



# NEWSLINE



Touchstone Energy®  
The power of human connections

May 2021

## Itasca-Mantrap's 80th Annual Meeting

The meeting will include director elections for districts 6 and 7, a financial report, Board Chair reports, and an update on Itasca-Mantrap business. With our members' safety in mind, we elected not to serve a meal at this year's Annual Meeting.

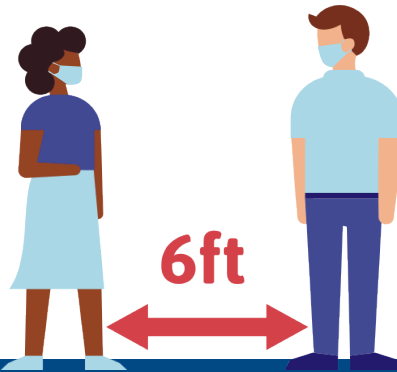
**THURSDAY, JUNE 10, 2021**  
**4 - 4:30 P.M.**

**RSVP BY JUNE 1, 2021**

Limited to:

**60 MEMBERS**

Each member will be allowed to have one guest accompany them.



### Safety First

Remember to wear your mask and practice social distancing.

## IN PERSON

To attend the in-person event at the Park Rapids High School auditorium (limited to 60 members and a guest), you **must call (218) 732-3377 to register**. After successfully registering, we will mail you an event ticket. Bring it to the Annual Meeting.

## MEETING AGENDA

- Doors will open at 3:45 p.m.
- Meeting begins at 4 p.m.
- Your attendance ticket enters you into a drawing for the chance to win one of three \$100 bill credits!
- Ticket and masks will be required, and social distancing will be implemented.

## MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

We use electricity every day. This invisible force has become so commonplace that it can be all too easy to overlook possible electrical hazards, even in the safety of our own homes. May is Electrical Safety Month, and a good time to review safe steps to take that will help prevent accidents. The following home safety tips will help arm you with the knowledge to stay safe.

- Always read and understand the operator's manual before using an appliance or tool.
- Never use a product with a damaged electrical cord.
- Never use extension cords on a permanent basis.
- For the safety of children in your home, install tamper-resistant outlets or protective coverings.
- If your outlets are warm to the touch, immediately shut them off at the circuit breaker, and contact a qualified electrician to make repairs.
- Install ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCIs) in areas that may be wet or damp. GFCIs help protect against electrical shock. Use the test and reset button monthly to ensure they are working properly.
- Never use power tools outdoors if it is raining or the ground is wet.
- If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker, or has given you an electrical shock, immediately unplug it and have it repaired or replaced.

To learn more about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org). You'll find a number of safety tips throughout this month's NewsLine.



## CEO Update - By Christine Fox, President-CEO

This time of year, I find myself reflecting on one of the things I love best about our community – the natural beauty that surrounds us. We are fortunate

to have so many trees that offer beauty, shade, and a habitat for all sorts of birds and other wildlife. Having grown up with the Superior National Forest as my backyard, I have a hard time imagining that there are people out there who love trees more than I do. In fact, I encouraged my husband to buy our hunting land because of a single tree in the middle of the property. I call it the "Fish Tree" because of its resemblance to a tree depicted on the VCR (yes, I said VCR) tape of the movie "Big Fish". I know a lot of you are just as passionate about our community and all its surroundings.

At Itasca-Mantrap, we strive to balance maintaining the beautiful landscapes with ensuring a reliable power supply by keeping our power lines clear in rights of way (ROW). A right of way is the land we use to construct, maintain, replace, or repair underground and overhead power lines. Rights of way enable the co-op to provide clearance from trees and other obstructions that could hinder

the power line installation, maintenance, or operation. The overall goal of our vegetation management program is to provide reliable power to our members while maintaining the beauty of our community. There are three main benefits to maintaining a ROW area: safety, reliability, and affordability.

Safety is always our number one concern at Itasca-Mantrap. We care about the safety of our members, our team members, and the public, above all else. We know we provide a potentially dangerous product and will do everything we can to keep everyone safe. Overgrown vegetation poses a risk to that safety. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our member's yards, they can pose grave danger to families. I read about one instance where a child climbing a tree, stepped out on a limb that, due to the child's weight, bent down into a power line. The results were tragic. We certainly do not want that to happen ever again. Furthermore, electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor, like a tree – it does not even have to touch the power line. Our proactive approach to vegetation management mitigates this risk and diminishes the chances of fallen branches or trees crossing our lines during severe weather events, making it less complicated and less dangerous for our lineworkers when restoring power.

Another benefit of a smart vegetation management program is reliability. Strategic tree trimming reduces the frequency of power outages caused by downed lines. Itasca-Mantrap employs an arborist whose job is to ensure we are being very strategic about the trees we trim or cut down. He looks at the health and location of the tree to determine if it is best to cut the tree down or to simply trim it back. Usually, healthy trees do not fall on power lines, so our arborist will save those he can.

As you know, Itasca-Mantrap is a not-for-profit cooperative, and that means we strive to keep our costs in check to keep our rates affordable. Our vegetation management program helps keep costs down for all our members. If trees grow too close to the power lines, the potential for expensive repairs increases.

Our community is a special place. We appreciate the beauty trees afford, but we also know our community depends on us to provide safe, reliable, affordable energy. Through our vegetation management program, we are better able to keep the power lines clear, prepare for future weather events, and secure the reliability of the grid.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you!

## WHETHER TEMPS RISE OR FALL, YOUR ENERGY BILL WILL STAY COOL.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS UP TO \$2,000 REBATE WHEN YOU INSTALL A QUALIFYING ENERGY-SAVING AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP!

Air Source Heat Pump	Promo Rebate
≥ 8.2 HSPF	\$1,000
≥ 9.0 HSPF	\$2,000
Ductless Air Source Heat Pump	Promo Rebate
≥ 9.0 HSPF	\$450



Air source heat pumps provide **home cooling and supplemental heating, using 72% less electricity** than conventional air conditioners and furnaces. Get up to a \$2,000 rebate when you install one.

Limited funds are available and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Rebate amounts are subject to change without notice. Installed centrally ducted ASHPs must be separately metered & controlled and must be installed by a participating quality installation contractor to qualify for rebate.

## Team Member News

There have been a few changes that have occurred at Itasca-Mantrap among staff and personnel.

We reported to you back in August of last year that **Jerry Byer** had accepted the position of interim Line Superintendent. We are happy to report that Jerry, in addition to becoming permanent in his leadership role, was also promoted to Operations Manager.

**Beth Eischens** started with Itasca-Mantrap as the cashier/receptionist in 2005 but has recently accepted a promotion to Administrative Assistant. She will be assisting Member Services and the Leadership Team with special projects.

**Kim Vredenburg** will be taking on additional duties at the Front Desk. Kim has played a vital role in our accounting department since 2008. She's been a "behind the scenes" staple, ensuring bills are paid for Itasca-Mantrap. Kim will continue with these duties while becoming the new face for the front desk.



And finally, **Tim Huwe's** last day at Itasca-Mantrap is Monday, May 3. Tim started at Itasca-Mantrap as an apprentice lineworker in 1990, made Journeyman in 1993, and was promoted to Lead Lineman in 2012. Tim has an incredible work ethic and has made Itasca-Mantrap members his working priority for 31 years. His knowledge and expertise will be truly missed. Best wishes to Tim as he starts this new adventure in retirement!



Please congratulate these Itasca-Mantrap Team Members next time you see them!



## Electrical Safety Myths

Don't Always Believe What You Hear

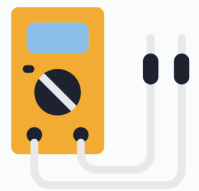
**MYTH:** Electricity always takes the path of least resistance

**FACT:** Although the path of least resistance is the easiest to take, an electrical current can take any conductive path.



**MYTH:** Voltage has to be high to kill

**FACT:** Although the voltage plays a role in how strong the current flows, exposure to the current itself is what's deadly. Even lower voltages can kill.



**MYTH:** Rubber gloves and shoes will protect me from shock and electrocution

**FACT:** That is only true if they are 100% rubber. Most everyday gloves and shoe soles are not, and the other materials they contain can be conductors.



**MYTH:** Heavily insulated tools will always protect against shock and electrocution

**FACT:** Don't let a tool give you a false sense of security; take all precautions even if a tool is marketed as safe or insulated.

Safe  
Electricity.org®



## Operation Round Up Distributes Over \$1 Million to Local Organizations



Over the course of several years, lots of tiny donations can add up and make a huge difference in the community.

Through the Operation Round Up® program, Itasca-Mantrap gives members the opportunity to give back to the community. Since the program's inception in 2006, Operation Round Up and Itasca-Mantrap members have awarded over \$1 million to local non-profit organizations and community service programs. Thank you Itasca-Mantrap members that have rounded their electricity bills up to the nearest dollar and helped contribute \$1 million to Operation Round Up.

Over the past 15 years, Operation Round Up funds have helped youth and senior organizations, food shelves, community organizations, emergency responders and more. The dollars are distributed by the

Itasca-Mantrap Trust Board.

"On behalf of the Itasca-Mantrap Trust Board, I want to thank all Itasca-Mantrap members who choose to have their electric bills rounded up to the nearest dollar," said Itasca-Mantrap Trust Board Chairman Al Judson. "It's amazing how great of an impact on our community comes from just a few cents per month."

The small change makes a big change in helping charitable organizations in the region thrive and grow. The full list of Spring 2021 awards will be in the June NewsLine!



## Board Report: Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors for Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. was held on Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the Itasca-Mantrap office.

A quorum of directors was present.

Items discussed or Board action taken:

- Approved the consent agenda.
- Heard the Operations and Safety report and the Marketing and Member Services report
- January financials were received and filed subject to audit.
- CEO Christine Fox gave her monthly CEO report.
- Discussed Great River Energy's readiness for the Polar Vortex in February and discussed the impact of the outages throughout Texas.
- Discussed personal contributions to the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) and the Rural Electric Political Action Committee (REPAC).
- Nominated Director Utke to serve a two-year term as the Great River Energy (GRE) director.
- Appointed Director Utke as the voting delegate for the GRE annual meeting.
- Approved a term limit of ten years for service as the director to the GRE Board.
- Appointed Director Cook as the voting delegate for the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) Annual Meeting.
- Heard a presentation by Attorney Marc Sugden on the board's obligations, duties, and responsibilities to the Cooperative and its members.
- Directors and CEO Christine Fox reported on meetings attended on behalf of the Cooperative.

The May meeting of the Board of Directors is Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

## Summer Residential Rates

Itasca-Mantrap's summer electric rates will go into effect in June. The general service rate for June, July and August is 12 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh), compared to 10 cents per kWh from September through May. The Basic Charge for residential services is \$38 per month throughout the year.

## GreenTouch Event is Canceled



GreenTouch is an annual event sponsored by Minnesota's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives in partnership with Minnesota State Parks. It is a half-day event where Volunteers from the area help ready Itasca State Park for visitor season and wrap up the day by sitting down to enjoy a lunch provided by Itasca-Mantrap. Unfortunately, GreenTouch is canceled this year due to COVID precautions.

**WE HOPE TO HOST GREENTOUCH NEXT YEAR, MAY 2022!**



**HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY**

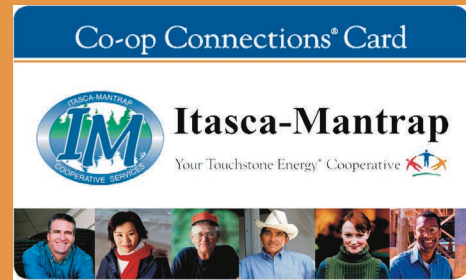
**SUNDAY, MAY 9, 2021**



MEMORIAL DAY 2021

**WE REMEMBER  
AND HONOR**








**OFFICE CLOSED ON MAY 31, 2021**



**SMALL CARD, BIG SAVINGS.**

## ELECTRICITY 101

To stay safe around electricity, start with these **SEVEN** basic tips:

- **1. DON'T OVERLOAD OUTLETS OR CIRCUITS**  
Plugging in too many items or drawing too much power on a circuit can cause overheating, fire, and damage to devices.
- **2. DON'T USE FAULTY ELECTRICAL CORDS OR PLUGS**  
Do not use cords that look frayed, worn or cracked. Do not use broken plugs. Never remove the grounding pin from a three-pronged plug.
- **3. HAVE YOUR ELECTRICIAN'S NUMBER IN YOUR PHONE**  
Most electrical repairs or installations are not DIY projects. Hire an expert to avoid serious injury or wiring problems.
- **4. BE CAREFUL AROUND H<sub>2</sub>O**  
Never use electricity while standing in damp or wet conditions. Keep all electrical devices away from water, including cell phones that are charging.
- **5. EVALUATE YOUR APPLIANCES**  
Do not use appliances in disrepair. Older or broken appliances can overheat, start a fire, and cause serious injuries.
- **6. TEST YOUR GFCIs**  
Outlets near a water source should be equipped with GFCIs, which help prevent shock and electrocution caused by ground faults. Test monthly to make sure they are working.
- **7. MAKE SURE YOUR HOME IS UP TO CODE**  
Your home should be properly wired and electrically sound. Contact a reputable electrician to evaluate your home.

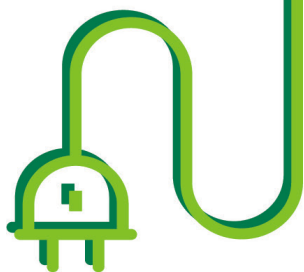
 **Safe  
Electricity.org**

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Avoid placing items like lamps and televisions near your thermostat.

The thermostat senses heat from these appliances, which can cause your air conditioner to run longer than necessary.

Source:  
[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)



## SmartHub App

The SmartHub online and mobile app help you manage your account by providing many features including, but not limited to:

- Billing & Payment Information
- Outage Reporting
- Quick, Easy Communication
- Billing Alerts
- Detailed Usage Reports



## MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH



**Label circuit breakers** to understand the different circuits in your home.

### ITASCA-MANTRAP COOPERATIVE

16930 County 6, PO Box 192  
Park Rapids, MN 56470

### OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM  
Phone: 218-732-3377 or 888-713-3377  
Fax: 218-732-5890  
E-mail: [itasca@itasca-mantrap.com](mailto:itasca@itasca-mantrap.com)  
[www.itasca-mantrap.com](http://www.itasca-mantrap.com)



### GOPHER STATE ONE CALL

1-800-252-1166  
[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)

### OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Dist. 1 – Brian Behrens, Director  
Dist. 2 – Patricia Roehl, Director  
Dist. 3 – Terrence Cook, Treasurer  
Dist. 4 – Al Czczok, Asst Sec-Treas  
Dist. 5 – Nancy M. Utke, Chair  
Dist. 6 – Tim Kivi, Secretary  
Dist. 7 – Dan Breitbach, Vice Chair  
President-CEO – Christine Fox