



NEWSLINE



Touchstone Energy®
The power of human connections

January 2021

Itasca-Mantrap and Minnesota Power work together to light up Park Rapids

Itasca-Mantrap and Minnesota Power crews worked together to string lights and decorate the community Christmas tree in downtown Park Rapids for the holidays. Chad Grande, Mike Moen, Parry Eidsmoe, and Randy George from Itasca-Mantrap helped decorate the tree.



Itasca-Mantrap Launches a New Website

Itasca-Mantrap proudly announces the launch of our freshly updated website! Our mission is to serve our members. With our mission in mind, it is important for our members to be able to access our information and services with ease.

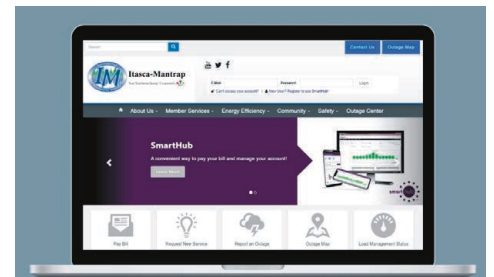
The website's new design features a clean look with responsive views for both mobile and desktop users. The website focuses on the user experience making it faster to find information.



A couple specific design updates include a quick SmartHub login at the top of our website and an Outage Center webpage. All outage information will be easily accessible from the Outage Center.

Nikki Torkelson, Marketing and Member Services Manager, states, "We are excited to launch our new website. The Outage Center provides a central hub for our members to access information quickly when their power is down. The improved

content structure keeps communication open and accessing information more intuitive."



Check out our new website at
www.itasca-mantrap.com!



CEO Update - By Christine Fox, President-CEO

Happy New Year!!!

I think we can all agree that 2020 was an unusual year. The good news is that it is over. Now, as we look forward to 2021,

we anticipate that sometime this year, COVID-19 and all its repercussions will be behind us. What a refreshing thought!

It is with that positive mindset that we began our work on our goals and budget for 2021. Our marketing plan has not changed much from our 2020 plan. All the events and member contacts we planned for 2020 are top priority for 2021. Assuming we beat COVID-19 in 2021, you can look forward to more events with your Cooperative, such as the Apps and Amps events where we aim to bring our members together for casual conversations to learn more about the Cooperative and each other. We also anticipate hosting our Annual Meeting where we will provide a report on how the Cooperative is doing and what our future looks like. And, of course, we look forward to the day when we can open our office and invite you in to share some coffee, cookies, and stories. In 2021, you will also find us out in the community. We look forward to the opportunities to spend more time supporting our community.

Throughout 2020 and into 2021, we have focused on becoming a more team-oriented culture. Of course, with the pandemic, we have not been able to meet and promote the kind of teamwork that requires face-to-

face interaction. We have, however, worked on communication. We have and will continue to explore the capabilities of Microsoft 365 and use the functionality of this product to further improve communications among team members. Just recently, we replaced our team member evaluation methodology with a coaching process wherein supervisors meet with their direct reports twice a year to establish goals and coach these team members in achieving those goals. We just implemented this process and are looking forward to positive results in 2021.

Although we congratulate them, we are saddened by the news that we will be losing two of our team members to retirement in 2021. This will be a great loss. Two of our seasoned linemen, Tim Huwe and Randy George, each of them with over 30 years' experience at Itasca-Mantrap, will be leaving us in 2021. We are proud they chose to spend their careers at Itasca-Mantrap. We will miss them greatly.

In 2021, we will also begin the implementation and installation of our new "AGI" (Advanced Grid Infrastructure). AGI consists of three parts: AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure), Load Management, and MDMS (Meter Data Management System). As I have lamented in previous articles, our current AMI and Load Management systems have become obsolete and are no longer being supported by our vendors. In fact, we have had to store meters in-house over the past season because the ones required for our current system are no longer available for purchase.

So, although our system seems to be working fine, we have no choice but to implement a new one. We have decided to bundle the AMI and Load Management systems together and select a vendor who can provide both. As I write this, we have narrowed that selection down to two vendors. As you read this, we will have chosen that vendor. We have already identified our current software vendor, NISC (National Information Solutions Cooperative), as the MDMS vendor. By using NISC, the data will easily integrate with our current system giving our Member Services, Operations and Billing personnel a myriad of new information. If all of this sounds extremely expensive, it is because it is. The entire system will be over \$5 million (once we include our labor to install it). The good news is, however, with our Board's insightful decision to defer excess margins to cover the expense of the pending AGI project, we are not recommending a rate increase to cover these costs in 2021.

The costs of our ambitious goals and the results of our ongoing cost reduction projects result in a net positive position. We have also been informed by our wholesale power supplier (Great River Energy) that they will not be imposing a rate increase for 2021. These factors result in no recommended rate increase for 2021 for operational expenses either.

Happy New Year!!!

Thank you for allowing me to serve you!!



THE OPERATION ROUND UP PROGRAM IS
ONE WAY ITASCA-MANTRAP MEMBERS
WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.



Five Ways to Stay Cozy this Winter



Baby, it's cold outside! When you're feeling chilly at home, there are several budget-friendly ways you can keep comfortable without turning up the thermostat. Here are five easy ways to stay cozy this winter.

1. Whether you're experiencing extremely cold winter temps or you simply "run cold," an electric blanket can deliver quick warmth like a regular throw or blanket cannot. Electric blankets can include a variety of features, like timers and dual temperature settings (if your cuddle buddy prefers less heat). This winter, consider an electric blanket instead of turning up the heat, and your energy bill will thank you.
2. One of the easiest ways to stay cozy at home is to keep your feet warm. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature, so when your feet are warm, your body automatically feels warmer. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.
3. On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and harness natural warmth from sunlight. Open all curtains and blinds in your home to let the sunshine in—you'll be able to feel the difference.
4. Another way to make your home cozier is to use a humidifier. Cold air doesn't hold water vapor like warm air, so by adding humidity inside your home, you can feel a little warmer. A favorable level of humidity inside your home can also help clear sinuses, soften skin and improve sleep.
5. Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, area rugs can also

provide extra insulation and warmth for your feet on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend the most time. You'll enjoy the new colors and textures of the rug, and the added comfort.

These are just a few ways you can stay cozy this winter without turning up the thermostat. Don't forget the hot chocolate!



Co-op Connections® Card



Itasca-Mantrap

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



SMALL CARD, BIG SAVINGS.

The One Card That Does it All®.

www.itasca-mantrap.com/content/co-op-connections

Feeling chilled?

HEAT your SPACE safely

Here are some space heater safety tips:

- Only use them as the manufacturer recommends
- Do not leave them unattended
- Give them space: remove any flammable items within 3 feet

Learn more at:

Safe
Electricity.org®



Akeley Regional Community Center wins Touchstone Energy Award



Itasca-Mantrap has named Akeley Regional Community Center (ARCC) the winner of the 2020 Touchstone Energy Community Award.

The Akeley Regional Community Center has been serving Akeley and the surrounding community for more than 15 years providing low cost shopping, a gathering space and library. Of special significance is the library, which did not exist in Akeley before the ARCC. The ARCC

Thrift Store is open Monday through Saturday offering a variety of used clothing, books, and household goods, at very low prices. The ARCC also features a gymnasium and houses an archery club.

The community surrounding Akeley relies on the ARCC to provide a helping hand to those in need. Not only does the ARCC provide affordable clothing for families, but also assists fire victims with free clothing and supplies.

As you can see, the ARCC has made a lasting impact on the community – one that continues to evolve as the Center responds to the emerging needs within the community. The latest project for the ARCC are renovations for an

onsite Women's Shelter, which will provide clothing and shelter for women in need.

In appreciation of its community service, the Akeley Regional Community Center received an engraved plaque and a \$500 check that will be used to support its community work.

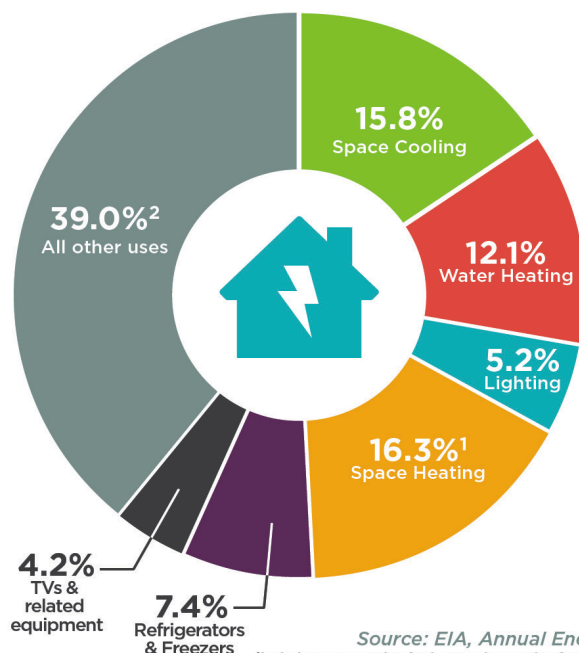
The Akeley Regional Community Center award application will be submitted for consideration in the statewide Minnesota Touchstone Energy Community Award. The statewide award recipient will be selected from award winners around Minnesota. The winning organization will receive \$1,000 to go toward its community cause. The Minnesota Touchstone Energy Community Award will be presented to the award recipient in March during the Minnesota Rural Electric Association annual meeting in St. Paul. *The Touchstone Energy Community Award highlights the Cooperative Principle, Concern for Community.*



L-R: Larry Holm (Chairman of ARCC Board) and Nikki Torkelson (Marketing and Member Services Manager).

How Americans Use Electricity

The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows the combined use of clothes washers and dryers, computers, dishwashers, small appliances and other electrical equipment (noted as “all other uses” below) accounts for nearly 40% of electricity consumption in American homes.



Source: EIA, Annual Energy Outlook 2020

¹Includes consumption for heat and operating furnace fans and boiler pumps.

²Includes miscellaneous appliances, clothes washers and dryers, computers and related equipment, stoves, dishwashers, heating elements, and motors.

Board Report: Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors for Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. was held on Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. at the Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. office located in Park Rapids, Minnesota.

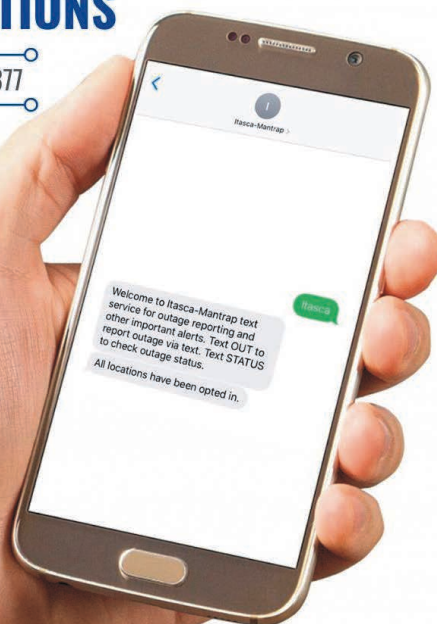
A quorum of directors was present. Items discussed or Board action taken:

- Approved the consent agenda.
- Heard the Operations, Safety and Engineering report and reviewed the 2020 data for Itasca-Mantrap vehicles and equipment.
- September financials were received and filed subject to audit.
- Reviewed the Unclaimed Property report for 2020 and approved the transfer of unclaimed funds to the Operation Round Up Trust fund.
- Reviewed the 2019 tax return.
- Listened to a presentation from Alison Deelstra, regional vice president of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC), on the Key Ratio Trend Analysis for the five years ending December 31, 2019.
- Heard the Marketing & Member Services report.
- CEO Christine Fox gave her monthly CEO report.
- Heard quarterly reports for Board Expenses, Strategic Plan and Safety Incidents.
- Approved revisions to Board policies.
- Approved the dates for 2021 Board meetings.
- Directors and CEO Christine Fox reported on meetings attended on behalf of the Cooperative.

The January meeting of the Board of Directors is Thursday, January 28, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

SIGN UP FOR ITASCA-MANTRAP TEXT NOTIFICATIONS

Text "ITASCA" TO (888)713-3377

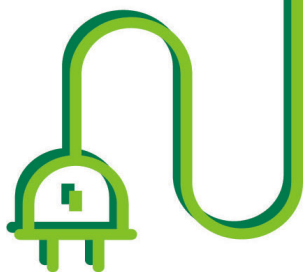


Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy. Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load).

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.

Source:
www.nrel.gov

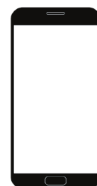


Itasca-Mantrap Electricity Bill Payment Options

AUTO PAY



**ONLINE
THROUGH
SMARTHUB**



**ONLINE WITH
PAY NOW**



**DRIVE-UP
DROP BOXES**



MAIL



Use SmartHub.

Manage your account from the comfort and safety of your home, or on-the-go.

It offers an efficient way to report a power outage.

It is quick and easy to pay your bills, or set up auto-pay each month.

ITASCA-MANTRAP COOPERATIVE

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OFFICE HOURS

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E-mail: itasca@itasca-mantrap.com
www.itasca-mantrap.com



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