



Co-op Advantage

Do you love getting involved?

Director nominations due Valentine's Day 2023

Are you an involved member of your local community? Do you have a passion for serving your neighbors and friends? If you're open to new ideas and can connect with people from all generations, please consider joining ECE's Board of Directors.

Director nominations are now open for members who live in districts 2, 4, 5, and 6. Directors whose four-year terms expire in April 2023 are David Deutschlander in District 2, Garry Bye in District 4, and Linda Laitala in District 5. Due to Wes Siemers' departure from the board, a one-year term in District 6 currently occupied by Jim Jesok is also open. To learn if you live in one of these districts, please check your bill on the upper right under your account number.

Directors have many duties, including strategic goals, annual audits, policies, bylaws, rates, budgets, work plans, and overseeing the President/CEO. Directors are also expected to stay updated on legislative, local, and industry issues.

If you live in an eligible district and are interested in becoming a nominee, visit our website for a wealth of information at eastcentralenergy.com > Your Cooperative > Director Election. Director nomination packets must be completed and returned by 10 a.m. February 14, 2023, after which all nominees will be notified regarding the status of their candidacy.

We retain the services of Survey and Ballot Systems to conduct the election, and the entire election process is overseen by co-op members who serve on the Credentials and Election Committee.

DISTRICT MAP

(Visit eastcentralenergy.com for a detailed map)

District 2

Serving all or part of the following areas:

Arlone, Barry, Brook Park, Chengwatana, Clover, Crosby, Dell Grove, Hinckley, Kroschel, Mission Creek, Munch, Ogema, Pine City, Pokegama, Pomroy, Rock Creek, Royalton, and Sandstone, including the cities of Rock Creek, Pine City, Henriette, Brook Park, Hinckley, and Sandstone.

District 4

Serving all or part of the following areas:

Athens, Bogus Brook, Cambridge, Dalbo, Isanti, Maple Ridge, Princeton, Springvale, Stanchfield, and Wyanett, including the cities of Braham, Cambridge, Isanti, and Princeton.

District 5

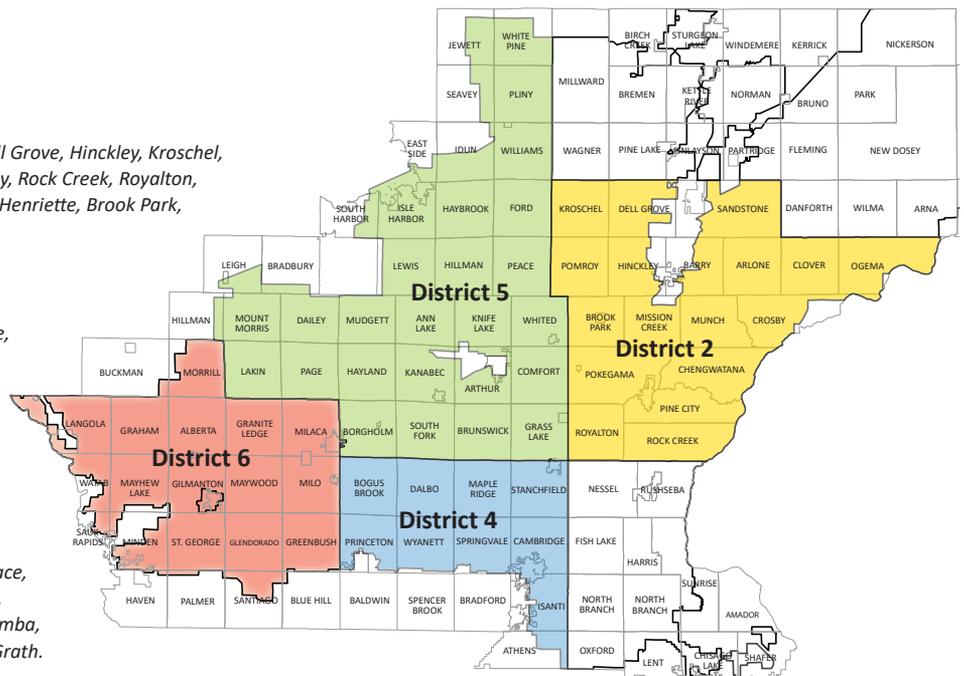
Serving all or part of the following areas:

Ann Lake, Arthur, Bradbury, Borgholm, Brunswick, Comfort, Dailey, East Side, Ford, Grass Lake, Haybrook, Hayland, Hillman, Idun, Isle Harbor, Jewette, Kanabec, Knife Lake, Lakin, Leigh, Lewis, Mount Morris, Mudgett, Page, Pease, Pliny, Seavey, South Fork, South Harbor, White Pine, Whited, and Williams, including the cities of Braham, Grasston, Quamba, Mora, Ogilvie, Bock, Milaca, Hilman, Wahkon, Isle, and McGrath.

District 6

Serving all or part of the following areas:

Alberta, Blue Hill, Buckman, Gilmanton, Glendorado, Graham, Granite Ledge, Greenbush, Haven, Langola, Mayhew Lake, Maywood, Milaca, Milo, Minden, Morrill, Palmer, Pease, Sauk Rapids, St. George, Santiago, and Watab, including the cities of Foley, Foreston, Gilman, Glendorado, Milaca, Pease, Rice, Ronneby, Santiago, Sauk Rapids, and St. Cloud.



NOMINEE INFORMATION SESSION

January 26 at 1 p.m. at ECE Braham Headquarters

Learn director expectations and tips to help with the nomination process. Attend in person or online! Call 1-800-254-7944, ext. 8046, for details.

The journey of a thousand miles...

How electricity gets to you

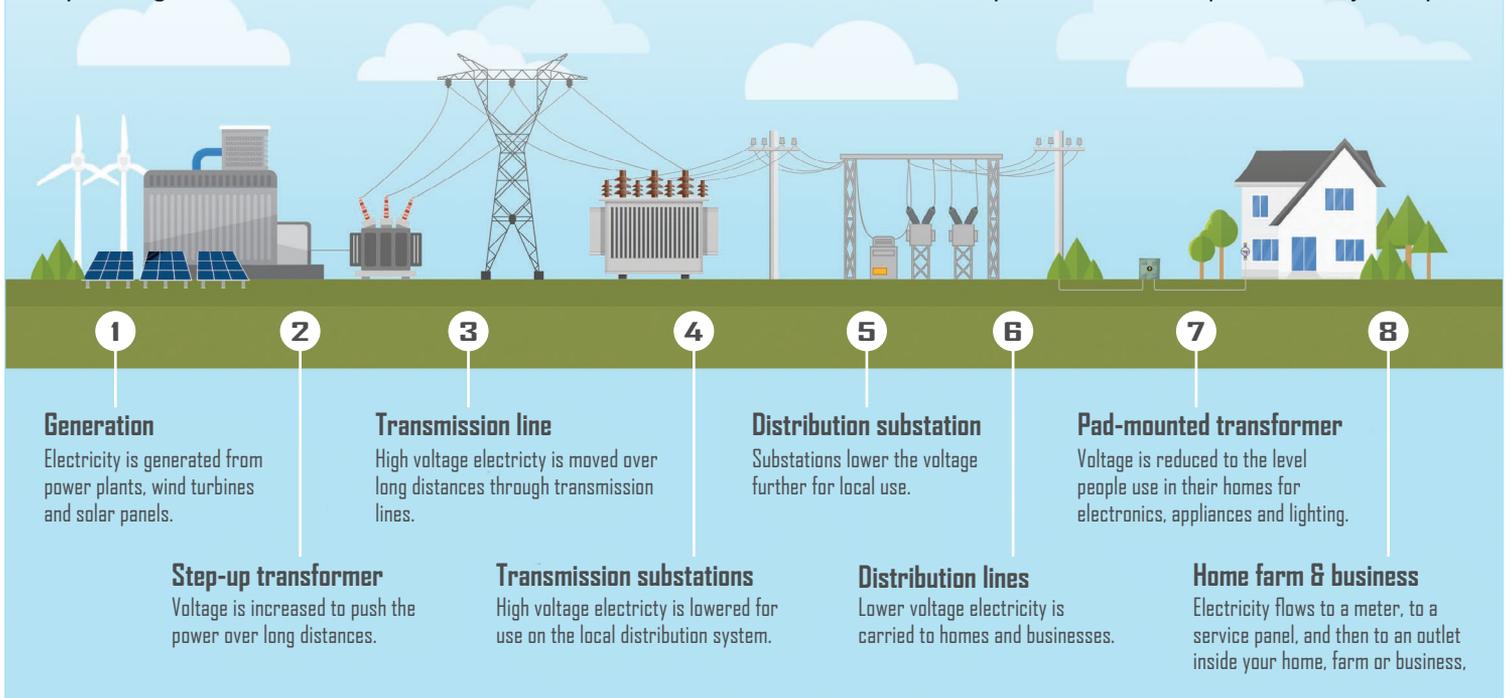
This winter, when you pull a warm mug from your microwave, you'll be relying on the electric grid to deliver convenient, reliable electricity. Have you ever wondered where that energy comes from?

First, electricity is made by huge spinning turbines at generating stations using coal, wind, natural gas, or water. These generators, located at places like power plants and wind farms, then push power along high voltage transmission lines to substations where the voltage can be "stepped down" to lower, more functional levels. Then, it is sent along smaller distribution lines, like those owned by ECE, to be delivered to your neighborhood.

From there, smaller transformers reduce the voltage again to make power safe for homes, schools, farms, and small businesses. These smaller transformers may be mounted on poles or a pad on the ground (the humming green boxes we warn you to stay away from).

Electricity then runs from the transformer, through your meter, and to a service panel where breakers or fuses protect the wires inside your house from being overloaded. Finally, electricity then zips along the wiring in your walls to your light switches and outlets.

Whew! Who knew your warm drink required such a journey?



Students, win a FREE trip

Meet other teens from across the country during the six-day, all-expense-paid Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., which is scheduled for June 13-18, 2023.

Spend an exciting day on Capitol Hill, explore historic landmarks and sites, and learn how electric cooperatives power communities just like yours. Don't miss out on this opportunity, as ECE covers the entire cost of the trip, including airfare.

The Youth Tour is open to high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors whose parent or guardian is an ECE member. Applications are available on eastcentralenergy.com > Community > Youth Tour. Students may also request an application by emailing desiree.cuda@ecemn.com or calling 1-800-254-7944, ext. 8031. Completed applications and essays are due February 27, 2023.





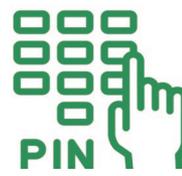
“Paws” to keep pets safe from electrical hazards

Every year thousands of pets around the country are given as gifts during the holiday season. If you are thinking about joining this tradition, please “paws” to prepare your home before bringing a furry friend home for the holidays.

TAKE ACTION

Pet proof your home by covering or enclosing electrical cords and taking steps to prevent other electrical hazards. If you must leave your pet unsupervised, make sure any loose electrical cords are unplugged or tucked out of sight.

Learn more about pet safety at SafeElectricity.org.



Do you make ECE payments over the phone?

While we recommend SmartHub as the preferred payment option, some members still pay bills over the phone. After another co-op experienced scam activity, ECE made a small change that will have a big impact on member security. Our automated payment system will now require a four-digit personal identification number (PIN).

You can still call our 800 number, then choose option 2 as usual. You will hear a message stating “As a security measure, you will be required to enter or create a special four-digit ECE PIN to access any account information.” Proceed as normal but you will be instructed to enter or “Please create a 4-digit personal identification number” before accessing information. Creating a PIN is quick and simple, and the system walks you through each step!

This change will affect all members who use the automated payment system. If others pay on your account over the phone, please let that person know what your PIN is. As a reminder, joint memberships with more than one account will share one PIN. Questions? Please call us at 1-800-254-7944.

Achieving effective vegetation control

To promote reliability and control vegetation near electrical conductors, we employ the industry-best practice known as Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM), which offers better right-of-way access for our crews. It also helps prevent outages and keeps lineworkers, arborists, and the public safe.

By promoting desirable, stable plant communities that will resist invasion by tall growing tree species, IVM consists of a blend of manual, mechanical, chemical, and cultural control of unwanted vegetation. The result is a thriving ecosystem of low-growing plant species, which is beneficial to wildlife, pollinating insects, and butterflies.

We work with line clearance contractors and typically conduct maintenance on a six-year cycle; regrowth is treated two to three years after. Split between 18 projects, we’ve scheduled about 900 miles of line for clearing in 2023. Interested in where we’ll be working? Check out the detailed map on our website under [Trees & Lines > Vegetation Management Plan](#).

Contact center hours are changing

To allow for more efficient use of our employee resources and better meet your needs, hours for the contact center will be changing beginning January 3, 2023. Rather than 7:30 a.m.- 6 p.m., phones will be answered by our contact specialists from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. We carefully analyzed call volume data, which showed a reduction in member calls at the beginning and end of the day. The Braham lobby will continue to be open from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Please continue to utilize SmartHub, our free online account management tool. SmartHub puts the power of data in your hands 24/7. You can review your billing, make payments, monitor kWh use, and communicate with ECE. While our hours may be changing, we will always be available during major outage events.





It's simple to participate. You can request to have your monthly electric bill rounded up to the next dollar, with the excess going to ORU. Even at 99 cents per bill, the most you would round up is \$11.88 a year.

It may not sound like much, but that's the power of numbers. Combined with other member contributions, your pennies work for the common good to fund local grants for police and fire departments, early childhood education, 4-H clubs, community centers, playgrounds, and so much more. Every dollar goes to making local communities a better place to call home.

As your neighbors and friends at ECE wish you the happiest of holiday seasons, please consider a one-time or monthly donation to the Operation Round Up program. Sign up in SmartHub or give us a jingle.

At your service we remain,

As a Pine City native, I've seen firsthand the influence a group of committed citizens can have. Small towns rely on volunteers to get the job done...and when elbow grease just isn't enough, grants make a huge impact. Often, grant funding means the difference between a successful effort and one that never makes it off the planning page.

One ECE program close to my heart is Operation Round Up. Since 1997, the power of small change has made a \$2.3 million difference thanks to generous co-op members.

O, R U rounding up?

Thank you to the members who round up your bill to the nearest dollar for ECE's Operation Round Up program! Over \$71,000 was given to local organizations in 2022. Any community organization that serves ECE members is eligible to apply for an ORU grant. A trust board meets every quarter to carefully review applications. Please consider rounding up your bill or making a one-time donation. Help us provide more opportunities in the small towns we call home! Call 1-800-254-7944 to donate today.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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 THE DATE

ECE Annual Meeting
April 20, 2023

Watch our website for details!



Help support your COMMUNITY!

For less than \$1 per month, you can support local organizations by “rounding up” your bill to the next dollar.

**Sign up for Operation Round Up
via SmarHub or call us today!**

ECE 1.800.254.7944
eastcentralenergy.com

ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



*An ORU grant assisted with the Isanti County
Veterans Memorial Park in Cambridge, MN.*