Have you noticed a change to your electric bill? Is your bill higher than normal? The team at Capital Electric Cooperative may be able to help. Learn more on page C2.
or many people, electric bills are a bit of a mystery. You always remember to turn off the lights when you leave the room, so why is your bill so high? The first step to demystifying your electricity bill, and hopefully reducing it, is to take stock of where you use the most energy.

Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) is happy to provide members looking to reduce their monthly electric bill with a free basic home energy audit.

The process is simple. First, a CEC employee will examine a member’s energy usage for the past year to determine if the household is using excess energy. “Then, we’ll ask some questions about their home and the appliances they are using, and we may make some recommendations over the phone,” says Energy Services Manager Josh Schaffner, CEC. “We’ll follow up within a week and look at the difference. If it’s not where we expected it to be, we’ll visit the home.”

During the home visit, a CEC employee will do a visual inspection and a thermographic scan. “We’ll walk around the home to see if we can see anything that might be causing the problem. Then, we’ll open up the electric panel and use our amp clamp to test every single circuit. In some cases, something is running, and they aren’t aware of it,” says Schaffner.

Schaffner says they’ve found a lot of interesting things on home visits. “We found a septic lift pump that was failing. The switch was left on, and it was running continuously. We also found an issue on one of our farming accounts. The member had a series of grain bins with dryers, and each of the dryers had underground power lines running to them. One of them was partially grounding and drawing power into the ground. It didn’t occur all the time, but when the ground was saturated, it would draw. He was losing a couple hundred dollars a month into the ground.”

But, Schaffner says, more often
than not, there isn’t a major problem. He recommends making a few simple changes that can result in a lower electric bill.

**Heating and Cooling**

Heating and cooling takes up the largest chunk of your monthly energy bill, but cutting back doesn’t have to mean being uncomfortable.

Schaffner recommends cleaning or replacing heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) filters regularly to keep the systems running efficiently. Dirty filters make your system work harder and run longer than necessary.

Schaffner also advises against using space heaters, which can cost up to $85/month to run.

“Instead, we encourage members to use a baseboard or a cove heater or something that can be hard-wired in, so they can get a discounted rate on it.”

Keeping the blinds open in the winter and closed in the summer can also reduce the burden on your HVAC system.

**Appliances**

According to the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, a typical American home has 40 products that are constantly drawing power, even if they’re not in use. This is responsible for 10% of your electricity use.

Energy vampires, like your phone charger, computer and coffeemaker, can cost the average household $100 per year and should always be unplugged or put in sleep mode when not in use.

**Lighting**

Lighting accounts for about 12% of a typical residential utility bill.

Schaffner advises members to swap out incandescent light bulbs for LEDs and always turn off the lights when they are not in use. Replacing old incandescent bulbs with LEDs has a much quicker return on your investment now than ever before.

In the past 10 years, the cost of LED bulbs and fixtures has dropped more than 85%.

Another way to conserve energy is to control outdoor lights with a timer or photocell to assure dusk-to-dawn only operation.

Schaffner also offers these energy saving tips for the home:

- Don’t peek in the oven while baking. Every time you peek, the temperature drops 25°F.
- Turn off the oven a few minutes before cooking time runs out. Your food will continue to cook without using the extra electricity.
- Clean refrigerator coils.
- Use dishwashers and clothes washers/dryers at night. This will help keep the house cooler during peaks.
- Wash your clothes in cold water.
- Install low flow shower heads.
- Seal cracks, gaps and leaks and add insulation. This can save up to 10% on home heating and cooling costs.
- Check and replace weatherstripping on windows and doors.
- Put insulation kits on outside wall light switches and outlets.

To schedule your home energy audit and learn about ways to lower your electric bill, call Josh Schaffner, (701) 712-7920, or Jared Nygaard, (701) 712-7922. CEC also offers energy and cost saving options for commercial accounts. ☺️

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**Capital Electric offers student scholarship**

Capital Electric Cooperative is offering a $1,000 student scholarship, in partnership with Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

To qualify for the scholarship, seniors must be enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate or graduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school. Their parents or guardians must be members of Capital Electric.

Our cooperative will assemble a panel of impartial judges to review all applications. The judges will select the winning application based on academic performance, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, a statement of education and career goals, work experience and an outside referral. The scholarship will be awarded without regard to other awards, loans or financial assistance the applicant may have obtained.

Application forms may be downloaded at [www.capitalelec.com](http://www.capitalelec.com) or picked up at co-op headquarters at 4111 State Street North in Bismarck. Applications need to be completed and returned to Capital Electric on or before Friday, Feb. 14, 2020.
And, the Survey Says...

BY PAUL FITTERER

When I hear, “And, the survey says…,” I’m reminded of Family Feud, my favorite game show as a kid. On the show, two families compete to name the most popular responses to survey questions in order to win cash and prizes.

In 2019, Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) conducted its own survey and gained valuable feedback from its members. In 2020, your co-op plans to address and follow up on what you, our member-owners, have told us. We’ll be using the results of our recent surveys and focus group sessions to guide our efforts to provide the best service to our members.

Board of Directors

On electing your board of directors, the survey says….

You would like to be more informed about the director candidates, have the ability to vote even if you are unable to attend the annual meeting, and know more about the current board of directors.

If you’ll recall, an overarching strategy at CEC is to have each member-owner engaged in the cooperative. We believe your desire and ability to vote for the leaders of your cooperative is tantamount to being engaged.

Your co-op says, “You bet.”

In 2020, CEC members will:

✓ Have the option of reading candidate biographies and/or viewing video biographies online prior to the annual meeting.
✓ Be able to vote for directors in person at the annual meeting or online prior to the meeting.

(A whopping 52% of you said you’d like the online option to be available).

✓ Be able to peruse information about the existing Board of Directors.

Annual Meeting

On the current annual meeting venue, the survey says….

More than half of those surveyed believe the annual meeting is an important method of connecting and engaging as co-op members. However, many believe the event is too crowded and it can be difficult to find a place to sit.

Your co-op says, “let’s expand.”

At recent annual meetings, we’ve typically served around 1,200 meals and registered more than 600 members. Without a doubt, we’ve been limited in what we can offer in terms of space, including indoor displays, kid’s entertainment and overall comfort.
In 2020, we will:
- Increase annual meeting space by relocating to the Bismarck Event Center.
- Improve entertainment and other family friendly options.
- Increase the number of indoor displays, electric vehicles, etc.

Communications

Regarding member communication preferences, the survey says....

You’d like to see more options on the Smarthub app; receive general information, such as energy saving tips, legislative issues affecting your co-op and the latest energy technology via a newsletter; receive time-sensitive information, such as a power outages, via text message (68%) and/or automated phone call (48%); and receive an electronic version of North Dakota Living magazine.

Your co-op says, “We’ll continue working on this for you.”

In 2020, we will strive to improve our communications.
- A quarterly newsletter is in the works. Sign up today at www.capitalelec.com.
- New Smarthub app features are now live, including a revamped home screen and the option to set up contact information and establish notification preferences.
- Brand new outage map options are now available at www.capitalelec.com. Members can report an outage via Smarthub or the Smarthub mobile app.

Online voting for directors

Sign up for SmartHub to vote online!

This spring, Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) will introduce online voting as an alternate means of voting for the co-op's directors. In addition, traditional voting will still occur at the annual meeting on June 10, 2020.

Online voting will be offered through SmartHub, a web and mobile app that allows members to access their bill, manage their account and monitor electric usage. To register for the free resource, visit www.capitalelec.com and click on “New User? Register to use SmartHub?” at the top of the home page. You will need to enter your billing account number, last name and email address to sign up.

Save the date for your annual meeting:
June 10, 2020

New venue:
Bismarck Event Center

This year, Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) will hold its annual meeting at a new location – the Bismarck Event Center. At the June 10 meeting, members will learn about co-op issues, elect board members and enjoy a free meal. Stay tuned for more information.

Also added are notification options for emails or texts about outages. Please note: This function is not currently turned on, but by signing up for notifications in Smarthub, you will be ready to go once this function is ready.

The electronic version of North Dakota Living can be found at www.capitalelec.com every month.

As we continue into 2020, the employees and board of directors of CEC are focused on providing you with enhanced services and offerings throughout the year based on your recent and continued feedback. As always, if you have suggestions on how we can better serve your needs, please send us an email or give us a call—no need to wait for a survey.
WEARING OUT YOUR BOOTSTRAPS?
YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

North Dakotans expect a lot from our bootstraps.

Handling stress. Fixing problems. Farmers and ranchers learn how to troubleshoot challenges. But sometimes life overwhelms us more than even the strongest bootstraps can support. Life is just plain tough sometimes.

Being sad, frustrated or overwhelmed doesn’t mean you are failing. Those feelings are signals, like a “check engine” light. It’s a cue to focus on your wellness, because your health is your most important asset.

When we experience a disappointment or loss, it’s normal to feel sad or discouraged. Normal sadness usually fades as we figure out how to handle the event that caused it and re-involve ourselves in our day-to-day life.

But depression is different. Depression is a medical condition and does not just improve on its own.

If a number of the signs/symptoms listed below are present in you or someone you know, and they continue for over two weeks, the person may be experiencing depression and should seek medical care:

- Feeling sad most of the day, nearly every day.
- Becoming irritable about abnormal things. Irritability can apply to everyone; men are more likely to show this sign of depression.
- Unable to stop worrying or overthinking.
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions because of worry.

- Disinterest in doing things you usually enjoy.
- Wanting to be alone, isolating yourself.
- Trouble waking up or falling back asleep because of worrying or sleeping much more than usual.
- Feeling tired, lacking energy.
- Feeling like you can’t control emotions.
- Being asked by others if something is wrong.
- Feeling physically ill (stomach upset, trouble eating, headaches, muscle aches).
- Repeated thoughts of death or suicide.

It’s not weakness. It’s called being human.

Sometimes people won’t seek help for depression, because they worry what others might think.

The fact is this: Even if you feel alone, you aren’t. An estimated 16.2 million adults have had at least one major depressive episode.

Depression is a complex medical condition. Like any medical condition, it requires treatment.

The good news: It’s treatable!

Since we know that not everyone experiences and handles stress in the same way, we recognize there can’t be a one-size-fits-all approach to treating depression, stress and anxiety. There are multiple, evidence-tested treatments that can help, ranging from medications to calibrate your brain chemistry to counseling approaches to help you cope with life’s ups and downs.
Interested in automating your home, but wondering where to start? Let us help you navigate the smart home landscape, so you save energy and save money.

Smart products can be remotely managed from your phone, programmed to perform certain actions automatically and send alerts about performance issues before they become big problems. Below is some key advice from Energy Star for leveraging smart home devices for energy savings.

**Smart thermostats**

The best candidate to save energy in your home is a smart thermostat. These devices offer the ability to monitor and adjust your home’s temperature, even when you are away. More importantly, they can be used to automatically turn down your heating and cooling when it’s not needed.

Smart thermostats with Energy Star certification that verifies energy savings include Nest and EcoBee.

Here are some cool things you can do with these products:

- If your household operates on a typical schedule, adjust your heating and cooling settings accordingly, using a smartphone or tablet app. Or, some products will even learn your schedule on their own!
- If you don’t have pets or plants and are going away for extended periods of time, tell your thermostat to ease way off. Keep your home protected from freezing pipes, but don’t waste energy keeping your furniture’s feet warm. When you’re returning, you can turn the system back on remotely, so the house is comfortable when you arrive.
- Energy Star smart thermostats can be controlled remotely. If you forget to change the thermostat before you leave for vacation, you can adjust it from anywhere with a cellular connection.
- Many smart thermostats can automatically determine when your home is empty and ease off on your heating and cooling system. For instance, they might do so using geofencing (detecting whether mobile devices you identify are nearby). Geofencing also allows your smart thermostat to know when you’re on the way home and automatically adjusts your home’s temperature to your liking.

**Smart lighting**

With a smart light fixture or light bulb, you no longer have to remember to turn off the lights. If you choose smart lighting that has earned the Energy Star, it’s using less energy when it’s on and in standby.

Here are some of the cool things you can do with these products to save energy:

- Take advantage of location-based controls, called geofencing, to automatically turn off your lights based on the location of your smartphone.
- Use smart lights with built-in sensors which turn lights on only when someone is present in a room and keep them off otherwise.
- If you forgot to turn off the lights before you left your house, use your mobile device to turn off any that may be left on.
- Pair with other devices like smart thermostats and security systems for energy-saving away modes that minimize energy use while you are away, operating lights minimally as a security measure.


The Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) Board of Directors held its regular meeting on Friday, Dec. 20, 2019, at co-op headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota, pursuant to due notice to all directors. All directors were present at that time. Also present were Manager Paul Fitterer, Business Manager Luke Steen, Operations Manager Rick Dressler, Engineering Services Manager Greg Owen, Energy Services Manager Josh Schaffner, Manager of Communications Wes Engbrecht and Attorney Carol K. Larson of Pringle & Herigstad, P.C., who acted as recording secretary.

Minutes and Agenda: The Board approved the minutes from the Nov. 18, 2019 meeting without objection. The Board also approved the agenda.

Financial Review: Prior to the meeting, Directors Dwight Wrangham and Dave Charles reviewed the November 2019 check register and expenditures. They reported all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve November expenditures in the amount of $2,722,235.82.

RC3 Program: Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve the letter authorizing RC3 Program: carried to approve November expenditures in the amount of $5,013.46

Management Reports (Business Department, Operations, Engineering Services, Energy Services, and Public Relations/Communications):

Business Department Report: The business manager presented the November 2019 financial and statistical report to the Board. Total kWh sales for November were ahead of budget by 3.4%. Actual monthly electric revenue was ahead of budget by 2.5%. CEC’s load factor was behind budget. Billing adjustments from Central Power Electric Cooperative (CPEC) as a result of two faulty PTs in two substations were made from the September and October power bills. As a result, power costs were over budget by 6.11% for the month.

The total operating margin for November was -$76,144, versus the budgeted amount of -$76,652. The total margin for November was -$28,410, versus the budgeted amount of -$73,327, ahead of budget by $47,117.

Year-to-date sales are below budget by 1.2%. Year-to-date revenue is $35,293,669, in comparison with a budgeted amount of $35,659,829. CEC began billing 28 new services in November, bringing active services to 20,878 versus 20,597 at this time last year, or a net increase of 282 over the last 12 months.

The business manager reviewed the comparison of actual to budgeted expenditures, cash flow statement and monthly power costs for the month of November 2019. Accounts receivable balances as of Dec. 20, 2019, were reviewed.

CPEC CC Retirement & Bill Credit: CEC will receive a capital credit retirement of $6,952.30 and a renewable energy credit of $41,948.64 from CPEC.

Property Tax: Property tax statements have arrived and reflect an increase of $1,103.57.

Peak Time Rebate Program: Owens, Schaffner and Steen met with people from Clearspring to review the results of the summer season. They noted the overall season was challenging due to the lack of definitive weather events. Six hundred more members signed up as a result of the recent marketing effort.

Estate Retirements: Following review of the financial condition of the cooperative and recommendation by management, it was moved, seconded and carried to authorize payment of capital credits to the following deceased members’ estates:

- Dave Wahl
- Garry & Eunice Budeau
- Peggy Neumann
- Margaret Van Vranken
- Marva Jonstal
- David Spitzer

Operations Report: Dressler reviewed the written report from the engineering department.

The old Sterling Substation was de-energized on Nov. 26, 2019. All load is now on the new substation. Outages since the last board meeting were the result of a contractor hitting an overhead line with an excavator, a milk truck hitting a CT cabinet at a commercial building, a cable dig in, a contractor driving a ground rod through our primary cable and a third party substation crew tripping a relay in a delivery substation which left nine of CEC’s substations without power.

All of CEC’s lineworkers attended a Personal Protective Bonding and Grounding seminar held at the co-op’s headquarters.

Engineering Report: Owen reviewed the written report from the engineering department.

CEC completed 48 work orders in November, adding $3 new consumers.

Outage Details: The outage on Dec. 11, 2019, is the third major transmission outage in recent years. The co-op is evaluating additional options to minimize the impacts of events like these that occur prior to the point the power reaches our system and control.

Transmission Line Events: The transmission line between the Menoken and Sterling substations has been seeing breaker operations due to the seasonal bird migration. CEC is working with CPEC to find a solution for this annual occurrence.

Cellular Fault Indicators: CEC received a set of transmission line fault indicators that communicate via cellular signals. The co-op has begun the initial setup of the software and programming.

Gibbs Study: HDR completed a load study for the future Gibbs distribution substation.

Metering: The co-op has 4,006 Verizon meters deployed.

Load Control: CEC received a shipment of cellular-based load controllers and has begun setting up its load control profiles in the software. One of the key benefits is the reporting of load before and after the event.

Security: CEC is in the process of evaluating security improvements to our facilities.

Energy Services Department: Schaffner reviewed the energy services report. Nineteen service orders were completed in November.

Level 3 Charging: CEC is waiting to hear from DEQ regarding the first round of funding for EV charging projects.

HQ Projects: CEC is receiving bids and options for a replacement door at the northwest employee entrance.

Demand Reduction: The City of Bismarck is planning a domestic water pump site along 43rd Avenue. CEC presented configuration options and pricing, as well as off-peak scenarios, to the City and its engineering group.

Meetings and Training: Schaffner attended the Irrigation Workshop for the North Dakota Water Users Association and presented to the joint board on off-peak irrigation benefits.

Communications, Public Relations and IT Department: Engbrecht reviewed topics of interest.

Scholarship and Youth Tour Essay Contest: The deadline for the Youth Tour essay contest is Jan. 31, 2020, and the deadline for the Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship program will be Feb. 14, 2020.

Public Relations: Engbrecht attended the Touchstone Energy Cooperative (TSE) Annual Meeting on Nov. 19, 2019. The meeting’s purpose is to give updates on what is happening at TSE and to vote on open director seats. Engbrecht completed terms on both the Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC) Board of Directors and the Bismarck Public Schools Foundation Board of Directors.

IT Department: CEC has begun the process of entering information into its new intranet.

Safety Report: There were no lost time accidents in November.

CEC hosted a class taught by Brady Hansen, an industry expert in the best grounding practices. All of CEC’s lineworkers were able to attend along with others from around the state.

The Safety Committee had its fourth quarter meeting on Dec. 19, 2019. Without objection, the safety report was approved.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative: Fitterer reported on Basin matters.

CPEC: Director Sheri Haugen-Hoffart reported on CPEC matters.

RDFC: Director Bill Patrie is running for the board. Director Richard Koski was appointed as delegate.

NRECA: Charles was appointed delegate, and Patrie was appointed as alternate.

Federated: Wrangham was appointed delegate, and Patrie was appointed alternate.

NISC: Patrie was appointed delegate, and Charles was appointed alternate.

CFC: Wrangham was appointed delegate, and Patrie was appointed alternate.

Midwest: The annual meeting was reviewed.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the meeting, without objection, the regular meeting was adjourned.

FEBRUARY 2020  |  CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  |  www.capitalelec.com