



Public Services

Utilities

Telecommunication, electricity, energy pipelines, and alternative energy production provide critical needed resources for existing and future users.

Telecommunications

In Rice County there are 12 public telephone service exchanges operated by a total of seven exchange service providers (companies). Follow this link to see a map of the [7 exchange servers](#) in the Rice County Area. Six radio stations operate out of the county - three in Faribault and three in Northfield. Altogether, there are 54 towers or co-located antennas for either radio or wireless communications located in the county.

Electrical Service, Production, and Transmission

Rice County has five electrical service providers. Xcel Energy provides service to the majority of the urban area, the corridors along Minnesota Trunk Highways 3 and 60, and the eastern edge of the county. Steele-Waseca Coop Inc. provides service to a similarly broad area including the lakeshore areas of Wells and Forest Township, as well as the rural areas of Richland, Walcott, Northfield, and Warsaw Townships. Minnesota Valley Coop serves a large portion of the northwest area of the county. Smaller areas are served by Dakota Electric Association (part of Webster Township) and Goodhue County Coop (part of Richland Township). To review these service areas on a live map, please reference the MNGEO Site of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) at: <http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/eusa/index.html#>

Faribault Energy Park is a 300 megawatt electrical generation plant owned by the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (MMPA). Power from the plant serves the MMPA member cities of Anoka, Arlington, Brownton, Buffalo, Chaska, East Grand Forks, Le Sueur, North St. Paul, Olivia, Shakopee, and Winthrop. Primarily a natural gas burning plant, the facility is also equipped to use natural "biomass" fuels such as recycled vegetable oil, soy oil, and camelina oil.

There are approximately 140 miles of high voltage transmission lines (69 KV or above) in Rice County. Roughly 100 miles of 69 KV AC supports the electrical grid of Rice County's urban and rural communities. In turn, these lines are supported by power supplied from a 161 KV distribution line running north to Faribault from Owatonna and a 115 KV line running south to Faribault from Lake Marion. Much of the supply originates from the Prairie Island power plant (nuclear) in Goodhue County and the Black Dog power plant (coal) in Burnsville, Minnesota.

There are several new solar garden projects (5 megawatts or less) being developed throughout all corners of the county. Rice County approved three Conditional Use Permits (CUP) for solar gardens in 2016 and another eight in 2017. There has been significant activity on this emerging technology to augment traditional power supply sources in Rice County. Like wind energy, the future of alternative energy sources in Rice County remains an uncertainty with regard to the extent to which they will contribute to the larger region and local economy.

Natural Gas

Two major pipelines traverse the county, providing reliable and relatively low cost fuel. In 2011, Minnesota had an average cost for industrial customers of \$5.62 per cubic foot which was the 10th lowest in the nation. Additional information on all these issues may be obtained from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission at: <https://mn.gov/puc/puc-documents/reports/>