

MEEKER COOPERATIVE PIONEER

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL



Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit, community-led utilities. Because we are a co-op, we can adapt to our local members' needs, providing the programs and services you care about most.

That's the power of co-op membership.

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Meeker
Cooperative
Light and Power Association

VIBRANT
Broadband™

The Pioneer Newsletter is the official Cooperative publication.
Meeker Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

CELEBRATE NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH WITH MEEKER COOPERATIVE

October is National Cooperative Month, a time to recognize and celebrate the significant role that cooperatives play in building stronger, more resilient communities. At Meeker Cooperative, we're honored to be part of this tradition, delivering reliable services while embracing the cooperative principles that guide us—member ownership, democratic control, and a commitment to community well-being.

As a member of Meeker Cooperative, you're not just a customer; you're an owner. This means you have a voice in how your cooperative is run. Our board of directors is elected by members like you, ensuring that decisions reflect the

needs and priorities of the people we serve. This is a key feature that sets cooperatives apart from investor-owned businesses. 18-05-301 Our goal is not to maximize profits but to serve you, our member-owners, with safe, affordable and reliable services.

National Cooperative Month also shines a spotlight on the economic benefits that cooperatives bring to local communities. Cooperatives like Meeker are rooted in the areas we serve, creating local jobs, investing in infrastructure, and supporting other local businesses. We take pride in giving

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MEMBER NOTICE: MINNESOTA COLD WEATHER RULE



The Cold Weather Rule, Section 216B.097 of the Public Utilities Act, in effect from October 1 through April 30 in Minnesota, governs how we handle disconnects; it does not prohibit them. Electric cooperatives cannot disconnect a residential consumer for nonpayment if the disconnection would affect the primary heat source, **and all of the following conditions are met:**

1. You declare the inability to pay by completing the Inability to Pay Form. Household income must include proof of one-month gross total household income or be verified on a form provided either by Meeker Cooperative or by a local energy assistance provider.
2. Your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income and/or you are a recipient of energy assistance for this heating season.
3. You must have entered into a payment agreement and remain current under that agreement.

We want to ensure that you are well-informed about your energy payments and the protection offered by the Cold Weather Rule during the winter months. 28-04-201 It's essential to be aware that Meeker Cooperative will be conducting disconnects as per legal requirements, even during the cold weather period.

To ensure transparency and assist you in navigating this process, Meeker Cooperative will provide the following information:

Advance Notice of Disconnection: You will receive a notice of disconnection at least 30 days before any action is taken.

Member Rights and Responsibilities Statement: A document outlining your rights and responsibilities as a member will be provided to you.

Local Energy Assistance Providers: You will be given a list of local energy assistance providers who can offer support in times of financial difficulty.

Cold Weather Rule Protection Request Forms: Forms enabling you to request protection will be available.

Payment Plan Options and Alternatives: Information

about available payment plans and alternative options to maintain uninterrupted service will be presented.

It is crucial for you to take proactive steps to avoid disconnection. We strongly encourage you to act promptly. The sooner you reach out to us, the better your chances of retaining electricity service throughout the winter season.

Should you require assistance or wish to discuss options for shut-off protection or payment arrangements, please do not hesitate to contact us at 320-693-3231. You can also access the Cold Weather Rule & Shut-Off Protection form on our website's download forms page: meeker.coop/download-forms.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

KANDIYOHI, MCLEOD & MEEKER COUNTIES UNITED COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

P.O. Box 1359, 200 4th Street SW, Willmar, MN 56201
320-235-0850 | 800-992-1710

904 Hwy 15 S, Hutchinson, MN 55350
320-587-5244 | 800-992-1710

120 N. Sibley Avenue, Litchfield, MN 55355
320-693-7911 | 800-992-1710

MCLEOD COUNTY AREA MCLEOD COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICE CENTER

1805 Ford Avenue N, Glencoe, MN 55336
320-864-3144 | 320-484-4330 | 800-247-1756

RENVILLE COUNTY AREA UNITED COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

500 E DePue Avenue, Olivia, MN 56277
320-523-1842 | 800-363-2533

WRIGHT COUNTY AREA WRIGHT COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION

130 West Division Street, Maple Lake, MN 55358
320-963-6500

STEARNS COUNTY AREA STEARNS TRI-COUNTY ACTION PROGRAMS

1210 23rd Avenue S, P.O. Box 683, Waite Park, MN 56387
320-251-1612 | 888-765-5597



**FIND YOUR
LOCATION
NUMBER**

Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Cooperative before October 31, you will have \$10 credit to your account. When you call and verify your information is correct in our system, you will also receive an additional bill credit equal to one month's output from a Member Solar Panel.

CO-OP MONTH CONTINUED...

back to the community through various initiatives, including energy-efficiency programs, scholarships for local youth, and sponsorship of community events. Every dollar spent within the cooperative helps strengthen the local economy, creating a ripple effect of benefits.

Additionally, the cooperative principle of "Concern for Community" is central to everything we do. Beyond providing electricity, Meeker Cooperative is actively involved in improving the quality of life in our service area. Through programs like VIBRANT Broadband, we're helping to bridge the digital divide, ensuring our members have access to high-speed internet for work, school, and home life.

As we celebrate National Cooperative Month, we want to thank you for your continued support and engagement. It's because of your participation that we're able to remain strong, forward-thinking, and committed to serving the community. Together, we're building a brighter, more connected future for all.

SEEKING MEMBERS FOR NEXT CO-OP 101

Meeker Cooperative's Co-op 101 is a member education series that covers topics such as where your electricity comes from, how the Co-op obtains financing, what tools a lineman uses, what happens at a substation, and more. The Group is made up of three members from each district on a two-year rotation. The Group meets quarterly from 7-9 pm on the third Tuesday of February, May, August and November. Participants receive a \$50 stipend plus IRS-approved rate for mileage for each meeting attended. Walking is required for some activities.

Sound interesting? Return your completed form to Mary Alice Holm by 11/4/24. Directors will appoint participants and you will be contacted if you are selected.

CO-OP 101 MEMBER INFO

Complete this form and return it by November 4, 2024. This is a two-year commitment.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (Home) _____ (Cell) _____

Co-op District _____ No. Yrs. as Co-op Member _____

Return to: Meeker Cooperative, Attention: Mary Alice Holm, 1725 US Highway. 12, Suite 100, Litchfield, MN 55355 by November 4. Or simply drop off in the office. --Do NOT mail with bill payment.--

OCTOBER SECURITY SPECIAL

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WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT



Your brain generates enough electricity to power a small light bulb, with billions of neurons sending electrical signals called action potentials. These impulses allow neurons to communicate and control everything from movement to thoughts and emotions. Each neuron acts like a tiny battery, generating electrical voltage. This bioelectricity powers the brain's intricate network, enabling complex functions like memory, reasoning, and sensation, showcasing how electricity is crucial for life and cognitive processes.

MEMBER NEWS

RATE REMINDER

The non-summer energy management rate of 5.7¢/kWh goes into effect on September 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025, for members enrolled in the dual fuel space heating, peak shave, and storage heating programs.

The small single-phase rate class (01 & 02) remains the same at 12.3¢/kWh year-round. Your September kWh usage will be reflected on your October bill.

For more information on Meeker Cooperative electric rates visit www.meeker.coop/rates or contact us at 320-693-3231.

NEW PHONE PAYMENT NUMBER

Starting October 30, 2024, please use our new secure phone number to make bill payments: 1-855-939-3815.

STAY SAFE: HOW TO SPOT AND AVOID UTILITY SCAMS



Utility scams are on the rise, and Meeker Cooperative is committed to keeping our members safe and informed. Scammers often pretend to be utility representatives, using deceptive tactics to get your personal information or pressure you into making fake payments. Here's how you can protect yourself:

- **No Immediate Payments Over the Phone:** Meeker Cooperative will never demand immediate payment over the phone or threaten to disconnect your service without prior notice. If you receive a call like this, hang up and call us directly to check your account status.
- **Beware of Urgent Requests for Information:** Scammers often create a sense of urgency, asking for personal or financial information. Never provide details to unknown callers, texters, or email senders. We'll never ask you to pay using prepaid cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency.
- **Watch Out for Spoofed Numbers:** Scammers can spoof our phone number to make it appear like Meeker Cooperative is calling. Don't trust caller ID alone. If you're unsure, hang up and call us directly using our official number (320) 693-3231.
- **Report Suspicious Activity:** If you suspect a scam, contact Meeker Cooperative immediately. You should also report the incident to local law enforcement and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

Your safety is our priority. By following these tips, you can avoid falling victim to utility scams. 10-22-404 If you have any concerns, don't hesitate to reach out to Meeker Cooperative for assistance.

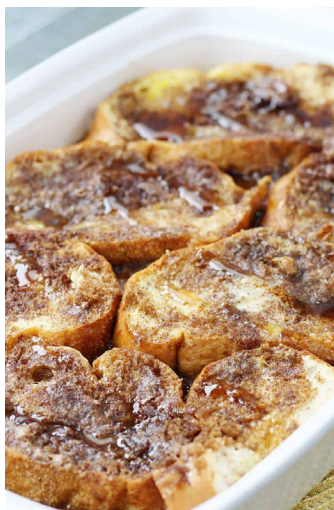


YOUR SECURITY IS OUR PRIORITY

To safeguard member information, Meeker Cooperative employees and board members participate in monthly cybersecurity training and testing, comply with stringent governmental red flag regulations, and continuously seek new ways to enhance our cybersecurity measures. Your trust and safety are always at the forefront of our efforts.

FEATURED RECIPE

EASY OVERNIGHT FRENCH TOAST | SUBMITTED BY: SHELLEY CARTER/BLOOMINGTON & LAKE MANUELLA



INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup butter melted
- ½ cup brown sugar packed
- 1 loaf french bread sliced
- 12 eggs beaten
- 1 ½ cups milk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup or ½ teaspoon maple extract
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon divided
- ½ cup walnuts or pecans, chopped
- whipped cream (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Before bed, slice the bread into 1-inch thick pieces and let them dry on the counter for a few hours or in a 300°F oven for 10 minutes, ensuring they don't brown. In a large rimmed baking sheet, mix melted butter, brown sugar, and cinnamon, and spread it evenly on the bottom. Arrange the bread slices over the mixture. Whisk together eggs, milk, vanilla extract, and maple syrup, then pour half of the mixture over the bread, flip the slices, and pour the rest. Sprinkle with chopped walnuts and cinnamon, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, remove the pan from the fridge and let it sit for 20 minutes. Preheat the oven to 350°F and bake for 30 minutes, making sure the French toast doesn't brown. Serve with maple syrup and whipped cream.

Submit your favorite recipe for our next issue! The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. DEADLINE: October 31, 2024. Email to: szeppelin@meeker.coop | Mail to: Meeker Coop, ATTN: Shane 1725 US Hwy 12 E, Ste 100, Litchfield, MN 55355

CONTACT US

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Chad Felstul, Attorney

MORE NEWS & CLASSIFIEDS ONLINE

Keep up-to-date with your Cooperative in-between issues of the Pioneer and browse our classifieds online at:
www.meeker.coop/news.



PHANTOM ENERGY: THE HIDDEN COST IN YOUR HOME

Did you know that some of your appliances and electronics continue to use electricity even when they're turned off? This is called phantom energy, also known as standby power, and it could be quietly increasing your energy bills without you even realizing it.

Phantom energy refers to the power that devices consume when they're not in active use but remain plugged in. Many modern electronics, such as TVs, gaming consoles, and kitchen appliances, continue to draw small amounts of electricity in standby mode to 05-15-312 power features like clocks, remote controls, or automatic updates.

While the energy each device uses may seem minimal, the combined impact of multiple devices in a household can add up over time, leading to higher electricity bills.

COMMON CULPRITS OF PHANTOM ENERGY:

- **Televisions and Cable Boxes:** Even when turned off, these can draw power to stay connected to services or updates.
- **Chargers:** Phone and laptop chargers continue to use energy when plugged in, even if the device is not connected.
- **Gaming Consoles:** Consoles left in standby mode can continue to use a significant amount of power.
- **Microwaves, Coffee Makers, and Other Kitchen Appliances:** Many have clocks or displays that draw energy when not in use.

HOW MUCH IS PHANTOM ENERGY COSTING YOU?

Phantom energy may seem like a small drain, but it can account for up to 10% of your total electricity use. While that might not seem like much on a monthly basis, it adds up over the course of a year.

SIMPLE STEPS TO REDUCE PHANTOM ENERGY:

The good news is that reducing phantom energy is easy with a few simple changes:

- **Unplug Devices:** The most effective way to eliminate phantom energy is by unplugging devices when they're not in use.
- **Use Power Strips:** Plug multiple devices into a single power strip, and turn off the strip when those devices aren't needed. This is especially useful for entertainment systems or home offices.
- **Opt for Energy-Efficient Electronics:** Look for ENERGY STAR-certified devices that use less standby power.
- **Smart Plugs:** Consider using smart plugs that allow you to control power to devices remotely or set them on a schedule.

By taking a few simple steps to combat phantom energy, you can save money on your electricity bill. So the next time you finish binge-watching your favorite show or charge your phone, remember to unplug or power down the devices that aren't in use. Your wallet will thank you!