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### Reminders

#### Renewable energy options available

With the GreenSource program, members can purchase green power through Renewable Energy Certificates or RECs.

The average household uses 1,000 kilowatt hours a month. By participating in a REC program, that amount of usage would be offset in renewable energy with the purchase of:

- **Wind RECs** – \$.10 per 100 kWh block
- **Solar RECs** – \$.30 per 100 kWh block

You may purchase as many blocks of RECs up to your average annual electric usage. Learn more at: [www.mvec.net/renewables](http://www.mvec.net/renewables)

**January Board Meeting** highlights are online at [www.mvec.net/your-cooperative](http://www.mvec.net/your-cooperative)

**Additional resources** available 24/7 at [www.mvec.net](http://www.mvec.net)

# MVEC

Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative  
Your local source for energy solutions



# ElectricEye

February 2020

Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative

## Learn more about the co-op April 7 Arlington site of 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting

Learn more about how your cooperative works by attending MVEC's 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting, which will be held 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 7, at the Arlington Community Center, 204 Shamrock Dr, Arlington. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m.

**All registered households in attendance will be eligible for prizes and will receive a \$15 bill credit, to be applied in May.**

The business meeting will include the annual cooperative update from CEO Ryan Hentges. Gerry Mareck, vice president of finance, will present a report outlining 2019 financials.

**All three districts** have a seat open on the Board of Directors. In District I, candidates are



incumbent Brent Lawrence of Credit River Township and Barbara Marschall of Prior Lake. In District II, incumbent Michelle Morrison is unopposed. In District III, candidates are incumbent Fran Barten of New Prague and Terese (Terri) Gulstad of Prior Lake.

Since there are no races in District II, **ballots will only be mailed to homes or businesses in Districts I and III** in early March. Use the postage-paid envelope to mail ballots, which must be received by Tuesday, April 7. Voting

is also available at the meeting on April 7. **See district map and sample ballots on page 2.**

MVEC's 2020 scholarship winners and Youth Tour representative will be recognized at the meeting, and each household in attendance will have a \$15 bill credit applied to their account in May.

## Deadline to apply for annual Youth Tour trip to D.C. is March 20

One area high school sophomore or junior, whose parent or guardian is an MVEC member, will be selected to represent MVEC in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, an all-expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C., June 20-25, 2020.

An alternate will also be selected and will receive a \$200 cash prize.

The winner will travel with 40 Minnesota teens from other rural electric co-ops and will join 1,800 national delegates in the nation's capital for a fast-paced leadership experience.



**A 300 to 500-word essay is due with the application by Friday, March 20**

### Trip highlights include:

- Fly from Minneapolis to Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C., and stay at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, VA.

**See Youth Tour on page 2**



# Annual Meeting continued from page 1

## 2020 Board of Director Election

### District I - ballots will be sent

Three-year term:

- **Brent Lawrence**, Credit River Township (*incumbent*)
- **Barbara Marschall**, Prior Lake

## 2020 Board of Director Election

### District II - no ballots will be sent

**Vote for one:** (three-year term)

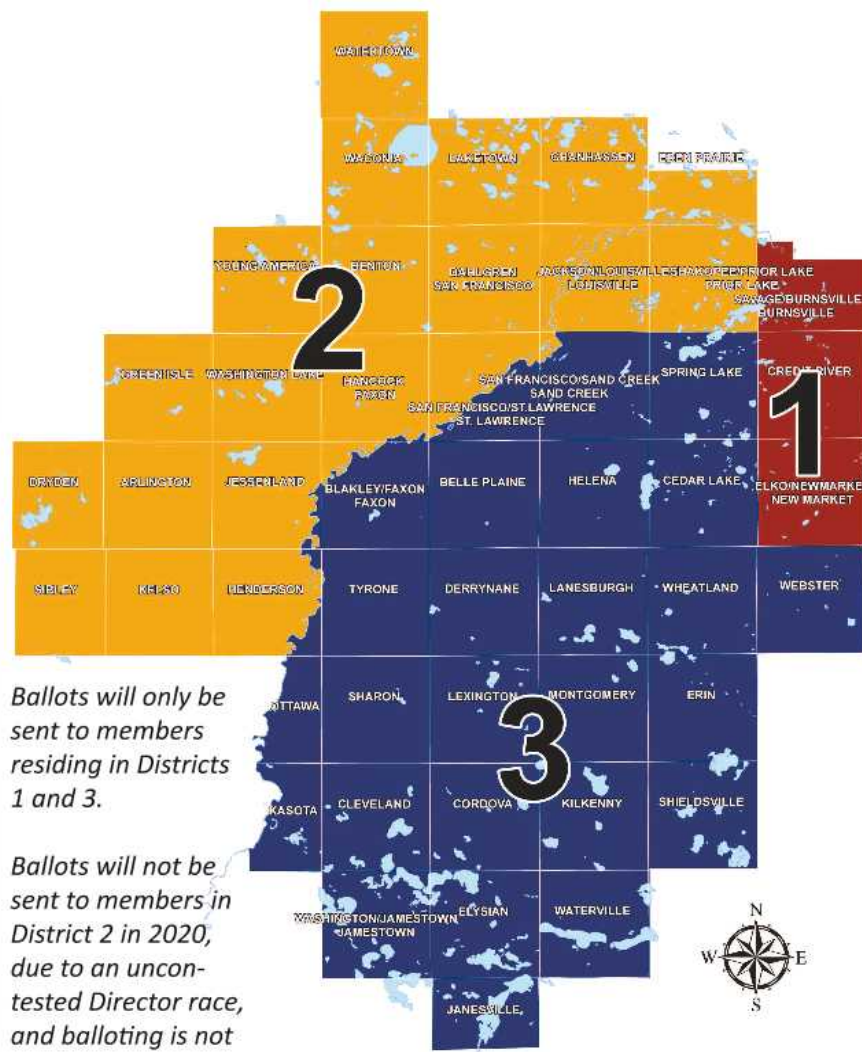
- **Michelle Morrison**, Belle Plaine
- As of 1/31/2020 no other candidate had filed*

## 2020 Board of Director Election

### District III - ballots will be sent

Three-year term:

- **Fran Barten**, New Prague (*incumbent*)
- **Terese (Terri) Gulstad**, Prior Lake



Ballots will only be sent to members residing in Districts 1 and 3.

Ballots will not be sent to members in District 2 in 2020, due to an uncontested Director race, and balloting is not necessary.

“Words cannot express my gratitude to MVEC for sending me on this amazing trip. It truly was a trip of a lifetime, and I will never forget the wonderful people and memories I made.”

- Natalie Thoms

## Youth Tour continued from page 1

- Tour historical sites, including Arlington National Cemetery, Capitol Hill, the Lincoln Memorial, Mount Vernon, the Smithsonian Institution, the U.S. Supreme Court, Washington National Cathedral, Library of Congress, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, National Archives, Iwo Jima Memorial, Old Town Alexandria, the White House (outside only) and more.
- Meet Minnesota political representatives and learn more about our local and national government.

- Hear featured speakers who provide insight to the important roles electric cooperatives play in their communities.
- Create lifelong friendships with students from all around the country.

Apply at [www.mvec.net/our-community/youth-tour-washington-d-c-trip/](http://www.mvec.net/our-community/youth-tour-washington-d-c-trip/).

While on our Youth Tour page, read about the adventures on the tour from our 2018 representative, Sam Meeker, and 2019 representative Natalie Thoms.



Natalie Thoms, far right, was MVEC's 2019 Youth Tour rep, joining other Minnesota students on the D.C. trip.



# Winter outage Q & A



Mike Dietz  
Operations Manager

MVEC's main goal is to keep your lights on - which we do 99.9% of the time. When an outage does occur, crews and staff work hard to restore your power safely and quickly, most often starting in areas where the most members can be restored at once. Here are answers to questions we frequently get.

## When is my power coming back on?

This is by far the most asked question, and we wish we had a crystal ball. There are just too many factors to consider, and each outage is different. When the co-op is dealing with a small, one location outage, our average restoration time is just over an hour. But when 5,000-plus households are out, it will take longer due to outage complexity, time and manpower. You might be one of the first neighborhoods restored, or the last, and to give an estimated time would not be accurate due to unexpected situations that arise during widespread outages.

## Why do some outages take longer to restore?

Keep in mind, in the case of an after-hours outage, linemen on call are at home (often asleep) and need time to get ready and arrive to the outage scene. When the outage is caused by a vehicle accident, law enforcement must investigate and clear the scene before repairs can be made. Sometimes, MVEC's crew needs to wait for Gopher State to locate adjacent underground utilities before they can safely dig and replace a pole. Sometimes, it just takes time to patrol miles of line to find a cause, especially in the dark.

## What are the most frequent causes of winter outages?

Snow and ice, wind and cold temperatures are the cause of most outages during the colder months. Snow and ice can accumulate and weigh down tree branches that normally don't come in contact with power lines. Snowy and icy roads also can cause vehicles to leave roadways and collide into poles. When winds are high, branches bend and break onto the power lines, and galloping lines can cause power to flicker, or at the most extreme, break away from a pole. Very cold temperatures can cause metal pieces of the power system to contract and break.

## Why doesn't MVEC bury all power lines?

Underground power cables are protected from ice and wind, however, frost can still disrupt power, and shifting soil from frost heaves can break underground power lines. Plus, it is more expensive to install underground cable than overhead line, and it takes longer to locate and repair outages on underground cable.

## How can I prepare for an outage?

1. Falling trees and branches are the number one cause of MVEC power outages. No one likes cutting down trees, but MVEC has right-of-way clearance to remove branches that interfere with power lines. If you have a tree close to an overhead line, contact the co-op.
2. Your correct phone numbers on file helps us restore outages quicker. When you call in an outage, your location is automatically added to our system, which gives dispatchers a better idea of where problem areas exist. Update your most-used phone numbers at [www.mvec.net/power-outages](http://www.mvec.net/power-outages)
3. Keep plenty of non-perishable food, your daily medications and bottled water on hand. Items like trail mix, canned fruit and crackers and other non-cook items are good in a pinch.

## What if someone depends on life-support equipment?

If someone in your household is on a respirator, ventilator, home dialysis machine or other qualifying medical equipment, please send a physician's note, on clinic letterhead, to MVEC. Upon receipt, someone from our Dispatch Center will call to confirm your phone and location number. We can notify you prior to a planned outage, allowing you to make alternative arrangements. In the event of an unplanned outage, MVEC first works to restore the greatest number of members out of power, but then members on the Critical Service Load list are next on the list. In any case, always have a backup plan in place.

For additional outage information, visit [www.mvec.net/power-outages](http://www.mvec.net/power-outages)





## CEO's Corner

By Ryan Hentges

Serving our members is the daily focus at MVEC. Our mission is to provide exceptional member experiences, while safely providing reliable energy at cost. We strive to serve you in a variety of ways to meet your specific needs.

Some members want very little interaction with their utility. For those members, we offer the convenience of automatic payments via bank draft and recurring credit card. We also have SmartHub, an online portal and phone app. In addition to payment and outage reporting options, SmartHub is a powerful tool that gives members the control to view monthly, daily, and hourly electric usage. You can even download and analyze your data.



Some members focus on energy

conservation for financial or environmental reasons. For those members, we have rebates and Energy Wise programs. The rebate program offers cash back when you purchase energy efficient appliances or heating and cooling units such as air source heat pumps or garage heaters. Our Energy Wise programs for heating, cooling and electric water heating help you save money and conserve energy at the same time.

MVEC's electric water heating program is very popular. Members receive a reduced electric rate or bill credit for allowing MVEC to interrupt power to the water heater at times of high electricity prices. With a lifetime warranty on the tank, our Westinghouse water heaters offer long-term value.



MVEC's Energy Wise heating programs include products such as heat pumps, plenum heaters, boiler systems, zone heating and garage heaters. Members on these programs receive a reduced electric rate in exchange for allowing MVEC to interrupt the power to these appliances at times of high electricity prices.

MVEC's Energy Wise cooling programs are for members with air source heat pumps and air conditioners. Our traditional program cycles your cooling system on/off in 15-minute increments during times of high electricity prices. Our WiFi Thermostat program increases the temperature setting on your home thermostat by 4 degrees during times of high price summer energy. Members receive 10 percent off all energy usage June-September.



We are seeing an increase of electric vehicles (EVs) in our area. In 2018, MVEC implemented a new time-of-use rate. With this program, you can charge your vehicle whenever you choose, with the most cost-effective charging from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.

For very budget conscious members, we offer our Pay as you Go program. This allows you to put funds in an account and then draw it down on a daily basis as you use electricity. You receive daily information about how much electricity you use and the cost each day. This information is quickly available via SmartHub on a smartphone app. On average, PayGO members use 10-12 percent less electricity per year.



Finally, we know many members are interested in renewable energy. MVEC continues to add renewables to our power portfolio, with two new contracts signed



in 2019. Members wishing to have more than 20 percent renewable can participate in our GreenSource program, which allows you to purchase renewable energy credits and green up your individual portfolio to whatever percentage you desire.

Serving our members is the daily focus at MVEC. We will continue to refine our programs and bring new options to you as it makes sense. If any of these programs are of interest to you, please don't hesitate to contact our office at 952.492.2313 and speak with an energy specialist. We are here to serve you, and we thank you for that opportunity.

*Ryan Hentges*

Think your winter bill is high? The bill you open in January reflects your December holiday usage and your February bill is impacted by cold spells in December and January.

**Winter conditions** — Short days/long nights mean lights are on twice as long as in summer months. More time is spent indoors, families watch more hours of television, water takes longer to heat and so on. Even if your heating system is gas, it still needs electricity for operating the fan and the air exchanger.

**Dirty furnace filter** — Your furnace doesn't run efficiently with a clogged filter, which causes higher costs and can lead to other problems. Remember to change your furnace filter on a regular basis.

**Space heaters** — A small heater can cost \$110 or more per month if used continuously. Though it requires investment, electric in-wall, cove and baseboard heaters are more efficient, and they qualify for a lower Energy Wise electric rate and cash back rebates. Make sure any qualified equipment you already own is installed to an Energy Wise program.