

Let us tell you about our building

Nov. 15, 2007 marked the day the project began with loads of sand and dirt being hauled in and out of the building site. Two weeks later, on Nov. 26, a ground-breaking ceremony allowed us to thank those who helped us get to that point. Because of the flood, monies from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the State of Minnesota and the Rural Utilities Service were used to help us move forward and helped us pay for a portion of the \$6.4 million headquarters. Once completed, an open house was held Oct. 27, 2008.

How will our members benefit from this new headquarters?

The new headquarters will save us on the cost of day-to-day operations, which in turn, saves our members money. It was also designed to help us provide better service.

- ▶ By combining four facilities (office, warehouse, storage building and pole yard) it will save money on fuel and labor.
- ▶ Green practices used to construct the headquarters will allow us to operate with less impact on the environment. Many of the features were added for increased energy efficiency and conservation and to reduce maintenance, which saves money.
- ▶ Added computer technology and automation allows our employees to work more efficiently, which again saves money. The technology will also help us provide better customer service and better quality of service.
- ▶ Overall, the headquarters was designed to position us for opportunities down the road and to serve as a solid service base for our membership for many years to come.

As you walk through our headquarters there are several features designed with energy efficiency, the environment, advancing our technology capabilities and just good sound foresight in mind.

Our Vision

That Tri-County Electric Cooperative is the model of efficiency and quality member care.

Our Mission

To deliver high-quality energy services at reasonable prices and maximize value to our members consistent with the wise use of resources.

Statement of Commitment

We will constantly seek to enhance the quality of life of our members and the economic and social well-being of our communities.

Our Pledge Is To:

- ▶ Reliably fulfill the electrical and related service needs of our members.
- ▶ Prosper as a financially sound business at lowest reasonable cost and maximum value.
- ▶ Encourage the wise use of resources in a socially and environmentally acceptable manner.
- ▶ Maintain the highest ethical standards of trust and respect and meet public responsibilities.
- ▶ Meet the members' needs through a staff of honest, well-trained, professional, motivated and service oriented employees.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Welcome to our headquarters



Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Rushford, Minn.

The history of this building

It was during our annual strategic planning meeting in 2004 that our board of directors first identified the need for a new headquarters. The physical growth, as well as trying to use advanced technology in a building built before the computer age, would soon hinder us in providing the kind of service that members wanted, expected and deserved.

Step by step our board advanced its plans. Following a site evaluation study within the Rushford area, on June 8, 2006, the board approved the purchase of 25 acres of land. Once the land was purchased, our board and management continued to move ahead with the planning phase of building a new headquarters.

Then the unexpected occurred: the memorable flood of August 2007. Our office, warehouse and fleet of vehicles were destroyed. Once the floodwaters receded, our advanced planning provided a bright spot — we began construction of the new headquarters immediately.

During construction our employees continued day-to-day operations. Temporary office spaces were added in the flood-rehabbed warehouse, and a four-plex trailer offered additional office space.

The outcome of the disaster was a remarkable recovery story that was recognized nationally in the electric cooperative industry. Our first day of business at 31110 Cooperative Way was Monday, Sept. 29, 2008.

What you see outside

✔ Site location

The board carefully considered other sites for the headquarters. This location was chosen because of easy access to two main roadways. Another plus is that with large vehicles pulling in and out, it is a much safer location. Following the flood, a flood study was conducted on the site, and the headquarters as it stands exceeds the 500-year flood projection level.

✔ Land position

The headquarters is positioned to maximize the use of natural daylighting. It allows for passive solar gain from the south. Plus, the service center blocks winter's northwest winds.

✔ Landscaping

The plants were chosen because they require minimum amounts of maintenance and don't require regular watering. Grass was planted only in the area closest to the building, again for less maintenance and watering. The rest of the landscaping incorporates native grasses and plants.

✔ Concrete pavement

You'll notice the pavement on the grounds is concrete. Choosing concrete instead of asphalt helps reduce what is called the heat island effect.

✔ Rain collection

All runoff water from the building, parking and storage areas is collected. The water is then diverted to a pond on the south side of the building. Water collected is also used for water gardens.

✔ Outdoor lighting

If you come during the night you'll notice that our lighting outside the building shines downward. It allows us to keep strategic areas of the grounds lit for security purposes, but at the same time reduces the amount of light drifting off-site.

✔ Pump house

We have a pump house on-site with a 65,000 gallon water tank. It is equipped with attachments to allow us to draw water out for our fire suppression system. During the 2007 flood, we also realized the importance of having water available during and following disaster situations. So the tank also serves as an additional source of water for area fire departments.

✔ Pole yard

One of the key efficiencies of the headquarters is having everything at one location. Having the pole yard on-site allows quick access to materials and a secure location for storing those materials.



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What you see inside

✔ Polished concrete floors

The beautiful floors you see in high traffic areas are not granite. The floors are made of polished concrete. They are long-lasting and require little maintenance and minimal amounts of cleaning agents to keep them looking great.

✔ Paint

The paint used on the interior walls has a low volatile organic compound content. This means that the paint has a reduced quantity of indoor air contaminants which benefits those applying the paint, as well as our employees working within the building.

✔ Recycled countertops and workstations

As you come into the building, it is hard to miss the silver-colored counter at the reception desk. It is made of recycled metal. Also, the rich look of the workstations is not cherry wood. It is a laminate made from recycled materials. The workstations also incorporate corkboards made of recycled materials.

✔ Call center

Personal contact with members is important to us and that is why when you call us during regular business hours you won't get an automated phone attendant. We have a staff of member service representatives to answer the phones and to offer personalized service to each person calling us.

✔ Security system

The security of the headquarters complies with Homeland Security standards. All employees must enter the building using a pass card. To gain entrance to sensitive areas of the building, a pass card is also necessary. The system helps ensure safety for employees and members visiting the site. Cameras are also stationed throughout the interior and the outside perimeter of the building, which helps deter theft and vandalism.

✔ Restroom fixtures

If you visit our restrooms you will notice the flushing mechanisms are green — literally. They are dual-function for water conservation. The sink fixtures and showers have low-flow and water-conserving attachments.

✔ Task lighting

You'll notice the hallways are lit so you can find your way, but it isn't real bright. Looking in office areas you'll see lighting placed directly over work spaces, where you need it most. Careful placement of lighting throughout the building is designed to save on energy costs.

✔ Lighting controls

Dual sensing occupancy sensors are used in office areas, copy rooms and other locations where the capabilities work best. Main hallways and the service center have manual switches. Both the occupancy sensors and the manual switches are programmed to automatically turn off and on at a particular time, such as the end or beginning of the day. All lighting can also be manually turned on and off.

✔ Wellness center

This room was designed to help promote health and wellness among our employees. As a bonus, having this room and making exercise equipment available to employees is one of the qualifiers for reducing our annual medical insurance benefits by 6%.

✔ Board room and training room

These rooms are equipped with wireless internet and have many built-in features for enhanced presentation and training capabilities. This allows us to take advantage of web conference opportunities, which saves on travel expenses. It also allows us to bring in special events for members and residents of southeastern Minnesota that require a venue with advanced technology needs.

✔ Operations Department

The dispatch center in the Operations Department features a system that allows the projection of our complete electric distribution system on a large screen to provide up-to-the-minute information. The center is also central to the department's personnel for enhanced communication and outage restoration.

✔ On-site generator

The generator has the capability of powering the entire headquarters. Again, following the 2007 flood disaster, we wanted to be prepared for emergency situations where backup power was necessary. The generator also allows us to go off-line during peak energy use periods for added savings.

✔ Service center

The service center was built with insulated concrete tip-up walls. It is where our fleet is parked. The service center is designed to allow crews to park their trucks on the south side and the rest of the fleet on the north side. Having the trucks backed up to the south side offers better efficiency for service center personnel and line crews when preparing and setting out project materials for each crew. The service center also features wireless internet for when line crews begin using laptop computers at their work location in the field.

✔ Recycling program

In the service center there are large bins for recycling paper, cardboard, plastics and aluminum. It is the responsibility of each employee to sort their own recyclables, which saves the cooperative on trash-removal costs.

What you don't see

✔ Ground-source heat pump

The headquarters uses a ground-source heat pump, which uses renewable energy from the earth for heating and cooling the office.

✔ Reflective roof

Even on a cloudy day, our roof is bright. The roof is white and designed to reflect sunlight to help reduce summer cooling costs.

✔ Temperature control system

As with the lighting controls, the heating and cooling systems are mechanically controlled to turn up and down at certain times to allow for greater efficiency.

✔ Fleet monitoring

All vehicles are equipped with monitoring devices to track fuel and other key levels so maintenance is done regularly to ensure maximum efficiency.

✔ Data protection

All electronic data is backed up remotely off-site and encrypted for the protection of personal cooperative information, including member data. Our servers were not damaged by the flood and we were able to retrieve all electronic data. We also had everything backed up remotely off-site at that time.