

POWER LINE

OCTOBER 2020



Redwood Electric Cooperative



Helping People. Changing Lives.

Struggling to pay your monthly housing bills?

Call a United Community Action Partnership (UCAP) office near you:

Willmar: 320.235.0850

Marshall: 507.537.1416

Redwood Falls: 507.637.2187

United Community Action Partnership (UCAP) has been awarded money to help families who are struggling to meet their housing related payments through the MN COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program (CHAP). An on-line application is available at www.housinghelpmn.org. If families in UCAP's service area use the on-line application, please scroll to Southwest Minnesota and click on the United Community Action Partnership line. If needed, UCAP staff can help families walk through the process.

In addition to contacting a UCAP office and applying for the MN COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program (CHAP), you **MUST** contact **Redwood Electric at 507-692-2214 or email sgroebner@redwoodelectric.com**

**Redwood Electric
Office Will Be
Closed:**

**November 11th:
Veterans Day
November 26th & 27th
Thanksgiving**



Problems paying your electric bill?

Energy assistance may be available

United Community Action

Marshall Office: 507-537-1416
Redwood Falls Office: 507-637-2187
Willmar Office: 320-235-0850

The Salvation Army HeatShare

320-235-2033
507-537-1416

Veterans Services (MAC-V)

Redwood County: 507-637-4034
Lyon County: 507-537-6729
Brown County: 507-233-6636

Salvation Army

Redwood Falls: 507-637-2187

Redwood County Human Services

507-637-4041
Toll Free: 888-837-6713

MN COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program (CHAP)

www.housinghelpmn.org

The ARC Minnesota Housing Access Program-Southwest Region

Cheryl Hutchens: 507-345-4223
<https://www.arcminnesota.org/ways-we-can-help/housing-access-services/>

"The Southwest Region provides programs and services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, Waseca, Watonwan, and Yellow Medicine counties."



ELECTRIC HEATING SALES TAX EXEMPTION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the main source of heat for my home (more than 50 percent) is furnished by permanently installed electric heating equipment (not portable) and I, therefore, am eligible for the electric heating sales tax exemption as provided by Minnesota State Tax Fact Sheet 157. This exemption is for the billing months of November through April only. *Please notify us if you change from electric heat to a different primary heating source.* If you qualify for Electric Heat Sales Tax Exemption, please fill out this form and mail it to our office.

Account # _____ Member Name: _____

Location # _____ Meter # _____

Address: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Please complete and return to:

Redwood Electric Cooperative
60 Pine Street
Clements, MN 56224

Cold Weather Rule

Outlines Process to Avoid Winter

*****THE MEMBER MUST CONTACT OUR OFFICE BEFORE
THE DISCONNECT DATE IF THEY RECEIVE A DISCONNECT
NOTICE ON THEIR BILL*****

Residential Member Notice

An electric cooperative must not disconnect residential service between October 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit **when the following conditions are met:**

- The member has declared an inability to pay on forms provided by the utility. A member receiving energy assistance has demonstrated this inability. The member **MUST** provide the coop with the approval letter or confirmation from the energy assistance agency;
- The member's household income is less than 50 percent of the state median income;
- Verification of income may be conducted by the local energy assistance provider or the coop, unless the member is automatically eligible for protection against disconnection as a recipient of any form of public assistance, including energy assistance that uses income eligibility in an amount at or below the income eligibility as mentioned above;
- A member whose account is current for the billing period immediately prior to October 15 or who, at any time, enters into a payment arrangement that considers the financial resources of the household and is reasonably current with payments under the arrangement. **Payment arrangements must be honored to avoid disconnection of utility services and for any future payments to be accepted during the cold weather season and;**
- The member receives referrals to energy assistance programs, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce the member's energy bills.
- It is the members responsibility to contact our office to provide the coop with all required information and if any current payment arrangements need to be changed **prior to the scheduled disconnect date or the payment arrangement date. Payment Arrangements are considered BROKEN if our office is contacted after the arrangement date and NO future arrangements will be made!!!!This is very IMPORTANT!!!**

Members Facing Disconnection

Before disconnecting service to a residential member between **Oct. 15 and April 15**, the following information must be provided to the member:

- A notice of the proposed disconnection;
- A statement that explains the member's rights and responsibilities;
- A list of local energy assistance providers;
- Forms on which to declare an inability to pay; and
- A statement explaining available timely-payment plans and other options to secure continued utility service.

Restrictions For Disconnection

If a member must be involuntarily disconnected between October 15 and April 15 for failure to comply with residential disconnection provisions, it must not occur on a Friday or the day before a holiday. Plus, the disconnection must not occur until 20 days after the notice required, as previously listed, was mailed to the member or 15 days after the notice was personally delivered to the member. Redwood Electric has the **"DISCONNECT NOTICE" IN RED ON THE MEMBERS MONTHLY BILL WITH THE DUE DATE BEING THE 6TH OF EVERY MONTH AND THE AMOUNT DUE IS THE ENTIRE BALANCE.** If the member does not respond to the disconnect notice prior to the due date of the 6th of each month, the coop will continue with the disconnect process. The 20 days starts the day the bill with the DISCONNECT NOTICE on it was mailed. If you have any questions about this, please contact our office. **Then the member receives a "courtesy friendly reminder (COURTESY FRIENDLY REMINDER NOTICE IS NOT THE DISCONNECT NOTICE!!!).**

If a member does not respond to the courtesy friendly reminder that is either emailed, sent via text message (these options are only available if the member has their electric account registered with SmartHub) or is left at the location (\$75 collection fee is charged when the lineman delivers a courtesy friendly reminder notice), the member must not be disconnected until the coop investigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied. If the unit is found to be occupied, the coop must inform the member of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the coop must give seven days written notice to the local energy assistance provider before making a disconnection. If, prior to disconnection, a member appeals a notice of involuntary disconnection as provided by the coop's established appeal procedure, the utility must not disconnect until the appeal is resolved.

Active Duty Military Shut-Off Protection

When a household member has been ordered into active duty, for deployment or for a change of duty station, some members may find it hard to pay their utility bills. Minnesota law protects these military personnel from shut off if they cannot pay their bills in full. For more information and to apply for a payment arrangement, please contact Redwood Electric office.

Contact your local United Community Action office to apply for Energy Assistance or for MN COVID-19 Housing Assistance. If you apply for assistance and have a red disconnect notice on your bill, you will need to contact our office immediately to notify us.



Make Time for Safety This Harvest Season

Harvest season often means putting in long hours, which can make it difficult to stay alert and on the lookout for potential hazards. Safe Electricity provides safety tips to help farmers make this harvest season a safe one.

Richard McCracken, Safe Electricity Advisory Board member, advises, "Safety starts with preparation. Be prepared for potential emergencies before the rush of harvest season begins. Have a safety plan, and make sure that farm workers and family members are aware of the procedures in it."

Be sure that you can see well in the areas where you are working. Consider adding extra lighting around grain bins and augers.

Take the time to look up and look out for electrical lines. Always be aware of where they are in relation to your equipment. Keep a minimum of 10 feet away from all electrical equipment, and lower extensions before moving equipment. If you see a power line that is sagging or low, contact your utility. Also keep an eye out for guy wires. Although these wires are not energized, they can bring down live lines.

In equipment with auto-guidance systems, less focus is needed on steering, which may lead some drivers to think that they do not need to be as aware of navigation issues. However, even while using a GPS with auto-steering, farm workers need to keep safety in mind and stay focused on their surroundings.

"Slow down, always stay alert, and take all recommended precautions. To help you do so, recognize when you need to take breaks so that you can be active and engaged in the farm work," says McCracken.

Additional electrical safety tips include:

- Use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Look up and use care when moving any equipment such as extending augers or raising the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Always set extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads to prevent contact with overhead lines. Grain augers should always be positioned horizontally before being moved.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.

If the machinery you are operating does make contact with a power line, stay on the equipment. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away, and wait for the utility crew to cut the power.

Only on the rare occasion that the machinery catches fire should you leave the vehicle after contact is made. If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and machinery at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area. Never touch anything that is in contact with a power line.

"Remember, while harvest is a busy season on the farm, it's still important to take the time to keep safety first and look out for and stay safely away from potential hazards like overhead power lines," adds McCracken.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Office Hours & Contact Information

Monday-Friday 7:00 AM-3:30 PM

Phone: 888-251-5100 or 507-692-2214

Email address: office@redwoodelectric.com

Web: www.redwoodelectric.com

SmartHub: redwoodelectric.smarthub.coop

Pay By Phone: 844-846-2696

OUTAGES
(888) 251-5100
24 HOURS A DAY

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG
Gopher State One
Call (800) 252-1166

General Manager

Ronald Horman

Board of Directors

Dick Nelson

Michael Baune

Dan Tauer

Dean Fultz

Jill Weber VanDerWal

Emily Evans

George W. Turbes

STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

Redwood Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.