


 C5-5P
ADVANTAGE

Careers in Energy Month: Fiber broadband team

Fiber broadband is redefining how we think about energy. As the reliance on digital connectivity grows, the role of broadband services alongside energy delivery becomes increasingly vital. The ECE Fiber team plays a pivotal role in ensuring rural members have access to reliable, high-speed internet.

“Our group comes from varied backgrounds,” explains Broadband Manager Dennis Rice. “They’ve brought experience in splicing, telecommunications tech, and one has even worked on ships ported out of Pearl Harbor during his time in the Navy.”

For those interested in a career in broadband, Dennis suggests focusing on continuous learning and adaptability. “The technology in our field is always evolving,” he says. “You need to troubleshoot effectively and communicate solutions in a clear, empathetic manner. Some of our members have never had the internet before. Our job is not just about technology; it’s about improving people’s lives and connecting them to the rest of the world.”

He continues, “The small towns we serve are more than ready to bridge the digital divide and see more opportunities for education, business, and healthcare that were previously out of reach. It’s gratifying to hear positive comments from members and local businesses.”

The future looks promising for careers in broadband within the energy sector. There’s currently a nationwide shortage of fiber optic splicers (we’re a big fan of trade schools and on-the-job training). Dennis points out, “Building a brand-new network takes time and the talents of many. Both the broadband and electric sides of the co-op are growing to meet the needs of our membership. It’s an exciting time to be an employee at ECE.”

As we celebrate Careers in Energy Month, we honor the efforts of those who have forever transformed life in our service area. Thank you to employees, directors, members, local agencies, contractors, statewide governments—and so many more—for your invaluable contributions!



ECE FIBER TEAM

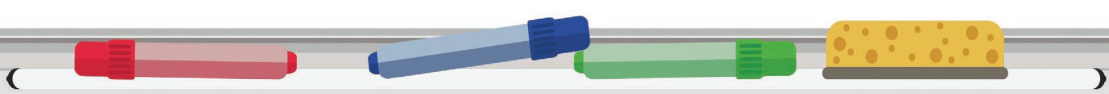
We're celebrating Careers in Energy Month with the fiber team: Matt, Ben, Joe, Brian, Dennis, Nick, Mike, and Doug.

Celebrating National Co-op Month... and local teachers

ECE's Teacher Totes initiative began with a simple yet powerful idea: to support educators by providing them with essential classroom supplies. Many teachers spend their own money to prepare and maintain their classrooms. To alleviate this financial burden, our employees purchased, sorted, assembled, and delivered \$20,000 in supplies to public elementary schools within our service area.

These aren't cloth bag "totes"—they're large, heavy-duty containers filled with a variety of essential items like label makers, wall pockets, and snacks for students. "We're now in our ninth year of this initiative," highlights Community Relations Coordinator Desiree Cuda. "Once again, CoBank's Sharing Success grant matched ECE's \$10,000 contribution and we couldn't be more grateful."

This year, we delivered to elementary teachers in Chisago Lakes, Foley, Mora, Princeton, Willow River, and Wrenshall. Because the program is on a three-year rotation, these schools last received a Teacher Totes delivery in 2021. "Our employees scramble to sign up for delivery dates," Desiree shares. "For many of us, this kind of hometown support is why we choose to work at a cooperative."



Test driving the future

Around 80 people attended our EV Ride & Drive event, held August 15 at Braham HQ. Members of all ages gained a deeper understanding of the advancements propelling the EV revolution.

Thanks to many members and employees, plus Anderson-Koch Ford in North Branch, Luther John Hirsch's Cambridge Motors Chevrolet, Minnesota Equipment in Isanti, North Branch Chevrolet, and Stan's Equipment Center in Pine City, the event featured various EVs available for viewing and test driving. Models included a Cadillac EV, Chevy Bolt EUV, Tesla Model 3, Tesla Cybertruck, Ford Mustang Mach-E, an EV bus, and electric lawn equipment. Our employees were available to assist with test drives and discuss co-op charging rates and rebates, which can also be found on our website under Programs & Rebates.

ENERGY VAMPIRES

DON'T LET THEM DRAIN YOUR WALLET

Many electronic devices that are plugged in continuously use energy even when you are not using them. These vampires are sucking money from your wallet! Depending on how many appliances are used, costs can add up to \$100-200 a year.

Stop energy vampires. Unplug all electronics that are not in use or plug into a smart power strip or a power strip you can turn off.



TOP 10 OFFENDERS

1. TVs
2. HOME COMPUTERS
3. VIDEO GAME CONSOLES
4. SURROUND SOUND SYSTEMS
5. CELL PHONE & TABLET CHARGERS
6. SATELLITE/CABLE BOXES
7. DVD PLAYERS
8. PRINTERS
9. MICROWAVE
10. COFFEE MAKER



LEND A HELPING HAND

Small-town residents often participate in local fundraising events to support families facing medical emergencies or financial hardships. Through the Caring Members program, we can all help those in need of a little help keeping the lights on.

Member Accounts Supervisor Jessica Bliss says, "ECE matches Caring Members donations. Every dollar you give becomes two dollars of support for local families in crisis."

By donating, you are not only providing immediate relief to those in need but also fostering a spirit of solidarity and compassion within your community.

"This is truly about neighbors helping neighbors," Jessica highlights. "Give us a call and we can help you set up a monthly donation amount from your electric bill or explain how to make a one-time donation."

ONE EASY STEP

Call 1-800-254-7944 today to make your tax-deductible donation, or

Complete this form and send to:

East Central Energy
c/o Caring Members
PO Box 39
Braham, MN 55006

DO NOT RETURN WITH YOUR BILL PAYMENT



YES, I WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO CARING MEMBERS

- Please add the following amount to my monthly ECE bill as my tax-deductible contribution.

\$1 \$5 \$10 Other \$ _____

I understand I may stop my donation at any time by contacting ECE.

- I am making a one-time contribution of \$ _____
(this one-time charge will be added to your bill)

Name _____

Address _____


City/State/ZIP _____

Phone _____

ECE Account # _____

Email _____

10/24ADV

 1.800.254.7944
eastcentralenergy.com





ECE is a member of Great River Energy, who supplies the power we distribute. GRE is committed to meeting Minnesota’s mandate to achieve a 100% carbon-free energy supply by 2045. This is ambitious, and achieving that target requires careful consideration of our energy sources to ensure reliability for all members.

Minnesota’s current suspension of nuclear power poses a significant challenge to reaching the 2045 regulatory requirement. Nuclear energy is a proven, reliable, and carbon-free baseload power source that can work alongside renewable energy. While wind and solar are essential to the energy transition, they depend on specific weather conditions. Meanwhile, nuclear power can provide a stable and continuous energy supply, ensuring we can meet your power demand even when renewable sources are not available.

There are concerns surrounding nuclear energy. Safety and waste management are important considerations, but advancements in technology and stringent

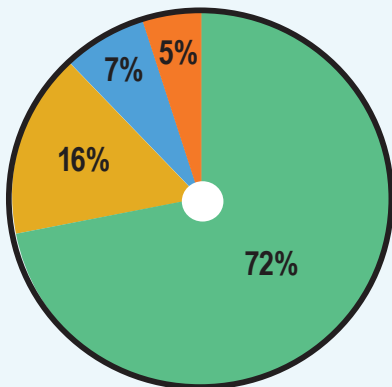
regulatory oversight have significantly mitigated these risks. By embracing nuclear energy as part of a balanced and diversified energy strategy, we can address these concerns while ensuring a reliable energy supply.

Lifting the nuclear moratorium would allow us to consider new, advanced nuclear technologies that are safer, more efficient, and more cost-effective than older models. It could play a critical role in diversifying energy resources in the state, reducing our carbon footprint and enhancing grid reliability.

Your cooperative is committed to engaging with all stakeholders in an open and transparent manner as we explore carbon-free options. Together, we can work toward a future that is economically sustainable and beneficial for all 14 counties we serve.

At your service we remain,

ENERGY SOURCES: 2037 PROJECTION



- RENEWABLE
- ENERGY MARKET
- HYDRO-ELECTRIC
- NATURAL GAS/FUEL OIL

Source: Great River Energy



Email: info@ecemn.com

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
Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Emergency and outage calls are
answered 24 hours a day.

The ECE Board of Directors meets monthly. Please call 1-800-254-7944 and ask to talk to our Executive Administrator to confirm meeting information. Monthly board meeting minutes 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



Email: info@ecefiber.com

Website: ecefiber.com



Caring Members Program

Help a neighbor in need

We've all received a helping hand—will you **pay it forward** by helping fill the gap for a neighbor struggling to pay their electric bill this winter?

Call us today to add a monthly or one-time donation to your electric bill, and ECE will **double every dollar** you contribute!

ECE 1.800.254.7944
eastcentralenergy.com

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