



Co-op Advantage

Your Connected Home

A simple guide to smart devices

A growing number of consumers own devices they regulate with mobile apps. These gadgets serve a wide range of purposes, offering security, entertainment, control over energy consumption, and peace of mind.

With so many programs and devices available, where do you start? "Start small," advises Justin Jahnz, Manager, Energy Services and Strategic Projects. "You don't need to do everything at once."

To help you sort through your options and start your own connected home journey, we offer a few suggestions from our Information Technology department.

Illuminate it. Never come home to a dark house again. Use your voice to turn your lights on and off. Smart bulbs also install just like a regular bulb. Out of town for the week? Set a timer via your phone to keep burglars at bay.

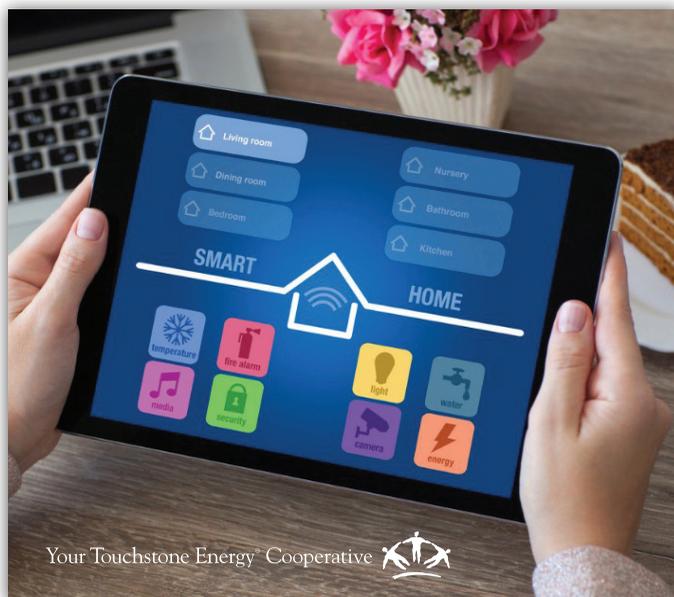
Safety always. Consider a smoke detector that senses fire, smoke, or the buildup of carbon monoxide. You will receive an alert on your mobile device in case of emergency.

Ding-dong! Install a video doorbell and easily communicate with visitors. Receive alerts when packages arrive or unusual activity occurs. Many models produce crisp, clear images and offer two-way communication. Pair with a smart door lock to lock/unlock your door with your phone.

Cool tool. Control your home's temperature from a remote location (or the couch) using your mobile device. You'll save energy and money by using a timer. Wi-Fi thermostats can be tricky to choose and install, so do your research before heading to the store. Don't forget, we have a \$25 rebate available for Wi-Fi thermostats.

Also, says Jahnz, "Choose your brand wisely. Something to keep in mind is that devices made by different manufacturers often have no way to communicate with each other."

Most importantly, be sure to configure your home network properly, use strong passwords when setting up these devices, and understand what types of data these devices are collecting and sharing with the vendor and/or others. Always do your research and only implement apps you feel are safe for your situation.



Can you help us find these former members?



ECE is trying to find current addresses for former members. To view the list, go to eastcentralenergy.com/capitalcredits, or call 1-800-254-7944 and we will mail the list to you. You may also visit any ECE Service Center to get a copy of the list.

If you know anyone listed and have their current address, please call 763-691-2001 or 1-800-254-7944, ext. 2001, and leave a detailed message.

Watt's Cookin'

Congratulations to Judy Nelson, a seasonal member from Roseville, MN, for winning the Watt's Cookin' barbecue recipe contest. Judy will receive a \$25 energy credit.

BARBEQUE SAUCE



1 stick butter
1 c. ketchup
1 T. Worcestershire sauce
¾ tsp. dry mustard (or to taste)
Salt and pepper to taste

Melt butter then add rest of ingredients. Simmer 15 minutes.

Great served with pork ribs. Can spread sauce on ribs during last ½ hour of cooking.

To enter our Watt's Cookin' contest, mail your favorite stuffing 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 Sept. 20, 2019. The winning recipe and the contributor's name and city will be featured in a future edition of the Co-op Advantage. Recipes can also be emailed to info@ecemn.com.

Online safety Choosing a parental control app

School is starting soon, which makes now the perfect time to consider how your kids plan to balance their technology use with other activities like homework, chores, and sports.

By downloading a parental control app, you can easily manage their screen time and block harmful content. Many apps allow you to limit online time by locking the device during certain times or after a set number of hours. You will also find apps that help kids use search engines safely by blocking inappropriate results.

A few things to consider:

- **Platform** – do you use Apple, Android, or another device platform?
- **Devices** – how many devices do you want to monitor?
- **Price** – will you be charged monthly or just once? Will you be charged per device?
- **Tracking** – can the app track location? Can it monitor calls and texts? Does it monitor every key stroke?
- **Web and app monitoring** – can the app monitor website use along with blocking inappropriate sites? Will it retain search terms? Can it block other apps from being used? Can it monitor social media activity?



Technology offers many benefits for today's kids. At the same time, we recognize that it's becoming increasingly important to educate families on how to stay safe online. Choosing the right parental control app is an important first step.



Auto Pay WINNER

Visit our website to learn about Auto Pay. If you would like to be entered in the monthly drawing, sign up for Auto Pay today!

Members who currently participate in Auto Pay will automatically be entered in the drawing.

Congratulations
Walter Larson, Rush City, MN

2 eastcentralenergy.com



\$UMMER BILLS

Q&A with Member Services

Our Member Services department is here to help regarding summer electric bills.

What is causing my bill to be higher over the summer?

Take a look at any appliances that heat, pump or cool. Air conditioning (A/C) systems can consume as much as three kilowatt hours (kWh) per hour of operation. During a hot summer month, A/C use alone can add over \$150 to your normal monthly bill.

Another factor in the summer is the higher kWh energy rate. September through May, residential members pay 12.49 cents per kWh. From June to August, residential members pay 14.38 cents per kWh. The elevated summer rate is due to high demand for electricity during hot summer days.

What are some things I should look for when assessing my energy use?

Pool pumps, air conditioners, and dehumidifiers are some appliances that can be large consumers of electricity. Summer is also a time when family and friends get together; extra people in your home can account for additional electricity consumption due to more showers and loads of laundry.

What can I do?

Change how you use your appliances. For example, reduce the electric consumption of your A/C by turning up your thermostat a few degrees. If you are going on vacation, set your thermostat to an even higher temperature. Remembering to adjust your thermostat can be challenging, but technology can help. A programmable Wi-Fi thermostat (check out our \$25 rebate online) allows you to adjust settings through an app on your smartphone.

If you have questions regarding your electric bill, we'd be happy to help.

Give us a call at 1-800-254-7944.



ENERGY MATTERS

with ECE President/CEO Steve Shurts

As technology continues to advance, the utility industry is recognizing the benefit of putting drones to work. Officially called an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), a drone can be remotely operated from the ground and used to capture pictures and video from the air.

Last year, we formed a committee to explore the potential for drone use at ECE. In May we purchased our first drone. Two of our employees, Jeff Wells and Milt Gunderson, were recently certified UAS commercial pilots through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Part 107 testing process.

Safety is the most significant benefit we expect from using drones. They can reach places that are difficult and even dangerous to get to. They also provide the advantage of reducing inspection time, which can help cut costs for the cooperative. The detailed images can help us effectively monitor and maintain our system by checking for damage and corrosion, especially in remote areas.

There are many things to consider when building a UAS program. We are currently developing a policy and setting guidelines for utilizing drones. We will keep you updated as we explore this exciting new technology.

**It's a bird!
It's a plane!
No, it's... a drone!**



Jeff Wells and Milt Gunderson show off ECE's new drone.



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

Service Center locations:
Braham, Milaca, and Finlayson
Monday-Friday
Hours vary by service center.

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 Administrator Julie Johnson at 763-689-8046 to confirm meeting information.

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:
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Leaving is 'Bittersweet' for Retiree Tom Gross retires after 29 years with ECE

After working at ECE for much of his adult life, Meter Technician Tom Gross celebrated his retirement on June 25—marking exactly 29 years to the day.

Tom has had a long and rewarding career. After serving four years in the Marines as a Sergeant and Communications Supervisor, he came home and knew he wanted to work with electricity.

"It always fascinated me," he says, which is why he chose to become a lineman.

"My mom was the one who told me about the opening at ECE. I was working at another co-op and thought, 'Why not?'"

When Tom received the lineman job at ECE, he and his wife, Karen, moved their family three hours south from Effie, MN.

Tom enjoyed linework until 2004, when he accepted a position as a Meter Technician. For the last 15 years, Tom has been testing and programming meter equipment, continuing to work closely with his linemen friends.

Father to Theresa, David, and TJ, Tom is now a grandfather as well. His eyes light up when he talks about the accomplishments of his children. "We have really great kids; all three of them. We're very lucky."

While he is looking forward to moving toward St. Cloud to be near family, as well as spending more time with his wife, he says he will miss his friends at ECE.

"It's true, what they say." He smiles. "It's bittersweet. It really is like a little family here."



ECE MEMBER APPRECIATION EVENTS

**OCTOBER 3
4-6 P.M.**

Braham Event Center,
Milaca and Finlayson
Service Centers, and
Superior Operations Center

**Free food and fun
for the family!**



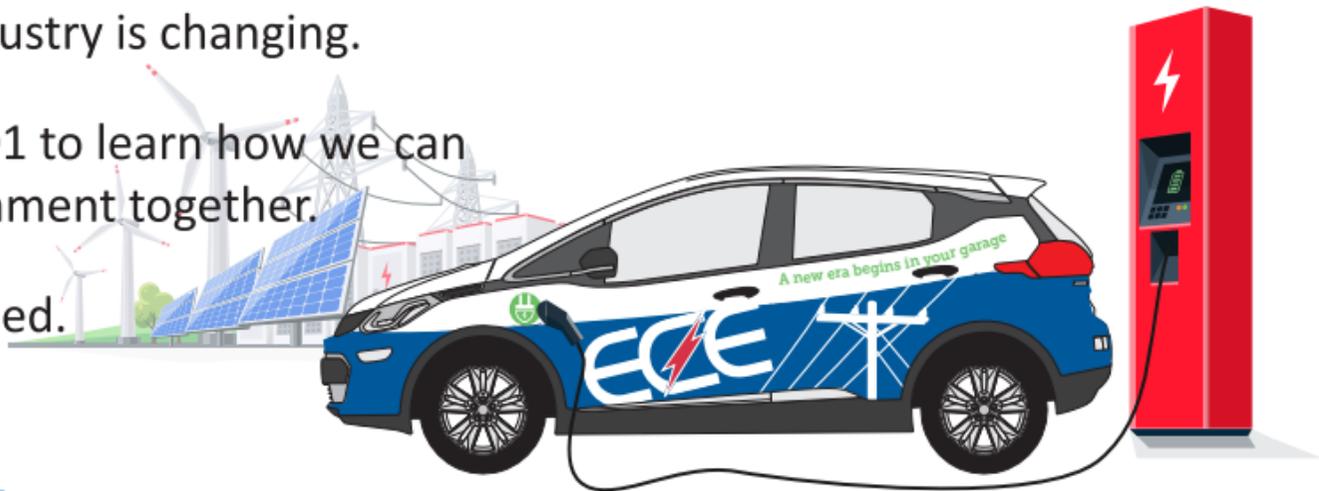
YOUR ENERGY FUTURE 101, August 28, 7-8 P.M.

Northern Lights Ballroom and Banquet Center, 10376 112th Ave., Milaca, MN

From solar and wind to battery storage, electric vehicles, and smart appliances, the energy industry is changing.

Join us for Your Energy Future 101 to learn how we can navigate this new energy environment together.

Light refreshments will be provided.



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Owning an electric vehicle (EV) is easier and more affordable than ever.

- **\$800** rebates on qualifying EV chargers *(until funds are exhausted)*
- Special off-peak charging rates

Visit our website for details

ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



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