



Shane L. Larson,  
Chief Executive Officer

### ***More Power to You***

## ***Business as Usual in Rockton***

**T**he Second District Appellate Court of Illinois recently affirmed the decision of the Winnebago County Circuit Court to dismiss the lawsuit that the village of Rockton had filed against Rock Energy Cooperative.

The courts ruled that the village did not have an enforceable contract requiring the co-op to sell its utility assets because there had been no agreement on the price that the village would pay for those assets.

Over the past few years, much has been written and said about the legal issues between Rock Energy Cooperative and the village of Rockton. During this whole ordeal, REC has tried to do what is best, not only for the residents of Rockton, but for all our members in eight counties and two states. I'm sure that not everyone would agree with that statement, but I can assure you that the REC directors took their fiduciary responsibilities very seriously when addressing this matter.

Throughout the legal action, Rock Energy Cooperative remained focused on delivering safe and reliable utility service at the lowest practical costs to all our members—those in Rockton and across the rest of our system. We also continued to remind Rockton residents that they already had a financial interest in their electric and natural gas company because we are a not-for-profit cooperative.

Now that the courts have ruled, I'm certain we can move forward in a positive manner and continue providing all members with the excellent service they deserve.

### **Is prepaid energy right for you?**

I hope you read the story on page 16b about our Prepaid Energy Option and seriously consider whether it might help your budget situation. It's a new way for members to pay for power as they use it, rather than

making one payment for the energy they used in the previous month.

The concept isn't new because we buy groceries, gasoline, and countless other goods and services when we need them and can afford them. For example, if you need gas for your car and only have \$10, you just put \$10 worth of gas in the tank. In the same way, prepaid energy can help consumers plan more accurate monthly budgets and make smaller, incremental payments.

Besides being easier on the budget, prepaid energy is a way for people to be more aware of how much power they're using. In fact, members who prepay generally use less energy than folks on traditional billing because the program empowers them to manage their energy use in a way that best suits their individual situation. Even better, when members use less energy, it lowers demand on our entire system, which saves everyone money in the long run.

### **Have a safe summer**

As I watch the news coverage of the deadly tornadoes that have swept the country, I'm reminded just how much devastation summer storms can cause. All too often, we learn of tornado warnings and just continue whatever we're doing. But after seeing what's happened in Alabama and Missouri, I plan to head to the basement the next time there's a tornado warning. I hope you'll do the same.

Also, remember that lightning can be extremely dangerous. "When thunder roars, go indoors" is the National Weather Service's recommendation for electrical storms because if you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance of lightning.

If there's anything we can do to serve your energy needs and improve our service to you, please let us know. In the meantime, have a safe and happy Fourth of July! ■



# Take Charge of Energy Costs with Prepaid Option

**D**o you remember when the only way to pay your energy bill was to mail a check or make a payment at the co-op office?

Other payment options have been added in recent years, and now you can pay online, by phone, at third-party payment centers like Wal-Mart, or with automatic bank withdrawal. But even with the variety of choices, the process remained the same. You received a bill that detailed your energy consumption for the previous month, and you paid the full amount before the due date.

Now, Rock Energy Cooperative is introducing a pay-as-you-go plan, which allows you to pay for energy as you use it, the same way you buy groceries and gasoline. You have greater control over your budget because you decide how much to pay and when to pay it.

Members maintain a prepaid balance in their account from which their daily usage is subtracted. When their balance gets low, the co-op alerts them that they need to add money.

More than 100 Rock Energy members are enrolled in the Prepaid Energy Option, and Mike Salmons, consumer accounting manager, expects more members will sign up as they learn about the program.

"If it would be more convenient for you to make weekly or biweekly payments on your energy bill rather than one large payment each month, this option is perfect for you," Salmons said. "Instead of getting a traditional bill each month, you'll receive a monthly statement that shows your usage. When your account runs low, you'll get an alert by e-mail, text message, and phone call to let you know it's time to add money."

The program is so flexible that members can choose when to pay and how much to pay as long as they maintain a balance in their account, Salmons said. They also have the same variety of ways to pay—by mail, in person, by phone, online, at third-party payment centers, or through online banking.

"Members might make a payment whenever they get a paycheck, when their Social Security check arrives, or whenever they can afford it," he said.

This option is a good solution for members who move often or are facing financial difficulties because it eliminates the need for deposits and late fees, Salmons said.

In addition, people who prepay generally use less energy than those on traditional billing because they're more aware of how much power they're consuming.

Electric service with Rock Energy is required to participate in the program. If you're interested in finding out more about the Prepaid Energy Option and whether it's right for you, stop at either our Janesville or South Beloit office to pick up a brochure or visit our website at [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop). ■



*Mike Salmons  
Consumer Accounting  
Manager*



# **Company Powers Up Generator to Save Money**

**N**orth American Tool Corp. takes pride in the fact that it ships products to customers within 24 hours of receiving orders.

Dependable electricity is vital to meeting that commitment, said Curtis Lansbery, president and CEO of the South Beloit manufacturer of premium quality cutting tools. He complimented Rock Energy Cooperative for its record of providing reliable electric service. In the few outages that have occurred—whether due to squirrels or car accidents—the co-op always has provided a quick response to restore power, he said.

Affordable electricity also is important to North American Tool as well as Rock Energy's other commercial and industrial members. The co-op launched its Peak Alert Demand Response (PADRe) program in 2009 to help local employers stay competitive in the worldwide marketplace.

Large commercial and industrial members, like North American Tool, pay demand charges based on electricity usage during times of peak demand. It's like the electric utility industry's equivalent of rush-hour traffic. Because electric power can't be easily or economically stored, it must be produced as it's needed. In response to an alert from the co-op, PADRe participants voluntarily reduce electric consumption during periods of peak demand. When peak demand is reduced, Rock Energy's wholesale power costs go down, and the savings are passed on to the member.

In order to enjoy these energy cost savings, industrial members in the PADRe program must have the ability to voluntarily reduce demand during peak times. That wasn't possible for North American Tool because the manufacturer operates three shifts a day and basically never shuts down.

But in May, the company installed a generator capable of producing enough electricity to power the plant. Now, when peak alerts are issued, the manufacturer can seamlessly go off the grid and use its backup generator. The energy savings from the new generator, which is expected to be used only about 16 hours a month, will pay for itself in less than three years, Lansbery said.

Company officials also are becoming weather watchers and plan to use the backup generator when



*Rock Energy CEO Shane Larson, left, congratulates Curtis Lansbery, president and CEO of North American Tool, on the manufacturer's new on-site generation facility.*

severe weather is threatening and there's a potential for a power outage. If a rare unexpected outage occurs, the backup generation system takes over in less than three seconds.

The combination of North American Tool's new on-site generation facility and Rock Energy's innovative peak alert program will allow the manufacturer to achieve two of its strategic goals: on-time delivery of its products and lower energy costs.

North American Tool has operated in South Beloit since 1986, and the company is commemorating its 25th anniversary by sponsoring the city of Beloit's fireworks on the Fourth of July.

"It's an ideal way to give back to a great community while we celebrate a milestone event," Lansbery said. "We are truly excited for our customers, our associates, and our community to be celebrating our 25th year in the industrial tooling business." ■



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



### Member Appreciation Day 2011

## PANCAKE BREAKFAST

**Saturday, Sept. 17 • 8 to 10:30 a.m.**

REC Headquarters, 2815 Kennedy Road, Janesville, Wis.

*Watch for details!*

## Have a Safe and Happy Independence Day!

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, July 5. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend. Even though our offices are closed, standby crews are always available 24 hours a day. If you need to report a power outage, please call (608) 752-4550 or toll-free (866) 752-4550.

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