



Freeborn  
Mower  
Electric  
Cooperative

People. Power. Possibilities.

# county lines

## NEWSLETTER

MAY 2024 • VOLUME 85 • NO. 05



**MAY IS  
ELECTRIC  
SAFETY  
MONTH**



## ELECTRICAL SAFETY — EVERY DAY

When dealing with electricity, prioritizing safety is crucial. While Electric Safety Month falls in May, it is essential to maintain safety throughout the year.

Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind to ensure safety around electricity:

- Never allow any part of your body to come into contact with an electric circuit.
- Docks wired for electricity should be inspected by a licensed professional to ensure no electrocution hazards are on the dock or created within the surrounding water.
- Stay vigilant by being aware of your surroundings, looking up and around to gauge your proximity to power lines and utility equipment.
- Keep children away from pad mount utility transformers, junction boxes, and from flying toys near power lines to avoid potential hazards.
- Avoid attempting to move downed power lines or clear trees from power lines, as downed power lines can energize the ground up to 35 feet away.
- Maintain a safe distance of at least 10 feet in all directions between farm equipment, ladders, irrigation pipes, and overhead power lines or the service entrance lines to your home or building.
- Remember that electricity and water are a dangerous mix, so keep electric devices away from pools and have dock wiring inspected by a professional to prevent electrocution hazards.
- Avoid nailing, tacking, or stapling notices to power poles to prevent hazards to lineworkers and potential damage to protective gloves.
- If your vehicle hits a power pole, stay inside to prevent creating a circuit for electricity to flow through your body. If you need to exit due to a fire, leap out with both feet together and shuffle at least 45 feet away. Warn others to stay clear and call 911 for assistance.

**STAY SAFE AROUND  
ELECTRICITY**

## ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



### FMEC FOCUSES ON SAFETY

Safety is a core value of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC). Safety touches each of our plans and endeavors, every day. Whether within our workplace or out in the field, attention to safety is essential.

The emphasis on safety is an integral part of our industry. FMEC recently participated in RESAP (Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program), a national safety program in partnership with statewide and cooperative safety leaders. The program framework is designed to continuously improve safety performance and strengthen the safety culture within the cooperative.

Our employees must attend regularly scheduled safety meetings and training sessions. #814204. Some of the topics include fire prevention and response, the pole-top rescue of an injured lineworker, ergonomics, proper lifting, safe equipment use, eliminating hazards in warehousing and storage, recognizing symptoms of heat stroke, responding effectively to emergencies, and first aid. Additionally, FMEC is committed to staying up to date with the latest safety regulations and industry standards, to ensure the well-being of all staff members and continue to foster a culture of safety that extends

beyond the workplace.

Safety and reliability are inherently connected, serving as the foundation of trust and effectiveness in our system. In 2023, FMEC tested more than 3,300 power poles to ensure their integrity. Inspection was also made on more than 2,000 miles of line to identify hazards or potential future problems. These steps help keep our employees safe, reduce public safety hazards, and aid in outage prevention.

When we do have outages, our employees are equipped with the knowledge and tools they need to stay safe. It's their initial step in planning the restoration of power. Employee safety will never be compromised to expedite tasks. Each of our employees deserves to go home after a safe day at work — every day.

FMEC employees worked all of 2023 without a lost day due to injury and had only one recordable incident during the year. I applaud our employees' attention and adherence to safety protocols. A safe work environment benefits us all.

## member news

### OFFICE CLOSED

Our office will be closed on Monday, May 27, 2024 in observance of Memorial Day.

### RATE INCREASE

At the recent annual meeting, it was announced that there will be a rate increase effective in September. You will receive a notification in your June billing statement.

### COGENERATION AND SMALL POWER PRODUCTION — POLICY 5.904

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from co-generators and small power producers which satisfy the conditions and become a qualifying facility. The member is required to execute the "Cooperative Agreement for Cogeneration and Small Power Production Facilities" with the Cooperative. A Qualifying Facility (QF) is a cogeneration and small power production facility that satisfies the conditions in the 18 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 292.101(b). FMEC is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. The current interconnection documents and applications are posted on the cooperative's website — [www.fmec.coop](http://www.fmec.coop).

### NOVA POWER PORTAL™

Members who are interested in installing their own distributed energy resource such as solar for interconnection, must use the NOVA Power Portal. Applications and resource documents are available through our website. Search under Services, Renewables, and then the Interconnection Information tab. Also found on the FMEC website is an abstract of the Interconnection Process for Distributed Energy Resources less than 10 megawatts (MW) interconnected to the Distribution System of a Cooperative in the State of Minnesota. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any disputes over interconnection, sales, and purchases are subject to resolution by the cooperative.

We invite you to contact the FMEC office to discuss cogeneration or interconnection plans.



## WELCOME, JESSICA PHELPS

FMEC is pleased to announce that Jessica Phelps has joined our team as a Marketing/Communications Specialist. With a background in communications, she previously served as an Executive Assistant and owned a photography business. "There are so many opportunities to grow the cooperative's brand and create positive experiences for our members," she said, explaining her excitement for her new position.

Originally from Andover, MN, Jessica and her husband Jeff have lived in Albert Lea for 12 years. They have four children. "I love spending time at our family cabin enjoying water skiing, wake surfing, and tubing. In the fall, you can find me in the woods deer hunting or watching our kids play hockey."

### CONTINUITY OF SERVICE STATEMENT

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) will always strive to furnish continuous service yet acknowledges that interruptions are possible for a variety of reasons. By accepting service, the member agrees to hold the cooperative harmless from any losses or damage to life or property resulting from power interruptions caused by circumstances beyond the cooperative's control, and/or failure on the members' part to have their premises wired according to the National Electric Code and the State of Minnesota Wiring Regulations. #2029900 The member has the sole responsibility for any wiring done, and the maintenance of said wiring, beyond the metering point. The cooperative shall not be responsible for voltage reduction brought on by its wholesale power supplier. Refer to our website or contact the office if you want to view Policy 4.001 — Continuity of Service.

### BODENSTEINER IS NAMED TRUSTEE

We welcome Dan Bodensteiner as a new Trustee to the Operation Round Up® program! Dan is retired and resides in FMEC District 1. A graduate of the University of Iowa, he worked as District Auditor for Interstate Power for 25 years, Credit and Collections for Alliant for three years, and retired as Controller at Church Offset Printing. Dan and wife Cindy have three children and three grandchildren.

He enjoys being aligned with activities that serve the community and draw from his previous work experience in accounting. Dan's current hobbies are being a member of Anytime Fitness, the Exchange Club of Albert Lea, Knights of Columbus, and raising money for child abuse prevention programs. He is a volunteer at his church and also delivers for Meals on the Go. "I enjoy giving back to the community whenever possible," said Dan.





## ILLUMINATING OUR CORE VALUES: FREEBORN MOWER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING

*On the evening of March 26, members were welcomed to the 87th annual meeting of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative held at the Albert Lea High School. The weeknight meeting was a departure from the Saturday morning meeting held the past several years. The change was made to accommodate more members and provide greater flexibility for those wishing to attend. There was a total of 418 attendees, with 243 being voting members.*

Besides learning more about FMEC's performance, the event provided members with an opportunity for friends and neighbors to visit, interact with employees and view educational displays.

Dennis Anderson in District 1, Richard Schaufler in District 4, and Jack Korman in District 7 were re-elected and seated on the board of directors.

President & CEO Jim Krueger highlighted 2023 under the meeting's theme of Illuminating Our Core Values. Electric sales were slightly lower than projected. However, bottom-line margins were very strong. It was the strongest financial performance the cooperative has had in recent years. The biggest contributing factor to the increase in margins was the moderation of wholesale power costs. Operationally, FMEC invested nearly \$12 million in upgrades and repairs to strengthen our distribution system.

Krueger explained that while most costs have risen across the board, wholesale power supply will continue to be the cooperative's largest annual expense. #2029900 The price for securing financing for this capital-intensive business is also going up with rising interest rates. It is anticipated that FMEC will need to make smaller and more frequent changes to rates during the next couple of years to better align revenues with expenses.

He also discussed how legislation at both the state and federal levels is playing a critical role in shaping electric rates, particularly as the nation transitions to a more carbon-neutral energy future. Concerns about grid reliability and the industry's ability to meet future peak demands for electricity are related aspects of energy policy decisions.

Krueger concluded his report by extending his thanks and gratitude to the FMEC members, employees, and directors.



## "LUCK OF THE DRAW" SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

*Congratulations to the following ten high school seniors!*

Each student was recently awarded a \$1,000 scholarship through the Luck of the Draw Scholarship program at Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative. Best wishes as these students move to post-secondary education!

### ALBERT LEA HIGH SCHOOL:

- Blaine Bakken
- Hannah Veldman
- Carly Jo Stevens
- Alyssa Colby
- Jordan Habana
- Sydney Kokot

### GLENVILLE - EMMONS HIGH SCHOOL:

- Ruby Page
- Kaylee Slater

### LEROY - OSTRANDER HIGH SCHOOL:

- Brendon Arndorfer

### SOUTHLAND HIGH SCHOOL:

- Jessie Hanson



*Students to Experience  
Washington D.C. Co-op Style!*

Congratulations to Kaci Wallin from Glenville-Emmons High School and Nolan Brooks from Albert Lea High School! They will be heading to Washington, D.C. in June to participate in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. This exciting leadership opportunity is organized by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and Minnesota Rural Electric Association. Nolan and Kaci earned this award through Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative's local application process. Watch for a recap of their experience this summer.

## MREA ANNUAL MEETING — "POWERING TOMORROW TOGETHER"

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) held its 83rd annual meeting at the St. Paul River Centre in late March. MREA CEO Darrick Moe warned of threats to reliability in Minnesota if the state doesn't proceed carefully with legislation relating to providing Minnesota's ongoing electricity needs. "Reliability and affordability cannot be taken for granted in the face of the policy pressures that are underway," he said.

MREA works in a bipartisan manner, working with both parties to shape legislation impacting cooperatives. #814204 During the legislative day, electric cooperative representatives received a legislative update from Jenny Glumack, MREA's Director of Government Affairs, and heard a robust discussion and a lively cross-section of views relating to Minnesota's energy policy between legislators on the panel.



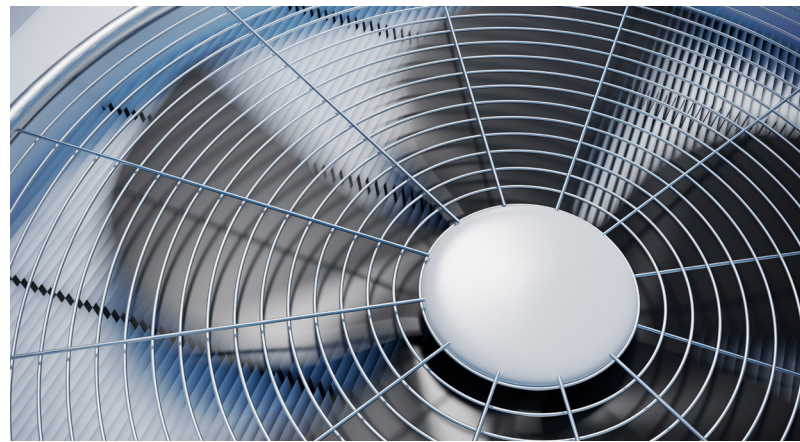


## \$25 CENTRAL AC TUNE-UP REBATE

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) offers a \$25 rebate as a credit on your electric bill for a documented tune-up of your central air conditioning system or air source heat pump. The tune-up must be completed where electricity is supplied by FMEC.

You hire the HVAC service contractor of your choice. The central air conditioning or air source heat pump must be in operating condition, more than three years of age, and has not received an AC Tune-up Rebate in 2022 or 2023.

More information can be found on our website. The rebate application requires documentation.



## INSTALLING A NEW HVAC SYSTEM?

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative offers various equipment rebates that will be of interest to you! Check our website for details or contact our energy solutions professionals by emailing [energyservices@fmec.coop](mailto:energyservices@fmec.coop).

The new equipment rebate(s) must be submitted no later than three months after the purchase date and must be installed at a location served by FMEC. #1871204 This rebate request requires the completion of a rebate form, a dated copy of your receipt or an invoice for each item purchased. Note that proposals will not be accepted.

AHRI Certificate Reference Number is also required for all air conditioners, heat pumps, and ECM blower motors. The AHRI relates to performance data and the ECM refers to a variable-speed electronically commutated motor.

**REMINDER: As with all rebates offered by FMEC, the program is in place through December 31, 2024. Funds are limited, so members are encouraged to submit their requests as soon as possible.**



## HIRE A PROFESSIONAL HVAC TECHNICIAN

Your Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) equipment is essential for your family's comfort and health. It's also some of the most expensive equipment in your home and is typically a large user of energy.

- Routine, preventative maintenance can extend its life span and will help avoid expensive replacement costs. In addition to providing a more reliable system, proper maintenance can also reduce the energy used to heat and cool your home. #1871204 Hire a professional service technician to find and fix problems.
- As we move into the summer months, our concerns focus on air conditioning. Air conditioning filters, evaporator coils, and fins require regular maintenance for the unit to function effectively and efficiently. Additionally, the technician will check for refrigerant leaks and verify the unit has the correct amount of refrigerant. Should any refrigerant need to be evacuated from the equipment, a professional technician will be able to capture it instead of illegally releasing it into the atmosphere.
- In addition to measuring the airflow through the evaporator coil, an AC tune-up should also check for and seal duct leakage in central systems. Electric terminals may need cleaning and tightening of connections. Motors may need to be oiled. Belts should be examined for tightness and wear. The thermostat should be checked for accuracy.
- Use a programmable thermostat to adjust the home's temperature setting based on the hours of occupancy.



## Know what's below. Call before you dig.

Before you dig call 811 or visit [gopherstateonecall.org](http://gopherstateonecall.org)



## CLASSIFIED marketplace

### FOR SALE

#### VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:

**1985 CORVETTE.** White w/grey leather interior, automatic, 68,000 miles, like new tires. \$10,500. Call (507) 440-2363.

#### FARM:

**CASE 1370 DAVID BROWN TRACTOR.** Approx. 140 hp, 7523 hours, new transmission, runs great, cab w/heat. \$13,500 OBO. Call/text (651) 263-0140.

#### 3 POINT BLADE.

7'. Like new. Call (507) 383-0410.

#### JOHN DEERE GRAIN DRILL.

10', double disc, rubber tires. \$485. Call (507) 279-0949 or (507) 279-0838.

#### HOUSEHOLD:

**OAK CONSOLE/COUCH TABLE w/drawer.** 52"l x 17"d x 30"h. In excellent condition. \$60. Call (507) 369-5172.

**TROMM CLOTHES DRYER.** Newer style, natural gas. \$125. Call (507) 383-0802.

#### MISC.:

**WHITE OAK SELECT FLOORING.** 216 sq. ft. of 2 1/4" x 3/4" flooring. Call (507) 383-3438.

#### TONNEAU COVER for FORD F150.

Soft roll-up, 5 1/2 box. \$200 firm. Call (507) 355-1324 or (507) 440-5158.

#### JOHN DEERE TOY TRACTOR

**COLLECTION.** 30-plus years old, in original boxes, Collectors Editions. Call (507) 259-0475.

#### CHAR-BROIL GAS GRILL.

Double burner, side tables, extra burner, deluxe cover. Excellent condition. Call (507) 438-0524.

#### 2004 JOHN DEERE X495 AWS MOWER.

1100 hours. \$6,000. Call (507) 383-5570.

#### PALOMINO SLIDE-IN PICKUP CAMPER.

8', loaded options, excellent condition. \$2,975. Call (507) 437-1615.

#### FOLDING CHAIRS.

New condition, high backs, padded seats and backs tan colored. \$25 each. Call (507) 373-0093.

**KNEE WALKER.** Adjustable height, hand brakes, storage. Barely used, like new. \$75. Call (507) 460-8017.

#### COLEMAN SKYLODGE TENT w/screen porch.

12 person, new in box. Retail \$430. Asking \$300. Call (507) 279-2845.

#### AMERICAN FLAG & MOUNTING

**BRACKET.** 3 X 5, almost new, as just purchased at Legion. \$30. Call (507) 373-0539.

#### TONER CARTRIDGES.

Premium ITN420-N60 (Brother compatible) - \$15. Brother Drum Unit DR 420 - \$50. Call (507) 402-5746.

#### PETS/ANIMALS:

**HAVACHON PUPPIES.** Non-shedding, hypoallergenic, great with elderly & families. 10 weeks old. 3 females & 1 male. Call (507) 369-3454

#### BARNYARD CHICKS.

Call (507) 475-1468.

#### SIAMESE BLUEPOINT.

6-year-old female to rehome. Retired queen, not spayed. \$150. Call (507) 273-2141.

### WANTED

#### 1973-1980 CHEVY PICKUP.

2-wheel drive. Must be restorable. Call (507) 373-0760.

#### BARN PULLEYS.

Call (507) 402-0880.

## CLASSIFIED MARKETPLACE RULES

Classified Marketplace ads are printed in our monthly **County Lines** newsletter **FREE OF CHARGE** to our current members.

- Ad deadline is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to the issue in which it will be printed. Ads received after the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month will be printed a month later. Example: An ad received on or before June 15<sup>th</sup> will appear in the July issue. If it is received on June 16<sup>th</sup> or later, it will appear in the August issue.
- No business ads will be accepted. Ads must be submitted in writing or electronically, not by phone call.
- Ads will not be repeated.
- One ad/item per member, per month.

You will find a downloadable form on our website: [www.fmec.coop](http://www.fmec.coop). Select **MY COOPERATIVE**. Click on **NEWSLETTER** under **NEWS & INFO** tab.

You may also email ads to [michelle.rayman@fmec.coop](mailto:michelle.rayman@fmec.coop) or go to the website, use the instructions above, and click on the **NEWSLETTER** tab to electronically submit an ad.



## SPOT YOUR NUMBER

### WIN A \$25 BILL CREDIT

To reward our faithful newsletter readers, we've randomly selected and hidden three (3) member account numbers in the newsletter, each two times. Hidden account numbers are spelled out numerically. (Ex: #123456)

If you spot your full account number, contact the cooperative by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the current month to claim your \$25 bill credit.

Congratulations to Bobby Wildeman! He spotted his account number in the April newsletter.

### FREEBORN MOWER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

PO Box 611  
3366 Bridge Avenue  
Albert Lea MN 56007

(507) 373-6421 or (800) 734-6421  
www.fmec.coop  
info@fmec.coop



#### Office Hours:

Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

#### Board Meetings:

Typically the last Tuesday of each month.

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## GreenTouch™

### STATE PARK CLEAN UP EVENT

Join us at Myre-Big Island State Park  
Saturday, May 4, 2024 | 9-11:30 am

Light lunch provided after park cleanup.  
Trash bags, rakes supplied.  
Bring gloves, sunscreen, bug spray, hat, etc.

Hosted by Freeborn Mower  
Electric Cooperative

Please RSVP at (800) 734-6421



## LET'S COOK



### RHUBARB JAM

Submitted By:  
**Audrey Bremer**

- 5 C. rhubarb, cut up
- 4 C. sugar

#### Directions:

Combine and soak overnight. Cook 15-20 minutes until syrup consistency. Remove from heat and stir in 1 small package raspberry or cranberry Jello. Cool and add to a blender; blend until smooth as apple butter.

Members may submit one short recipe per month by email to [michelle.rayman@fmec.coop](mailto:michelle.rayman@fmec.coop) or by mail at FMEC Newsletter, PO Box 611, Albert Lea, MN 56007. The member whose recipe is published will receive a \$10 electric bill credit.