

ECE

65-6p
ADVANTAGE

Clean, Green, Powered by ECE

Ogilvie goes electric

Ogilvie School District has introduced a new electric bus to its fleet, characterized by its eerily-quiet, whimsical “UFO-like” humming sound. This innovative vehicle, powered by a massive battery stored under the body, marks a significant step towards sustainable transportation.

The process of acquiring the electric bus was a collaborative effort. Transportation Administrative Assistant Becky Meyman was especially thankful for the guidance of ECE Director Jerry Tvedt and Business Account Specialist Matt Heggernes. She shared, “Applying for the electric bus grant required careful consideration and collaboration. We also had to determine if it was cost-effective and if it could handle our Minnesota winters.”

ECE has worked closely with Ogilvie to ensure the project’s success, addressing line extension costs, charging rates, and other concerns. The district’s Blue Bird EV bus was delivered this past May, supported by additional grants from our power supplier, Great River Energy, and ECE.

Myron Carlson will be the driver assigned to the EV bus. “I’m excited about the electric bus and using it on my route, which will be about an hour-long route in the morning and afternoon. I am curious to learn the advantages and disadvantages of the bus,” he said.



In 2022, the Environmental Protection Agency Clean School Bus Program offered rural school districts a \$395,000 rebate for an electric bus, which included \$375,000 for the bus and \$20,000 for charging infrastructure. Among the school districts served by ECE, Ogilvie was the only one to apply and was awarded the grant in October 2022.

We’re excited to check in with Myron to see how the EV bus performs throughout the school year!

BACK TO SCHOOL



As students return to class this fall, roads will be busier than ever. Slow down, pay attention to your surroundings, and:

- Take note of speed zone changes during school hours.
- Watch for children playing near bus stops.
- Stop at least 20 feet away when a bus has its stop arm out (both lanes).
- Watch for children walking to school when backing out of a driveway.

Remember, drivers who violate bus safety laws face a \$500 fine and criminal charges. Keep an eye out for flashing lights and report school bus stop arm violations. Let’s make this a safe school year for everyone!



Surf smart with better network security

As your family gears up for another school year, it's crucial to provide a safe and productive online experience for students of all ages. Luckily, ECE Fiber's Network & Family Security add-on feature will do just that! Managed through the mobile app, this feature makes protecting the whole family's digital footprint a breeze.



Add the Network & Family Security feature to:

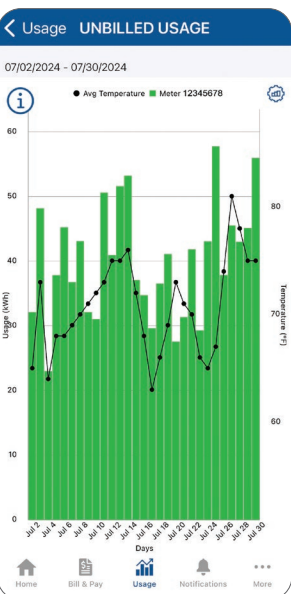
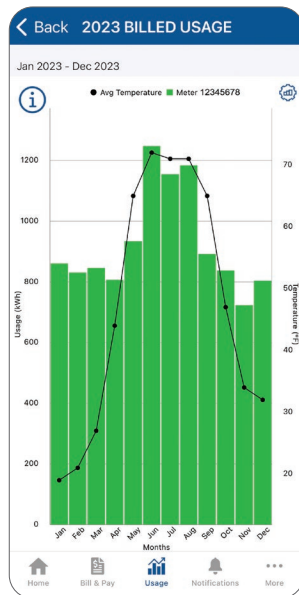
- Filter and block content to keep all family members safe.
- Review the time each user spends on mobile applications.
- Schedule "offline" timeframes to prevent internet/app access.
- Protect your family from cyberattacks.

With more online learning (and cybercrime) than ever before, protecting your online presence is not just a precaution—it's a necessity. Give us a call today and add the Network & Family Security feature to your ECE Fiber internet package!

Monitor your energy use with SmartHub

Were your energy bills higher this summer than last? Curious how the temperature affects your electric use? These answers and more are at your fingertips 24/7 with the free SmartHub mobile app!

How does your monthly use compare to last year?



How does the temperature affect your electric use?

Download the SmartHub app today!

Available on the App Store Google play



FREE SNOWBLOWER?

Check our website for contest details!
(ECE members only.)

TOUCHSTONE ENERGY COMMUNITY AWARD NOMINATIONS DUE OCTOBER 18!

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.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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 Brahm Headquarters.

Ready to heat things up?

Enjoy the comfort of a warm and cozy home while saving money with every degree.

Visit our website to learn about reduced-rate electric heating options!





you with balanced information to make informed decisions based on your own values and needs.

Through educational initiatives and community engagement, we aim to foster open dialogue while paying close attention to the evolution of technology. We respect individual preferences and believe in supporting choices that benefit our members. At ECE, we're dedicated to exploring practical solutions that align with the many diverse perspectives within our membership.

Let's embrace the future of transportation, ensuring our cooperative remains a place where all viewpoints are valued and respected. Together, we can navigate these discussions and contribute to a better future for generations to come.

At your service we remain,

As a cooperative, ECE is committed to keeping our communities informed about important developments that impact us all. As you can see on the front page of this newsletter, Ogilvie Schools recently introduced an electric bus into their fleet, reflecting a growing interest in new and innovative transportation solutions.

Electric vehicles present opportunities like reduced emissions and operational costs. At the same time, we understand there are considerations around affordability, infrastructure, and performance. ECE's approach focuses on providing

MRC: power players

Two years ago, a group of members embarked on a journey that laid the groundwork for a new kind of relationship between ECE and our 67,000 members, one built on constructive feedback and intentional learning. As their term comes to an end, the Member Resource Council reflected on their experiences during a recent meeting.



Many stressed the importance of transparent member communication. Judith Kissner shared, "As ECE enters into this new energy economy and tries to meet Minnesota's energy goals, it's vital to continue educating members about how ECE fits into that, while giving accurate information and myth-busting."



Brent Thompson mentioned that one of the key takeaways for council members was the complexities of energy supply. "The co-op and the energy industry are right on the edge of a lot of environmental issues. How do you maintain being apolitical and not alienating members?"



The MRC was established to foster engagement and provide a platform for members to share their suggestions directly with leadership. An unexpected bonus, Nancy Liebelt shared, was "Getting to see behind the scenes of ECE. My husband worked here for years and now I truly see how well a co-op treats its employees. Even after retirement, he's still part of the family here."

As they pass the torch to the next group of council members, they leave behind a legacy of engagement, humor, and advocacy that will continue to guide future member initiatives. We can't thank them enough for taking time out of their busy schedules to learn and grow with us!



Email: info@ecemn.com

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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.

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eastcentralenergy.com



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Touchstone Energy Community Award

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