



Co-op Advantage

September 2021



The right decision for our members New ownership group for Coal Creek Station

Great River Energy (GRE), our wholesale power provider, has announced the sale of Coal Creek Station, the 1,151-megawatt (MW) North Dakota power plant, to Rainbow Energy Center, LLC.

The sale of Coal Creek Station averts the plant’s closure, which was scheduled for the second half of 2022 unless a buyer was found. Rainbow Energy Center will continue to operate the power plant and plans to develop carbon capture and storage at Coal Creek Station to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. GRE will enter into a power purchase agreement with Rainbow Energy Center, helping to provide reliable and affordable electricity to co-ops like ECE, while also adding 900 MW of wind energy by 2023.

As ECE President/CEO Justin Jahnz highlights, “Electric markets are complex. GRE is making a decision that has the most positive outcome possible for a generation asset that was not running economically. At the same time, Coal Creek Station will continue to operate, which preserves the stability of the market as well as the local economy.”

The high voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission system that extends between central North Dakota and Minnesota

will be purchased by Nexus Line, LLC, though GRE will operate and maintain the HVDC system under a 10-year contract. Additionally, Rainbow Energy Center plans to add incremental generation from renewables to fully utilize the capacity of the HVDC transmission system.

Ultimately, Justin points out, “ECE members want to know if the sale of Coal Creek Station will impact their electric rates or power reliability. We want to assure our members that this will not affect ECE’s rates. The sale of Coal Creek Station ensures reliable energy for ECE while reducing the risk of an asset that was losing money.”

He adds, “We’re glad to see our power supplier move toward a more sustainable future while balancing cost effectiveness and reliability. The decision is in the best interests of ECE and our nearly 63,000 members.”

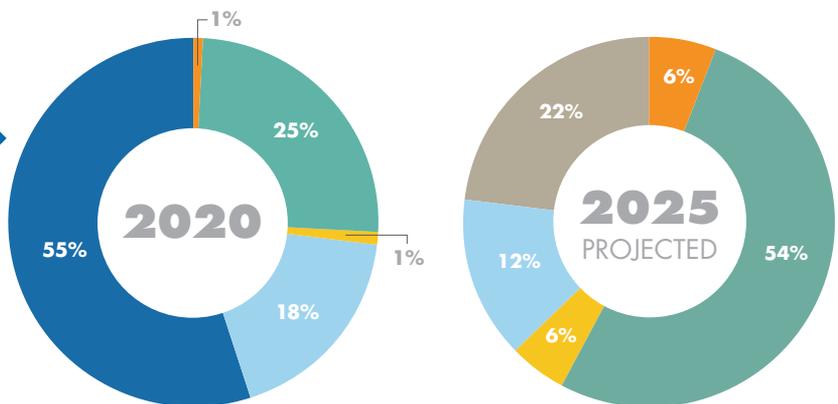


Flexible resources, reliable electricity

Great River Energy has a fleet of peaking plants ready to produce energy when its members or the larger grid need it. When combined with the Midwest’s high availability of wind, natural gas provides stability today and flexibility for a future with new technologies and opportunities.

ENERGY MIX PROGRESSION

Over the past several years, Great River Energy has begun to transition from an energy mix heavily reliant on coal to one that will be over half renewable energy sources by 2025.



Legend: COAL, NATURAL GAS, RENEWABLE, HYDRO, MARKET, RAINBOW PURCHASE



Stay solar smart Research before you sign

As the demand for solar energy skyrockets, the solar industry is seeing steeper competition. This can lead to an increase in deceptive solar advertisements and scams. While the industry has many reputable providers, the media has been bombarded with ads that promote “low-cost” or “no-upfront-cost” programs. Increasingly, these ads tend to make false claims about special government or utility programs.

Why do solar scams exist? Simply put: to generate leads and get your contact information. When you enter your details to “see if you qualify,” a sales representative can contact you directly, day or night, and sell your information to other marketing firms.

What kind of claims are being made? Some companies offer “no-cost options” due to a “special government program.”

Remember, legitimate financing does exist—but rarely from the government. Other companies overestimate future utility rate increases to exaggerate your return on investment.

What should you look out for? Be wary of ads that sound too good to be true. Additionally, look for phrases like “limited time,” “special program,” or “no-cost.” And if you’re visited by a pushy door-to-door salesperson, don’t sign an agreement you don’t fully understand.

Always do your research before signing a contract. Ask for bids from competing installers. Take the time to ask questions so you fully understand each proposal.

Remember, we’re here to help! Call your ECE energy experts at 1-800-254-7944.

Sales tax exemption for electric heat

You may be eligible for a sales tax exemption on your electric bill from November through April each year if electricity is the primary source of heat in your permanent principal residence.

If you are a WI resident, you are automatically exempt from sales tax from November through April.

If you are a MN resident and would like to apply for this sales tax exemption, call 1-800-254-7944, visit our website, or pick up an application at our Brahm Headquarters.



CONGRATULATIONS

JAMES AND CAROL LAFORE
FORESTON, MN

Visit our website to learn more about Auto Pay.

BACK TO SCHOOL SHARE THE ROAD



As many schools return to in-person learning this fall, roads will be busier than ever with school buses, kids on bikes, and parents navigating the drop-off lane. “It’s important to slow down, share the road, and pay attention to your surroundings,” mentions ECE Safety Administrator Ben Smith, who offers the following tips:

- Be sure to take note of speed zone changes during school hours.
- Watch for children playing near bus stops.
- Both lanes of traffic must stop at least 20 feet away when a bus has its stop arm out.
- When backing out of a driveway, watch for children walking to school.

“Safety is paramount,” Ben stresses. “Drivers who violate bus safety laws face a \$500 fine, as well as criminal charges for passing when a child is outside the bus, passing a school bus on the right, or injuring or killing a child. Let’s make this a safe school year for everyone.”

Can my power be turned off in the winter?

YES

Disconnection is prohibited only when it affects the primary heat source for the household and as long as ALL four conditions are met:

1. You declare an inability to pay by completing the Inability to Pay Form.
2. You provide proof of last three months total gross household income.
3. Your total gross household income, not individual income, is less than 50% of the state median income, or you are a current recipient of any public assistance with qualifying income requirements, including energy assistance.
4. Your account is current or reasonably on time with a payment plan or you make and keep a mutually acceptable payment plan at any time that considers the financial resources of the household.

The Cold Weather Rule, in effect from October 1 to April 30 in Minnesota, governs how we handle disconnects; it does not prohibit them. We use the MN guidelines for everyone in our territory. We are prepared to work with you if you are struggling to pay your electric bill. For more information about the Cold Weather Rule, see MN Statute 216B.097.

Energy assistance may be available. For a list of assistance providers and to verify income eligibility visit eastcentralenergy.com > Residential > Assistance Information.

Military service personnel assistance

According to Minnesota law, a utility may not disconnect your service if a member of your household has been issued orders into active duty, for deployment, or for a permanent change in duty station during the period of active duty, deployment, or change in duty station.

How can your military household qualify for exemption?

- If your household income is below the state median household income or you are receiving energy assistance, and you have entered into a satisfactory payment plan with ECE and remain current with payments under that plan.
- If your household income is above the state median household income and you have entered into a plan with ECE, establishing a reasonable payment schedule that considers the financial resources of your household, and you remain current with payments under that plan.

We use the MN guidelines for all members, including those in WI. Forms are available from ECE. For more information about military shut-off protection, see MN Statute 325E.028.

Have questions about either program? Give us a call at 1-800-254-7944 or visit our website for more information.

Nominate your organization today!

It's that time of year again—nominations for our Touchstone Energy® Community Award are now open. One winning organization will receive a **\$1,000 cash prize** and will compete with winners from other electric cooperatives for statewide recognition and an **additional \$1,000** cash prize.

Who is eligible?

Any civic organization or non-profit (big or small!) within our service territory is eligible to compete for the award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the local community. Organizations can apply for the award themselves, or community members may apply on behalf of a deserving organization.

How do I apply?

Applications are available at eastcentralenergy.com or by calling 1-800-254-7944, ext. 8031. The application will require a description of the project, program or event, and the positive impact it brings to the community. Completed applications must be received at our Braham Headquarters office by Monday, October 18.

Last year, our Touchstone Energy Community Award was presented to the Tusen Tack organization, which went on to win the statewide award as well.





Over 85 years ago, East Central Energy introduced the convenience of electricity to members. Since then, there has been a shift in technology and the electrification of vehicles is the next step. We have worked with multiple entities to install electric vehicle (EV) chargers throughout our service area, and ECE even purchased a Chevy Bolt to experience the maintenance and performance for ourselves.

As prices come down, EVs are gaining in popularity. More public charging stations are starting to appear even as vehicle range is expanding.

For members who are curious about EVs, we encourage you to attend the North Country EV Show & Tell Event, held September 30 at Duluth's Canal Park Lodge from 5-7 p.m. The event will feature a panel of industry experts answering your questions, as well as EVs on display in the adjacent parking lot. We've been working with Arrowhead Cooperative, Cooperative Light & Power, Great River

Energy, and Lake Country Power to host the event, and we're all very excited to discuss the evolution of EVs.

Don't forget, your co-op is offering a \$750 rebate to install a level 2 charger at your home, either on our time-of-use rates or our off-peak storage rate. Our three-tier, time-of-use rates provide the greatest flexibility. Learn more by visiting our website under Residential > Programs and Rebates > Electric Vehicles.

As an EV driver myself, I appreciate the energy-efficiency and low maintenance that comes with owning a car of the future. The transportation industry is evolving and EVs are quickly becoming a viable choice for new car buyers. Have you considered an EV?

At your service we remain,



East Central Energy
P.O. Box 39
Braham, MN 55006

Braham Service Center
Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

1.800.254.7944
General business calls are answered from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Emergency and outage calls are answered 24 hours a day.

Email: info@ecemn.com

The ECE Board of Directors meets monthly. Please call Executive Assistant Wendy Leibel at 763-689-8046 to confirm meeting information. Monthly board meeting highlights and board operating policies can be found on SmartHub.

The Co-op Advantage newsletter is published by East Central Energy, your not-for-profit, member-owned, local electric cooperative.

ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Website: eastcentralenergy.com



SAVE SOME SERIOUS GREEN!



- **\$750 REBATES** on qualifying EV chargers (until funds are exhausted)
- Special off-peak charging rates

Visit our website for details.



SAVE SOME SERIOUS GREEN WITH THIS LIMITED TIME OFFER



- **\$750 REBATES**
on qualifying electric
vehicle chargers
(until funds are exhausted)
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