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September 2023

Advantage

Honoring our commitment to local communities

Apply for the Touchstone Energy Community Award

Commitment to community is the 7th Cooperative Principle and is essential as we foster positive change across the 14 counties we serve. To recognize the significance of community involvement, each year we select one organization to receive ECE's Touchstone Energy® Community Award, which comes with a \$1,000 prize. The winner then competes with other co-ops for statewide recognition and an additional \$2,000.

A testament to our deep commitment to the communities we power, the award amplifies the work of those making a difference. Past winners include organizations spanning from Princeton, MN, to Oulu, WI. Their missions include everything from mentoring programs and cancer awareness to military support and community theater. They have proven this well-deserved recognition of their collective efforts can bring about meaningful change.

Last year's winner, A Place for You (APFY) in Pine City, has spent a decade serving homeless individuals from surrounding counties. "The award made an immediate impact on our shelter," highlights APFY Executive Director Mathew Viney.



Pictured above (l-r): ECE President/CEO Justin Jahnz presents the 2022 award to APFY's Executive Director Mathew Viney, Vice Chair Linda Setterlund, and Board Chair Michelle Young.

"The community's trust in ECE was extended to us. We saw an increase in awareness, especially after the newspaper article and the co-op's annual meeting. Members reached out to learn more and offer their support."

WHO WILL YOU NOMINATE?

TOUCHSTONE ENERGY COMMUNITY AWARD NOMINATIONS ARE DUE OCTOBER 20!

One winning organization will receive a **\$1,000 cash prize** and will compete for statewide recognition and an **additional \$2,000**.

Any civic organization or non-profit (big or small!) serving ECE members is eligible to compete for the award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the local community.

Apply at eastcentralenergy.com > Community > Community Award or by calling 1-800-254-7944, ext. 8031.

Storage space heating

Efficient comfort at your fingertips



When the temperature drops, a warm and cozy environment becomes a top priority. One effective solution for maintaining a comfortable area is storage space heating. We spoke with Brad Rooney, our Energy Services Supervisor, to learn more.

Whether you're looking to lower your energy bills, create a cozy living space, or reduce your carbon footprint, storage space heating is a solution worth considering. At ECE, we offer three types: central storage furnace, room storage heaters, and slab heat. These are practical for all types of buildings, including homes, shops, cabins, or businesses. Even better, you can take advantage of our available rebates and low off-peak electric rate of 5.3 cents per kWh.

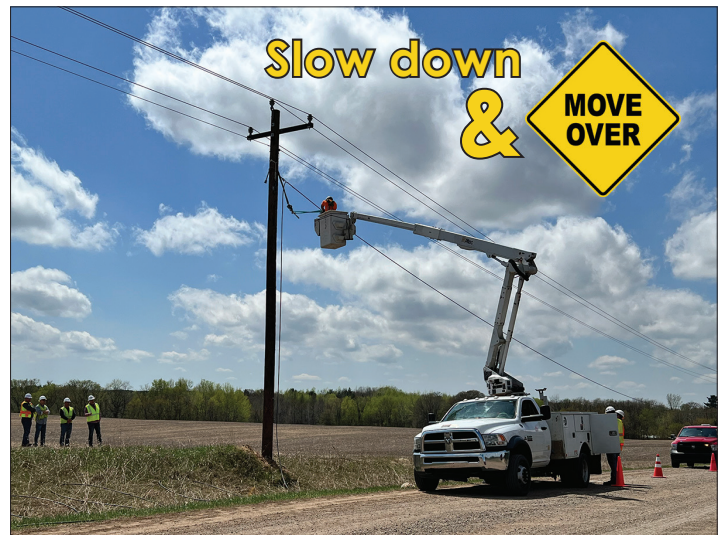
How does it work?

After storing heat during off-peak hours, the equipment releases heat gradually throughout the day, effectively reducing the reliance on costly peak-hour electricity.

- **CENTRAL STORAGE FURNACES** store heat in specially designed ceramic bricks, sized to provide enough heat for the building. Heat is distributed through forced air or hot water systems. A sensor monitors outdoor temps to determine how much heat must be stored in the bricks.
- **ROOM STORAGE HEATERS** need no duct work and offer individual room control for safe, clean, comfortable heat anywhere you need it. When the thermostat calls for heat, a quiet fan circulates warmth from the bricks into the room.
- **SLAB HEAT** uses electric heating panels, mats, tubing, or cables are installed in soil or sand under the concrete slab. The ground underneath becomes an efficient, large mass of thermal energy that is released into the cooler area above.

Why should I consider storage space heating?

Besides a lower off-peak electric rate, it is safer due to no chimneys, flues, backdrafts, or carbon monoxide! In addition, the gentle release of stored heat eliminates the need for constant mid-day energy consumption, which is often required by traditional heating systems. Compared to other heating systems, storage space heaters require minimal maintenance because they are designed with fewer moving parts that can break or wear out. Call 1-800-254-7944 to speak with an energy expert today!



It's been a busy summer for our crews. Between fiber installation and electric maintenance, you've likely seen ECE's (or our contractors') trucks working along the roads.

We've said it many times, and we'll keep saying it: please move over for crews working on the roadside. These workers operate in hazardous conditions, handling technical equipment while being exposed to moving traffic. When you take time to brake and move over, you create a safe buffer zone that reduces the risk of accidents and protects the lives of everyone in the vicinity. It also demonstrates respect and consideration for those individuals—and the families they'd like to go home to.

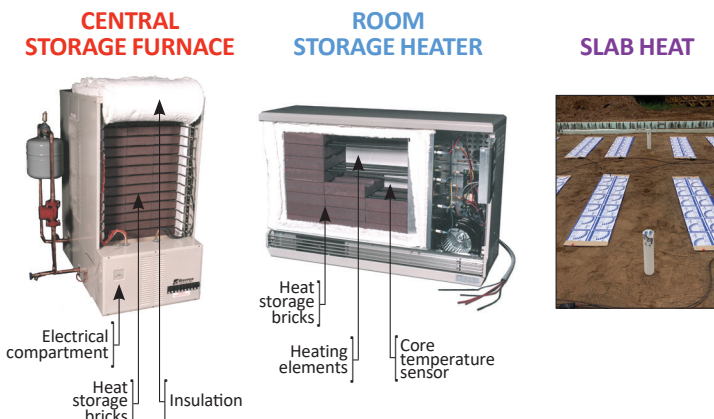
This fall and winter, as the sun angle changes, stay aware and give roadside workers the space they need. Help create a safer environment for everyone on the road and avoid a hefty fine or life-changing incident.

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.



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 (not individual) income is less than 50% of the state median, or you provide proof 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.**

Sales tax exemption for electric heat

If electricity is the primary source of heat (supplies more heat than any other source) in your residence November through April, you may be eligible for a sales tax exemption on your electric bill.

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 Braham Headquarters.



We're proud to power your
**FRIDAY NIGHT
LIGHTS**

To all the players, coaches, and supporting staff,
we wish you a fun and safe 2023 football season.
We're rooting for you!

ECE
East Central Energy



In July, I had the honor of testifying about your co-op's efforts to protect the monarch butterfly at a hearing of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries. My main message? We all win when the federal government collaborates with property owners, rather than increasing regulatory requirements.

When I represent you in Washington, D.C., I always aim for a balanced approach. To that end, I remain focused on building relationships on both sides of the aisle. This kind of bipartisanship plays a pivotal role in the success and sustainability of your electric cooperative, ensuring the continued delivery of reliable electricity.

Electric co-ops are unique entities. We operate on a non-profit basis, owned and governed by the members we serve. Given our community-focused nature, bipartisanship allows us to navigate the complex landscape of energy policy, regulation, and funding by fostering collaboration between political parties.

Please keep in mind that because ECE is owned by over 66,000 members, we represent a huge variety of personalities, experiences, and viewpoints. Our service area is about 4,300 square miles—nearly the size of Connecticut.

When we ask for your opinion, or invite you to an annual meeting, we're not just being polite. Not only do we want to hear from you, we need to know what you think. Bipartisanship is indispensable to us all because it fosters stability and support by transcending political divides. Together, we will pave the way for the future of this cooperative. The question is: are you going to be part of the conversation?

At your service we remain,



East Central Energy
PO 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 from 8 a.m.-5 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 Administrator 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. To find the Statement of Non-Discrimination for ECE, go to eastcentralenergy.com and select About Us, or call us at 1-800-254-7944.

Website:
eastcentralenergy.com



MORE THAN FIBER INTERNET

Did you know that along with blazing fast fiber internet, your cooperative will also be offering voice service? Dennis Rice, Broadband Manager, explains this optional add-on to our internet packages.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is a groundbreaking communication technology that allows you to make high-quality voice and video calls over the internet. Dennis explains, "This is truly revolutionizing the way we connect and communicate."

He adds, "With VoIP, you can leverage the power of your selected fiber package because the key to reliable VoIP service is high-quality internet. That's where ECE Fiber comes in! All our packages are fast enough to power this service."

Whether you're a business seeking a cost-effective communication solution or an individual looking for a versatile way to connect, VoIP empowers you to experience crystal-clear conversations and an array of innovative features that surpasses traditional telephone service.

Dennis highlights, "Compared to antiquated copper phone networks, VoIP travels using the fiber network and drastically reduces outages due to weather and rodents."

Visit ecefiber.com to learn more about packages, prices, and add-on features.



VOLUNTEERS MAKE THE WORLD GO 'ROUND

Nominate your community group for ECE's
Touchstone Energy® Community Award
and a chance to win up to **\$2,000!**

**Nomination forms are due
October 20, 2023.**

Call 1-800-254-7944 or visit
eastcentralenergy.com for details.



East Central Energy

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.