CIRCUITS

NEWS FOR DAKOTA ELECTRIC MEMBERS

Electric space heaters: Tips and costs

As temperatures drop this winter, many will look for supplemental heating sources for their homes. Space heaters can be an alternative for those who want to warm one area of their home without turning up the thermostat on the central heating system. However, space heaters are also responsible for 32 percent of house fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

If you have a hard-to-heat area and are considering a space heater, contact the Energy Experts® first. There may be an off-peak heating solution that will keep you comfortable and save you money.

Source: The Consumer Product Safety Commission

Follow these tips for safe operation of your electric space heater

- Keep the heater at least 3 feet from flammable items such as curtains, furniture or bedspreads.
- Select a space heater with a guard around the heating element.
- Make sure the space heater has an auto shutoff function in case it gets tipped over.
- Choose a heater that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing institution such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Never leave a space heater unattended.
- Never go to sleep with a space heater on.
- Never use or store flammable liquids near a space heater.
- Do not use a heater in a bathroom – it's a high-moisture area that could cause damage.
- Keep heaters away from water to prevent electrocution.
- Do not use an extension cord with a space heater.
- Buy a heater that can handle the area you want to heat.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Do not use the heater to dry clothes.
- Be sure the heater's plug fits snugly in an outlet. The cord and plug may feel warm when operating since the unit draws so much power, but they should not feel hot. If they do, unplug the heater and have a qualified repair person check for problems.

If you are considering electric space heating, contact the Energy Experts® first. We can help you find the most efficient option to meet your needs. Call us at 651-463-6243 or email energyservices@dakotaelectric.com.

Turn to Page 4 for information on what to know before you buy an electric space heater and how to calculate the cost to operate one.

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Upcoming events

Nominating committee deadline . . . . . Dec. 9
Deadline for board candidates. . . . . Dec. 9
Board Meeting . . . . . Dec. 22, 8:30 a.m.
Christmas - office closed . . . . . Dec. 23-26
New Year's - office closed . . . . . Jan. 2

DAKOTA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Greg Miller
President & CEO

2016: Year in review

Each December I take a look at your co-op's progress during the year, highlighting important projects that set the course for the future. You own this co-op, and therefore have a stake in its accomplishments and the work we have yet to do.

Growth and energy conservation

Dakota Electric Association expects to end 2016 with service extended to approximately 1,000 new homes and businesses. We work in partnership with builders, contractors and our members to implement energy-efficient lighting, appliances and HVAC systems.

Your investment in energy conservation will allow Dakota Electric to exceed our goal of saving 16.5 million kilowatt-hours for this year. Since 2007, when Minnesota first mandated an energy-savings goal for electric utilities, your conservation efforts have allowed your co-op to exceed the goal each year. Thank you.

We are also grateful to our member-owners who take advantage of our off-peak programs. Together we saved over $17 million in wholesale power costs in 2016.

Reliability

Dakota Electric continued to make investments in our electrical system this year to keep pace with growth and improve reliability. We rebuilt the Miesville substation and broke ground on a new substation in the Randolph area, which will be completed in 2017. We are also in the process of connecting all 30 existing substations with fiber optic cables to allow for better communications and control of our system. This project began in 2016 and will be completed in 2018.

Solar and electric vehicles

Your co-op continues to provide assistance to residential members who are interested in installing solar panels on their property. We offer a residential rebate and will work with members and contractors to ensure a safe solar installation.

2017 RTA increase

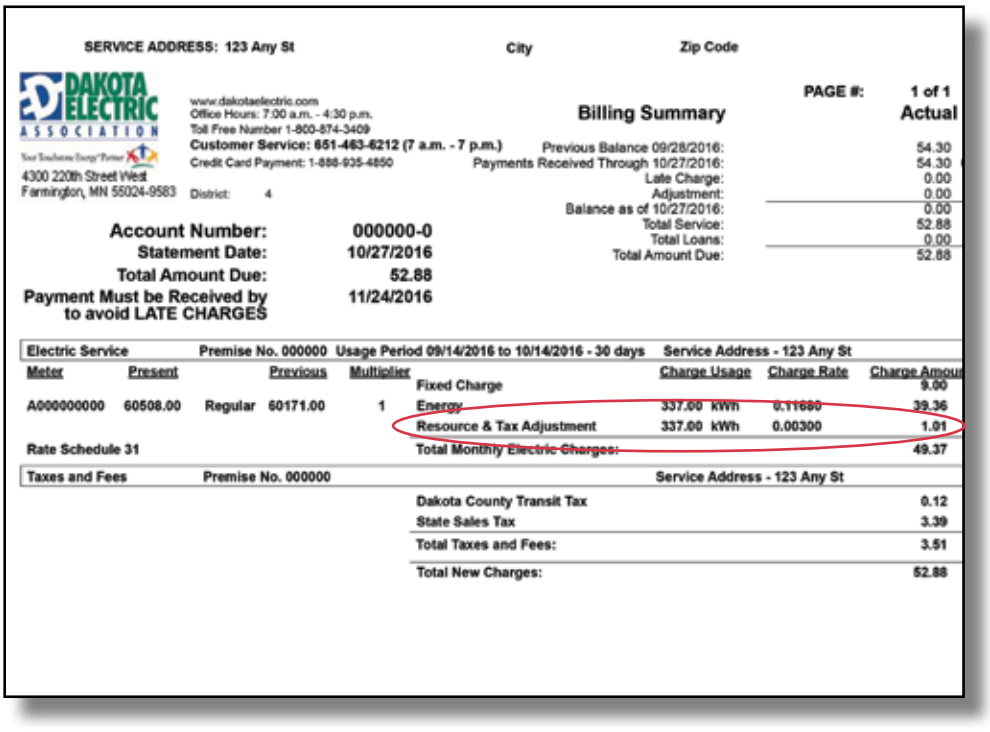
At this time, Dakota Electric anticipates a Resource and Tax Adjustment (RTA) increase in 2017. The final RTA change will be reported in the February issue of *Circuits.*

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 taxes.

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.



SERVICE ADDRESS: 123 Any St | City | Zip Code

DAKOTA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION
4300 220th Street West
Farmington, MN 55024-9583

www.dakotaelectric.com
Office Hours: 7:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Toll Free Number 1-800-874-3409
Customer Service: 651-463-6212 (7 a.m. - 7 p.m.)
Credit Card Payment: 1-888-935-4850
District: 4

PAGE #: 1 of 1

Billing Summary

	Actual
Previous Balance 09/28/2016:	54.30
Payments Received Through 10/27/2016:	54.30
Late Charge:	0.00
Adjustment:	0.00
Balance as of 10/27/2016:	0.00
Total Service:	52.88
Total Loans:	0.00
Total Amount Due:	52.88

Account Number:	000000-0
Statement Date:	10/27/2016
Total Amount Due:	52.88
Payment Must be Received by to avoid LATE CHARGES	11/24/2016

Electric Service | Premise No. 000000 | Usage Period 09/14/2016 to 10/14/2016 - 30 days | Service Address - 123 Any St

Meter	Present		Previous	Multiplier		Charge Usage	Charge Rate	Charge Amount
					Fixed Charge			9.00
A000000000	60508.00	Regular	60171.00	1	Energy	337.00 kWh	0.11680	39.36
					Resource & Tax Adjustment	337.00 kWh	0.00300	1.01
Rate Schedule 31					Total Monthly Electric Charges:			49.37

Taxes and Fees | Premise No. 000000 | Service Address - 123 Any St

Dakota County Transit Tax	0.12
State Sales Tax	3.39
Total Taxes and Fees:	3.51
Total New Charges:	52.88

In addition, last month we announced a utility-scale solar project that will benefit all of our member-owners. The first megawatt, or about 3,600 panels, will be installed next spring in Marshan Township near Hastings.

Our popular Energy Trends Expo brings together solar experts and environmental groups to educate members on solar installations. This year we also added information about electric vehicles (EVs) and charging stations. We partnered with Great River Energy, our wholesale power supplier, to be the first utility in Minnesota to offer a time-of-use rate for charging EVs, and to offer Revolt – a program that allows EV owners to charge their EV with 100 percent renewable wind energy at no additional cost.

Looking ahead

Your board of directors is nearing the completion of their strategic plan review. The board uses this process to look several years into the future and identify potential opportunities and threats that may lie ahead. It is a good process that partners the board with senior management, informing our planning and budgeting processes.

I will look ahead to 2017 in the February issue of *Circuits*. I will preview several projects that will come on line next year to benefit members. As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

'Tis the season for giving

Helping Neighbors® helps those in need

Layoffs, medical emergencies, unexpected repairs – all things that could happen to anyone and all things that can leave families struggling to make ends meet. Dakota Electric members who contribute to the Helping Neighbors® trust help local families pay utility bills when facing unexpected financial struggles.

Dakota Electric distributes Helping Neighbors funds to the local CAP Agency, Salvation Army and 360 Communities, which provide utility assistance to families experiencing hardship.

Please consider making a donation. Monthly donations can be added to your electric bill or you can make a one-time contribution.

To learn more, contact Member Services at 651-463-6212 or sign up at www.dakotaelectric.com/residential/programs/helping_neighbors.

Reed wins Dakota Electric's Township Leader Award

Congratulations to Jeff Reed of Hampton on being named the Outstanding Leader of the Year. Each year, Dakota Electric seeks to recognize outstanding leadership with this award. "I was pretty surprised and honored," Reed said of the award.

Peg Varien, township clerk, said Reed is a go-to resource person. "Service to the community runs in his family," Varien said. "His dad and grandfather were township officers. Jeff has also served on the Dakota County Fair board for many years."

Reed has been a Douglas Township Supervisor for six years and has served as chair for the past four years. He has supported the local community in many ways, including serving on and chairing the planning commission, getting the Douglas Township solar ordinance passed, serving on the Dakota Township Officers Board and being vice chair of the 4-H auction committee.

It is easy to see why people speak well of Reed and the work he has done as he keeps the goal of local government in mind. "Township government is all about grassroots," Reed said. "We do our best to represent the needs of the community."

"People who serve the local townships are very dedicated to their communities," Peggy Johnson, Dakota Electric's community relations director, said. "Dakota Electric is a member-owned cooperative, so we're pleased to help recognize people like Jeff who do outstanding work."

You may get money back! Dakota Electric to return more than $2.6 million in capital credits to members

One of the many benefits of being a co-operative member is receiving capital credits distributions.

When you signed up to receive electric service from Dakota Electric Association, you became a member of an electric cooperative. While investor-owned utilities return a portion of any profits back to their investors, electric cooperatives allocate excess margins to members as "capital credits," and retire — or pay — them when the co-op's financial condition permits.

"This month, members who received service from Dakota Electric in 1988 will receive their share of the largest capital credits distribution returned to members," said Jim Sheldon, board chair. "As part owner of this business, receiving capital credits is an important advantage of your cooperative membership."

Dakota Electric is retiring capital credits from 1988. Members who purchased electricity in 1988 and are receiving $5 or more in capital credits will be mailed a check this month. The amount of each allocation and retirement is based on how much individual members were billed for electric service during that period.

"We operate on the seven cooperative principles," said Sheldon. "Returning excess margins to those who own the business is a benefit of membership."

Watch for your check arriving in mid-December.

How do capital credits work?

1. Dakota Electric tracks how much electricity you buy and how much you pay for it during the year.
2. At the end of the year, Dakota Electric calculates whether there are excess margins. This is the amount by which revenue exceeds expenses.
3. Dakota Electric allocates the margins to members as capital credits based upon their annual electric bill.
4. When the co-op's financial condition permits, the board of directors decides to retire, or pay, the capital credits.
5. Dakota Electric notifies you of how and when you will receive your capital credit retirement.

Space heaters: What to know before you buy

- All portable electric space heaters are 100-percent efficient. For every one unit of electricity consumed, one unit of heat is produced.
- Most electric space heaters are limited to a maximum of 1,500 watts — about the same as a coffee maker or hair dryer. Good for heating a room, but not an entire house.

- If you have a room that is cold or drafty you could use a heater to warm that room, but it would be better to invest in caulk, weather-stripping and plastic sheeting around windows.
- Space heaters are meant for temporary use, not for long periods of time. Using one for just eight hours a day, five days a week, will have an impact on your monthly electric bill.

1. Convert watts to kilowatts:

_____ / 1,000 = _____
watts — kilowatts

2. Estimate the operating cost:

_____ x _____ x $0.12 =
kilowatts — hours of operation per day — cost per kilowatt-hour

_____ x 30 = _____
cost of operation per day — cost of operation per month

Options available to pay your bill

Dakota Electric understands how important your time is. That's why we offer several options to make paying bills as easy and convenient as possible.

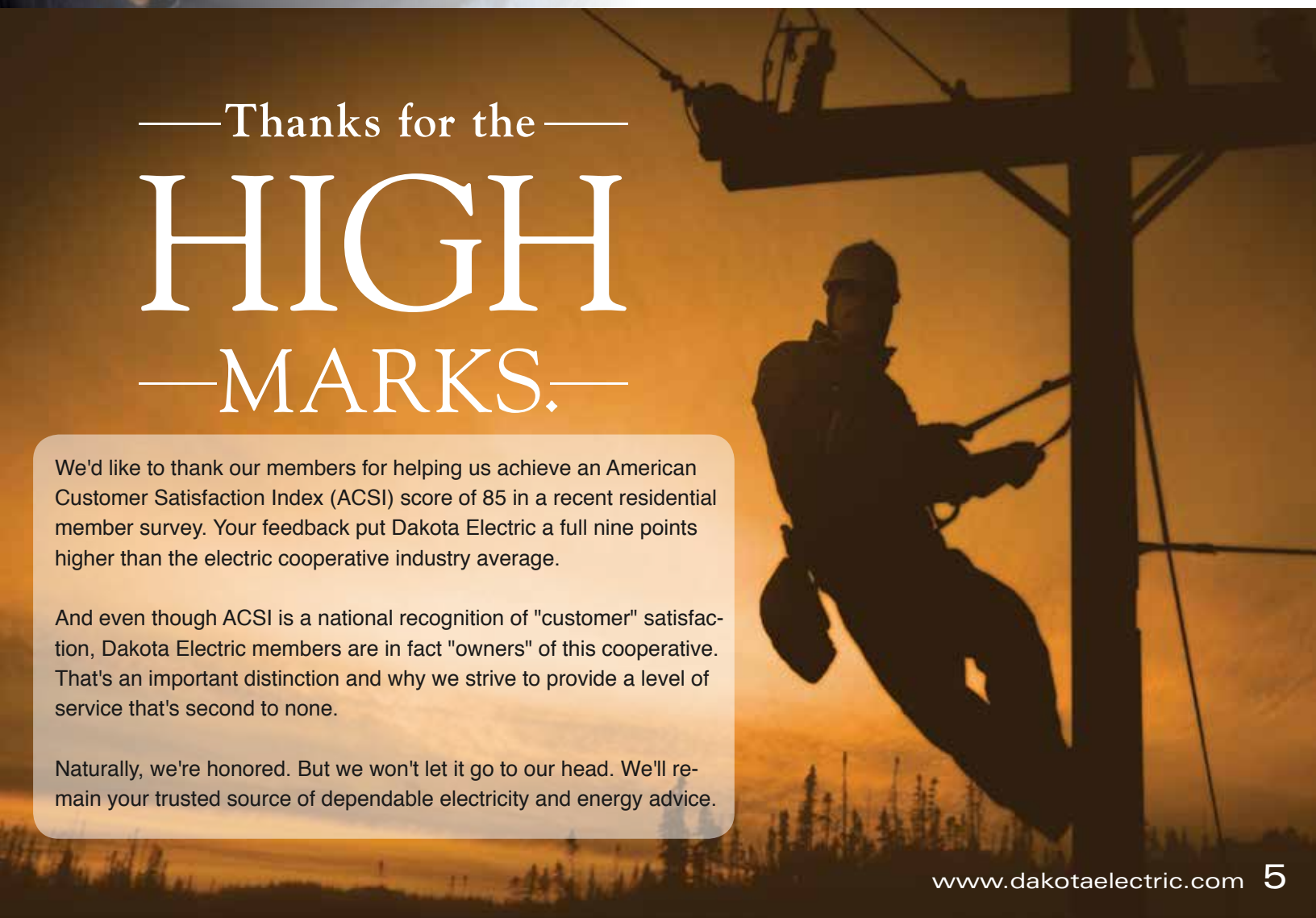
Billing options

- Budget Billing allows you to pay the same amount on your electric bill every month, eliminating large fluctuations caused by weather and usage patterns.
- QuikPay lets you forget paper bills, stamps and writing checks. View, pay and organize your bills online.

Payment options

- Pay online 24 hours a day from anywhere at www.dakotaelectric.com.
- Pay by mail with a check or money order using the envelope provided with your paper bill.
- Pay in person at our Farmington office. Visit our website for hours.
- Pay by phone with a credit card, debit card or electronic check 24 hours a day. A convenience fee applies.
- Pay with automatic deduction from your checking or savings account using Dakota Electric's electronic funds transfer program.

Contact member services at 651-463-6212 or customerservice@dakotaelectric.com, or visit www.dakotaelectric.com for details.



Thanks for the HIGH MARKS.

We'd like to thank our members for helping us achieve an American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score of 85 in a recent residential member survey. Your feedback put Dakota Electric a full nine points higher than the electric cooperative industry average.

And even though ACSI is a national recognition of "customer" satisfaction, Dakota Electric members are in fact "owners" of this cooperative. That's an important distinction and why we strive to provide a level of service that's second to none.

Naturally, we're honored. But we won't let it go to our head. We'll remain your trusted source of dependable electricity and energy advice.

Hurry...offer ends December 15th!

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*In-Home Estimate Needed, Offer Expires December 31, 2016

Paid Advertisements: For more information about advertising in *Circuits* call 651-463-6270.

Please:

Shovel a path to your meter

Reading meters can be dangerous work. An icy and snowy surface can cause life-changing slips, trips and falls.

As the snow flies this winter, please remember to shovel a clear path to your electric meter and make sure 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!

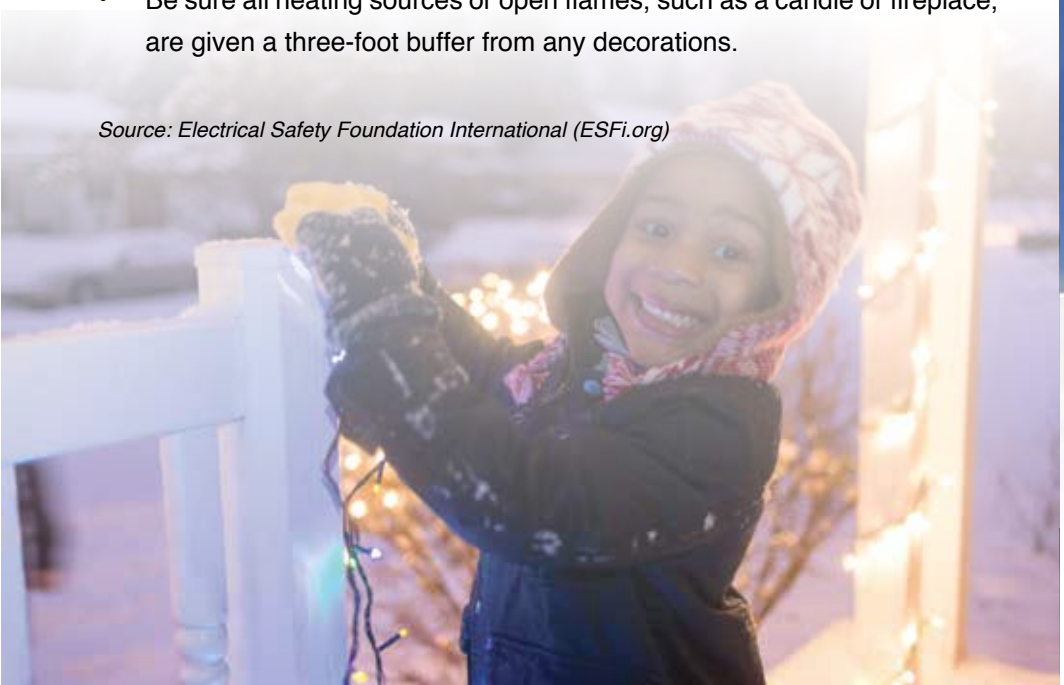
Circuits
Quick Clips

Electrical safety:
Tips for the holiday season

Planning and preparation is essential to reducing your stress during the holiday season. While we can't help you manage your budgets, guests and travel arrangements, we can help you plan and arrange for safe holiday decorations.

- Inspect all electrical decorations and replace any that are cracked, frayed or have other breaks in the insulation of any wires.
- Consider purchasing LED lights, which use less energy and run cooler than traditional incandescent lights.
- Plan out the placement of your holiday lighting so that no more than three strands are strung together (unless using LEDs).
- Outdoor electric lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If circuits are not GFCI-protected, portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold and require no special knowledge or equipment to install.
- Be sure to check each product label or packaging to determine whether it is intended for indoors or outdoors and use accordingly.
- Arrange your decorations so that no outlet is overloaded and no cords will be pinched by furniture or positioned under rugs.
- Be sure all heating sources or open flames, such as a candle or fireplace, are given a three-foot buffer from any decorations.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFi.org)



ENERGY WISE MN

2 WAYS to save

1. $2 INSTANTLY on all ENERGY STAR® qualified Philips LED holiday string sets at participating Target® stores. Discount taken at register. For store locations visit **EnergyWiseMN.com**. Offer valid December 4-17, 2016.

2. Up to $3 per holiday string set with MAIL-IN rebate thru Dec. 24. Good anywhere LED holiday string sets are sold. Download the rebate form at www.dakotaelectric.com.

Make The SWITCH

Visit EnergyWiseMN.com to enter for your chance to win a $500 gift card. Drawing will take place in January 2017.

DAKOTA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

CIRCUITS NEWS FOR DAKOTA ELECTRIC MEMBERS

Circuits is published by Dakota Electric Association, Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative

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www.dakotaelectric.com

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RELIABILITY NEVER TAKES A HOLIDAY

Dakota Electric will be closed Fri., Dec. 23, Mon., Dec. 26 and Mon., Jan. 2 in observance of the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

However, our system control center is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and crews are ready to respond to outages and emergencies — even on holidays.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Contact Us

Member service & drive-up window
7 a.m. – 7 p.m. Monday - Friday
651-463-6212 or 1-800-874-3409
Minnesota Relay Service 711

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

Dakota Electric is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer

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customerservice@dakotaelectric.com

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