$1.2 million in capital credit refunds to be sent to WH members during holiday season

Wright-Hennepin’s (WH) continuing strong operational and financial condition will again provide a gift to all members with a capital credit refund on their energy bill this holiday season.

WH’s board of director’s recently declared a capital credit return of $1.2 million – $200,000 more than last year – to members who purchased electricity from the cooperative during 1987, 2009 or 2010.

Capital credit refunds in the cooperative business model are similar to dividends in investor business models. Each member’s share of the capital credit refund is based on their energy use during the years being retired. However, before returning these margins back to members WH uses this capital to offset the cost of debt for the construction and maintenance of the electric distribution system. This working capital represents the members’ ownership equity in WH.

WH retires portions of annual margins faster than many electric co-ops in the nation because of a board-recommended bylaw amendment passed by the membership in 1998. This amendment has resulted in more members being eligible for a refund each year.

Per cooperative bylaws, WH’s member-elected board determines the amount of margins retired each year based on the cooperative’s financial condition and other considerations.

“Capital credits are the cornerstone of the cooperative way of doing business,” said WH Board Chair Chris Lantto. “The board of directors is again pleased to return margins to members despite so many challenges in the economy at this time.”

This is the 31st consecutive year that WH’s board has given capital credit refunds to the membership.

New blog launched on Wright-Hennepin’s website

Get energy-saving tips, browse through energy-industry articles and hear directly from Wright-Hennepin’s (WH) CEO and board members. You can do all of these things by simply checking out WH’s new blog.

This blog is made up of four major categories. The first category listed, “Energy Saving Ideas,” will have posts that explain easy, seasonably-relevant ways to save energy around your home. These tips will involve low cost/no cost solutions that can help you reduce your monthly energy bills.

The next category, “From the CEO’s Desk,” will contain insights from WH’s President and CEO Mark Vogt. Much like his column in the Hotline Update, Vogt’s posts will elaborate on industry issues and advancements. He will help keep WH’s membership informed on how these items will affect the cooperative.

The “Energy Think Tank” section will contain recently published articles regarding energy industry news, serving as a “food for thought” article repository.

Finally, the “Director Files” section will feature posts from each of the members of WH’s board of directors. Through this forum, they’ll give you a director’s perspective about the things happening at WH.

All of these sections give visitors the capability to provide feedback by commenting on any blog post they choose. Start saving energy and learn more about your cooperative today by checking out the new blog at http://goo.gl/uB18A.
Three ways WH is building the “smart grid”

You are probably hearing the term “smart grid” a lot. This term has many interpretations in the press and industry, but generally, the smart grid system is:

• A combination of intelligent electronic devices placed on the poles, wires and other utility equipment to help workers automate the electric grid
• Communications technology and software applications to help customers better understand and control the power usage in their homes and businesses

WH has been an early-adopter in getting this technology applied to our grid. Approximately $20 million has been invested in recent years, making WH’s electric distribution system one of the most advanced in the area. WH’s smart grid strategy derives from three technology needs:

1. Member technology: WH’s smart grid now provides every member with a computer the ability to directly interface with our system, helping them to understand and take action on their families’ power use in real time or near real time. The best example of this is the MyMeter application, which is available free to all WH members on www.whe.org in the “Quick Links” section on the home page. Future plans for this energy management capability include “pay as you go” electricity billing (coming right after the first of the year). “Pay as you go” electricity billing is just like buying gas for your car: You go to the WH website and buy as much electricity as you want, when you want it, without worrying about the utility’s timetable for billing. It allows you to more conveniently manage your family’s budget and cash flow. Studies show that electric use typically goes down about 10 percent on this plan because members are more conscious of how much electricity is in their “tank.”

Throughout 2012, we also plan to introduce cell phone text messaging capabilities for:
• Outage reporting, notification and restoration updates
• Load management alerts
• Voluntary conservation requests on peak usage days
• Trending alerts regarding your average daily usage if it is running higher than normal for the month
• Bill payment
• Account information

2. Office technology: WH’s smart grid investments have automated metering and meter reading, load control, on-site generation, switching and restoration – all while monitoring power quality and system status in real or near real time from the office. Previously, we had to physically send an employee plugged into it from your PC, iPad or smart phone. It will give you operating reports on each of these appliances. This is the kind of innovation that the smart grid is starting to make possible for electric consumers – and it’s only the beginning.

3. Mobile technology: Every one of our service vehicles is now equipped with a computer and high-speed communications technology, which enables employees to view the grid’s current status at any time from inside the cab of their vehicles. It also gives employees the ability to access work orders and electronically communicate with the office while in the field. In short, it enables WH’s employees to work for you more efficiently, creatively and safely.

We believe our current capability, along with the 2012 smart grid projects noted above, will provide a package of enhanced consumer services and benefits unmatched by other electric utilities in this area. In addition to the competitive rates and higher reliability our smart grid technology already provides, WH’s early adopter approach to this technology is another way we can highlight the advantages of an electric cooperative.

Finally, from our family to yours, we wish you all the blessings of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Mark Vogt
Members may now file as director candidates

Wright-Hennepin (WH) members can now submit nominations to vie for a seat on the cooperative’s board of directors in Districts 1, 3, 9 and 7 (see map). Members elected to these positions will begin their terms immediately following the 2012 Annual Meeting on March 29, 2012.

If you are unsure which district you live in, look at your mailing label on this month’s newsletter. The district number is shown on the first line of the label, just above your name. The “BD” stands for board district.

Directors up for re-election (three-year terms) in 2012 are Timothy Young, District 1, Annandale, Minn.; Burton Horsch, District 3, Howard Lake, Minn.; and Erick Heinz, District 9, Corcoran, Minn.

All three have indicated they will seek re-election.

There’s also a vacancy in District 7, as Sarah Evenson recently submitted her resignation. Pursuant to the bylaws, this position will also be up for election for the remaining two years of Evenson’s term.

Members in these districts who would like to compete in the election need to file a director nominee application form. To apply, print out, complete and sign the form found on WH’s website (www.whe.org) then click on the “Director Application” under the “Quick Links”) or call (763) 477-3027 to request a form.

Mail the form along with a resume to: Wright-Hennepin, Attn: Dale Jans, Secretary/Treasurer, P.O. Box 330, Rockford, MN 55373.

Application deadline is Feb. 8, 2012. If you have any questions about this process, please contact Jen Podolske at (763) 477-3027.

Landis+Gyr recognizes WH staff member

Landis+Gyr – a leading global provider of energy management products – recently presented Wright-Hennepin’s (WH) Vice President of Energy Distribution Lance Hovland with a plaque in recognition of his contributions to the company’s User Advisory Council.

Composed of seven members from across the nation, the User Advisory Council provides insights and suggestions to aid in the development of Landis+Gyr’s energy-management products and smart meter technologies.

These products allow meters to automatically transmit energy use data to utilities. The council helps shape the development of new products by bringing a customer and utility perspective to Landis+Gyr’s process. Additionally, the council provided guidance to Landis+Gyr on corresponding software enhancements, customer support and field services.

Hovland served on the council from 2007-2011.

“Serving on the User Advisory Council provided a unique opportunity to give insights to technology experts and provide Landis+Gyr with Wright-Hennepin’s perspective on product features that would benefit our membership,” said Hovland.

WH uses Landis+Gyr’s smart meter technology throughout its service territory to obtain precise meter reads and convey daily energy-use information to its membership through MyMeter, which can be accessed through the “Quick Links” section at www.whe.org.

Residential electricity use expected to decrease

Despite an increase in the number of appliances and electronic gadgets at home, residential electricity use per person is projected to decrease between now and 2020, according to a data analysis completed by the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI). “The main drivers behind the decrease are new efficiency codes and standards, technological innovations, and more spending on efficiency by states and utilities,” EPRI Senior Project Engineer Sara Mullen said.

“We’re still looking into broader implications of the data, particularly how use may change on a per-person basis,” Mullen said. “New trends in household formation may also prove to be a contributor to projected reductions.”

Source: CFC solutions

CapX2020 route may shift

The main path for the new high-voltage transmission line that will run from Monticello to Fargo has been decided, but minor shifts in the route are under consideration. Xcel Energy and the other utilities behind the CapX2020 project are asking for permission to make 12 adjustments in the route.

The approved route follows Interstate Highway 94 from Fargo to Sauk Centre, then veers south near Freeport and follows county and township roads through farmland before connecting with a new substation in St. Cloud. The proposed reroutes were brought forward by landowners who suggested alternatives to having the line run in front of their homes.

The changes are not expected to significantly alter the cost of the St. Cloud-to-Fargo segment, which is estimated at $255 million. Construction on that segment is expected to begin this year.

Source: St. Cloud Times
Under floor radiant heating systems

Under floor heat is a comfortable, efficient and an extremely versatile way to heat your home. WH’s under floor radiant heating systems add a luxurious feeling to your home instantly. That’s why radiant heat is one of the hottest growing home-heating methods for both new construction and remodeling projects.

With under floor heat, warm radiates from the floor to heat the surrounding space. These heating systems produce the most comfortable heat available, because you are close to the heat source.

Install Warmfloor offers easy installation and can be fastened right to the sub-floor with thin-set, nails or screws. Unlike forced air heating systems, under-floor heating warms your body and objects, not the air – eliminating inconsistent room temperatures and keeping the heat where you are.

Under floor heat also uses less energy than conventional forced air systems, allowing you to be comfortable at a lower thermostat setting, therefore saving you money on your energy bill.

Under floor radiant heating systems

HeatMyFloors.com offers three types of under floor heating products:

1. **Seisco hydronic systems**: Hydronic under floor radiant heat consists of a system of loops buried in the concrete floor of your home or under the subfloor that carries hot water into specific rooms, warming the heat to the floor surface. Because tubing is installed under the floor, hydronic heat is ideal for new construction and remodeling projects. These hydronic systems are powered by the Seisco boiler and can be installed under tile, vinyl and carpet. They are competitively priced, easy to install and require little maintenance.

2. **Danfoss cable systems**: The Danfoss cable system is an economical, electric radiant heating system that produces a gentle, rising heat, which is great for bathrooms, kitchens, and basements or anywhere that you want a warm tiled floor. The Danfoss mats include a heating cable, which is woven into an adhesive-backed fiberglass mesh, allowing for simple roll-out installation and eliminates the need to worry about cable spacing. The floor warming mats are pre-determined for use with 120 and 240 volts, and are available in various lengths of 24-inch widths to accommodate any room’s layout.

3. **Danfoss cable systems (Heating only)**: The Danfoss cable system is made from high-quality components that are backed by a ten-year comprehensive warranty. Danfoss electric hydronic boilers do not use ductwork to circulate air throughout the home, therefore they are quiet and will not circulate dust and allergens.

**Low voltage electric systems**

If you’ve been considering replacing your existing flooring or adding an addition to your home, now is the perfect time to consider installing STEP Warmfloor. We refer to STEP Warmfloor as the best under floor heating system available because of its versatility, reliability and low energy use.

STEP Warmfloor offers easy installation and can be fastened right to the sub-floor with thin-set, nails or staples without ruining the integrity or performance of the product. It may be used with any non-conductive floor covering including: natural stone, ceramic and porcelain tiles as well as hardwood, tiles and carpet.

STEP Warmfloor is the ultimate under floor heating product. This specially designed electric heating mat provides a comfortable, even warmth and is the only low-voltage self-regulating system available.

Wright-Hennepin offers a variety of products that efficiently enhance the comfort of your home.

**Conventional electric systems**

Conventional electric systems work by activating a water heater by as much as 25 percent. The system is sized easily fits under a sink and is activated with a wireless remote or by the push of a button.

**Danfoss cable systems (Heating only)**

Danfoss cable systems (Heating only) allow for simple roll-out installation and eliminating the need to worry about cable spacing. The floor warming mats are pre-determined for use with 120 and 240 volts, and are available in various lengths of 24-inch widths to accommodate any room’s layout.

**Danfoss cable systems (Heating only)**

Danfoss cable systems (Heating only) are backed by a ten-year comprehensive warranty. Danfoss electric hydronic boilers do not use ductwork to circulate air throughout the home, therefore they are quiet and will not circulate dust and allergens.

**Seisco hydronic systems**

Seisco hydronic systems are powered by the Seisco boiler and can be installed under tile, vinyl and carpet. They are competitively priced, easy to install and require little maintenance.

**Low voltage electric systems**

If you’ve been considering replacing your existing flooring or adding an addition to your home, now is the perfect time to consider installing STEP Warmfloor. We refer to STEP Warmfloor as the best under floor heating system available because of its versatility, reliability and low energy use.

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STEP Warmfloor is the ultimate under floor heating product. This specially designed electric heating mat provides a comfortable, even warmth and is the only low-voltage self-regulating system available.
Like it or not, cold temperatures will soon return to Minnesota for the winter, and with those cold temperatures comes the risk of having freeze damage occur to your property.

If you worry about broken pipes and freeze damage, a low temperature sensor may be the perfect solution for you. This sensor alerts WH Security dispatchers who then alert you when the temperature inside your home falls below a predetermined level. Low temperature sensors can be added on to new and existing security systems.

These devices can save unoccupied homes or cabins from frozen pipes, water damage and frost.

Adding a low temperature sensor to a new or existing system is a smart choice for those that spend time away from home during the winter months or for those that have a cabin that is left unattended.

For more information on WH Security’s low temperature sensors, please call (763) 477-3000.

Are you looking for a way to help others this holiday season? You can drop off unwrapped gifts for kids in need at WH’s office in Rockford, Minn. The gifts will be given to the Riverworks Food Shelf’s and the Rockford Fire Department’s “Caring for Kids” campaign. Gifts can be dropped off between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and until 6 p.m. on Wednesdays. All gifts must be dropped off by December 16.

The emerald ash borer is in Minnesota and could harm your ash trees if they’re not properly treated.

The emerald ash borers’ larvae feed on the inner bark of trees, disrupting the tree’s transmission of nutrients. This causes branches – and eventually the entire tree – to die. Many trees lose 30-40 percent of their canopy within two years of infestation and die within three to four years if left untreated.

These unhealthy trees have been causing damage throughout the country as they can uproot and fall after once they’ve died. However, there are preventative measures that can be taken to protect your ash trees.

Through WH Services, Wright-Hennepin offers ash-tree treatments that will protect your high-value trees from this troublesome insect. Contact WH at (763) 477-3000 to learn more.

If left untreated, many trees that are affected by the emerald ash borer die three to four years after infestation.

Control your home from anywhere

WH Security is the name Twin Cities’ households have trusted for more than 20 years when it comes to protecting against intrusion, fire, carbon monoxide poisoning, freeze damage and more.

With interactive websites and phone apps from WH Security, you can remotely access and control your home’s:

- Lights • Door locks • Appliances
- Thermostat • Security system

Also, receive email or text messages when your security system’s sensors have been activated, alerting you of occurrences such as opening doors and motion activity.

*Valid on a new security system with a three-year monitoring agreement.
Experiment shows advantages of new appliances

Wright-Hennepin (WH) is conducting an experiment to find out exactly what your old appliances are costing you. We’ve hooked up a new Energy Star refrigerator and a Frigidaire model – which was built in the early 70s – to meters that will track both units’ usage over the next three months.

Through this set-up, we’ll be able to track the exact amount of energy that both of these devices are using and compare them throughout the three-month period.

The experiment began on September 27, and as of this writing, the 1970s refrigerator has used nearly three times more energy than the new Energy Star refrigerator. The older refrigerator has used 82 kWh (costing $8.36), whereas the Energy Star refrigerator has only used 27 kWh (costing $2.75).

You can follow the stats on WH’s website at www.whe.org. Progress reports will be available under the “Quick Links” section on the home page under “Refrigerator Experiment.”

Find easy ways to save!


Win this month’s wind or solar generation!

Each month, two lucky members will have their names drawn. One will win the current month’s output of Wright-Hennepin’s wind generator and the other will win the output of the solar panel.

To enter the monthly contest, or find more information and data, go to: http://www.whe.org/for-my-home/resources/wind-solar.html

Last month’s winners:

John Vassar of Maple Plain wins a credit for 488 kWh, August output from WH’s wind generator.

Keith Hovland of Buffalo wins a credit for 263 kWh, August output from WH’s solar panels.

Average monthly energy output year-to-date:

- WH’s wind generator = 606 kWh
- WH’s solar panels = 188 kWh

Average monthly energy use per household = 1,100 kWh

Pop Quiz! Win a string of LED holiday lights!

Complete WH’s quiz with the correct answers and be entered for a chance to win a prize!

All the answers for the quiz can be found in this newsletter. Please insert the correct answers, clip out the form and mail it with your electric bill, or submit your answers online at whe.org on the “Newsletter Archive” page, found under the “News & Events” section. “Completed quizzes are due by December 15, 2011”

Name: ___________________________________________ Phone: ______________________
Address: ___________________________________________ City: ______________________ State: ______ Zip: __________

1. WH’s new ______ features information on the cooperative, electric utility industry and energy-saving tips.
2. WH’s board of directors returned ______ in capital credits to WH’s membership.
3. ______ is a comfortable, efficient and an extremely versatile way to heat your home.
4. “____” _______ basically means increased automation throughout the electric grid.
5. ______ is a service that will protect you from unexpected appliance repair bills.

One winner will be selected each month. One entry per month, per household will only be accepted. Winners will be notified by phone or email.

October Quiz Winner:
LaVonne Kadlec, South Haven
Protect yourself from high appliance repair bills with WH Appliance Repair

The WH Appliance Repair program (formerly Wright Service) is designed to protect you from large, unexpected appliance repair bills. For only $17.99 per month, your refrigerator, clothes dryer, heating system, range and water heater are all covered for both parts and labor expenses.

If you want additional appliance protection, optional add-on coverage is also available for most appliances for $5.25 per month. Almost every appliance that you currently own will qualify for this program.

When a breakdown occurs on one of your covered appliances, all you have to do is call our dispatch center and an authorized technician will be contacted. They will make the necessary repairs between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays and test your appliance to be sure that it is once again operating at peak performance.

Preventative maintenance coverage is available as an add-on to the basic WH Appliance Repair plan to ensure that your furnace, air conditioner, geothermal system and/or fireplace are in the best possible condition.

Finally, if you need to ultimately replace your appliance, you’ll receive up to a 10 percent rebate towards the purchase price of a new replacement appliance if the cost of the repair your appliance needs exceeds its repaired value. This includes your optional covered appliances.

For more information on the WH Appliance Repair plan, call (763) 477-3000 or visit our website at http://bit.ly/tB5E3A.

The WH Appliance repair program is designed to protect you from high appliance repair bills. The program offers a variety of options to meet your individual needs.

Cooperative vehicles for sale by sealed bid

WH is selling the following vehicles “as is” by sealed bid:

- 2005 Chevrolet half-ton extended cab pickup
- 2001 Ford Explorer
- 2000 International 4900 Digger Derrick and 6 x 6 45’ boom
- 2000 8020 Ditch Witch Trencher
- 30’ Tilt Bed Trailer with 24’ tilt

The vehicles can be seen during regular business hours at WH’s office in Rockford, Minn. For more information, please call Jeff Hofford at (763) 477-3126.

Bids must be received by November 23. Bids can be mailed or faxed to: Wright-Hennepin, Attn: Marianne Galles, P.O. Box 330 Rockford, MN 55373; fax (763) 477-3054. WH reserves the right to reject any and all bids. The winning bidder will be notified by phone following bid opening.

Request your free calendar

Free 2012 calendars featuring tips to help you save energy are now available, courtesy of Wright-Hennepin. Stop in or call (763) 477-3000 for your complimentary calendar. You can also send a request to info@whe.org. Quantities are limited.

Cut down your winter heating costs!

Sign up for the Dual Fuel Off-Peak program and save!

The Dual Fuel program is for members that use electricity to heat their homes, while still having a non-electric, automatic backup heating source.

Participants in this program receive a special reduced electric rate on the electricity used to heat their homes.

Contact a representative today: (763) 477-3000 or (800) 943-2667
www.whe.org or info@whe.org

For more energy-saving ideas, check out WH’s Green Tweet

Twitter profile. Follow us to find ways to save!

Follow us at http://twitter.com/#!/WHGreenTweet

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