

Delivering More Than Electricity

By
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WHAT CAN HEAT YOUR HOME, HEAT YOUR WATER, grill your steaks, protect your home, protect your life, provide you with the Internet, come and do your electrical work, ship your UPS packages and notarize your official documents? The answer of course is nothing.

Not one person, place or thing can perform all these functions for you. But, along with providing you with electricity, your electric cooperative can offer you so much more, including some of the services listed above.

Not only can some of the services and appliances offered by co-ops make your life more convenient, they may also save your life. For example, a number of cooperatives provide the MainStreet Messenger Emergency Response System.

The Messenger system gives the customer a transmitter that is worn around the neck or on the wrist. The transmitter has an alert button that the customer can press in case of an emergency.

Once the button is pushed and the system is activated, it immediately sends a call to the coopera-



tive monitoring station; there trained professional dispatchers answer the call. By determining the type of emergency, the dispatcher can send someone to respond to the customer's call.

Marlene Biegler, operations secretary at Moreau-Grand Electric, has 30 Messenger systems installed in the cooperative area. The dispatcher for these systems is located in Bismarck, N.D., at Basin Electric. "Someone is there 24/7 and they have all the customer's contact information and emergency numbers," said Biegler.

One member of Moreau-Grand who uses MainStreet Messenger in her home is Dorothy Lawien, 90, a retired senior office clerk at Moreau-Grand Electric.

"The Main Street Messenger service provided by my cooperative enables me to continue living at home," said Lawien.

Biegler agrees that it is an important service provided to members, especially the elderly who live alone. "I think it's a very good program for the elderly. They like knowing that something is there for them and it makes them feel secure," said Biegler.

In addition to protecting your life, some cooperatives provide the option of home protection. Oahe Electric Cooperative, Blunt, S.D., offers customers the Simon Home Monitoring System.

The system is customized for each individual homeowner and includes features to prevent intrusions and environmental monitoring to protect against things like carbon monoxide.

The cooperative installs the security devices which are completely wireless. The system detects anything from a home break-in to a flood, giving the customer peace-of-mind even when they are not at home.

The equipment kits start at \$240 with no installation fee and the service cost \$16.95 a month and because the system is wireless, it can be installed in a pre-constructed home.

Russ Hohn, member services manager, at Oahe Electric, has 15 units installed in homes and businesses around the area. A commercial property that had several break-ins in the past hasn't had any issues since the system was installed.

Hohn said, "A customer with a summer house on the river had previously boarded up their windows and chained their doors to keep their home secure when they weren't there. Once they had the system put in, they've had no trouble at all."

In addition to keeping your home safe and offering you security, the Simon Home Monitoring System can also save you money.

"There's an average of a 10 percent discount in homeowner's insurance when you have a monitoring system," said Hohn.

As well as keeping your home secure, another service offered is something to keep your appliances safe. Leviton Surge Protection Devices protects against transient surges entering the home through the power lines, telephone lines and cable TV or satellite feeds. These surge protective devices guard electronic

In addition to reliable electric service, electric cooperatives offer a variety of services and products to their members. Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative member Dorothy Lawien, 90, uses the MainStreet Messenger in her home.



Electric cooperatives provide needed services beyond basic electricity. Many cooperatives carry electric grills above while others provide safety and security services such as the Main Street Messenger.



equipment from the disruptive and damaging effects of transient voltage surges, voltage sags and power outages.

Along with keeping your home and appliances safe, electric cooperatives also help to keep your home and your water heated. With Comfort Cove Heaters and Marathon Water Heaters on hand, cooperatives strive to keep customers comfortable.

Comfort Cove Heaters produce radiant heat and are installed on the wall close to the ceiling. The benefits of Comfort Cove Radiant Heat are numerous. It cost less to install and operate than other heating methods and they run at temperatures that are extremely unlikely to overheat or cause fires, making it one of the safest options.

Marathon Water Heaters have a technologically advanced design that is differentiated from short-lived steel water heaters. It's one of the most durable water heaters made and it has a warranty to match.

Also available is the more frivolous, albeit more fun option of a Meco Electric Grill. With the increasing number of restrictions against the use of gas or charcoal units in condos and apartments, electric grills are becoming quite popular. All of Meco's grills are UL certified, fit into any standard 120-volt grounded plug and are safe for outdoor cooking.

Last but certainly not least, maybe the most important things cooperatives offer is reliable, accurate information. "Customer's questions are answered, even if we have to do a little research and get back to them," said Ken Schlimgen, director of member services and marketing at Oahe.

Many cooperatives provide the convenience of Internet service have electricians on staff, serve as a UPS drop off/pickup and also have a notary public. The cooperatives serve their members with way more than just electricity.

Schlimgen said, "In addition to all the goods and services the electric co-ops sell, we offer advice on numerous energy topics."