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Reminders

Your electric heat bills may be exempt from sales tax

If 50 percent or more of your energy costs are for using electricity to heat your home, you may be exempt from Minnesota sales tax on that heat cost. Fill out the exemption form online at www.mvec.net/my-account/forms.

If you have filed for an exemption in the past, there is no need to file again.

Holiday office closings:

- November 24-25 for Thanksgiving
- December 23 and 26 for Christmas
- January 2 for New Year's Day

Crews and staff will be on call for power outages.

October Board Meeting highlights are online at www.mvec.net/about-us

Additional resources available 24/7 at www.mvec.net



ElectricEye

November 2016

Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative

Garage heater gives relief from the cold



This garage heater keeps Orin Kruschke's dog Layla cozy when its cold.

Layla the Australian shepherd dog doesn't realize it, but the electric garage heater in her owner Orin Kruschke's rural Belle Plaine garage was installed with her comfort partly in mind.

"She's an outdoor dog, who doesn't get to come indoors," said Orin. "We generally set it at 45-50 degrees, and even after the door gets opened, it doesn't take long for that little heater to recoup."

The Kruschkes installed the electric garage heater in December 2015 and took advantage of MVEC's 18-month, zero percent financing. "We have it on auto-pay – it's almost painless," said Orin with a laugh.

With Energy Wise®, Orin was able to take advantage of MVEC's off-peak electric rate of 4.9 cents per kWh, which is a 57 percent discount from regular rates, fulfilling all of his (and Layla's) needs in the most budget-friendly way possible. Assisted by a well-insulated garage, MVEC's American-made garage heater made a clear difference last winter while just adding well under \$100 to the Kruschkes' electric bill for the season.

See Garage Heater on page 4

Want to serve on the board? Three seats open in 2017 director election

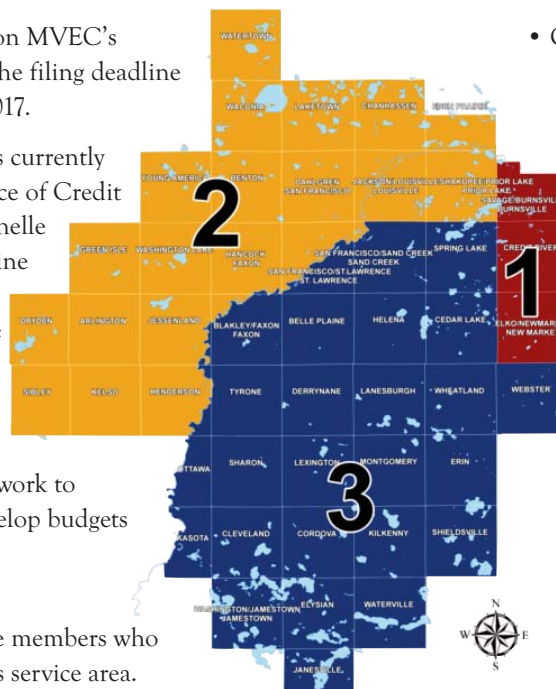
Interested in serving on MVEC's Board of Directors? The filing deadline is Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2017.

The director positions currently held by Brent Lawrence of Credit River (District I), Michelle Morrison of Belle Plaine (District II) and Fran Barten of New Prague (District III) will be on the ballot.

Directors represent the membership and work to establish policies, develop budgets and set rates.

Qualifications

- Candidates must be members who reside within MVEC's service area.



- Candidates may not be employed by or financially involved with a competitor or business selling electric energy or supplies.
- If elected, directors must be able to attend monthly board meetings held at 8:30 a.m. the last Monday of each month.

Voting will take place by mail or at the Annual Meeting on Tuesday, April 4, 2017, at Shepherd of the Lake Church in Prior Lake.

For more information, contact deannc@mvec.net or call 952.492.8288 before Jan. 24.

Ready for winter?

Here's what you need to know



Update your phone numbers!

Call 952.492.8333 or 1.866.492.8333 | OR www.mvec.net/update-phones

Why is it important? If your two most-used phone numbers (landline and cell phone) are in MVEC's records, our automated phone system will be able to identify your location when you call in an outage. Your information is added to the other outage information that has been reported. This helps our dispatchers send crews to needed areas and speeds up power restoration.

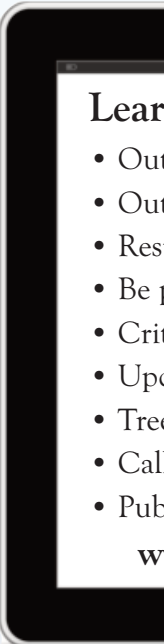


Keep branches trimmed

Trees near power lines are a big culprit of power outages

To maintain reliable electric service for member-owners, MVEC crews work hard to make sure power lines and equipment are ready for winter weather, including year-round trimming of trees that threaten to fall on power lines when weighed down with ice or snow.

Winter weather-related outages still occur and are costly to MVEC and a nuisance to members. If you have a tree that is in close contact to one of our power lines, contact MVEC's dispatch department at 952.492.8255.



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Be prepared!

Create emergency kits for your home and car

At your home

Having winter survival kits on hand is a smart idea. Here are some essentials:

- **Food:** Store food that does not require cooking, such as canned goods, crackers, dehydrated meats and dried fruit. Keep a large supply of water on hand. Ready.gov recommends five gallons per person.
- **Other items:** First Aid kit, blankets, matches, flashlight, battery-powered radio, fire extinguisher, shovel, rock salt, non-electric can opener and extra batteries.

Take into consideration things that are specific to your home and family. Listening to weather forecasts regularly can provide you with several days notice to allow you to check emergency materials and to stock-up on essential supplies.

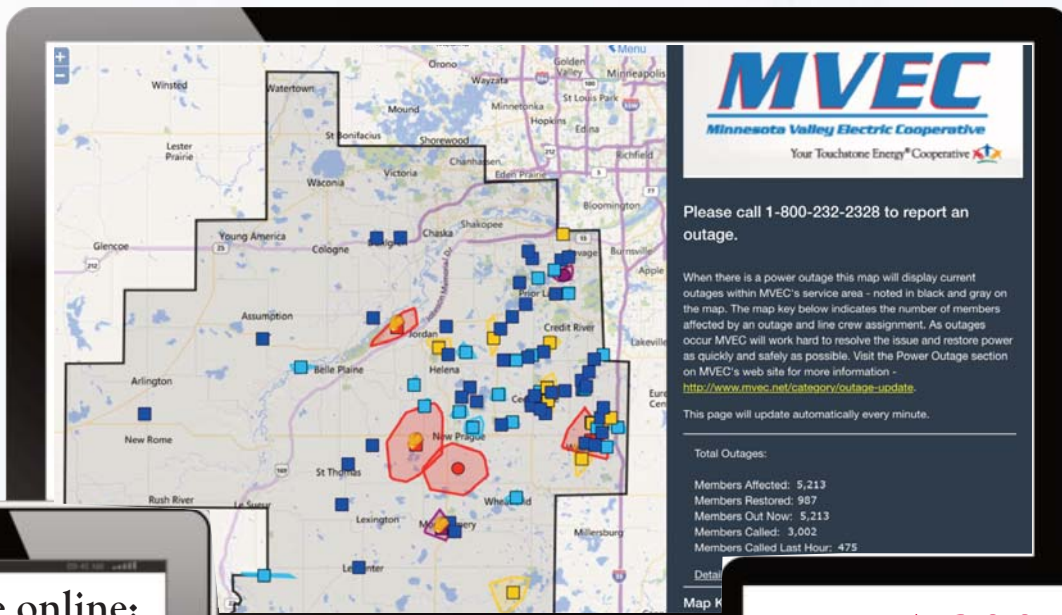
Stay warm and safe

If an outage occurs, you should plan for an alternate heating source. A fireplace, propane space heater or wood-burning stove would be sufficient. Fuel and wood-burning heating sources should always be vented, and make sure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. Always practice extreme caution when using alternate heating sources.

If you use a portable generator, make sure it is placed outside with proper ventilation. Do not overload the generator. Use appropriate safety practices to handle the electric load.



MVEC's online outage map shows the location and size of outages. A yellow hard hat means a crew has been dispatched. You can access it from your computer, smartphone or tablet.



Call 1.800.232.2328 or 952.492.8255 to report outages or downed power lines

During large or prolonged outages, updates are posted on www.mvec.net and on our Facebook page



Learn more online:

- Outage map
- Outage updates
- Restoration process
- Prepared
- Critical service load
- Update phone #
- Trimming
- Before you dig
- Public safety
- www.mvec.net



Check out our short videos on outage preparedness, power restoration, food safety, creating an emergency kit and more. Search Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative on YouTube.

In your car

Be the home for proper extension cords that can

- **Charged cell phone:** You probably always carry one, but making sure it is always charged may make the difference between getting help fast and not getting help at all.
- **First Aid kit:** Include bandaids, adhesive tape, gauze pads, aspirin, antiseptic wipes, antiseptic cream or ointment, and anything specific to you or your family.
- **Fire extinguisher:** Should be rated for Class B and Class C fires by the National Fire Protection Association.
- **Three reflective warning triangles.** Place 50 feet apart to warn oncoming traffic if you become stalled.
- **Tire gauge:** Use the tire gauge in your car emergency kit to periodically check the air pressure in your tires — don't forget your spare tire.
- **Foam tire sealant:** A quick, inexpensive way to repair many flats without changing the tire.

- **Jumper cables:** They should be at least 10 feet in length and coated with at least 8-gauge rubber.
- **Flashlight and extra batteries:** The flashlight should be waterproof.
- **Duct tape:** The universal fix-it solution.
- **Cat litter:** It works as well as sand beneath the tires for traction and weighs less.
- **Multipurpose utility tool:** This can be something like a Leatherman tool or a Swiss Army knife.
- **Rain poncho.** An inexpensive plastic poncho is better than nothing when changing a tire in the rain.
- **Drinking water and nonperishable snacks:** Protein bars are a good choice.
- **Cold weather essentials:** Warm blanket, snow shovel and windshield ice scraper.





Energy 101

MVEC and its Board of Directors hosted an Energy 101 Forum in September for local legislators and candidates, facilitated by the Coalition for a Secure Energy Future. Joel Johnson of OneMinnesota Government Affairs and former state representatives Loren Solberg (DFL-Grand Rapids) and Mike Beard (R-Shakopee) discussed a range of energy issues from how electricity is generated and how co-ops are different than other utilities to renewables and other current factors that affect Minnesota's energy scene.

Active military personnel have shut-off protection

Minnesota Law protects military personnel and their families from shut-off if they cannot pay utility bills when on active duty.

How to apply:

To request an arrangement, complete a Military Protection form at www.mvec.net/my-account/forms and return it to MVEC. If you qualify and make the required monthly payment, MVEC will not disconnect your electricity due to financial hardship.

Garage Heater

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Orin says in addition to taking the edge off the cold, the garage heater keeps frost off the windows and helps prevent mold.

It also makes early mornings a little more comfortable for his wife, Linda, who is a flight attendant and often leaves for the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport at 3 or 4 a.m. in the morning.

The Kruschkes, who have five grown children and nine grandchildren, built their home in 2000. Orin has owned the 80 acres, called the OK Ranch, since 1970. He is retired from Plastech, where they make plastic parts for Toro lawnmowers, snowblowers and lawn trimmers.

"It was easy working with Michael the MVEC sales guy, and the brothers from Kriha Electric couldn't have been nicer," said Orin. "They installed the heater quickly and cleaned everything up to the point you didn't even know they were here."

HOLIDAY LIGHTING SAFETY TIPS

- Consider purchasing LED holiday lights; they are cool to the touch and more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs.
- Test holiday lights by connecting each strand before hanging them.
- Make sure there are no broken bulbs or damaged or frayed cords. Discard any defective strands.
- Use holiday lights that include the Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) label.
- Avoid resting bulbs on tree needles and branches. Try using a clip to keep the bulbs upright.
- Do not overload electrical outlets or extension cords.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor holiday lighting before leaving the house or going to bed.