

CIRCUITS

NEWS FOR DAKOTA ELECTRIC MEMBERS



When shopping for light bulbs, look for lumens — not watts

Newer bulbs — like halogen incandescents, CFLs and LEDs — last longer and use less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs, saving you money on your energy bills. In 2012, everyday light bulbs have to meet new Department of Energy standards for how much energy they use. Bulbs that don't meet those standards will be phased out over the next couple of years.

Lumens vs. watts

For years, consumers have chosen light bulbs based on wattage, but with newer, more energy-efficient light bulbs, wattage is no longer a reliable way to gauge a light bulb's brightness. That takes lumens. Lumens measure how much light you are getting from a bulb, watts tell you

how much energy a bulb uses. See the chart to the right.

NEW lighting facts label

To help consumers better understand the switch from watts to lumens, the Federal Trade Commission will require a new product label for light bulbs starting in January 2012. The labels will help consumers buy bulbs that are right for them.

The label clearly provides the lumens (or brightness) of the bulb, estimated operating cost for the year and the color of the light (from warm/yellowish, to white to cool/blue).

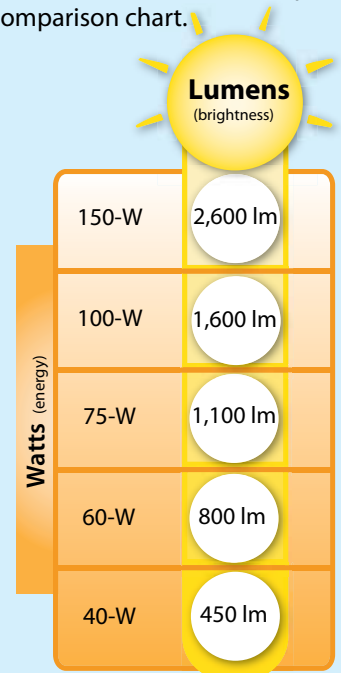
Learn more

www.energysavers.gov/lighting

Source: Federal Trade Commission

What to Look for When Purchasing Light Bulbs

Instead of shopping for watts, look for lumens. Here's a helpful comparison chart.



Estimates based on typical incandescent bulbs. Source: U.S. Federal Trade Commission

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Upcoming events

Board meeting.....	Dec. 15, 8:30 a.m.
Christmas Holiday - Office Closed...	Dec. 23
Christmas Holiday - Office Closed...	Dec. 26

Program information and offers in this newsletter are subject to change without notice.

December 2011



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 



Greg Miller
President & CEO

2011 ends with little change, similar success

As I reflect on the last 12 months at Dakota Electric, I realize how similar this year has been to last, both in successes and issues.

Last year at this time I talked about how the economic recession had impacted Dakota Electric:

- Fewer new members;
- More members facing financial hardship and unable to pay their electric bill;
- A reduction in sales and revenue for Great River Energy, our wholesale power supplier, due to excess capacity in the regional energy markets;
- The possibility of new regulations and legislation that would continue to add costs to our business.

The same can be said for 2011.

Growth

Growth is down even more from last year with only 350 new services expected this year. Our members continue to struggle with paying their electric bills, and we have more than 12,000 members that are behind in their payments. We

continue to work with them, encouraging them to consider the numerous energy conservation tips we publish to lower their bill, and if need be, referring them to agencies that can assist people with their utility bills.

Energy markets

The regional market now has 35 percent excess capacity because of the economy, conservation and new wind power. This has a significant impact on costs from Great River Energy, our wholesale power supplier, which in turn will affect our rates for next year.

Regulations and legislation

On the regulatory and legislative front the focus has clearly shifted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Energy legislation has stalled as our lawmakers struggle to find common ground for needed changes. The EPA is developing rules that would cost utilities billions of dollars, which would need to be paid for through rate increases. We are watching this closely and continue to actively meet with Minnesota's House and Senate members in Washington, D.C.

Check out a Kill A Watt® meter

Dakota County libraries continue to offer a valuable resource to help you learn more about your home's energy use. Dakota Electric has provided 27 Kill A Watt™ meters for Dakota County's library system. Members can check out a meter to easily measure the energy use of appliances and electronics in their home.

More Information

- > For Kill A Watt details, visit the Energy Efficiency section at www.dakotaelectric.com
- > Library locations and hours:
www.co.dakota.mn.us/library



Service, reliability and safety

On a more positive note, I am happy to report on our accomplishments in service, reliability and safety. Just like last year, we are very proud of how well our employees and our electrical grid performed throughout 2011.

Our call center will handle more than 160,000 calls this year. Our members continue to give us high marks for minimizing time on hold and having knowledgeable and friendly employees.

Our safety program continues to evolve and improve, and our reliability remains strong with impressive results. While some of that is luck, as most of this year's summer storms seem to have gone around us, it is the proactive maintenance of our lines and equipment that helps us maintain and improve reliability.

Looking ahead

The outlook for 2012 may be more of the same before growth and improved prosperity return. Next year we will celebrate 75 years of providing electric service to this area. Times were not great when this co-op was formed in 1937, and there have been numerous times of hardship throughout those 75 years. Our unique position of being a member-owned cooperative motivates us to work even harder for you in these tough times.

We appreciate the privilege to serve you and thank you for your business.

2012 RTA

At this time, Dakota Electric anticipates a Resource and Tax Adjustment (RTA) increase in 2012 due to increasing wholesale power costs.

The final RTA change will be reported in the February issue of Circuits.

What is the RTA?

Each month your bill includes an RTA line. The RTA allows Dakota Electric to recover cost increases related to:

- Purchasing electricity from Great River Energy, which generates electricity for members of 28 Minnesota cooperatives;
- Energy conservation programs;
- Property and real estate tax.

The RTA is a direct pass-through of costs, and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission reviews these costs every year.

For more information, contact us at 651-463-6212 or visit www.dakotaelectric.com.

Helping Neighbors® helps those in need

Times are tough. Now, more than ever, many of our neighbors are feeling the financial squeeze and struggling to pay their bills.

That is why Dakota Electric created the Helping Neighbors® program. Since 1994, people just like you have donated more than \$400,000 to help their neighbors pay utility bills during times of crisis.

Through generous donations from our members, Dakota Electric makes annual contributions to community agencies that use the donations to assist local families who need help paying utility bills.

How you can help

You can either make a one-time donation or elect to contribute a few dollars each month when you pay your electric bill.

- Visit www.dakotaelectric.com to sign up online. Click on Residential, then the Helping Neighbors link under Programs.
- Call Dakota Electric at 651-463-6212 and speak to one of our member services representatives.

Helping Neighbors is one more way Dakota Electric makes a difference in the communities we serve.



\$2 OFF

This year, switch your old incandescent holiday bulbs to LEDs and show your holiday spirit in a whole new, energy-wise light. You're saving money. And you're being smarter with the power that makes your very merry display possible. Shine on.

HERE'S HOW TO SAVE:

With COUPONS on the back of your October bill insert, good through Dec. 24, 2011.

Good anywhere GE® LED holiday string sets are sold.



Another bright idea from
Dakota Electric Association

Visit MNBrighterIdeas.com to enter for your chance to win a \$500 gift card.

Deadline for board candidates is Dec. 16

Dakota Electric Association's nominating committee is accepting applications for the board of directors until close of business on Dec. 16, 2011. The following incumbent board members indicated they intend to seek re-election for another three-year term: Judy Kimmes, District 4; Ken Danner, District 3; Clay Van De Bogart, District 2, and Jerry Pittman, District 1. Due to a board member's retirement, there is a one-year seat up for election in District 1 to finish the retiring director's three-year term.

Eligibility

To be eligible for directorship, a candidate must be a member of the cooperative and must not be employed by a competing energy business. Directors must be available to participate in monthly daytime board meetings, other business meetings and functions as deemed necessary by the board, and must be willing to spend the time necessary to learn about the highly technical utility industry.

Application and interview

One director from each of four districts is elected annually to serve a three-year term on the board. The nominating committee is responsible for interviewing and selecting qualified candidates to be placed on the ballot. Members interested in seeking a nomination for directorship must request, complete and return an application form with a résumé. All Dakota Electric member-owners will have the opportunity to vote for board directors via mail or electronic ballot. Election results will be announced at the annual meeting on April 12, 2012.

How to apply for nomination

The bylaws allow for candidates by petition; however, all candidates must go through the application and interview process to be eligible for nomination by petition. The nominating committee will interview prospective candidates on Jan. 5. To request an application for nomination, please contact Cherry Jordan, executive assistant, at 651-463-6252 or 1-800-874-3409 ext. 252 or email cjordan@dakotaelectric.com.

Portable electric space heaters: What you should know

Every winter a number of portable electric heaters are marketed using misleading information. The energy and cost-saving claims are based on the idea that you turn down the temperature of your home's primary heating system and use the portable heater to spot heat the area you are occupying.

Portable electric heaters range in price from around \$20 to \$300. Heaters that have the same wattage will produce the same amount of heat. How the heaters distribute the heat may differ. The difference between a \$20 and \$300 portable electric heater of the same wattage and same design (radiant, convection or fan-forced) would be the appearance only.

Cooperative members should keep in mind that all portable electric heaters are 100-percent efficient and watt per watt, they all provide the same heat output and cost the same to

operate. When purchasing a portable electric heater, the most important consideration is the number of watts it draws. The higher the watts, the more heat it will deliver and the more it will cost to operate.

Calculate the cost of running a portable electric heater

1. Convert watts to kilowatts:

$$\frac{\text{watts}}{\text{watts}} \div 1,000 = \frac{\text{watts}}{\text{kilowatts}}$$

2. Calculate the operating cost:

$$\frac{\text{kilowatts}}{\text{kilowatts}} \times \frac{\text{hours of operation per day}}{\text{hours of operation per day}} \times \frac{\$0.11}{\text{cost per kilowatt-hour}} = \frac{\text{cost of operation per day}}{\text{cost of operation per day}} \times 30 = \frac{\text{cost of operation per month}}{\text{cost of operation per month}}$$



What to do when winter weather strikes

At Dakota Electric, we take measures to prepare for the winter season by:

- Trimming trees that threaten to fall on power lines when weighted down with ice and snow;
- Designing our lines specifically to support the stress from high winds and the additional weight of ice.

In spite of these steps, storm-related outages still occur and members must be prepared.

If someone in your household depends on in-home life support equipment, purchase a back-up generator or make plans for a location you can go to if an outage lasts longer than you can be without power.

Generator safety

An improperly installed back-up generator can cause injury or death to a family mem-

ber, a lineworker or others. For proper installation instructions, visit our website and go to Safety & Education > Electric Safety and click on Power Outage Safety.

Reporting an outage and staying informed

- Call Dakota Electric's emergency service line at 651-463-6201 to report outages and downed power lines.
- Update your account information by visiting www.dakotaelectric.com to ensure Dakota Electric has your current phone number on file. This helps dispatchers handle calls and locate outages more efficiently.
- Listen to WCCO 830 AM or visit the News & Events section of our website for updates during large or prolonged outages.



12 Days of Holiday Safety

It's easy to make safety a part of your holiday with these tips. Tackle one a day and you're well on your way to a safe New Year!



- Day 1** **What's that noise?** Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Make sure everyone knows what to do if they hear them.
- Day 2** **What a shocker!** Inspect all electrical lights, decorations, and extension cords for damage.
- Day 3** **Two's company, three's a crowd.** Do not overload outlets with too many decorations or devices.
- Day 4** **Is it working?** Test your ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) and arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) to make sure they're protecting you.

- Day 5** **Ouch!** Prevent trips and falls by keeping cords safely along walls and out of doorways and high traffic areas.
- Day 6** **Kids eat the darndest things!** Avoid putting lights, metal hooks, breakable ornaments, and other small decorations within reach of young children.
- Day 7** **Thirsty?** Keep your Christmas tree stand full of water. A fresh, green tree poses less of a fire hazard than a dry tree.
- Day 8** **Make a wish!** Blow out the candles before leaving a room or going to bed.

- Day 9** **Nice and warm.** Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn—decorations, trees, gifts, and curtains.
- Day 10** **Can't touch this!** Consider installing tamper-resistant outlets/receptacles to prevent kids from inserting objects into the slots.
- Day 11** **Escape Route:** Share your family fire escape plan with overnight guests.
- Day 12** **Hot stuff!** Keep children away from cooking areas; use back burners and turn pot handles in away from little hands.

There's no greater gift you can give your family than a safe and happy holiday! Learn more at holidaysafety.org.

Whatever it takes.



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Recycle old holiday lights

When you purchase new LED holiday lights, do not forget to recycle your old lights. Incandescent holiday light strings contain copper, plastic and glass that can be recycled.

You can drop off your old light strings at participating retailers. Visit www.mnbrighterideas.com to find locations near you.



Please clear snow away from your meter

As the snow flies this winter, please remember to shovel a clear path to your electric meter and make sure that your meter is not blocked by snow or ice. A blocked meter can result in injury to Dakota Electric staff or an estimated bill if the meter reader cannot access your meter to read it.



Thank you for helping to keep your meter accessible.

Tell us your story...

Not only is 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives, it also marks the 75th anniversary of Dakota Electric Association. That is plenty of reason to celebrate!

In honor of this milestone, we would like to hear from you, our original member-owners. If you, or someone you know, can remember when Dakota Electric first brought electricity to your home or business, please share your story.

Contact Tanya Wolfs at 651-463-6270 or twolfs@dakotaelectric.com.



Compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) contain a small amount of mercury and must be recycled. Mercury is harmful to the environment, and placing CFLs in the garbage is illegal in Minnesota. To learn how to lawfully dispose of CFLs, visit www.earth911.org or call the MN Pollution Control Agency at 651-296-6300.



Rother wins Township Leader Award

On behalf of Dakota Electric Association, board member Margaret Schreiner recently awarded Maralee Rother, Castle Rock, the Township Leader of the Year award. Each year, Dakota Electric seeks to recognize outstanding leadership with the award.

Rother has been the secretary-treasurer of the Dakota County Township Officers Association since 2004. Rother also served on the Castle Rock Township Planning Commission for 30 years and as clerk of Castle Rock Township for eight years. She volunteers with various organizations including the Dakota County Fair, the Hampton Area Boosters Club, Hampton Fun Fest and Senior Day.

Hank Tressel, who nominated Rother for the award, said, "Maralee has done a lot for the community and has been heavily involved for years in Castle Rock and the neighboring communities."

"As a member-owned cooperative, Dakota Electric is pleased to help recognize people like Maralee who do outstanding work," said Peggy Johnson, community relations director.

Board of Directors

District 1

Gerald F. Pittman
Carl E. Potter, Great River Energy
Director
Ronald R. Swagger

District 2

Clay Van De Bogart, Great River
Energy Director
Janet L. Lekson
Jim Sheldon, Chair

District 3

Kenneth H. Danner, Treasurer
William F. Holton, Vice Chair
Margaret D. Schreiner

District 4

Paul Bakken
Judy H. Kimmes, MREA Director
Paul A. Trapp, Secretary



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Greg Miller, President & CEO
Tanya Wolfs, Editor



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Happy Holidays

Dakota Electric's offices will be closed on Friday, Dec. 23, Monday, Dec. 26 and Monday, Jan. 2 in observance of the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

Our system control center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and crews are available for outages and emergencies.

We wish you and your family a safe and blessed holiday season and a very happy new year!

Contact Us

Member service & drive-up window
7 a.m. – 7 p.m. Monday - Friday
651-463-6212 or 1-800-874-3409
Hearing Impaired TDD 651-463-6144

Lobby 7 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday
4300 220th Street West, Farmington, MN 55024

24-hour outage & emergency service
651-463-6201 or 1-800-430-9722

Underground cable locations
Gopher State One Call 811 or 651-454-0002 or
1-800-252-1166

Tree trimming & street lights 651-463-6287

Careers 651-463-6129
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