

Scholarships
Opportunities for students

Q&A with our expert
Winter outages

Win an iPad
Activate SmartHub

Margin disbursement
Shared with members

January 2020

ECE Co-op Advantage

Celebrating renewable energy

A new solar array built for our members demonstrates our commitment to renewable energy.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held November 22 at the array's site in Cambridge, MN. In attendance were ECE's Board of Directors and staff, Cambridge city officials, members of North 65 Chamber of Commerce, representatives from Great River Energy (GRE) and ENGIE North America, as well as Minnesota State Representative Brian Johnson.

ENGIE North America, a private energy company, will sell the array's production to GRE, our power supplier, which will sell the entire output to us. Our only investment was to connect the array to our lines.

"We are so thankful the city of Cambridge has this great site for the array," shared President/CEO Steve Shurts. "We will continue to explore additional means to increase our renewable energy supply, with an eye toward our members."



(L-R) Jeff Haas of GRE, ECE's Board Chair Linda Laitala, Cambridge Mayor Jim Godfrey, and Andy Seward of ENGIE



Cambridge Solar Array

BY THE NUMBERS CAMBRIDGE SOLAR ARRAY



7,072 PANELS
located in
Cambridge, MN



+/-60 DEGREES
panels track the
sun for maximum
energy output



15 ACRES
layout includes
a low-growing,
pollinator-friendly
meadow



300 HOMES
the number of
homes that could be
powered with the
electricity produced



3 MILLION+
kWh
annual electricity
production

25 YEAR
life expectancy

2 MW
total capacity

Powering your future with scholarship opportunities



Power Up scholarship

This program is open to non-traditional students (defined as those already in college or those returning to college after a hiatus), high school seniors who attend homeschool, private educational institutions, a high school located outside our service territory, or seasonal ECE members.

Applications are being accepted until Feb. 25, 2020, for our Power Up scholarship program. Applicants must be an ECE member or the dependent of an ECE member. The application form and more information can be found on our website.

High school scholarship

As part of our focus on community, we also provide scholarship opportunities to college-bound seniors at participating high schools within our service territory. All of these scholarships are funded by unclaimed capital credits.

A list of participating high schools is available on our website. Contact your high school guidance or career counselor for information and the application. Submit the completed application to your school counselor.

To learn more about our scholarship opportunities, visit our website or give us a call.

2 1.800.254.7944



SMART TIPS

SPACE HEATER SAFETY



Review and follow all manufacturer directions.

Place them out of high-traffic areas and on a hard, level floor surface.



Keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items.

Plug them directly into outlets. Avoid using an extension cord.



Turn them off before you leave the room or go to sleep.

Learn more at:

 Safe
Electricity.org

Space heaters may increase your monthly electric bill. Visit eastcentralenergy.com to calculate the cost to run a space heater.



Auto Pay **WINNER**

Congratulations
Richard Harshman,
Clear Lake, MN

Visit our website to learn more about Auto Pay.



Q&A with Vern Johnson



Remember the January 2019 polar vortex? Several co-ops experienced power outages. We asked Vern Johnson, COO and VP of Operations, to answer a few winter outage questions.

Why do winter power outages happen?

In the winter, outages typically come down to three things: precipitation, wind, and temperature. When ice and snow accumulate on trees, or when winds are high, tree branches can bend and break onto power lines. And very cold temperatures cause metal (such as power lines and line connections) to contract and sometimes break.

Why don't we just bury the lines to prevent these outages?

While burying power lines would protect them from ice and wind, frost can still disrupt power. Soil movement from frost heaves can break underground power lines. And don't forget, it takes a lot longer to locate and repair outages on underground lines.

Do we supplement with wind and solar during cold snaps?

You may remember hearing that wind turbines were shut off proactively to prevent damage to them during last winter's polar vortex, so wind energy is not always feasible. As far as solar, we tend to have pretty cloudy winters in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Cold weather can halt energy production at wind farms and, as we saw last January, even restrict the availability of natural gas. This makes power plants like Coal Creek Station—operated by our power supplier, Great River Energy—particularly important.

How can I prepare for a winter outage?

We depend on electricity for heat and hot water. During extreme weather, however, reliable electricity means so much more. If you rely on electricity for a medical device (like an oxygen machine), make it a point to have alternative plans. If you use a generator during an outage, make sure it's properly ventilated and ensure the building is disconnected from our system by opening an approved transfer switch. Finally, keep plenty of food, medicine and bottled water on hand. Items like trail mix, canned fruit and crackers can make for a tasty meal in a pinch.



ANNUAL MEETING

April 23, 2020

Braham Event Center
and
ECE Superior Operations Center
(via live video)

Registration begins 5 p.m.
Business meeting 6 p.m.



How can you win? It's simple!



Activate your SmartHub® account **by February 19, 2020** for a chance to win one of two iPads. ECE members currently using SmartHub are automatically entered.

FIRST-TIME USERS

Download the FREE SmartHub app on your smart device or visit our website and click on "My Account" to activate your account. You will need your ECE account number. Once you have activated your account you are automatically entered in the drawing.

With SmartHub you can quickly and conveniently report an outage, pay your bill, view your energy use, receive alerts, and more.

Focusing on what's important



As Member Services Supervisor Kari Pangerl prepares to retire, she's confident the cooperative is in good hands. Because she oversees the contact center and front offices, Kari has launched numerous careers at ECE and quickly developed a knack for spotting potential.

"I'm never disappointed," she says, when asked about employees leaving the department for another one. "I go into every interview thinking about their fit for the entire company as a whole. I love seeing employees grow into their own."

After 27 years with the co-op, Kari herself has entered a new season of life. She knew it was time to retire when life outside of work began to hold more of her attention... and her heart.

"At a certain point, I began to question who needed my time more," she shares.

"I have loved my career, but I'm ready to focus on the people in my life."

She admits her retirement plans won't seem all that exciting to others: more time with her three children, Josh, Gina, and Jamie, and her seven grandchildren, who range in age from two to 21.

"My husband, Rob, and I have plans for road trips and various journeys in the years ahead," Kari mentions. "As a parent and grandparent, I want to be available for my children. I want to savor the sweet moments with my grandkids."



Looking at the office around her, she adds, "There is a lot of talent within my team, and it's time to step back and let others take the lead, bringing their fresh ideas to the department."

Margins of \$1.9 million shared with members

A favorable energy market and unseasonable weather patterns provided ECE and our power supplier, Great River Energy, a successful year. This resulted in margins beyond what we budgeted.

We had some options: we could allocate margins to you (as we have in the past) as capital credits, or we could share margins with you immediately. We are choosing to share \$1.9 million with you now by crediting one month's cost-of-basic service. The 2019 Margin Disbursement credit will appear on your bill due in January.

As a cooperative member, you benefit from our financial success.



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. 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





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You gotta be in it to win it!

Activate your SmartHub account by **February 19, 2020** for a chance to win an iPad.

Download the FREE app or visit our website and click on “My Account.”

Put the power of data in your hands with SmartHub.

Must be an ECE member.

Current SmartHub users are automatically entered.



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eastcentralenergy.com