



Co-op Advantage

CELEBRATING a historic decision



Quality internet connection is becoming a necessity. Many of our members live in rural areas and are separated from major services by a long drive. Broadband would allow

parents to telework, help the elderly access telemedicine, and give students access to online advanced placement courses.

Last October, after nearly a year of research and grant applications, ECE's Board of Directors unanimously voted for the cooperative to invest in continued growth and economic development by officially entering the broadband business.

"It's clear that members are excited for broadband," says VP/CIO Ty Houglum, "But we're urging patience. As we learned in 1936 when the cooperative was formed, changing the landscape of rural America is not an overnight task."

GLOSSARY: Broadband 101

BROADBAND

The Federal Communications Commission defines a broadband connection as one with a minimum download speed of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) and a minimum upload speed of 3 Mbps. *Note: ECE plans to offer higher speeds than this—see "fiber" below.*

UNSERVED

An area in which households or businesses lack access to wire-line broadband service at speeds that meet the FCC threshold of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload.

UNDERSERVED

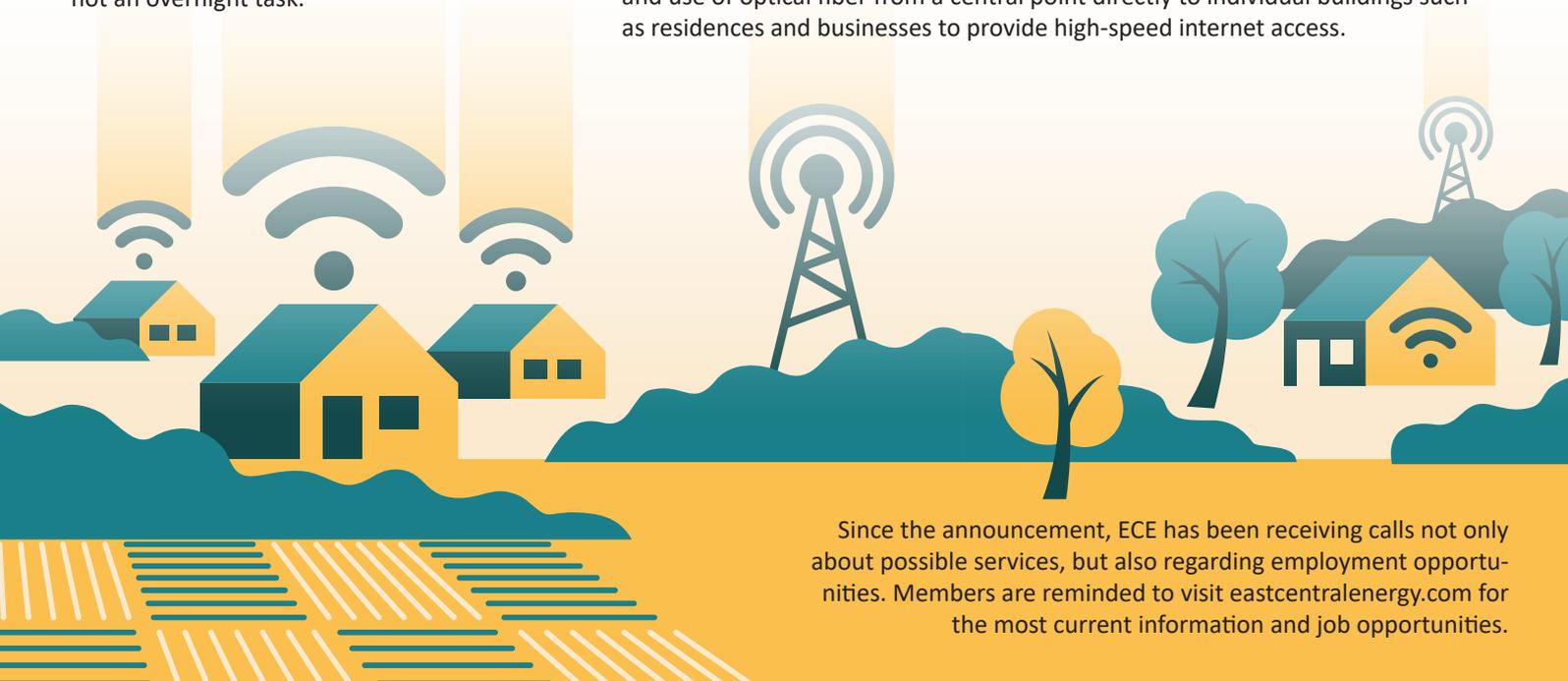
An area in which households or businesses do receive service at or above the FCC threshold, but lack access to wire-line broadband service at speeds 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload.

FIBER

Fiber is considered the "gold standard" of broadband connections. It is incredibly fast because a glass filament transmits data through light pulses. Fiber can handle a near unlimited amount of data and users. *ECE plans to offer a minimum of 100 Mbps.*

FTTH

"Fiber to the home," also called "fiber to the premises" (FTTP), is the installation and use of optical fiber from a central point directly to individual buildings such as residences and businesses to provide high-speed internet access.



Since the announcement, ECE has been receiving calls not only about possible services, but also regarding employment opportunities. Members are reminded to visit eastcentralenergy.com for the most current information and job opportunities.



Applications are being accepted until February 27 for our Power Up scholarship program.

Five \$1,500 Power Up scholarships will be awarded to non-traditional students, which include those already in college or those returning to college after a hiatus; high school seniors who attend homeschool, private educational institutions, or a high school located outside our service territory.

Applicants must be an ECE member or the dependent of an ECE member. The application form and more information can be found on our website under Community > Scholarships > Non-traditional Students.

Separately, we also provide scholarship opportunities to college-bound seniors at participating high schools within our service territory. Most of these scholarships are funded by unclaimed capital credits. For a list of participating high schools, visit our website under Community > Scholarships > High School Students. Contact your high school for information and to apply.

Tips to prevent space heater fires



Our friends at Princeton Fire & Rescue recently shared some great space heater information on their Facebook page. They mentioned that many people turn to space heaters during cold weather. Unfortunately, the Princeton department (and many others) frequently respond to house fires caused by space heaters plugged into power strips.

Remember:

- Plug space heaters directly into the wall, never a power strip or extension cord.
- Keep them at least three feet away from other items.
- Do not cover the power cord.
- Make sure your space heater will shut off if knocked over.

Thank you to all our first responders for everything they do to keep our communities safe!

Note: Space heaters may increase your monthly electric bill. Use our handy formula below to calculate the cost to run your space heater and other appliances.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT COSTS TO RUN YOUR APPLIANCES?



Calculate the cost before plugging in

$$\text{Wattage} \times \text{Hours used per month (30 days)} \times \text{*Co-op's kWh rate} \div 1,000 = \text{Monthly cost}$$



SPACE HEATER
1,500 Watts
8 hrs. per day =
\$44.96/month



COFFEEMAKER
800 Watts
1 hr. per day =
\$3/month



49" HD LED TELEVISION
128 Watts
5 hrs. per day =
\$2.40/month

*ECE's rate per kWh September - May: .1249¢ (used in calculations above)

Shelly and Ron's first year

"Electrifying" and "educational"

Along with representing other members' best interests, our twelve board members also manage ECE policies, review the budget, oversee the President/CEO, and monitor progress of the strategic plan. We spoke with our two newest directors, Shelly Nault and Ron Volker, to see how their first year is going.



Shelly Nault represents our northernmost members in District 1. She describes her experience as "electrifying," explaining that "Learning so much new information, meeting the current board, and attending conferences has been exciting. I didn't realize that the energy industry has so many abbreviations and acronyms, which has been a learning experience!"



Ron Volker, representing District 6 in the western part of our service area, has found his first year to be incredibly educational. He shares, "ECE really is a family-oriented organization. I'm so grateful to the other board members for helping me, as I'm still getting my feet wet. I've learned a lot about the complicated chain of producing, purchasing, and distributing electricity."

As both Shelly and Ron approach their one-year board anniversaries, they want other members to get involved. Shelly suggests attending the annual meeting to learn more about the cooperative, while Ron encourages members of all ages to consider running for an open board seat.

Have you considered joining Shelly and Ron on ECE's Board of Directors? If you live in District 2, 4, 5, or 6 and are interested in becoming a nominee, visit our website and contact us for a director nomination packet at 1-800-254-7944, ext. 8046. Don't delay! The packet must be completed and returned by 10 a.m. February 14.

Do you have a power concern?

Low levels of A/C (alternating current) voltage on the grounded conductors of an electrical wiring system are a normal and unavoidable consequence of operating electrical equipment. This voltage, sometimes called stray voltage, is referred to as neutral-to-earth voltage (NEV) when it can be measured between two objects which may be simultaneously contacted by livestock.

If you suspect NEV or other electricity-related issues, such as low voltage, electromagnetic fields, or power quality concerns, contact us. We have qualified employees who can answer your questions and investigate any suspected problems.

Please note: if a person feels an uncomfortable tingling sensation, the condition is probably not NEV but faulty equipment or a serious problem with your wiring system. This situation requires immediate attention and an electrician should be contacted to investigate and correct the problem.

**SAVE
THE DATE!**



**Annual Meeting
April 20, 2023**

Attend in person at the Braham Event Center or online.

Watch our website for details!

Forgot to pay your bill?

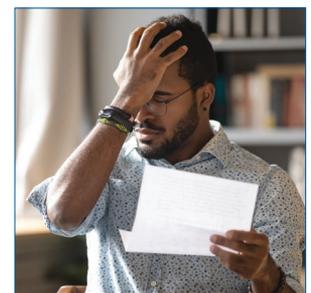
Rest easy with Auto Pay

Auto Pay, our worry-free bill-pay plan, gives you peace of mind each month knowing your bill is automatically being paid.

The benefits:

- Deducts payments automatically from a designated checking or savings account or credit card
- Payment is deducted on the due date of your bill
- Receive a paper bill with enough time to review it before payment or choose paperless to receive a copy of your bill electronically
- All members enrolled in Auto Pay are automatically entered into a monthly drawing for a **\$50 bill credit**

Access your account online by visiting SmartHub to set up Auto Pay today!





Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

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

1.800.254.7944

General business calls are answered Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

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



Before farmers created your electric cooperative, people in our area could only dream of the luxuries that big-city folk enjoyed. In 1936, ECE's very first members learned how electricity provided light for evening chores and education, radio shows for entertainment, and many incredible opportunities to make life better. If things go according to plan at ECE, there will be a day when current members say the same thing about affordable access to high-speed internet.

There are two types of communities in our country: those who have access to broadband, and those who do not. A stark contrast is forming between the two. Your neighbors and friends at ECE would prefer to have our service area be part of the former type, along with all the benefits that broadband brings.

Since the beginning, we've been committed to improving the quality

of life for our members. Based on a promising feasibility study and a solid business plan, in October our board of directors made the decision to enter the broadband business, with construction to begin this year. Moving forward now ensures we can take advantage of grant opportunities that will truly usher in a new era in our rural communities.

Your co-op was created on the premise of building infrastructure in some of the most challenging parts of the Midwest, in an effort to solve everyday problems. We are confident that ECE is the best organization to solve this problem as well. It's going to take time for us to get the solution to everyone, but we are working diligently to improve the future for our membership.

At your service we remain,

Interested in a job at ECE?

When you join our team, you become part of the ECE family. We empower decision making at all levels, encourage new ideas, reward our employees for exceptional efforts, and have a lot of fun along the way.



Unsolicited resumes or applications are not accepted, so please watch our social media and website for job openings: eastcentralenergy.com > About Us > Careers & Job Openings.





Forgot to pay your energy bill? Rest easy with Auto Pay

Members enrolled in Auto Pay are automatically entered into a monthly drawing for a
\$50 BILL CREDIT!

Access your account online by visiting SmartHub to set up Auto Pay today!

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1.800.254.7944
eastcentralenergy.com