It’s National Safe Digging Month

Call before you dig
to keep yourself and others safe

How can a bird sit on a power line and not be shocked?

FOR EARTH DAY:
“E” STANDS FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Volunteers needed for GreenTouch Day
In the last 24 months, we have hired seven new lineworkers due to retirements and promotions. In 2016, we estimated that half of the employees at our cooperative would be eligible to retire within 10 years. Replacing those long-term tenured employees, is one of the most important jobs we have to continue the quality service our members expect from us.

An example of this is Lorraine Benson, who has attained tenure that will most likely never be overcome. She has always had the members’ best interest at heart and made her “cooperative career” a true priority in her life. After 55 years of service, she will retire at the end of May. We can’t thank her enough for what she has done for our cooperative. As always, I welcome your calls, emails and personal visits.

Greatest asset: employees

Countless times, our members have heard me say that the employees of MiEnergy Cooperative are our greatest asset. Not a week passes by that I don’t hear a member’s positive comment or see a testament of that phrase coming through in our employees’ daily work schedules.

It was a long winter. We had the February blizzard with record snow and the –50-degree polar vortex. What you may not know is that during the blizzard, crews were restoring power to members experiencing outages. Removing broken tree branches and beating the heavy snow off evergreen trees pulling on power lines to get power restored was a tremendous challenge.

During the polar vortex, we had just a few isolated outages that were due to line breaking or a sleeve pulling loose due to the cold. When we have an outage and a member is without power, our crews roll out. Yet, despite the latest –50-degree polar vortex, we were rescued by another crew. The truck was filling up with flood water. One of the trucks slowly sputtered to a point in the creation of MiEnergy and its importance is proving to be even more critical than initially anticipated.

In the next bo...
PLAN AHEAD TO DIG SAFELY

19TH ANNUAL GreenTouch Day
Wednesday, May 1
4-8 p.m.
Forestville State Park
Preston, Min.

MiEnergy encourages members to join employees and attend this year’s GreenTouch Day. It is a statewide event where Minnesota Touchstone Energy Cooperatives lend a hand to Minnesota State Parks. This cleanup day helps get the state parks ready for summer visitors, in particular the rush of Memorial Day.

The event is open to everyone – individuals, youth groups, families, etc. Volunteers can arrive at any time during the event and sandwiches will be provided. Please call 1-800-432-2285 or send Annie Holland an email at aholland@MiEnergy.coop so we know how many volunteers to expect.

Your first priority should be evacuating the area for safety. Call 911 to notify emergency personnel and the affected utility. Excavation nick in underground lines can be expensive, but necessary, to fix. If you believe it may be an electric line, call 811, the “Call Before You Dig Number,” at least 2 business days prior to digging.

A common mistake people make is not locating underground electric utility lines as they were originally located. Always call 811 to locate underground utility lines. A sticker on utility poles, service drops, or in a utility’s right-of-way is evidence that an underground line is present. This sticker is your ticket to contact the utility, and you’ll be provided with the phone number of the utility’s emergency line.

MiEnergy offers a number of resources to help keep safe when digging near underground lines.

Can You Dig It?

An underground utility line is damaged once every 9 minutes because someone didn’t call 811.

Call 811, the “Call Before You Dig Number,” at least 2 business days prior to digging.

811 locations do not detect underground electric systems. Be sure to call for those systems as well. Call 811 to locate underground electric systems.

Even if you have previously had underground utility lines marked, utilities can shift or move over time due to shifting in the lines and ground movement. Call 811 before every project.

A green flag indicates that all underground utilities have been marked. Utility lines are safe to dig around.

A red flag indicates that there are underground utilities nearby, and you should contact 811 before digging.

A yellow flag indicates that underground gas or oil pipelines are nearby, and you should contact 811 before digging.

A blue flag indicates that you are on utility property, and you should contact your utility before digging.

A white flag indicates that you are on public property, and you should contact your local government before digging.

A red flag with the word “gas” indicates that an underground gas pipeline is nearby, and you should contact 811 before digging.

A red flag with the word “oil” indicates that an underground oil pipeline is nearby, and you should contact 811 before digging.

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Springtime has arrived and once again we welcome the sounds of birds chirping. Have you ever wondered how birds can perch on overhead powerlines? Or maybe a child has asked you that very question? How can it be that birds can sit on an overhead power line safely, yet it is not safe for people to touch? Safe Electricity reveals insights into the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction. With the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction. With the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction. With the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction. With the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction. With the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction. With the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction. With the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction. With the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction. With the “bird on a wire” phenomenon and separates fact from fiction.

A bird remains safe because it is sitting on a single wire and is at one point of contact—and consequently one electrical potential. If the bird sitting at this one potential was to also make contact with another object of different potential, that bird would be completing a path to ground (lower potential).

To learn more about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org or MiEnergy.coop.

**POWER LINE SAFETY TIPS:**

- Always look up and look out for overhead power lines.
- Keep yourself and any equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines.
- Remember that getting too close to a power line, even without touching it, is very dangerous.
- Avoid working directly under powerlines.
- When working with tall equipment such as ladders, poles or antennas, carry them in a horizontal position to not risk making contact with overhead lines.
- Always assume that power lines, even if they are on the ground, carry an electrical charge.

To watch the MiEnergy video on power line safety, go to www.MiEnergy.coop and click on the YouTube icon.
Important notice for former Alliant Energy customers

Former Alliant Energy customers will be receiving an official notice with their May statement of a rate change to be implemented August 1.

Now accepting American Express

MiEnergy is happy to announce payments can now be made by American Express credit cards. Discover, Mastercard and Visa cards will continue to be accepted.

PAY YOUR BILL YOUR WAY!

IN-PERSON
Stop by our Cresco or Rushford offices.

PHONE
Call toll free 1-877-853-6517.

MAIL
Send via the U.S. Postal Service.

ONLINE
Login and/or download the SmartHub app at www.MiEnergy.coop.

AUTOMATIC
Deduct from a bank account or charge to credit card each month. Enroll online through SmartHub or by calling 1-877-853-6517.

New employee at the co-op

Kent Whitcomb accepted the new position of director of member services and started on March 1. Kent has been employed as a staking technician for STAR Energy Services LLC, a company MiEnergy partners with for engineering and technology services. Most recently Kent has been working with the Minnesota members of MiEnergy on distributed generation interconnections. We welcome Kent to MiEnergy.