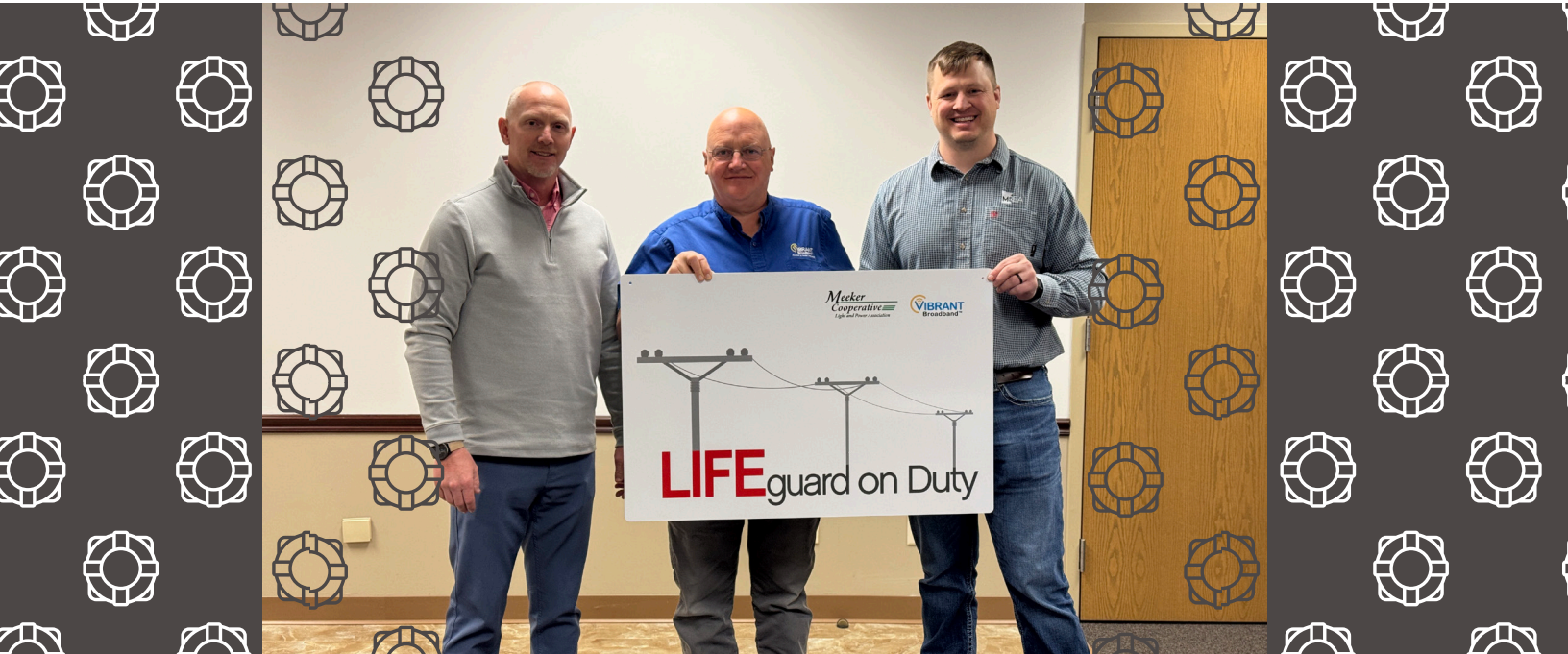


MEEKER COOPERATIVE PIONEER



VIBRANT BROADBAND TECHNICIAN RECOGNIZED WITH LIFEGUARD AWARD

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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.

On May 29, 2024, Vibrant Broadband Installation and Service Technician Mike Flaata exemplified bravery and compassion when he witnessed a severe car accident in Paynesville. Mike had just finished installing Vibrant broadband for a subscriber and was on his way back to the office at around 2:30 p.m. As he waited at a stop sign on Lake Street to merge onto Highway 55, an unexpected and dramatic event unfolded before him.

Across the intersection, a small SUV attempted a U-turn. In an instant, it collided head-on with an approaching tow truck, creating a deafening crash

that Mike described as a sound etched into his memory.

Without hesitation, Mike pulled over his Vibrant van, turned on his emergency flashers, and called 911 to ensure immediate assistance was on the way. Assessing the scene, he found the tow truck driver visibly shaken but fortunately not seriously hurt. However, the SUV driver—a woman—was bruised, bleeding, and clearly in distress. Her airbag had deployed, likely preventing more severe injuries.

Continued on page 2.

LIFEGUARD AWARD CONTINUED...

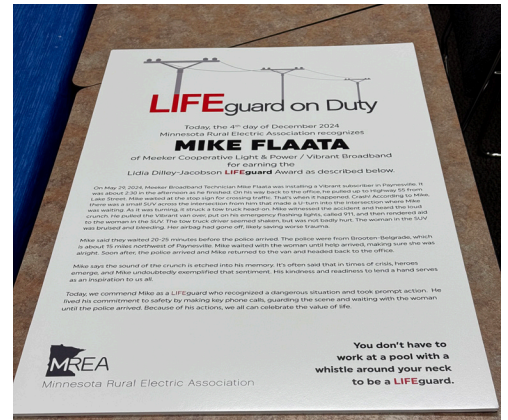
Demonstrating calm under pressure, Mike stayed with the injured woman for over 20 minutes until the police arrived, providing reassurance and ensuring her safety. The responding officers, who traveled from Brooten-Belgrade, about 15 miles away, arrived to take over the situation, allowing Mike to return to his duties.

Mike's quick thinking and willingness to help in a critical moment reflect the core values of Meeker Cooperative: safety, community, and service. His actions not only provided immediate relief to those involved in the accident but also set an inspiring example of selflessness and care.

For his heroic efforts, Mike was honored with the Lidia Dilley Jacobson LIFEguard Award by the Minnesota Rural Electric Association. 24-26-128 This prestigious recognition celebrates individuals who demonstrate exceptional commitment to safety and the well-being of others.

In reflecting on the event, Mike remains humble, but his actions speak volumes about his character. Emergencies like this often reveal everyday heroes, and Mike's readiness to step in and act showcases the impact one person can make.

The Meeker Cooperative family is proud to celebrate Mike's achievement and the values he embodies. Thank you, Mike, for living the Cooperative spirit and reminding us of the power of kindness and courage in action.



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320-693-3231



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FIND YOUR LOCATION NUMBER

Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer and four more in articles published on our website. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Cooperative before February 28, 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.



POWERING THROUGH CHALLENGES AHEAD: HOW POLICY, ADVOCACY, AND ACTION CAN ENSURE GRID RELIABILITY

A recent report from the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) highlights a troubling reality: our region could face power shortages during peak summer and winter conditions. This concern arises from the retirement of older generation facilities outpacing the addition of new resources, creating gaps in our power supply during critical times.

The 2024 NERC Long-Term Reliability Assessment highlights significant challenges for North America's grid over the next decade. As electricity demand rises due to economic growth, electrification, and increased use of technologies like electric vehicles, the energy system is transitioning toward more weather-dependent sources, such as solar and wind. While these resources are key to a cleaner energy future, their variability makes them less reliable during periods of extreme weather or peak demand. Regions like the Midwest, including Minnesota, face some of the highest risks, with power shortages expected to begin as early as 2025. These gaps in resource adequacy could lead to outages, especially during hot summers or freezing winters.

To address these risks, NERC recommends a mix of strategic actions. Policymakers must balance the pace of retiring older power plants with the development of new infrastructure to ensure there are enough dependable energy sources to meet demand. Streamlining permitting processes for new generation and transmission projects is critical to avoid delays. Strengthening interregional connections and improving coordination among energy providers can also help reduce shortfalls. Finally, investment in advanced technologies and planning tools is necessary to prepare for extreme weather events and long-term reliability.

At Meeker Cooperative, we take these challenges seriously. While much of the responsibility for ensuring regional generation and transmission capacity lies in the hands of our wholesale power providers, we are actively engaged in advocating for solutions and preparing for the potential impacts. The findings of the NERC report highlight the importance of careful planning and collaboration to address the evolving energy landscape.

The risks to reliability are not purely operational—they are also tied to policy decisions. For example, Minnesota's moratorium on nuclear energy significantly limits options for achieving the state's 100% carbon-free by 2040 mandate. By restricting one of the most reliable and carbon-free sources of power, this policy forces us to seek less efficient solutions and could impact energy affordability and availability in the future.

On a national level, the recent executive order issued by President Trump marks a significant shift in federal energy policy focused on reducing regulatory barriers and promoting energy independence. While the potential benefits include lower costs and increased development of domestic energy resources, this approach also creates uncertainty for long-term planning. Abrupt shifts in policy can make it challenging for generation and transmission providers to commit to large-scale projects, knowing future administrations could reverse course.

Without consistent federal regulation, state-level decision-making becomes even more critical. States like Minnesota must balance the benefits of these regulatory changes with the long-term need for resource adequacy and grid resilience. Reliability needs to be at the forefront of every energy policy decision, ensuring that our grid can meet demand during extreme weather, peak usage times, and unforeseen challenges.

As policies evolve, our focus remains clear: advocating for solutions that protect the resilience of the grid, supporting thoughtful investments in generation and transmission infrastructure, and working collaboratively with policymakers to ensure that reliability is never compromised.

So, what can you do as a Meeker Cooperative member? One way to help is by prioritizing energy efficiency in your home or business. Upgrading outdated heating, cooling, and lighting systems to energy-efficient options reduces demand, saves money over time, and eases grid strain. Participating in programs like off-peak heating or load control can also lower energy use during high-demand periods. While these changes may involve upfront costs, they often lead to long-term savings—and we're here to help with rebates and resources.

Another way to contribute is by engaging in advocacy. Platforms like Coop Votes (<https://vote.coop/>) allow you to stay informed about key legislative issues and participate in collective action when it matters most.

The challenges in the NERC report are real, but so is our commitment to overcoming them. Meeker Cooperative is dedicated to collaborating with policymakers, industry leaders, and our members to ensure reliable power and a thriving community.

Dedicated to keeping the lights on and the data flowing,

Luke Johnson
CEO, Meeker Cooperative



SAVE ENERGY AND MONEY WITH THE PEAK SHAVE WATER HEATING PROGRAM

As part of Meeker Cooperative's commitment to energy efficiency and cost savings for our members, we proudly offer the Peak Shave Electric Water Heating Program. This program helps reduce energy demand during peak usage times while ensuring you always have plenty of hot water.

HOW THE PEAK SHAVE PROGRAM WORKS

The Peak Shave program helps manage energy demand during peak periods, typically on the hottest or coldest days of the year when electricity usage is at its highest. By allowing Meeker Cooperative to control your water heater for short periods during these high-demand times, you help stabilize the grid and keep energy rates affordable for everyone.

You'll still have plenty of hot water when you need it, and in return, you'll benefit from reduced energy costs and exclusive rebates.

MEMBER BENEFITS

Water heaters must meet a minimum efficiency rating of 0.90 Energy Factor (EF) and have a capacity of 80 gallons or larger to qualify. The program operates on a separate meter, billed at Meeker Cooperative's energy management rate: \$0.057/kWh from September to May and \$0.062/kWh from June to August—making it one of the most affordable ways to heat water.

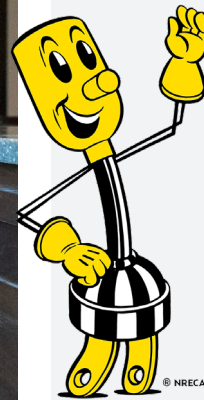
Members who join the program can receive up to an \$800 credit or rebate toward the purchase of a qualifying electric water heater. 34-05-306 This substantial incentive, combined with the energy management rate, makes upgrading your water heater a smart and budget-friendly choice.

Not only does this program lower your energy costs, but it also supports the Cooperative's broader efforts to reduce strain on the electrical grid and ensure reliable service for all members.

JOIN TODAY!

Getting started is easy! Meeker Cooperative provides and installs the necessary equipment, so you can start enjoying the benefits immediately. Visit our website or contact our member services team today at 320-693-3231 to learn more.

WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT



Certain crystals, such as quartz, possess a fascinating property known as piezoelectricity. This phenomenon occurs when mechanical stress is applied to the crystal, causing it to generate an electric charge. Widely used in applications like watches,

sensors, and medical devices, piezoelectricity showcases the incredible interplay between physical forces and electrical energy.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE MARATHON WATER HEATERS

Looking for the best in energy-efficient water heating?

Meeker Cooperative proudly stocks and sells Marathon grid-enabled water heaters, the gold standard in storage tank water heaters. For over 22 years, we've been a trusted Marathon dealer, offering units that deliver outstanding performance and long-term savings.

Why Choose Marathon Water Heaters?

- **Highly Efficient:** Save up to 40% annually on operating costs compared to LP gas water heaters.
- **Durable:** Built to last, ensuring reliable service for years.
- **Cost-Effective:** Priced competitively before tax and rebate.

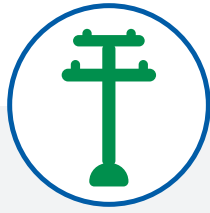
Upgrade to a Marathon water heater today. Contact Meeker Cooperative for more details!

FOUR KEY FACTORS THAT IMPACT ENERGY BILLS



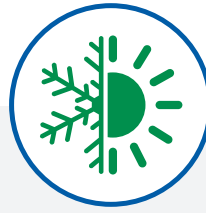
VARYING FUEL COSTS

The cost of fuels used to generate electricity fluctuates, which is why you see a power cost adjustment (PCA) on your monthly bill. This monthly charge or credit covers cost fluctuations without having to continually restructure electricity rates. The PCA is allocated to all members based on the passed-through cost adjustment from our whole sale suppliers.



SYSTEM DELIVERY COSTS

Your bill includes a monthly system delivery charge, which recovers part of the co-op's ongoing investments in poles, wire, meters, system maintenance and additional costs necessary to provide electric service regardless of the amount of energy you use.



WEATHER AND TEMPERATURE

When temperatures soar or dip, your cooling or heating equipment must run longer and at maximum capacity, which can greatly increase your energy use. Extreme temperatures can also affect electricity market prices. When the need for electricity increases due to extreme heat or cold, the price of power typically rises.



ENERGY CONSUMPTION

This is the amount of electricity you use each month to power your life. The amount of electricity you consume is measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh). You have control over when and how much energy you use, which can ultimately influence your monthly costs.

Electricity prices can fluctuate due to various factors, and understanding them helps explain changes in your bill. While Meeker Cooperative manages delivery costs, some factors, like weather and fuel prices, are beyond our control. However, members can take steps to manage energy usage, which directly impacts their bills. Simple steps, such as controlling appliances, heating, cooling, and lighting, can lower consumption and save money. To help, we offer load management programs, rebates, and energy-saving tips. If you have questions about your bill or would like advice on saving energy and money, don't hesitate to contact us. Together, we can work toward more manageable electricity costs while meeting your energy needs efficiently.

FEATURED RECIPE

WINTER SQUASH SOUP | SUBMITTED BY: SHELLEY CARTER/BLOOMINGTON



INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon good olive oil
- 2 cups chopped yellow onions (2 onions)
- 1 (15 - ounce) can pumpkin puree (not pumpkin pie filling)
- 1 1/2 pounds butternut squash, peeled and cut in chunks
- 3 cups homemade chicken stock or canned broth
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup half - and - half
- Creme fraiche, grated Gruyere, pepitas or croutons optional for topping

DIRECTIONS

Heat the butter and oil in a heavy - bottomed stockpot, add the onions, and cook over medium - low heat for 10 minutes, or until translucent. Add the pumpkin puree, butternut squash, chicken stock, salt, and pepper. Cover and simmer over medium - low heat for about 20 minutes, until the butternut squash is very tender. Process the mixture through the medium blade of a food mill. Return to the pot, add the half - and - half, and heat slowly. If the soup needs more flavor, add another teaspoon salt. Serve hot with garnishes, if desired.

Submit your favorite recipe for our next issue! The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. DEADLINE: February 28, 2025.
Email to: szeppelin@meeker.coop | Mail to: Meeker Coop, ATTN: Shane 1725 US Hwy 12 E, Ste 100, Litchfield, MN 55355

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www.meeker.coop/news.



At Meeker Cooperative, data is at the heart of our operations, and we need your help to keep it accurate. By ensuring we have your most current and complete contact information, we can continue delivering the reliable, high-quality service you depend on. Accurate information allows us to enhance customer service, improve communication, and quickly report and resolve outages. It also helps us keep you informed about important programs, events, and activities.

Up-to-date contact details play a crucial role in speeding up power restoration during outages. The phone number you provide connects your service address to our outage management system. 01-05-213 When you call to report an outage, our system recognizes your phone number, links it to your account, and pinpoints the likely location and cause. This streamlines the process, allowing our crews to resolve issues more efficiently.

While we work hard to provide uninterrupted service, planned outages may occasionally be necessary for equipment upgrades, repairs, or replacements. With updated contact preferences, we can notify you in advance. Additionally, accurate information ensures we can reach you if there are questions about your energy use or billing.

Rest assured, your contact information is kept private and is only used by Meeker Cooperative for essential communications. Please update your details by calling us at (320) 693-3231 or logging into your SmartHub account. Thank you for helping us serve you better!



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