demand, making it more challenging for your electric co-op to keep the grid stable and manage costs.

A STRATEGIC APPROACH

MiEnergy plays a vital role in managing energy demand and ensuring reliable service for all members. For co-op members who own EVs, off-peak charging provides a strategic solution to help reduce strain on the grid while also lowering costs— because charging when demand is lower eases pressure on the electric grid. This helps avoid costly infrastructure upgrades and supports a more reliable, efficient system that benefits everyone in our community.

Off-peak periods—typically during early morning hours and late at night—are times when the overall demand for electricity is lower, allowing co-ops to offer more affordable rates and incentives to shift energy consumption.

Charging your EV during off-peak hours may mean taking advantage of reduced electricity rates or incentives, helping you save money compared to charging during peak demand times. Smart scheduling means more affordable EV ownership and better energy budgeting.

EV Time Of Use Rate

	On-Peak	Off-Peak
Weekdays 9 a.m.-9 p.m.	19.3¢/kWh	4.9¢/kWh
Weekends & Holidays	4.9¢/kWh	

Basic Service is 27¢/day

EV Subscription Rate

	Monthly cost	kWh limit
Tier 1	$35	800
Subscription time period for charging is 9 p.m.-5 a.m. daily		
Tier 2	$70	1,500

Anything over these limits will be billed at your normal energy rate.

BENEFITS OF OFF-PEAK EV CHARGING

Off-peak charging provides a win-win solution for members and electric cooperatives by offering cost savings, improved grid reliability and environmental benefits. This practice not only enhances the appeal of EVs but also aligns with the cooperative values of reliability, sustainability and affordability, helping build a smarter and more efficient energy system for future generations.

MiEnergy has two electric vehicle rates for members: an EV time of use rate and an EV subscription rate. For details visit www.MiEnergy.coop/evcharging or call 800-432-2285.

Local business activity

Above, Sno Pac Foods, of Caledonia, receives a $1 million-dollar pass-through USDA loan from MiEnergy Cooperative's economic development program. The loan will be used for building a new cold storage facility. Pictured from L-R: Representing Sno Pac Foods are Nick Gengler, Jake Gengler, Jack Gengler, Pete Gengler and Brian Krambeer, MiEnergy president/CEO.

At left, WinnMed receives a $2 million-dollar pass-through USDA loan from MiEnergy Cooperative's economic development program. The loan will be used for a new addition to its medical center and complete extensive renovations to the existing facility in Decorah. Pictured from L-R: John Schroeher from Decorah Bank & Trust, Ben Stevens from WinnMed, Shelly Hove from MiEnergy and Cole Phillips from Decorah Bank & Trust.

Connect with your co-op at the Iowa State Fair!

The Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa are pleased to once again sponsor the 4-H Exhibits Building at the 2025 Iowa State Fair. MiEnergy is proud to be a Touchstone Energy member, which means we're part of a nationwide network of locally owned co-ops that provides resources and leverages partnerships to help member-consumers use energy wisely.

If you're planning a visit to the Iowa State Fair from August 7-17, make sure to stop by and see us in the air conditioned 4-H Exhibits Building on the southwest corner of the fairgrounds.

Electric co-op staff from across the state will hand out plastic hard hats and suckers for the kids while supplies last. Kids can also try on some lineworker safety gear and take fun photos in our co-op safety selfie station.

What is electric shock drowning?

Know the signs of this hidden danger

Electric shock drowning (ESD) is a type of drowning that many people are not familiar with. ESD happens when electrical current seeps into water from a nearby electrical source such as a yacht, boat or dock. It can also happen in a pool, hot tub or water park if there is faulty wiring or other electrical issues.

TO PREVENT AND RECOGNIZE ESD:

- Do not swim around docks with electrical service or boats that are plugged into a power source.
- If you are swimming and feel tingling or shocks, swim away from the dock or other electrical source.
- Try to stay upright and tuck your legs up.
- Alert others to cut the power source.
- If you feel a shock, swim away from the dock.
- Do not jump in to try and save someone you suspect is exposed to electricity in the water. Instead:
- Eliminate the source of power.
- Throw a float.
- Call 9-1-1.
- After the power is shut off, pull the person in with the float rope. If you cannot find a pulse, start CPR.

PREVENTION AND MAINTENANCE

- If you own a boat that has an electrical system, ensure circuits have GFCIs and check them often.
- If you have a dock with electricity, have its electrical system inspected regularly by a licensed contractor.

While it is impossible to know if water is electrified just by looking, learning about the dangers of ESD can help keep you and others safe in the water.

out & about in your COMMUNITY

HOWARD COUNTY FAIR– CRESCO

MiEnergy sponsored and helped judge three contests at the Howard County Fair: homemade salsa, strawberry dessert and light bulb decorating.

Winners of the salsa contest were: Anne Wemark (1st), Marsha Emerson (2nd) and Phyllis Stevenson (3rd).

Winners of the strawberry dessert contest were: Marsha Emerson (1st), Tammy Kulish (2nd) and Olivia Johnson (3rd). Judges and winners pictured L-R: MiEnergy Youth Tour Delegate Emma Godman, Howard County Fair Queen Contestant Kenzie Moellers, Kulish, Emerson and MiEnergy's Nancy Franzen.

Winners of the light bulb decorating contest taking old, used light bulbs and turning them into creative masterpiece were: Mia Gardner (1st), Khole Gragert (2nd) and Ruby Jackson (3rd).

WINNESHIEK COUNTY FAIR– DECORAH

MiEnergy sponsored and helped judge two contests at the Winneshiek County Fair: apple pie and chocolate chip cookies.

For the apple pie contest, pictured L-R: MiEnergy's Marlyn Ohloff, Deb Schott (1st), Marian Rovang Rude (2nd), Elaine Knutson (3rd), Decorah Bank and Trust's Jackie Kruse and Viking Bank & Trust's Creed Monroe.

For the chocolate chip cookie contest, pictured L-R: MiEnergy's Tim McConnell, Decorah Bank and Trust's Lydia Cunningham and Morgan Fechner and, Kristin Fankhauser (1st), Cydney Weitzel (2nd), Elaine Knutson (3rd).

RUSHFORD DAYS PARADE– RUSHFORD

L-R MiEnergy employees Jordan Williams, Brian and Rhonda Bauer, Kari Steele, Beth Olson (MiEnergy director) and Dani Gorder, along with their families and friends represented the cooperative in the Rushford Days Parade on July 19.

KESSEL KIDS VISIT– CRESCO

A class from Kessel Kids visited our Cresco office where they saw the trucks and tools used by the lineworkers. Thanks to Caleb Steiner, Matt Ackman and Meagan Moellers for helping with the visit. The little kids received coloring pages reminding them of the dangers around electricity.

miEnergy™ COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

OFFICE INFORMATION
Open Monday-Thursday 7 a.m.- 4 p.m. Friday by appointment.
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PAYMENT LINE 24/7 855-941-3631
UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING 811

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DISTRICT 4 Kyle Holthaus and Carl Reicks
DISTRICT 5 Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer

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ANNIE HOILAND communications specialist
BRENDA TESCH marketing and communications manager

2025 OFFICES CLOSED
SEPT 1 Labor Day
SEPT 9 Employee Development Day
NOV 27-28 Thanksgiving Holiday
DEC 16 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

Replace your cooling system's filter regularly to maintain strong airflow and boost energy efficiency. A clean filter means your system doesn't have to work as hard, saving energy and lowering your utility bills. Factors like allergies and pets in the home can impact how often filters should be replaced. Check the filter every month and replace it as needed. Changing filters regularly also reduces wear and tear on your cooling system, helping extend the life of the unit.

Source: energy.gov

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POWER OUTAGES

MiEnergy had two significant events happen the week of July 28: a storm that traveled through the service territory starting late Monday, July 28 and a planned power outage Thursday, July 31 to signify the 10-year anniversary of the Southern Minnesota Energy Cooperative's acquisition of Alliant Energy's electric distribution assets.

Thank you to our members for their patience during the outages.

Watch for more details and photos in the September issue of MiNews.

Attn: Tax filers
Use tax credits before they're gone

The federal home energy tax credits have been eliminated by Congress. Initially, the tax credits were set to last several years. The good news is there is still time to use them before they expire.

New and used electric vehicles must be acquired before September 30.

Heat pump air conditioners/ heaters, heat pump water heaters, weatherization/insulation and electrical panels must be installed before December 31.

Home energy audits must be completed before December 31.

Installations of rooftop solar, battery storage and geothermal heating must be completed before December 31.

Electric vehicle chargers must be placed in service before June 30, 2026.