



August 2022

Co-op Advantage

COOPx ECE's cooperative experience

For our second year of COOPx, we invited four local students to get a behind-the-scenes look at their cooperative, June 20-23. Over the course of four days, our employees spent time with Kyle Armstrong (16, Rush City); Braden Haukos (18, Milaca); Ryan Nyblom (17, Braham); and Tyler Strande (16, Mora). The students met with teams from IT, metering, forestry, and engineering. They also toured our Braham buildings as well as the pollinator garden. After a busy week, they attended a special board meeting held at Grand Casino Hinckley to celebrate the new solar array, where they were presented with \$500 scholarships.

This year we scheduled more time with outside teams due to the students' interest areas. When asked about the week's highlights, all four agreed with Ryan when he said, "The time we spent with the lineworkers was super interesting. It was great to see how they work together to get each job done thoroughly and safely." Tyler was surprised to learn how many different jobs existed within one local company, and Braden shared that COOPx helped underscore his decision to attend line school. Kyle, who also participated in this year's Youth Tour, felt that both experiences added to his overall understanding of how electric cooperatives deliver power to members.

Employees repeatedly mentioned how attentive and respectful all four were during their time at ECE. We wish Kyle, Braden, Ryan, and Tyler the best!



L-R: Ryan Nyblom, Braden Haukos, Kyle Armstrong, Tyler Strande



Outage reporting and safety

The Memorial Day storms were the worst we've seen in recent years. Our members were incredibly supportive, and many of you reached out with great questions. We'd like to take this opportunity to offer a few outage reminders to keep everyone safe.

THE LIGHTS GO OUT



In an outage event, please report your outage on SmartHub or call 1-800-254-7944, as these options allow us to connect to your account faster. Please don't report your outage on social media, as the team who manages ECE's account has no access to your member data. In addition, stay away from downed lines because there is no way to tell if they are still energized.

STEPS TO RESTORING POWER



Crews first clear fallen lines from the roads whenever possible. Work then begins on restoring power to substations, if necessary. Next, distribution feeders (lines that come from the substation) are repaired. Tap lines that carry power to groups of homes from distribution feeders are repaired next. Finally, individual service lines are repaired. While ECE is responsible for getting the electricity to the member's meter, members must contact an electrician to repair damage to member-owned electric equipment.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND



Landscape wisely! You should never plant in the right of way of a power line. Trees too close to the line can interrupt power or start a fire.



Stay food safe. According to the Centers for Disease Control, if the doors stay closed, food will stay safe for up to four hours in a refrigerator and up to 48 hours in a full freezer. If you have lots of expensive food items in your freezer, you may want to invest in a backup generator. Never taste food to determine if it is safe to eat. When in doubt, throw it out!



Need a medical device to safely sleep?

Always have alternate overnight plans. Stay with a friend or invite an elderly neighbor to bunk for the evening. Neighbors helping neighbors is the cooperative way.



Learn to use a generator before the storm.

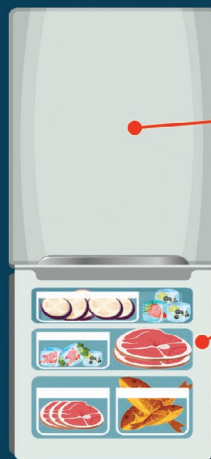
Never use one indoors or within 20 feet of a building. Select the right wattage to power all your essentials. If you don't, you run the risk of overloading your generator. To reduce the risk of backfeeding, and to protect utility workers who may be operating in the area, install a transfer switch.

Eat Safe Food after a Power Outage



During a power outage, keep refrigerator & freezer doors closed

⚡ If the doors stay closed, food will stay safe for up to:



4
Hours in a
Refrigerator

48
Hours in a
FULL
Freezer



24
Hours in a
HALF-FULL
Freezer



www.cdc.gov/foodsafety



Electric Cooperative Youth Tour

In June, the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., highlighted the connections that students have been missing since the pandemic began.

The two delegates that represented ECE, Avy Kester and Kyle Armstrong, were kept busy during the six-day, all-expense-paid educational tour. They toured the Smithsonian on the National Mall, had dinner in Old Town Alexandria, explored Mount Vernon, the National Cathedral, the zoo, spent time at the Holocaust Museum and let loose at a Nationals baseball game.

"It was amazing to see our nation's history in person," Avy says. "Learning about historical events is one thing, but seeing it up close and personal makes it all come to life. The Lincoln Memorial, WWII Memorial, Arlington Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were bigger and grander than I imagined."



Touring the city's monuments and spending time on Capitol Hill were the main attractions, but underneath it all were the connections Avy and Kyle made with students from across the country.

Kyle mentions, "There were so many different personalities, and we had a blast getting to know each other. The tour guides kept us moving along but we also had a lot of chances to relax and talk. That was probably my favorite part—the connections we made."



Protecting your data

Staying proactive in the face of threats

As the electric provider to over 64,000 accounts, we are careful to keep employee and member data secure. To provide consistent power, we must balance co-op needs while mitigating cyber threats.

"Ransomware is a malicious program that encrypts useful files," describes IT Manager Josh Jore. "This renders the computer and its information unusable. To access files, a special data key from the thieves must be obtained—typically by paying a ransom fee."

Our IT department takes a multi-layered approach to combat threats:

- Multifactor authentication is required for all employees accessing data on our network.
- We utilize an antivirus product that detects and stops ransomware files from being encrypted.
- Member financial data is stored securely in a location not accessible from our network. Member credentials are stored using a one-way hash function, and sensitive information is encrypted.
- Our servers send logs in real time to a company that analyzes the data and alerts us of anomalies.
- We have a disaster recovery site, in the event of data loss or another catastrophic IT event. We also use backups for important member data and software services. If a cyber-criminal were to delete our regular backups, we could still restore important data.

Josh adds, "Unfortunately, cyber threats are nothing new and they aren't going anywhere. We can't become complacent because that's when an entity becomes vulnerable to cyberattacks. At ECE, we use the latest technology to protect the co-op and our members."



Can you help us find these former members?

We are trying to find current addresses for former members. To view the list, go to eastcentralenergy.com > Your Cooperative > Capital Credits, or call 1-800-254-7944 and we will mail the list to you.

If you know anyone listed and have their current address, please call 1-800-254-7944, ext. 2001, and leave a detailed message.



After months of progress, the Grand Casino Hinckley solar array, located near Grand National Golf Club, was officially commissioned in June. The 3-megawatt array is the result of ECE's partnership with Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures (MLCV) as well as a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources. Our co-op will purchase the array's output and sell to MLCV. Meanwhile, NextEra will continue to operate and own the equipment.

This exciting project will reduce the area's carbon footprint. In addition, single-axis panels tilt and track the sun, capturing the maximum amount of daily sunlight. By generating output late into the day (when energy demand peaks), the array will help offset the need to purchase energy from the market.

We've had many members ask us about solar, particularly specific solar companies

and potential rebates. Please know that, despite any advertising you might see, ECE does not endorse or work with solar manufacturers or businesses. We are not offering solar rebates because equitable access to renewable energy is an essential part of a member-owned cooperative.

Projects like the Grand Casino Hinckley solar array create a mutually beneficial relationship, not only for MLCV, but also for every member of our cooperative. We are continuing to learn about the evolving market of distributed energy, like solar, and we are always happy to help educate members and share the things that we're learning in these exciting projects.

At your service we remain,



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

Braham Service Center
Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

1.800.254.7944

General business calls are answered from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Emergency and outage calls are answered 24 hours a day.

Email: info@ecemn.com


The ECE Board of Directors meets monthly. Please call Executive Assistant Wendy Leibel at 763-689-8046 to confirm meeting information. Monthly board meeting highlights 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





**NATIONWIDE CANDIDATE CONSERVATION
AGREEMENT WITH ASSURANCES
FOR THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY**

**1199%
ABOVE
TARGET!**

The University of Illinois Chicago recognizes

East Central Energy

*for the following conservation achievements
in support of monarchs during the 2021 program year.*

**4,028
HABITAT ACRES**

Additionally, East Central Energy conducted monitoring at

15 Monitoring Plots with an average of
1,104 Milkweed Stems per habitat acre
and **34% Nectar Plant Cover** on habitat acres

The Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) is a collaborative effort to develop a voluntary conservation agreement to provide habitat for the monarch butterfly. In 2020, ECE became the first cooperative to join the CCAA.



Protect and educate your loved ones!

Scammers love to target the elderly by creating panic and confusion. Educate your parents or grandparents about scam calls.

ECE will never ask you to purchase debit cards or money orders to avoid immediate disconnection. When in doubt, give us a call!



1.800.254.7944
eastcentralenergy.com



ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.