

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Ambulance district on the move
- 2024 work plans
- Apply for Youth Tour



Manager's moment

BY MARK DOYLE, GENERAL MANAGER



Mark Doyle

I would appreciate a moment of your time...

Happy New Year, everyone! I hope this message finds you all happy and healthy!

Well, McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) sure had a busy year! We had many new service requests, along with a significant number of service upgrades, ranging from residential

to agricultural to industrial. Most of the residential accounts were developments around the lakes area. Many of the service upgrades were agricultural members increasing their grain-handling facilities. I assume most farmers had a good year, as the weather cooperated well into November. Other increases occurred when Blue Flint Ethanol began sequestering carbon in October.

MEC also benefited from the late fall. It allowed us to finish nearly all our requests and a few we did not anticipate completing until spring.

The surge in requests, along with continued supply chain issues, caused MEC to carry a significantly higher amount of inventory. We have expanded our warehouse yard to accommodate the increased number of materials. We also have inflationary pressure on the cost of materials. With more inventory and costs, MEC had to make a rate change effective Nov. 1, 2023, by increasing

the customer base charge by \$5 for single and three-phase accounts. This will help us increase cash flow when we carry the additional inventory. We do not collect the cost for most materials until it is installed for the member.

Another change is the discontinuation of our current load-management system, effective Jan. 1. The system needed significant investment. This means our load-management members will not have their hot water heaters controlled, nor will they receive the \$7 credit for participation.

We appreciate the cooperation and patience the members provided in getting the projects done. As for cooperation, easements are always an issue, and we ask the landowners for continued support in getting our infrastructure in place to enhance our reliability. As for patience, we will have several contractors working for us, along with the MEC crews, to complete this infrastructure. We thank you for understanding that we cannot get everything done in a day, even though we try.

If you have any projects for which you need service, I strongly suggest you contact our staff now to discuss the project and get you in the queue for the 2024 construction season.

Again, I wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous new year!

As always, feel free to reach out to me with any questions or comments. My door is always open. ■



Dave Hanson and Jordyn Singer are part of the Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District's volunteers who spearheaded the effort to bring a new, larger ambulance building to better serve the public. The new building provides more space for training, meetings and conferences, in addition to heated bays for ambulances.

Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District on the move

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Ambulance and emergency medical services across McLean County do more than serve residents of North Dakota's second largest county.

They also provide emergency medical care and medical transport for anyone traveling, vacationing or working throughout the county.

And many, like Turtle Lake's Dave Hanson and Jordyn Singer, are volunteers.

They volunteer for a variety of reasons. Maybe someone they knew recognized the need for more help and simply asked them. Or maybe they grew up in a family of volunteers, whether it was as an emergency medical technician (EMT) or ambulance driver. Maybe they knew someone in need of critical emergency medical services and the reality of that need drew them to volunteer in their own rural community.

Whatever one's personal reason for offering to help, a volunteer's role is vital for many rural ambulance districts and services across North Dakota, including in

McLean County.

While several ambulance districts across North Dakota are aided by paid staff, volunteers are the heart of the Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District, described Hanson, the district's president and squad leader. The Turtle Lake area isn't alone, as other ambulance districts and ambulance services in McLean County also rely on volunteers.

Hanson joined as an ambulance driver in 1984. The ambulance service needed help, he explained, and driving was his way of contributing prior to becoming a certified EMT in 1989.

Singer became a certified EMT when she began volunteering. Her mother served as a volunteer ambulance driver.

"I've been around it all my life. I knew they needed volunteers. It's kind of like, if you don't do it, then who will?" she offered.

Every volunteer plays a huge role within an ambulance

district, Hanson added.

“Even those who substitute play an important role. Several of our volunteers do a lot of transfers to other medical facilities,” he said.

The Turtle Lake Ambulance Service was organized in the 1950s, Hanson continued.

Formation of the Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District in 2001 allowed the ambulance squad to receive a county mill levy to assist in purchasing equipment and ambulances, and for training.

People working and volunteering with rural ambulance districts appreciate the support from residents across McLean County and for approving mill levies for rural ambulance services, Hanson added.

The Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District serves a large area within McLean County, extending to within about a couple of miles of Butte and Ruso and south about halfway to Washburn and Wilton.

It also includes several of the county’s summer destination lakes – Strawberry, Blue, Brush, Crooked and Brekken-Holmes lakes – which swell in population from June through August.

“There are over 200 cabins on Strawberry (Lake) and the same at Brush,” Hanson added. “During summer weekends, it can grow to thousands of people at the lake.”

The ambulance service has been renting space from the Turtle Lake Fire District, but growth for both entities meant sharing space was becoming a bit crowded. Equipment grew in size and quantity and training needs increased.

Both needed more space, so the Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District began planning to relocate its ambulances and equipment.

The move didn’t take place quickly.

“We’ve been talking about it for 10 years,” Hanson explained. They talked, planned and budgeted in preparation for a time when it would be possible for two ambulance bays and space for training.

They planned for space for volunteers to decompress after an emergency run. There’s space to catch a few hours of sleep for those volunteers traveling any distance to provide assistance. And space for future growth, if necessary.

Now, almost a decade in the making, that space will be available in 2024.

Land for the district’s new facility was purchased about four years ago, Hanson continued. Located on the southeast edge of town, the location provides easy access to Highway 41 rather than driving Turtle Lake streets to make an emergency run in the country.

Bids were opened in August 2021, with groundbreaking in 2022, followed by pouring concrete in November 2022. January 2023 brought the framing of the building, water, sewer and interior construction throughout the year.

It’s not cheap to build an entirely new ambulance facility and the organization budgeted for a project in excess of \$600,000. They had some funds available, but anticipated applying for a loan, until they qualified for a N.D. Department of Commerce cost-share grant.

Rainbow Energy Center donated concrete for the

continued on next page

Star of life

It’s called the “star of life” and, for those in need of emergency medical care, it can mean emergency assistance and life itself.

The star of life symbol is used throughout the world, representing emergency medical services (EMS). It can be found on EMS uniforms, ambulances, equipment and training manuals, for example.

Each of the six blue bars surrounding a white serpent wrapped around a white staff represents a vital service performed by those providing emergency medical services. Beginning from the top going around clockwise:

- Detection
- Reporting
- Response
- On-scene care
- Care in transit
- Transfer to definitive care

The staff represents Asclepius, the ancient Greek god of medicine, and means “medicine and healing.” The skin-shedding serpent represents “renewal.”



Source: National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, Office of Emergency Services, www.ems.gov

continued from previous page

building and driveway, Hanson continued, which helped the funding efforts.

The grant also allowed the district to install a large generator, so the building can serve as a public gathering center in times of emergencies, such as extended outages during blizzards and tornadoes, Hanson added, even getting ambulance bay doors open during outages.

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) serves the Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District's new facility and MEC General Manager Mark Doyle is appreciative of the opportunity to have a role in supporting them.

"Without emergency services, it would be difficult for communities to sustain, as it is vital for life in the rural areas. Rural regional ambulances provide the support through full- and part-time employees and volunteers servicing the areas they reside in. Neighbors helping neighbors, just like cooperation amongst cooperatives. Without medical services, rural areas would see less development, as many do not want to travel distances for care and need emergency medical services available in short notice," he said.

The new facility has heated floors, which helps extend the life of equipment and vehicles. Two bedrooms have adjoining bathrooms, with an exercise room and central commons area with kitchen and meeting room space for training and conferences, Hanson described. It meets current needs, while recognizing the potential demands for future growth.

Plans call for moving into the new building in

early 2024, Singer added, followed by a community celebration or grand opening – or perhaps even both – to commemorate the event.

Both Hanson and Singer feel the celebration will provide area residents an opportunity to observe firsthand what the new facility brings to the community and rural area served by its volunteers.

The Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District has about 25 members currently on its roster. Some volunteers serve as substitutes taking calls, while others actively take scheduled call time, Singer described.

They're hopeful the celebration generates additional interest in volunteering with the ambulance squad.

"People don't have to start as EMTs or even become one," Singer stressed. "Drivers are just as important as those in the back (of the ambulance). Additional drivers or substituting can ease the workload on everyone," she added.

While the grant greatly assisted with the new facility becoming a reality, that doesn't mean the Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District's needs have ended. That third bay in the new building won't have an immediate occupant, but the district is in need of additional equipment, Hanson explained.

And just as they planned and worked for years to make the new facility a reality, the Turtle Lake Rural Ambulance District is planning for a future ambulance replacement, a remounted unit that would take about a year to become available. ■

Heat that space safely

Using space heaters to warm small areas of the home can save money, but the heaters need to be used safely.

The heating element and, in some cases, the covering of a space heater can be very hot, so avoid touching the heater. Because burns can result from touching a space heater, you need to teach small children to stay away from any space heater or find ways to keep them from getting near the heater.

You also need to keep space heaters away from combustible materials such as furniture, carpet, walls, curtains and tablecloths. Check the manufacturer's recommendations on how far the heater needs to be from combustible materials.

Avoid placing space heaters in high-traffic areas as well. Many electric space heaters will shut off automatically if they tip over, but the element still can be hot, which could cause a fire if it comes in contact with combustible material. ■





PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: McLean Electric's 2024 work plans

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) is continuing its efforts to meet increasing member-owner load demands and improve system reliability again in 2024. In other words, reduce outages and outage time.

The cooperative's 2024 annual work plans include several system upgrades.

Part of an overall 6-mile project in the Washburn area, plans call for constructing 2 miles of underground cable.

"It's part of our ongoing efforts for increasing capacity and resiliency. We did 4 miles (in that area) in 2023," explained MEC Engineering Manager Lucas Schaaf.

Working in conjunction with local property owners, two projects in the Lake Audubon area originally planned for the fall of 2023 will be moved into 2024, Schaaf continued. Again, both are designed to improve capacity and help reduce potential outages.

The projects were delayed after an October 2023 snowstorm created wet and muddy conditions, making it too difficult to trench and bore underground cable in the project area and for moving equipment on local roads, Schaaf described. The project was delayed, rather than create additional road and property damage.

The number and type of system upgrades is consistent with what MEC has done in recent years. They're expected to cost \$2 million to \$4 million, depending on how many can be completed in 2024.

In the tentative long-term picture, Schaaf explained MEC is analyzing the feasibility of replacing about 2 miles of overhead line with underground cable south of Coleharbor, another 2-mile stretch of line in the Butte area of northeastern McLean County, and about 3 miles of older single-phase upgrades in the Roseglen area.

Annual work plans help MEC prioritize its efforts to meet increasing load demands, while improving reliability. Member-owner driven projects, such as grain drying and irrigation systems and rural development projects, are also a priority, Schaaf described.

While the work plans help guide MEC and its need for line construction contractors, weather will be the determining factor for when crews can start in the spring and how late they can go in the fall – and what, if any, weather-related storms cause system damage in 2024. A late spring and early winter blast resulted in a short 2023 construction season, Schaaf added. ■

APPLY FOR A TRIP OF A LIFETIME

WHAT IS YOUTH TOUR?

- An all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., paid for by McLean Electric Cooperative.
- A week of visiting historic monuments, touring world class museums, learning about electric cooperatives and meeting elected officials.
- Developing lifelong friendships with delegates from across the country!



JUNE 15 TO 21, 2024
AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

ESSAY QUESTION

If chosen as a Youth Tour delegate, you will be traveling to Washington, D.C., to experience and learn about America's rich history. What moment in American history do you wish you had been a part of and what would you have contributed?

HOW TO APPLY

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school, and you and your parents or guardian must be served by McLean Electric Cooperative.
- Email entries to Sonja Moe at sonjadm@mcleanelectric.com or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, 4031 Hwy. 37 Bypass NW, P.O. Box 399, Garrison, ND, 58540-9447.
- Questions? Call Sonja at 701-463-6700 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 19, 2024.

EMPOWER



LEARN MORE AT NDYOUTHTOUR.COM

Lock your home against cyber criminals

Electric co-ops protect the private information of members and ensure hackers don't tamper with the reliability of the electric grid, but member-owners have a lot at stake, too. Think about losing all the photos on your smartphone or having bank or credit card information stolen from your computer.

Cyber criminals all over the world are on the prowl through the internet.

Just like washing your hands to keep you from getting bacteria, there are simple things you can do to protect yourself online. Let's start with the basics of "cyber hygiene" to protect yourself online.

TURN ON MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION

Implement multifactor authentication on your accounts and make it significantly less likely you'll get hacked. This means opting into an extra step when trusted websites and applications ask you to confirm you're really who you say you are.

THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

More than 90% of successful cyberattacks start with a phishing email.

Have you ever seen a link that looks a little off? It looks like something you've seen before, but it says you need to change or enter a password. Or maybe it asks you to verify personal information. It could be a text message or even a phone call. They may pretend to be your email service, your boss, your bank or a friend. The message may claim it needs your information, because you've been a victim of cybercrime.

A lot of the computer hacking problems result from people clicking on links or attached files that infect their computers or mobile devices. An email can even be disguised to look like it's coming from your best friend, so simple diligence can be extremely beneficial.

If it's a link you don't recognize, trust your instincts and think before you click.

PROTECT THE KIDS

Don't forget that children also need to be aware and practice good cyber hygiene. They should know not to share information such as birthdates and other ID numbers. Learn to use age-appropriate parental control options on your hardware and software, too.

UPDATE YOUR SOFTWARE

Keep your security software, internet browser and operating system up to date on your mobile phones, tablets and laptops. Better yet, turn on automatic updates. When downloading a software update, make sure it's coming straight from the company that created it.

Updating your software regularly – as soon as possible when a newer version comes out – helps make sure you have critical patches and protections against security threats.

USE STRONG PASSWORDS

Did you know the most common password is "password," followed by "123456?" Picking a simple password is like locking your door, but hanging the key on the doorknob.

Here are some tips for creating a stronger password. Make sure it's:

- **Long** – at least 15 characters
- **Unique** – never used anywhere else
- **Random** – make it complicated, with a mix of upper-case and lower-case letters, numbers and special characters. Remember to change the password at least every six months. Make sure you're not recycling the same password across all your apps and websites.

SECURE ALL YOUR INTERNET-CONNECTED DEVICES

Hackers have started invading wireless printers and baby monitors through the internet. Read the instructions carefully, set good passwords, keep the devices updated and make sure any wireless routers in your home are secure as well. Any internet-connected device is vulnerable – smart TVs, cameras, voice-activated speakers, thermostats, video games, fitness bracelets, internet-connected refrigerators and even light bulbs.



McLean County community calendar:

Events and activities to see and do

McLean County area food pantry January distribution dates, times and locations:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood food distribution:** 4-6 p.m. Jan. 4 and 10 a.m.-noon Jan. 20, 208 Lincoln Ave. Like us on Facebook, Community Cupboard of Underwood, for food pantry distributions, thrift store and other information.
- **Community Food Pantry, serving the communities of Ryder, Makoti, Roseglen, Plaza, White Shield, Parshall and those in need:** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Jan. 27, 181 Ellsworth, Makoti.
- **Free Community Clothing Share & Exchange Store:** Every Thursday, noon-6 p.m., 221 Main St., Turtle Lake.
- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry, Garrison:** Noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. Jan. 25.
- **McLean Family Resource Center, Washburn:** McLean County residents can contact the center, 701-462-8643, for an appointment to pick up baskets, along with more information or assistance through the center's services, 205 Seventh St., Washburn.
- **McLean Family Resource Center Clothing Outlet, Washburn:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and first Saturday of every month, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 205 Seventh St., Washburn.
- **Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** Noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. Jan. 15, Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** 2-4 p.m. Jan. 11 and 10 a.m.-noon Jan. 27, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.
- **Wilton Food Pantry, Wilton:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone; full food distribution, 4-6 p.m. Jan. 18,

Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.

Area food pantries often experience high needs for the following items: baked beans, pork and beans, canned fruit, tuna, chicken and vegetables, cereal, oatmeal, granola and breakfast bars, juice, macaroni and cheese, hamburger and tuna helper, pancake mix, syrup, pasta, spaghetti, Alfredo and pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, rice side dishes, soups, chili, and household items, such as body wash and soap, dish soap, laundry detergent, shampoo and conditioner, toilet paper, toothpaste and toothbrushes. Contact local food pantries for drop-off locations, information or a list of additional needs in your community.

January activities:

- **Jan. 19:** Youth Tour essay deadline
- **Jan. 20:** Bottoms Up Delta Waterfowl banquet, Wilton Memorial Hall.
- **Feb. 15:** Application deadline for two \$500 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarships and McLean Electric Cooperative's \$500 scholarship for students entering or currently enrolled in a higher education two- or four-year program in the fall of 2024. Go to McLean Electric's website, www.mcleanelectric.com, and click "Grants & Scholarships" on the homepage or contact MEC Communications Manager Sonja Moe at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922 for details.

Nonprofit organizations and communities throughout McLean County are encouraged to contact Patricia Stockdill, stockdill.patricia@gmail.com or telephone 701-337-5462, to submit community events. ■

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Larry Gessele, president
701-447-2461
District 7, Mercer

Darcy Klain, vice president
701-448-2408
District 4, Ruso

Rod Stockdill, secretary-treasurer
701-337-5462
District 3, Garrison

Clarence Behles, asst. secretary-treasurer
701-337-5362
District 2, Garrison

Troy Presser, director
701-447-2855
District 5, Turtle Lake

Karen Hanson, director
701-448-2636
District 6, Washburn

James Odermann, director
701-743-4415
District 1, Parshall

STAFF:

Mark Doyle, General Manager/CEO
Keith Thelen, Operations Manager
Lucas Schaaf, Engineering Manager
Wendy Kinn, Finance Manager

Office: 701-463-6700
Toll-Free: 800-263-4922
Fax: 701-337-5303

Email: mclean1@mcleanelectric.com
Website address:
www.mcleanelectric.com

