



Freeborn  
Mower  
Electric  
Cooperative

People. Power. Possibilities.

# county lines

## NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2025 • VOLUME 86 • NO. 04



*Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative Lineworkers*

## CELEBRATING OUR UNSUNG HEROES: THE LINEWORKERS

*They are husbands.  
They are sons.  
They are brothers.  
They are dads.  
They are friends.  
They are lineworkers.*

April is a special month for electric cooperatives nationwide, including Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC), as we celebrate National Lineworker Appreciation Day.

Our lineworkers at FMEC are on call 24/7, 365 days a year, dedicated to serving our members with unparalleled safety and excellence. These hardworking individuals often respond at the most inconvenient times, leaving their families—sometimes in the dead of night—to address any situation that arises.

The job of a lineworker is not only labor-intensive but also incredibly dangerous. Whether it's working with high-voltage lines, climbing 40-foot poles, or operating at elevated heights, it is not a profession for the faint of heart. Come rain, shine, bitter cold, or blizzard, our crew remains committed to restoring power as quickly and safely as possible.

We extend our deepest gratitude to each lineworker and recognize their families for the many sacrifices they make. Thank you for your unwavering dedication and service.

ceo message  
Jim Krueger, President & CEO



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!  
ELECTION RESULTS, BYLAW CHANGES,  
AND 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Thank you to those that were able to make it out to our Annual Meeting which was held on Tuesday, April 1. It was great to visit with many of our members and share a bit about 2024 and the things that are going to be important advocacy items on the legislative front in 2025.

If you were unable to attend the Annual Meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on the recent director election that took place earlier this year. We are pleased to announce that both Frank Fryer from District 5 and Bill Trygstad from District 8 have been re-elected to the board for a three-year term. 1311900 Additionally, I would like to congratulate John Penkava on his election to the board in District 2.

*We sincerely thank Jay Neitzell for his service on our board. Your contributions have made an impact, and we appreciate your ongoing support of the cooperative.*

In addition, I am pleased to share that the proposed changes to the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation have been approved. Thank you to everyone who participated in the process and cast their vote. Your voice is important to us.

Several key legislative priorities will be essential for cooperatives across the state to get involved with in 2025, and the importance of advocacy will be of critical importance to ensure cooperatives across the state can continue to operate efficiently, sustain financial health, and support their members' evolving needs. Here is a list of priorities that are on our radar in 2025 and where you can find more information:

- 1. Nuclear Moratorium
- 2. Property Tax Exemption
- 3. Net Metering

*Please visit [www.fmec.coop](http://www.fmec.coop) under News & Events for more details.*

As always, thank you to our members for your continued support, participation, and engagement. You are what makes our cooperative what it is today.

With gratitude,  
Jim Krueger

THANK YOU  
LINEWORKERS

I would like to personally thank each of our linemen for their commitment to powering the lives of our members. No matter the weather or time of day, they work tirelessly to keep our communities connected. Their dedication, skill, and sacrifice do not go unnoticed. We are proud to have such an incredible team at Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative!



member news

COLD WEATHER RULE  
ENDS APRIL 30

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule protects residential utility customers from having electric service shut off between October 1 and April 30.

If your account is past due, you are no longer protected under the Cold Weather Rule after April 30. If you need to make payment arrangements on your account, please contact our office during regular business hours.

COMING SOON!

We are excited to announce that a new payment kiosk will soon be available in our front vestibule for your convenience. This kiosk will allow members to easily submit payments using cash (note that no change will be dispensed), credit/debit cards, or checks. We believe this addition will enhance the convenience and accessibility of our services for all members, and we look forward to its arrival.

MEMBER SURVEY IN APRIL

In April, we are sponsoring a mail survey of a randomly selected sample of our residential members asking information about your home, appliances, energy efficiency, and opinions regarding a handful of energy topics. 1915101 If you receive a copy of this survey, we request that you take 10 minutes to complete it and return it to our survey processor in the postage-paid envelope that will be provided or using the online survey link provided. We thank you in advance for your participation.



LOOKING TO BUILD  
A NEW HOME?

*Building a new home is an excellent opportunity to incorporate energy efficient technologies from the ground up. At Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC), several rebate programs are available to support members in making their new home more energy-efficient and cost-effective.*

The Electric Sense™ New Home Program is aimed at ensuring new homes adhere to the latest energy codes. 1915101 This program incentivizes the construction of homes that meet higher standards of energy efficiency.

In addition to this program, members are encouraged to consider Smart WIFI Thermostats and have the opportunity to receive a \$25 rebate for installing selected models of Smart WIFI Thermostats (Honeywell® or Emerson®) that are enrolled in the FMEC load management program.

Installing Energy Star® Appliances is also a great way to make a new home more energy-efficient. Appliances that are labeled as Energy Star® such as clothes dryers, washers, dehumidifiers, dishwashers, freezers, and refrigerators may be eligible for a rebate.

Utilizing these rebate opportunities not only helps recoup initial costs but also fosters long-term energy savings through more efficient energy usage. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative encourages members to visit [www.fmec.coop](http://www.fmec.coop) or contact [energysolutions@fmec.coop](mailto:energysolutions@fmec.coop) for more detailed information and specific requirements.



# CELEBRATING ARBOR DAY WITH SAFE TREE PLANTING TIPS

*Arbor Day is a special occasion dedicated to the planting and nurturing of trees, highlighting their vital role in our environment and communities. Engaging in tree planting is a rewarding and eco-friendly activity, but it's essential to do it safely to protect both people and property.*

Before you begin planting, always call 811 to mark underground utilities. This important preventive measure ensures you avoid damaging gas, water, and electric lines, protecting both yourself and your property. 1753900 Choose tree species wisely, considering their mature size to prevent future conflicts with overhead power lines and nearby structures.

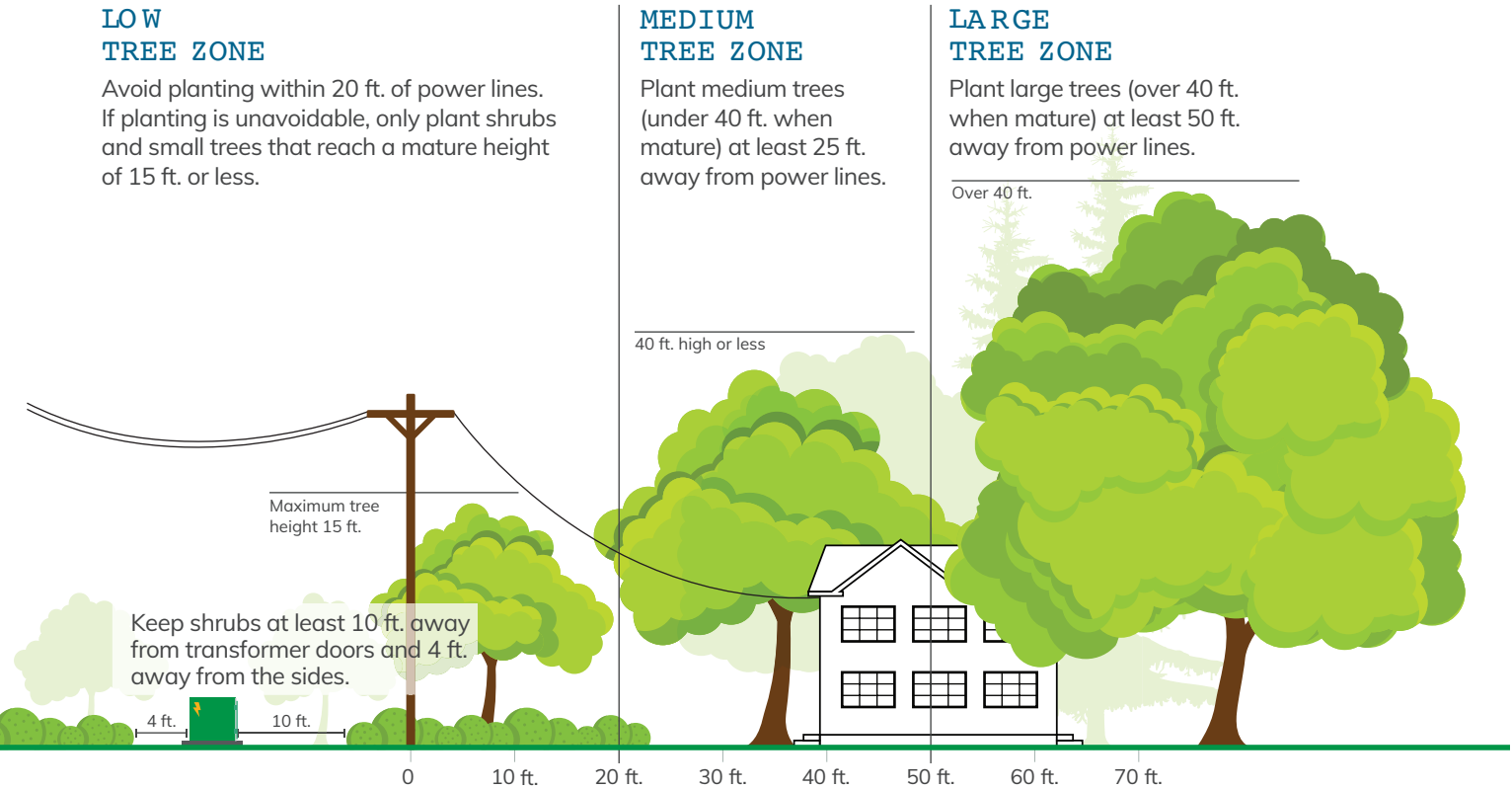
Equip yourself with the right tools, including gloves and a sturdy shovel, to prevent injuries. Practice safe lifting techniques: bend your knees, keep your back straight, and lift with your legs when handling heavy trees or soil.

If you're planting near roads, wear high-visibility clothing to stay visible to drivers. Always be mindful of your surroundings, ensuring your planting site won't obstruct views or create hazards as the tree matures.

By following these safe tree planting tips, Arbor Day can be a joyous and safe event that not only benefits you but also, your community.

## PLANT TREES SAFELY

*Know what and where you're planting. When making landscaping decisions, it's important to consider the type of care, appearance, location, and overall size (mature height) of trees and shrubs before planting – especially when planting near power lines. Follow these safe planting distances to help us avoid future problems and power outages and don't forget to call 811 before you dig to locate buried utility lines.*



## STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

*Most of us never think about the electric, gas, water, and other utility lines buried below the ground, but hitting one of these lines while digging is not the reminder you'll want--trust us! If you are planning a digging project, call 811 at least three business days before you start. Or you can submit a request online by visiting [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).*

When putting in a mailbox  
**CALL 811**

When planting a garden  
**CALL 811**

When building a deck  
**CALL 811**

When adding a fence  
**CALL 811**

*Keep your family, friends, and neighborhood safe by remembering these five easy steps to ensure safe digging.*

1	2	3	4	5
NOTIFY	WAIT	CONFIRM	RESPECT	BE CAREFUL
Call 811 or submit a request online two to three days before you start. The utilities affected by your project will be notified.	Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.	Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 811 call center notified.	Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.	Dig carefully. If you can't avoid digging near the markers, consider moving your project location.

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

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



## INVESTING IN RELIABILITY: UPCOMING SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

As the ground begins to thaw, our dedicated linecrews at Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative are already hard at work preparing for the busy construction season ahead. We have several significant projects that will soon be underway, all aimed at enhancing our infrastructure to better serve you, our valued members.

### ONGOING AND UPCOMING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

These upgrades are part of our commitment to strengthening reliability, modernizing our system, and ensuring long-term service quality for our members.

#### BROWNSDALE – DEXTER AREA:

- Our crews will be converting 5 miles of existing overhead line to new underground.
- This is part of our ongoing project to provide improved service to Dexter and retire the Wolfe Creek substation.

#### I-35 SOUTH OF ALBERT LEA:

- We will convert 13 miles of existing overhead lines to underground on either side of I-35, from CR 5 to the State Line.
- This project aims to improve reliability and replace aging overhead lines with more resilient underground lines.

#### NORTH OF AUSTIN ALONG CR 61:

- Converting 3.5 miles of aging overhead lines to new underground due to the condition and age of the infrastructure.

#### EAST OF SARGEANT:

- This marks the final phase of a multi-year effort to underground the entire feeder serving this area, covering 1 mile of existing overhead line.

#### SOUTH OF OAKLAND:

- Converting 3 miles of existing overhead lines to underground, part of a multi-year project to establish a looped feeder to the city of Oakland and facilitate the retirement of the Co-op owned portion of the Hayward substation.

### MEMBER SAFETY

As these projects commence, the safety of our linecrews is paramount. 1753900 We ask for your cooperation to ensure their safety by:

1. Slowing down when approaching work zones.
2. Giving our crews ample space to perform their work safely.
3. Exercising extra caution around construction areas.

Together, your support and vigilance will help us make these essential improvements smoothly and safely.

## SPRING ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIPS

As the warmer weather of spring arrives, it's an excellent time to adopt energy-efficient practices to reduce your energy consumption and save on utility bills. Start by performing a thorough check of your home's insulation and sealing any gaps or cracks in windows and doors to prevent air leaks. 1311900 Switch to energy-efficient lighting, such as LED bulbs, which consume less power and have a longer lifespan. Take advantage of natural daylight by opening blinds and curtains during the day to reduce the need for artificial lighting.

Schedule a maintenance check for your HVAC system to ensure it operates efficiently throughout the season. Additionally, consider using ceiling fans to circulate air, making your home feel cooler without relying solely on the air conditioning. Finally, be mindful of your water heating settings and minimize the use of hot water where possible. These simple steps can significantly enhance your home's energy efficiency this spring.



## CLASSIFIED *marketplace*

### FOR SALE

#### VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:

**2011 BUICK LUCERNE.** Tan leather interior, pearl white exterior. 160,000 miles. Text or call (507) 438-6682.

#### FARM:

**CUB CADET 1811.** Hydrostatic with rear-mounted tiller. \$1,600.00. Call (507) 273-6063.

**SET OF BOBCAT PALLET FORKS.** 48" long, very nice. Call (507) 383-0410.

**SMALL SQUARE BALES OF HAY.** First and second crop, mixed. No rain. Call (507) 567-2215.

**H & M MANURE SPREADER.** Single beater \$2,000.00 OBO. (507) 383-8748.

#### HOUSEHOLD:

**QUEEN-SIZE BED.** Headboard, 5' tall, footboard, 2½' tall. Solid wood. Mattress not included. Pictures available by text. \$195.00. Call (507) 440-4818.

**100% SILK-FILLED COMFORTER.** 100% cotton top, queen size, machine wash and dry. \$99.00. Call (507) 373-0093.

Classified Marketplace ads are printed in our monthly **County Lines** newsletter **FREE OF CHARGE** to our current members. You can review the Classified Marketplace Rules and/or submit an ad at [www.fmec.coop](http://www.fmec.coop). Select **MY COOPERATIVE**. Click on **NEWSLETTER** under **NEWS & INFO** tab. You may also email ads to [info@fmec.coop](mailto:info@fmec.coop) or send by mail to County Lines, PO Box 611, Albert Lea MN 56007. One ad/item per member. Ads will not be accepted over the phone. Ads will not be repeated.

**MATCHING WHITE COFFEE/END TABLE.** Coffee table \$10.00, end table \$5.00. Modern design. Call (507) 440-1481.

**TWO PASTEL COLORED CERAMIC EASTER CENTERPIECES.** Flowered watering can and a wagon with eggs, both beautiful. Call (507) 448-3491.

#### MISCELLANEOUS:

**VINTAGE CUB SCOUT SHIRT.** Albert Lea patch with two scarfs, patches, & clip. Size ? Call (507) 754-5103.

**10" CRAFTSMAN ELECTRONIC RADIAL ARM SAW.** Good condition. Call (507) 460-8601.

**GRACE MACHINE QUILTER.** Includes Pattern Perfect system. Valued at \$300.00, asking \$50.00. Call (507) 369-4239.

**V-5 SHELTON TRAILER HITCH.** For a pickup truck. Call (507) 259-6872.

**NEW HAMPTON BAY PATIO HEATER.** 7' tall. 2- 20 lb. propane cylinders full and partially full. \$140.00. Call (507) 460-8601.

### WANTED

**PINBALL ARCADE MACHINES.** Looking to purchase in any condition. Call (507) 402-1923.

**NIKON S7000 COOLPIX CAMERA.** In good working condition. Call (507) 265-3495.

**USED EUPHONIUM.** Musical instrument in good condition. Reasonably priced. Call (507) 383-8593.

**TINE TILLER.** Older front or rear tiller in good working condition. Call (507) 460-9745.

### FREE

**MEN'S SCHWINN BICYCLE.** 1972 men's 10-speed Schwinn Varsity bicycle. Call (507) 373-3633.

**HARD ROCK MAPLE COFFEE TABLE.** Good condition. (507) 373-3633.

## 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 and placed them 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 Stephen Sorenson and Manuel Madrigal for spotting their account numbers in the February 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](http://www.fmec.coop) | [info@fmec.coop](mailto:info@fmec.coop)



#### Business Hours:

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

#### Lobby Hours:

Monday - Thursday, 7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
Friday, By appointment only

#### Board Meetings:

Typically the last Tuesday of each month.

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

## SAFETY EDUCATION: SCHEDULE A SAFETY DEMO

Teaching electric safety knowledge is important to us, because it could save lives. Schedule a free safety presentation, led by Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative trained line workers, who will guide you through several different scenarios that could be hazardous, if not handled properly. This presentation would be ideal for schools, daycares, or other safety events in our service area.

Schedule your safety demonstration today by contacting Jessica Phelps at [communications@fmec.coop](mailto:communications@fmec.coop) or (507) 379-8853.



## LET'S COOK



### RUEBEN DIP

Submitted By: Deb Louters

- 8 oz. cream cheese
- ½ - ¾ C. of drained sauerkraut
- 1 pkg. corned beef (cut into pieces)
- 8 oz. sour cream
- Shredded cheese to taste

#### Directions:

Heat all the ingredients in a microwave or crock pot. Serve on pumpernickel bread, crackers, or bread sticks.

*Members may submit one short recipe per month by email to [info@fmec.coop](mailto:info@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.*