

NEWSLINE



CELEBRATING THE POWER OF MEMBERSHIP: INVESTING IN YOU, INVESTING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Every October, electric cooperatives across the country celebrate National Co-op Month. It's a chance to talk about what actually makes a co-op different, and this year we wanted to show you instead of just tell you.

In early 2026, the Itasca-Mantrap board approved returning more than \$700,000 in capital credits to members. That's not a marketing number. It's what happens when a business is owned by the people it serves instead of outside investors. When the co-op operates efficiently and margins are left over, that money doesn't disappear into shareholder dividends. It comes back to you.

That's economic participation, one of the seven cooperative principles, and it has two sides. One comes back to you directly. The other goes out into your community.

As a cooperative, we offer various programs that reinvest back into the community such as Operation Round Up and the Itasca-Mantrap Education Scholarship.

This spring, we awarded five students each a \$1,000 scholarship. And because members round up their bills, ORU awarded over \$36,000 in grants to 65 civic projects. Both programs are ones your co-op invests in every year, and it's a different kind of return as you are actively investing into the future of your community.

That investment reflects another cooperative principle: Concern for Community. Co-ops don't just serve their members, they work for the lasting development of the communities they're part of.

The capital credits check and the scholarship and Operation Round Up grants come from the same source: a business built to serve its members, not to maximize profit for someone else.

This Co-op Month, remember that your membership is more than an electric bill. It helps power reliable service, supports local scholarships and community grants, and strengthens the place we all call home. That's the cooperative difference.



Engineering & Operations Update

By Shannon Snell,
Director of Operations

As summer draws to a close, so does another busy construction season for Itasca-Mantrap's line crews. Although large construction projects stop once winter weather arrives, the work of maintaining and improving our electric distribution system continues throughout the year. Our crews remain active across the service territory completing maintenance, planned upgrades, repairs, and other reliability work.

Planning a project? *If you have last-minute construction needs, such as a new service or service alteration, please contact us as soon as possible. Winter rates go into effect November 1, and once winter weather arrives, frozen ground, snow, and other conditions may cause projects to be postponed until spring.*

One important part of this work is our pole inspection program. Each year, usually in September, a contracted pole inspection specialist inspects a portion of Itasca-Mantrap's poles. These inspections test for decay, damage, structural concerns, and other conditions that could affect pole strength or reliability. After the results are reviewed, replacement or repair work is scheduled for poles needing follow-up.

Some of this work may take place during the winter months. Frozen ground can provide better access to wetlands and other low-lying areas where heavy equipment may cause damage or become stuck during warmer months. Winter access allows crews to complete necessary work while minimizing disturbance to the surrounding property.

Line crews also conduct patrols of the electric system. During these patrols, they look for damaged equipment, loose or deteriorated components, trees or limbs that could contact power lines, and other conditions that could eventually cause an outage. Crews may also inspect transformers,

switches, reclosers, underground equipment, wildlife covers, and animal deterrents that help reduce animal-related outages.

This work, along with outage restoration, may require crews to travel slowly, stop frequently, or enter the right-of-way to access cooperative equipment on private property. If you see an Itasca-Mantrap vehicle or crew working nearby, they may be restoring power, completing repairs, inspecting equipment, removing vegetation, or addressing other issues identified during a line patrol.

Not every potential problem can be found before it causes an outage, especially when severe weather, animals, vehicle accidents, and other unexpected events are involved. However, inspections, patrols, vegetation management, and planned maintenance all help improve reliability and reduce outage impacts.

You can help as well. Before the snow falls, take a moment to note the location of cooperative equipment on your property, such as transformers, cabinets, poles, and guy wires. This can help you avoid hitting equipment when plowing and ensure snow piles allow crews room to access it if needed.

Also, if you notice a damaged pole or broken guy wire, a tree or branch that could contact a power line, a low-hanging wire, a damaged cabinet or transformer, or any other unsafe condition, please contact Itasca-Mantrap. Most importantly, never approach or touch a damaged power line or electrical equipment.

While winter weather brings large construction projects to a halt, our crews continue maintaining, repairing, and strengthening the electric system. Thank you for staying aware of our crews and equipment, reporting concerns when you see them, and helping us provide safe, reliable service throughout the winter months.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors for Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. was held on, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the Itasca-Mantrap office.

A quorum of directors was present.

Approved:

- Consent agenda
- June financials, subject to audit
- Pre-budget approval for 2027 construction season purchases
- Correction to PURPA QF rate
- Transaction limits for payments received via debit/credit card
- Revisions to Board Policy 3.94 – Alcohol, Smoking, Cannabis & Controlled Substances

Reports heard:

- Operations
- Safety
- Financial
- Marketing and Member Services
- Human Resources
- CEO
- Youth Tour
- Summaries of meetings attended

Reviewed:

- Changes to Itasca-Mantrap's membership
- GRE Power Cost Adjustment detail for June 2026
- Board Expenses to Budget YTD
- Scrap Material Sales
- Operational Plan updates
- Administrative Policy 5.15 – Purchasing and Procurement
- Administrative Policy 3.94.1 – DOT Controlled Substances and Alcohol Use

NEXT BOARD MEETING:

The next regular meeting of the Board of Directors is Thursday, October 29, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.



Breaking Down The Numbers:

What Demand Can Look Like On Your Bill

Over the past several months, we've been exploring a concept that is becoming increasingly important in the electric industry: demand.

We've learned that electricity costs are influenced by more than just how much energy we use. They're also affected by how much electricity is needed at one time.

Think of it this way: energy is the total amount of electricity you use throughout the day or month, while demand measures how much electricity your home is using at a specific moment. When several large appliances run at the same time, your home's demand increases, even if your total energy use doesn't change.

That's where our examples of Ross and Rachel came in.

Both used the same amount of electricity during the evening. They cooled their homes, cooked dinner, washed clothes, and dried them. Yet Ross ran most of those appliances at the same time, while Rachel spread them throughout the evening. Because Ross's electricity use peaked higher than Rachel's, his demand was greater, even though they consumed the same total amount of energy.

Why does this matter?

Because electric cooperatives must build and maintain a system capable of serving members during periods of peak demand. Whether that

peak occurs on a hot July afternoon or a cold January morning, the equipment, power supply, and infrastructure must be sized to handle it.

To help illustrate how a future demand charge might work, let's use a simple hypothetical example.

Suppose there was a \$1 demand charge for each kilowatt (kW) of monthly demand. A member whose highest demand for the month was 10 kW would pay a \$10 demand charge. A member whose highest demand was 6 kW would pay a \$6 demand charge.

The difference isn't how much electricity they used during the month. The difference is how much electricity they needed at one time.

The good news is that demand is often manageable. Small changes in timing can make a difference. Running the dishwasher after the dryer finishes, waiting to start a load of laundry until after dinner, or spreading out the use of major appliances can help reduce a home's peak demand without reducing comfort or convenience.

As the electric industry continues to evolve, understanding demand helps explain how power costs are created and how future rate designs may better reflect the costs of serving members. While energy use will always matter, the timing of that use is becoming an increasingly important part of the equation.



Residential customers who cannot qualify for winter shut-off protection and who cannot pay their full bill may make payments over a period of time. To schedule a payment arrangement, call us at 218-732-3377.

Energy Assistance

If heating costs are stretching your budget thin, the Energy Assistance Program may help. It's designed to assist income-eligible households with the cost of energy and heating their homes, for households whose income over the last three months falls below certain guidelines. Call one of the numbers below to request an application.

Becker County Human Services

218-847-5628

Bi-County CAP, Inc.

Bemidji – 800-332-7161 or

218-751-4631

Walker – 218-547-3438

Hubbard County Human Services

218-732-1451

Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership

Detroit Lakes – 218-847-1385

Park Rapids – 218-732-7204

Wadena – 218-632-3600

White Earth Housing Authority

218-473-4663

White Earth Energy Assistance

218-473-2711 or 866-885-7656

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule (MN Statute, Ch. 235, Sec. 216B.097) protects residential utility customers during the cold winter months. Under this rule, your electric service will not be disconnected from October 1st through April 30th because of non-payment provided you meet ALL of the following conditions:

- You declare an inability to pay.
- Your total household, not individual, income is less than 50% of the state median income. You must provide the necessary documentation to support this condition.
- You enter into, and make reasonable, timely payments under, a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills.

If you do not meet all of the above conditions, then you do not qualify for the winter shut-off protection. However, you still can continue to receive electric service if you call us to make a mutually acceptable payment arrangement.

Dual Fuel Members: Check Your Back-up System Fuel Supply

Members of Itasca-Mantrap Electric Cooperative who are on the dual fuel load management program are encouraged to make sure they have adequate supplies of their secondary fuel source for winter. It is essential that your backup system is able to adequately heat your home during control times.

As a reminder, the primary heating systems of participants can be controlled up to 12 hours per day and up to 400 hours per heating season. Control occurs on days of high electrical demand, high wholesale energy prices, and/or system emergencies. Both morning and evening control is expected throughout the cold weather months. If you have any questions, please contact the Itasca-Mantrap office.

Sign up for dual fuel texts through SmartHub!

- Add contact method: In settings, click Contact Methods. Add your cell phone number and verify as directed.
- Set up notifications: In Settings, click Manage Notifications, then On Demand. Under Alert Type, select your contact method under Load Management.



ETS Heating Program Adapting to a Changing Energy Market

If you participate in Itasca-Mantrap's Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) heating program, you may notice changes to the times when your heating system charges this heating season. While the way your heating system stores and delivers warmth will remain the same, some members may receive new charging schedules as we work to adapt the program to changes in the wholesale power market.

For many years, ETS heating systems were charged during traditional off-peak overnight hours. This approach worked well under the previous wholesale billing structure. However, our wholesale power supplier, Great River Energy, is transitioning to a new billing method. Under the new structure, large concentrations of load occurring at the same time can create significant costs for the cooperative.

As part of this transition, Great River Energy has been studying how ETS systems can be managed more efficiently by spreading charging times throughout the day and night rather than having all units charge during the same period. Pilot projects conducted with other cooperatives have shown that strategically staggering charging schedules can reduce system demand while maintaining member comfort.

What Will Change?

Some ETS heating accounts will be assigned different charging schedules that better distribute heating load across the electric system. The objective is to:

- Help control future wholesale power and transmission costs.

- Maintain the long-term value of the ETS program.
- Reduce system demand during high-use periods.
- Continue providing reliable and affordable electric heating.

Will My Home Stay Comfortable?

Yes. ETS systems are designed to store heat when electricity is available and release that heat throughout the day. Pilot programs have demonstrated that adjusted charging schedules can successfully reduce demand without causing comfort issues for participating members. In fact, cooperatives involved in early testing reported little to no member concerns related to comfort.

Looking Ahead

The electric utility industry is evolving, and cooperatives across the region are adapting to new wholesale power cost structures. Updating our ETS heating program is one way to ensure the program remains competitive and sustainable while continuing to provide value to participating members.

We appreciate our ETS members' flexibility as we make these adjustments. By working together, we can continue to offer an effective electric heating option while helping manage costs for the cooperative and all members we serve. If you have questions about your ETS heating system or the upcoming changes, please contact Itasca-Mantrap.



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OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Friday: 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

*Itasca-Mantrap Electric Cooperative is an
equal opportunity provider and employer.*

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We work hard to make sure your
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you agree, would you take a minute
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