



# CURRENT CONNECTION

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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## How One Cooperative Weathered the Hurricane >>>

*Editor's note: Intrigued about how a sister cooperative in Florida fared after being caught in the trenches of Hurricane Ian, we looked inland toward Peace River Electric Cooperative (PRECO), that served as ground zero for more than 500 out-of-the-area line workers. There we talked to Charlotte Heston PRECO Vice President of Corporate Services, who's lived in Florida her entire life.*

PRECO is an electric cooperative that serves more than 50,000 homes and businesses (10,000 more than Crow Wing Power). The Cooperative's headquarter building is located in Wauchula about 70 miles north and east of the Fort Myers area. Their service territory covers ten central Florida counties.

**Before the storm, PRECO was prepared.** As an electric cooperative, they undergo rigorous annual Emergency Restoration Preparation for a number of potential disaster scenarios; Five years ago they experienced Irma, which boosted their hurricane readiness; They had mutual-aid agreements (arrangements with other cooperatives for help during times like this); and they had 100 extra men from Arkansas and Oklahoma at PRECO before the storm hit with another 400 on the way.

Charlotte said, "During the evening, when the 100 pre-storm line workers came, they were preparing to work in the Ft. Myers area the next morning. Then the storm turned and knocked power out to 90% of our members in central Florida. The extra line workers had never been in a hurricane and they rode it out with us."

**Torrential rains and flooding** – Charlotte described the hurricane effects in the Wachula area, "Torrential rains poured down for 24 hours straight. We had historic flooding, not seen in 100 years. Some employees were stranded at the office because 100 roads in the county were closed or washed out. The headquarter building turned into a home and work environment for many employees and their families."

**Housing 500 workers** - Wauchula is a town of only 5,000 people and there weren't enough hotel/motels in the area to accommodate the influx of 500+ line workers. In preparation before the storm, PRECO contracted Storm Services, LLC, a company that provides mobile camps (tent cities) to feed and house line workers during storm restorations.

The tent city had 15 tractor trailers, each set up for 30 to 36 workers to use as sleeping quarters. There were two huge air conditioned food tents, portable showers, laundry service and restrooms facilities.

Storm Services, whose main office is in Georgia, began operations in 2005 during Hurricane Katrina under the Federal Emergency Management Agency umbrella. They are prepared to help during tornadoes, ice storms, earthquakes, floods and fires. During Ian, the company had five bases throughout Florida similar to Wauchula's camp.

Reports vary, but in a relatively short period of time, Ian cut power to 2 million people. 42,000 line workers, including vegetation clearing crews and other needed personnel rallied and worked up to 16 hour days to restore power. It took 5 – 7 days to bring back power to most everyone.

Hurricane Ian struck land at 3 p.m. on Sept. 28 and made its final landfall in Georgetown SC two days later.

Charlotte summed it up well when she said, "In times like this, mutual aid crews are what makes it happen. The army of line workers were incredible and that's what cooperatives do – they help each other out!"

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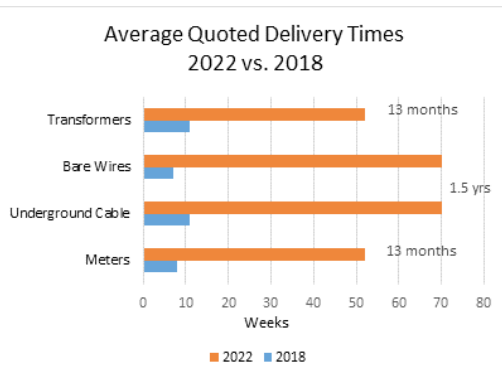
# A WORD FROM YOUR CEO

## Supply Chain Delays – A Growing Concern >>>

A year ago I wrote about supply-chain issues that caused global shortages of many products from household goods, to vehicles, food, raw materials and electric utility equipment. The situation has improved in some industry sectors, but remains a dilemma in others.

When we reviewed inventory last year we had adequate supplies of necessary electric equipment and that's still the case because of careful planning and collaboration with others in the industry. However, lead times for ordering materials are continuing to stretch even further and increased costs are definitely a concern.

**Lead Times:** We used to order basic materials and essential equipment six to eight weeks in advance, prior to the pandemic. Now, there's a 50 to 72 week lead time from ordering to delivery, up from 35 to 40 weeks just a year ago.



>> This graph shows the lead times in the delivery of essential equipment.

**Cost:** The most commonly used 15 KVA transformers needed for all households, to step down power to levels that can be used

in homes, cost \$1,029 in 2020 but have doubled in price to \$2,080 this year.

Labor issues and inflation, the war in Ukraine, and pandemic recovery reportedly have played into supply chain concerns, but natural disasters also play a role.

The jury is still out on what effect Hurricane Ian may have on supplies. Our sales rep from Stuart Irby Company, was at our office in October and informed us our transformer supplier from Mississippi had to send 15,000 transformers to Florida. Those 15,000 transformers were probably in the que to provide utilities' normal supply needs.

Anyone who's building a new house knows first-hand about supply chain shortages and resulting increased material costs and delays. We have an adequate supply of electric equipment homeowners need from us, but members are telling us that some materials supplied by electric contractors are either extremely delayed or impossible to get.

We pay close attention to the cost of material because in the long run it affects our electric rates. The supply chain issues came right in the middle of a four-year work plan, so predicted budgets are not being met.

I'm sharing this because the future is hard to predict. We will continue to be diligent and as always keep an eye on budgets.

I'll keep you informed,

Bruce L. Kraemer, CEO

## Board Meeting Highlights

Crow Wing Power's Board of Directors conducted its regular monthly meeting Thursday, September 15, 2022. A quorum of directors was present. President Bob Kangas opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following reports were given:

- CEO report
- Finance Committee report
- North Star Manganese Update on Emily Project
- Directors shared highlights of meetings attended on behalf of the cooperative

The following actions were taken:

The Board approved:

- September Consent Agenda
- Minutes of the August 18, 2022 regular board meeting
- Accept and approve filing of Form 990 and 990T
- Director expense reports for August 2022

Members can review detailed minutes by logging into their SmartHub account. Log in is located on the homepage of our website. October minutes will be published after approval in November. The next board meeting is November 17, 2022.



HAPPY Thanksgiving

We are thankful for you.  
It is our privilege to provide power to those we serve.



## Save Time – Text Your Outage >>>

Good news! We've completed testing and are now launching a new two-way text messaging service for reporting and monitoring outages. The new service will give a quick alternative to making an out of power phone call.

In November, members that have a valid mobile number associated with their account information will receive a welcome text message introducing the program. Members that don't want to use the service are given the opportunity to opt-out by texting QUIT at any time after receiving the welcome message.

To verify that we have current mobile phone number(s), members can login into their SmartHub account to see if the correct mobile number is listed in their profile or call our office at 1-800-648-9401 during business hours.

Checking your contact information in SmartHub:

- Login to SmartHub
- Click the My Profile tab.
- Click the My Information link in the left menu.
- Click the Update My Billing Address and Account Information.

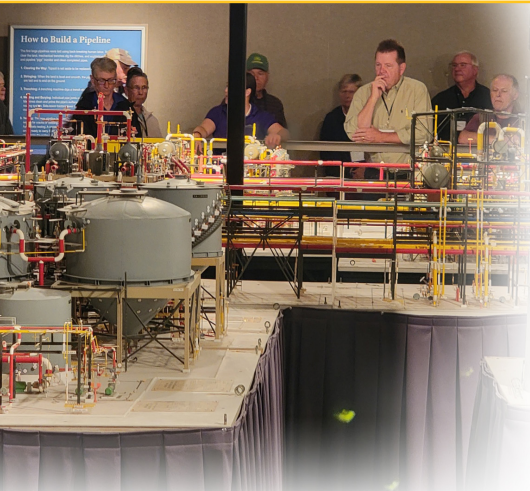
**Example of how outage text notification works:** When your power goes out –text the word OUT to 8006489401 and it

immediately gets logged directly into our outage management system. It's just like calling in your outage, only it's faster. Once the outage is verified, you can receive updates on the outage by texting STATUS. When possible, estimated restoration times will be communicated via text and you'll also be notified once we think the power has been restored.

When we have a planned outage or when we are aware of a power outage in your area, we'll send you a text notification.



## Basin Power Tour Returned for 2022 >>>



After several years of hiatus, fifty cooperative members headed west in October for a few days of fun and education on power generation. The three-day adventure toured Basin Electric Power, Dakota Gasification Company, Antelope Valley Station, and the Freedom Mine.

Mark Ronnei went along as a new board member. He said, "Having gone on the recent Basin Bus Tour, I can say that I have a whole new respect for all that goes into the power that we all take for granted. We saw hundreds of people, massive machines and even more massive power plants that work 24/7 to ensure that when we flip the switch the lights come on." He went on to say that he thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Mark added, "The Crow Wing Power staff acted as our guides and were wonderful. The trip was very well planned. If you go, you will never look at the availability of power the same way again."

Crow Wing Power plans to host another Basin Bus Tour in the fall of 2024.

## Baxter Holiday Lighting Contest is Back >>>

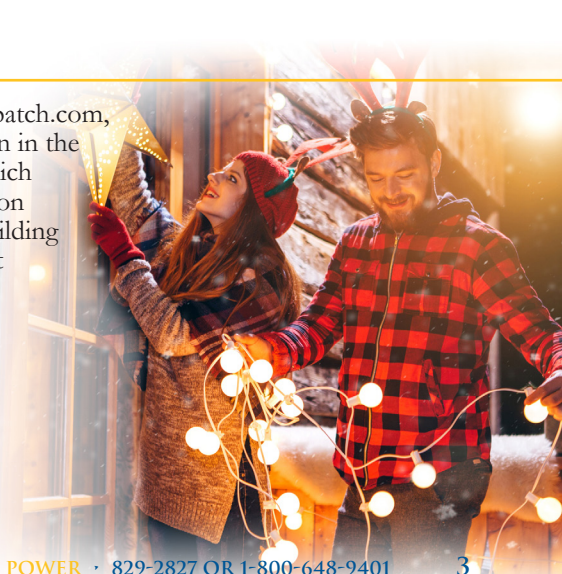
Now in its third year, the Holiday lighting contest returns to challenge Baxter residents. Three winners will be selected and judged by an anonymous committee on a point system as they viewed the entries curbside. Categories for judging are: first impression, 25 points; design, 20 points; and originality, 20 points.

Winners will receive bill credits on their electric bill from their electric provider, - either Crow Wing Power or Brainerd Public Utility: First Place - \$100; Second Place - \$75; and Third Place - \$50.

The deadline for entries is December 10. Those interested in entering the contest should send their name, address and contact information with 'Baxter Lighting Contest' noted to the Brainerd Dispatch, P.O. Box 974, Brainerd, MN 56401, email

newstips@brainerddispatch.com, or drop the information in the Dispatch drop box, which is accessed in the alley on the west side of the building at 506 James St. in west Brainerd.

Employees and elected officials in the city of Baxter are not eligible.



# Holiday Open House

DECEMBER 12TH - 16TH

Join us for the Holiday Open House.  
 Grab a cup of coffee and a doughnut.  
 Bring in an unwrapped gift for Toys for Kids.  
 Enter in a \$50 bill credit drawing.



## Notice of Tax Exemption for Electric Heat >>>

### CURRENT CONNECTION

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**Editor: Char Kinzer**

Board meetings are held the third Thursday of each month beginning at 9:30 a.m.

### Directors. Here to Help!

Following is a list of directors and their telephone numbers:

- Bob Kangas.....218-587-4453
- Paul Koering .....218-851-9954
- Ric Larson .....218-546-5781
- Bryan McCulloch .....218-821-8390
- LuAnn Nelson.....612-400-4627
- Giles Radtke.....218-839-9182
- Gert Roggenkamp.....218-562-4566
- Mark Ronnei .....218-821-4050
- Dwight Thiesse.....218-831-8605

Minnesota law provides for the exemption of sales tax on residential electric heat. To qualify, you must be able to declare that 50% of your primary residential/commercial heat is electrical.

If you meet that requirement and comply with the other items on the check-list, you may sign an exemption form and avoid the tax for the months of November through April.

Sign up to receive a six-month electric heat tax exemption if you meet the following requirements: you have a single electric meter; your primary heat is electric; you have not previously signed the exemption form; and you do not have a dual fuel or off-peak meter.

Those who have previously signed the form and people who have dual fuel or off-peak meters are already receiving the exemption. The Sales of Tax Exemption printable or online form can be found at [www.cwpower.com](http://www.cwpower.com) under service.



Give the  
 Gift of Electricity  
 this Holiday Season

visit [www.cwpower.com](http://www.cwpower.com) for more details on how you can give the most practical of gifts this holiday season.