



## The year was 1993

In 1993, ECE became the first utility in Minnesota to be designated a McGruff Truck® Utility. ECE trucks bear a special McGruff® logo identifying the driver as a source of help when someone is in trouble.

Al Zens, above, helped ECE introduce the program.

## Reporting an outage is easy at ECE

You can call 1-800-254-7944 and use our interactive voice response (IVR) system, or go to [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) and click on "Report an Outage."

Want to help restore your power quicker? Provide ECE with a current phone number. It helps us locate your service.



Retired ECE Lineman Al Zens

*May is Electrical Safety Month*  
**"You always need to remind yourself what you're working with."**

*"There are young linemen, and there are old linemen, but there are no old foolish linemen."*

Al Zens never forgot those words, spoken by an instructor when he went to linemen's school in the 1960s. Al retired recently after over 40 years of working safely at ECE.

He spent his career as a lineman and then Area Service Foreman for ECE's line maintenance department in the Milaca area. There weren't any aerial devices or bucket trucks when he started the job in the '70s.

"Everything was done working off of poles, turning lines off. I went through the transition to working lines hot out of aerial devices. The technology has changed so much, and the safety issues, the mindset, had to change along with it. Safety is an ongoing thing," he said.

"At times you become very complacent in your work; we all do," Al added. "As a lineman, you always need to remind yourself what you're working with. You don't want to make a mistake." Al recognizes that electricity can be deadly if not treated with care.

He credits ECE with making safety a priority through ongoing training for employees and electrical safety education for members.

"Linemen are the direct link to the public. We have personal, everyday contact, and over the years we certainly have opportunities to emphasize the importance of safety to our members. There have been occasions when we've kept members from doing something that would endanger their lives."

Al said he felt blessed and thoroughly enjoyed working with ECE members, especially when he could help solve a problem and "have the member go away happy."

**"Linemen are the direct link to the public...we certainly have opportunities to emphasize the importance of safety to our members."**

"I took a lot of pride in being a lineman, and I enjoyed the maintenance department," he said, "including the problem solving that comes with it."

He is looking forward to spending time with his grandchildren and doing some hunting, fishing and traveling when he's not at his sons' family business, Prince Bait and Marine, north of Milaca.



# Watt's Cookin'

Congratulations to Phyllis Hildreth of Fridley, MN, for winning the Watt's Cookin' vegetable side dish recipe contest. She will receive a \$25 energy credit for sharing her "Vegetable Casserole" recipe.

## Vegetable Casserole

- 1 bag (16 ounces) frozen vegetable combination (broccoli, cauliflower and carrots), thawed
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1/3 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup shredded Swiss cheese
- 1 can (2.8 ounces) French Fried onions

In a casserole dish, mix together vegetables, soup, sour cream, cheese, and half can French Fried onions. Put remaining half can of French Fried onions on top. Bake for 30 minutes at 350°. Yield approximately four servings.

To enter our next Watt's Cookin' contest, mail your favorite BBQ recipe to Watt's Cookin', P.O. Box 39, Braham, MN 55006. Entries must include your name, address, telephone number, ECE account number, and be received by May 26, 2011. The winning recipe will be featured in a future edition of the Co-op Advantage. Recipes can also be entered via fax at 1-763-689-8060 or e-mail to [info@ecemn.com](mailto:info@ecemn.com).

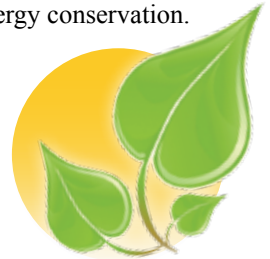


# Plant wisely this spring

Take ECE's "Plant Wisely" brochure along when you visit your local nursery this spring and take the guesswork out of choosing the right tree for your home landscape.

The brochure includes a list of tree and shrub species that can be planted safely near overhead power lines, instructions for planting trees the right way, and information on planting trees for energy conservation.

Visit [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) to download a copy of "Plant Wisely" or call ECE, 1-800-254-7944, to request the brochure.



# Call before you DIG

Remember to call before you dig.

**Gopher State One Call:**  
(Minnesota) 1-800-252-1166 or 811  
two business days ahead

**Digger's Hotline:**  
(Wisconsin) 1-800-242-8511 or 811  
three business days ahead

# Providing quality service now and into the future



ECE crews recently began working on a construction program that will solidify the strength of the co-op's distribution system, assuring quality service for members now and into the future.

The projects are part of ECE's 2011-2014 construction work plan, a blueprint developed by the co-op's professional engineering staff to cost-effectively prepare for growth and ensure reliability.

"Our goal is to be proactive," said ECE Principal Engineer and Vice President Distribution Operations Vern Johnson,

"to build the infrastructure so it will serve members' future needs and reduce the outages that result from overloaded distribution equipment."

Vern and his team analyze data from many sources to determine where system improvements are needed.

"We track substation load over years to see how it's growing and determine what we need to do to address it," Vern said. "We review outage records to identify any patterns that may imply equipment needs. We monitor our system for code compliance to ensure the safety of the public and our employees."

Even outages caused by small, climbing animals are recorded so equipment guards can be installed in problem areas.

"I think our system is in great shape," Vern said. "We are always watching for changes that can affect power quality, and we address them proactively so our members continue to experience reliable service."

# Staying comfortably cool with Cycled Air

ECE's Cycled Air program has been a comfortable fit for the Bob and Judy Bendickson family of Stanchfield, MN, since they joined the program in 2003.



**ECE members Judy and Bob Bendickson with their son, Luke**

“It was something we could do to help conserve, and with five kids running in and out in the summer, we don’t keep our house at a real constant temperature,” Judy said. “Getting started (on Cycled Air) wasn’t going to be a difficult thing for us to do.”

Cycled Air enables ECE to manage demand for electricity during times of heavy use. When members sign up, their

central air conditioner is wired to allow the outdoor condenser unit to cycle on and off approximately every 15 minutes on really hot days. The indoor blower continues to circulate cool air.

“We don’t even notice the cycling,” Bob said.

The Bendicksons received a \$25 incentive when they signed up for Cycled Air, and they appreciate the \$10 per month they receive as a bill credit every year in June, July and August.

“There’s enough of an incentive, and we’re doing our part to conserve energy. It’s a win-win, and it works well,” Bob said.

New enrollees receive a one-time \$25 incentive and a \$10 bill credit in June, July and August each year. The program is open to ECE residential members who have central air conditioning. ECE qualifying members who sign up for Cycled Air between April 1 and May 31 will receive an additional \$25 “cycle early” incentive.

“I think everybody likes to save a penny here and there,” Judy added. “It’s always fun to save a dollar and put the money elsewhere.”

**Members who would like to “cycle and save” can sign up now by calling 1-800-254-7944 or visit [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) for more information.**

## Residential rebates for high-efficiency air conditioners and air source heat pumps



ECE residential members who purchase and install a high-efficiency rated air conditioner or air source heat pump from a registered HVAC contractor may receive a rebate of up to \$630, depending on system efficiency. Installation by a qualified contractor is required, and the unit must be installed within ECE’s service territory. Rebate applications are available from registered contractors only. Visit [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) or call 1-800-254-7944 to find a contractor in your area. Federal tax credits may be available.

SEER rating	Air conditioner rebate	Air source heat pump rebate
SEER 13.0 - 14.4	\$30	\$330
SEER 14.5 - 14.9	\$180	\$480
SEER 15.0 - 15.9	\$280	\$580
SEER 16+	\$330	\$630



# Your electricity

## How does it get to your home?

In a recent issue of the Co-op Advantage, we explained where your electricity is generated. The next component in the process of getting electricity to your home is transmission. Great River Energy (GRE), ECE's wholesale power supplier, not only generates the electricity, but also transmits that power to ECE's substations.

GRE's largest generation station is Coal Creek Station in Underwood, ND. The power produced there is sent along 435 miles of high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission line operating at 400 kilovolts. The line ends at the Dickinson Converter Station in Buffalo, MN, where the power is converted to alternating current (AC) (the same type of current that goes into your home) and is available for ECE to distribute to its members.

GRE's transmission system currently consists of nearly 4,500 miles of line and 102 transmission substations. GRE and 10 other generation and transmission utilities are in the process of upgrading the state's aging transmission system through a project that will enhance reliability and accommodate growth. The project is called CapX2020.

These transmission system upgrades will take place across the state over the next several years. A segment that is close to ECE's service territory is the Monticello - St. Cloud 345 kV project, which will add about 28 miles of transmission line and is scheduled to be in service this year. For more information about CapX2020, visit [capx2020.com](http://capx2020.com).



**East Central Energy**  
P.O. Box 39  
Braham, MN 55006

**Service Centers are located at Braham, Milaca, Finlayson, and Superior.**  
Monday - Friday.  
Hours vary by service center.

**Call 1-800-254-7944.**  
General business calls are answered from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday - Friday.

Emergency and outage calls are answered 24 hours a day.

**Website**  
[www.eastcentralenergy.com](http://www.eastcentralenergy.com)

**E-mail**  
[info@ecemn.com](mailto:info@ecemn.com)

The ECE Board of Directors meets monthly. Please call Executive Assistant Julie Johnson at 763-689-8046 to confirm meeting information.

The Co-op Advantage newsletter is published by East Central Energy, a not-for-profit, member-owned, local electric cooperative. Contact us if you have any questions or suggestions about this publication.

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(Minnesota) 1-800-252-1166 or 811 two business days ahead

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## I'M HELPING MY ENERGY STAR® TV REALLY SHINE

By turning the TV off when I'm not using it and using a sleep timer at night, I'm watching the savings add up. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at [togetherwesave.com](http://togetherwesave.com).

**TOGETHER WESAVE.COM**

## Pole testing in progress

Employees from Osmose Utilities Services will be testing poles on ECE's system for the next several months. Their tests monitor the integrity of the poles and provide ECE with the data it needs to schedule pole replacement and maintenance.

The Osmose employees drive white pickups and may use ATVs, and carry ECE contractor ID badges. Call 1-800-254-7944 for verification if you have concerns about the authenticity of anyone working on or near your property who claims to be representing ECE.