



Freeborn
Mower
Electric
Cooperative

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county lines

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2026 • VOLUME 87 • NO. 08



TAKING CARE OF THE PEOPLE WHO TAKE CARE OF OUR MEMBERS

August is National Wellness Month, a time to recognize the importance of building healthy habits and supporting overall well-being. At Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC), that commitment extends to the workplace, where serving members well starts with supporting the employees who keep the cooperative running safely, reliably and efficiently each day.

That is the purpose behind FMEC's Wellness Committee, which promotes employee well-being through activities, resources and reminders focused on physical, mental, social and financial wellness. When employees feel healthy, supported, and ready for the day ahead, they are better equipped to serve members with care and focus. Whether they're working in the field, assisting members, maintaining systems, or supporting operations behind the scenes, that readiness shows up in everything they do.

FMEC's commitment to wellness dates back to 2009, when the committee was formed as a result of the Blue Zones Pilot Project in Albert Lea. FMEC became the first Blue Zones Designated

Worksite in Albert Lea, which was the first city in the United States to be designated a Blue Zones City.

Today, the Wellness Committee meets monthly and includes employees from across the cooperative, with representation from Finance, Member Services, Energy Solutions, Operations, and Communications. This helps ensure wellness efforts are meaningful and accessible for employees in different roles.

Throughout the year, the committee offers a variety of activities and challenges, including Wellness Day, Go Red for Women and heart health awareness, May is Movement Month, STEPtember Step Challenge, BWELL BINGO, Self-Care BINGO, weight loss challenges, seasonal photo contests and more. During Wellness Month, employees are participating in a "Your Summer in Pictures" contest, along with a "Coffee with a Co-Worker" event designed to encourage connection across departments.

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ceo message
Jim Krueger, President & CEO



THE COOPERATIVE
DIFFERENCE AT WORK

Summer never seems to last long enough, and here we are in August with school supplies already filling the shelves at local stores.

This summer has brought long stretches of heat along with periods of heavy rain, reminding us that Mother Nature can be unpredictable. Through it all, I want to take a moment to recognize our line crews, who work tirelessly in every kind of weather to maintain the resilient distribution system our members rely on. Their dedication, professionalism, and commitment to keeping the lights on, no matter the conditions, are truly appreciated.

The value of being a member-owner extends far beyond the dedicated service provided by our line crews and employees. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) is owned by the members we serve, which means every decision is made with our members' best interests in mind. Serving our members is at the center of everything we do.

From making strategic investments in our distribution system and maintaining reliable electric service to supporting

our local communities and returning Capital Credits when possible, membership provides benefits that go well beyond the monthly electric bill. This is the Cooperative Difference.

One of the most unique benefits of cooperative membership is the opportunity to earn Capital Credits. FMEC operates on a not-for-profit basis. Any margins remaining after expenses are allocated back to members in the form of Capital Credits based on their annual electric use. These allocations represent each member's ownership in the cooperative and are an important reminder that our members are more than just customers; they are owners.

Thank you for your continued trust in Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative. We remain committed to providing safe, reliable electricity while investing in the future of the communities we proudly serve.

Sincerely,
Jim Krueger



UNDERSTANDING YOUR
CAPITAL CREDIT ALLOCATION

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative's (FMEC) 2025 margins allocation has been completed. Members who had service with Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative in 2025 should see their Capital Credit Allocation notice with their August billing statement. Inactive members received a separately mailed allocation notice.

Capital Credits represent your share of ownership in the cooperative. These credits are held by FMEC until a general retirement is approved by the Board of Directors. Capital Credits belong to the member until they are fully distributed, which is why it is important to keep your current mailing address on file with FMEC, even if you move out of the service area.

Current members typically receive Capital Credit retirements as a bill credit. Inactive members receive retirements in the form of a check. For more information, contact FMEC Accounts Payable and Capital Credits Specialist Joanne Miller at (507) 379-8860 or joanne.miller@fmec.coop.

member news

OFFICE CLOSED

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative office will be closed Monday, September 7, in observance of Labor Day.

We hope you enjoy a safe and relaxing holiday weekend. As always, members can report outages through FMEC's regular outage reporting channels.

JOIN US AT THESE UPCOMING
COMMUNITY EVENTS

Wind Down Wednesday

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative will be at Wind Down Wednesday in downtown Albert Lea on Wednesday, August 12.

This summer market and music festival brings the community together for local vendors, food, entertainment and family-friendly fun. Stop by the FMEC booth to say hello, connect with our team and learn more about your local electric cooperative.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Albert Lea Safety Day

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) will be at Albert Lea Safety Day on Tuesday, September 15, from 4 to 6 p.m. at Morin Park, 222 St. Mary Ave. in Albert Lea.

This free, family-friendly event gives kids and families a hands-on way to learn important electrical safety tips. Attendees can explore emergency vehicles, meet local police officers, firefighters and first responders, and learn about fire safety, water safety, bike and pedestrian safety, and more.

FMEC will be there with safety information, games and prizes. No fee or registration is required. Stop by and join us for a fun, informative evening focused on helping families stay safe.

MEET OUR NEW
APPRENTICE LINEWORKER



Please join us in welcoming Tanner Brinkman to our employee group!

Tanner joined the team on July 13 as an Apprentice Lineworker. He'll play an important role in delivering the safe, reliable service our members count on. He is looking forward to learning more about the cooperative and the members we serve.

Tanner grew up in Waseca, MN, and has two sisters, one older and one younger. Outside of work, Tanner enjoys hunting and fishing, most notably ice fishing once winter rolls around.

Welcome to FMEC, Tanner!



NEWSLETTER BILL CREDIT PROMOTION UPDATE

To help protect member data and strengthen account security, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) will be discontinuing the hidden account number bill credit promotion in the *County Lines* newsletter.

In place of this promotion, we are increasing the bill credit for member-submitted recipes selected for publication in the newsletter. Members whose recipes are chosen will now receive a \$20 bill credit.

We appreciate our newsletter readers and look forward to continuing to feature recipes from FMEC members in future issues.



FMEC employees wore red in support of Go Red for Women, helping raise awareness about women's heart health.



FMEC employees helped "Pack the Trailer" during the annual food drive to support local families.

WELLNESS COMMITTEE CONTINUED...

Some efforts have become employee favorites, including the Healthy Snack Market, which has nutritious options available for purchase at cost, and the annual Hunt for a Cure Contest in October. Held in recognition of cancer awareness, the contest encourages employees to move naturally, enjoy friendly competition and learn more about different types of cancer.

"Employee wellness is important because healthy, happy employees are more engaged, productive and better equipped to serve our members," said Robyn Joel, FMEC's Plant Accountant.

"Since employees spend at least eight hours a day at work, we focus on making healthy choices the easy choices by offering wellness programs, resources and reminders that support well-being both at work and at home."

By taking care of the people who take care of our members, FMEC is strengthening its team, its workplace culture and its ability to serve members each day.

NEW FRIENDS AND LASTING MEMORIES IN WASHINGTON

This June, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) sent two local students to our nation's capital as part of the National Youth Tour, a scholarship program administered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) that offers students a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The statewide trip is sponsored by each electric cooperative that sends students, coordinated by the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), and hosted by NRECA. Nearly 2,000 students from across the United States attend the activity-filled week and learn firsthand about politics, community development, and the governmental process alongside peers from nearly every state in the nation.

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative was excited to sponsor two students from our service area, Markey Samp of Alden-Conger High School and Karina Lee of Southland High School. Having each visited Washington, D.C., once before on a trip that involved a long bus ride, the two were relieved to make this journey by plane.

Along the way, the delegates toured iconic sites ranging from the Lincoln Memorial, the Holocaust Museum, and Capitol Hill to Arlington National Cemetery and the National Archives. Karina noted that her favorite stop was the National Museum of the Marine Corps, which she found interactive and engaging from start to finish. Markey counted the Marine Corps Evening Parade among her favorite memories of the week. The week wrapped up with Youth Night, a dance that gave students one last chance to connect with peers from across the nation.

Markey and Karina were also quick to mention their bus driver, Jim, as a standout part of the trip. He was adored by the whole group and made the week even more memorable.

So how do you meet 2,000 people in just one week? One of Youth Tour's favorite traditions is the state pin scavenger hunt, where students challenge each other to collect as many pins as possible, or track down one from every state. This year's Minnesota pin held special meaning for our delegates as it was designed by Benett Grove, one of FMEC's 2025 Youth Tour delegates.

Beyond the sightseeing, the girls came home with something just as valuable: lifelong friendship. While there, the two bought matching sweatshirts, which now serve as a keepsake of a week filled with memories that will last a lifetime.

The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour has been a joint effort of local electric co-ops, MREA, and NRECA since 1964. Students wishing to participate in 2027 should visit the cooperative's website at www.fmec.coop for more information coming soon.



IT'S parade SEASON

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative employees enjoyed taking part in several area parades this summer. Community celebrations give us a chance to connect with members, see familiar faces and show our cooperative pride beyond the office and the line crew.

Thank you to everyone who waved as the FMEC bucket truck made its way along the parade routes. We were glad to join the fun and share a few sweet treats with the communities we are proud to serve.



WHAT IS DEMAND, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Your electric use is measured in two different ways: energy and demand. Understanding the difference can help explain how electricity costs are determined and why the timing of your use matters.

ENERGY IS HOW MUCH YOU USE

Energy is the total amount of electricity you use over time. It is measured in kilowatt-hours, or kWh, and appears on your monthly electric bill. Think of energy like the total number of miles you drive during a month.

DEMAND IS HOW MUCH YOU USE AT ONCE

Demand measures the amount of electricity needed at a specific moment, typically during a 15-minute interval. It is measured in kilowatts, or kW.

Using several large appliances at the same time creates higher demand than using those appliances at different times, even when the total amount of electricity used is similar.

Think of demand like your driving speed. The faster you travel at one moment, the higher your speed. In the same way, the more electricity your home requires at one time, the higher your demand.

ONE HOME, TWO DIFFERENT PATTERNS

Consider two members who use the same appliances during the evening.

John arrives home and starts the oven, dishwasher and laundry at about the same time. Because all the appliances are operating together, his home creates a higher demand for electricity.

Jane uses the same appliances but spreads them across several hours. She starts the oven first, uses the dishwasher later and waits to start her laundry. Her total energy use may be similar, but her highest demand is lower.

The difference is not necessarily how much electricity they use. It is how much they use at one time.

WHY DEMAND AFFECTS COSTS

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) must maintain enough generation, transmission and distribution capacity to serve members during the busiest periods of the day. When many homes and businesses use large amounts of electricity

at the same time, the cooperative's overall peak demand increases.

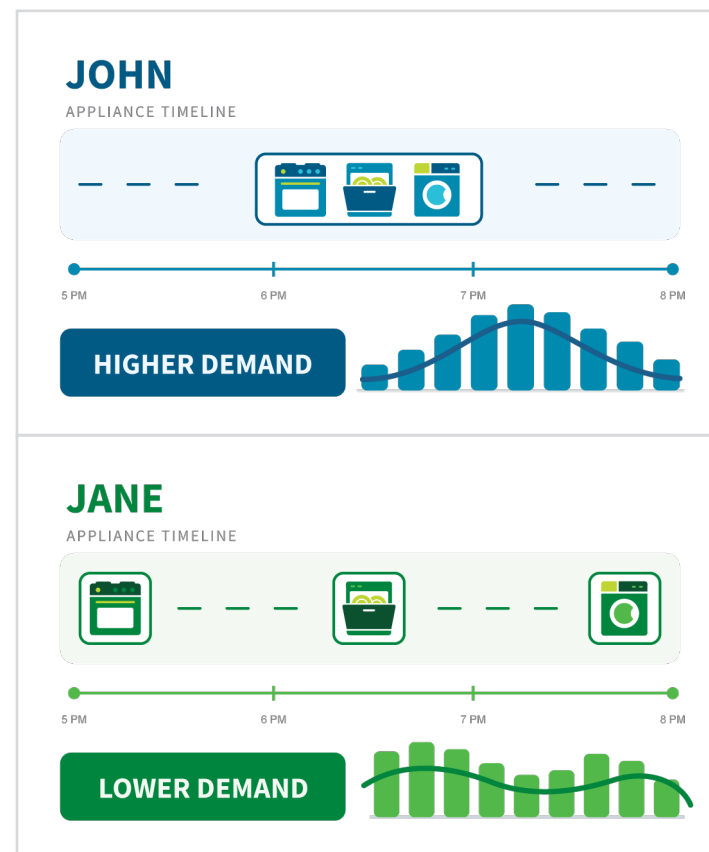
Those peaks can raise the cost of purchasing power and maintaining the equipment needed to deliver it reliably.

SMALL CHANGES CAN HELP

You can reduce your household demand by staggering the use of major appliances when practical. For example:

- Run the dishwasher after cooking is complete.
- Avoid using the clothes dryer and oven at the same time.
- Charge an electric vehicle during lower-use hours.
- Use appliance delay-start features to spread out energy use.

Even small shifts can help lower the cooperative's overall peak demand. When members work together to manage demand, it supports more stable costs and benefits the entire cooperative community.



GET MORE FROM YOUR ENERGY DOLLAR WITH HOT WATER

Hot water is part of daily life, from showers and laundry to dishes and cleaning. Because your water heater operates year-round, choosing an energy-efficient model can reduce your home's electricity use.

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative's Water Heater Program offers rebates to lower the upfront cost of qualifying equipment while supporting long-term energy savings.

CHOOSE AN OPTION THAT FITS YOUR HOME

FMEC offers rebates for qualifying electric water heaters:

- \$500 for a qualifying heat pump water heater
- \$600 for an 85-gallon Marathon water heater
- \$700 for a 100-gallon Marathon water heater
- Up to the purchase price, excluding sales tax, for qualifying water heaters installed in a new home or as part of a gas-to-electric conversion

Heat pump water heaters operate efficiently without load control. Qualifying Marathon, new-home and gas-conversion

models must be enrolled in FMEC's load control program.

SAVE WITH LOAD MANAGEMENT

Load management allows FMEC to temporarily manage participating water heaters during periods of high electricity demand. A properly sized tank stores hot water for use during these times, helping maintain household comfort.

Reducing peak demand helps control wholesale power costs and supports stable electric rates for all members. It is one household upgrade that benefits both your home and the cooperative.

BEFORE YOU BUY

Contact FMEC before purchasing a water heater to confirm eligibility and program requirements.

Submit the rebate form and dated receipt or invoice within three months of purchase. Rebates are available through December 31, 2026, or until funds are depleted. Make your next water heater an investment in long-term energy savings.

CLASSIFIED *marketplace*

FOR SALE

VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:

2020 ALUMACRAFT 14' BOAT. With shoreland'r trailer & 15 hp Evinrude motor. Like new. \$6,900. Call (507) 369-4239.

FARM:

10 ACRES OF GRASS HAY FREE FOR MOWING AND BALING. In Bancroft township. Call (507) 373-0263.

MISCELLANEOUS:

TWO ANTIQUE METAL WAGON WHEELS. 53" in diameter. \$50, each. Call (507) 383-0248.

CRAFTSMAN 12" RADIAL ARM SAW WITH DUST COLLECTION & ROLLING MOUNT. \$250, OBO. Call (507) 261-4914.

3-POINT HITCH DR RAPID FEED WOODCHIPPER. Model TPH 450. Good working condition. Includes PTO shaft and extended chute. \$1,500. Call (507) 456-4106.

17 FT ALUMINUM GRUMMAN CANOE. With carrying yoke. \$500, OBO. Call (507) 383-0521.

GRAVELY 272Z ZERO TURN MOWER. 72 inches. 1,263 hours of use. \$3,500. Call (507) 440-2226.

HOSTAS FOR SALE. Call (507) 273-2141.

WANTED

WEATHERVANES. Call (507) 402-0880.

WOODS L306 MOWER DECK. Call (507) 402-6793.

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR (PINBACK) BUTTONS. 1976-1981. Call (507) 754-5103.

PRE 1965 SILVER COINS. Will pay a fair price. Call (507) 396-8271.

FREE

WATER TANKS. Will not hold water. Previously used as raised garden beds. Leave a message. (507) 437-7141.

OAK FIREWOOD. You cut. Call (507) 318-8158.

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. Select **MY COOPERATIVE**. Click on **NEWSLETTER** under **NEWS & INFO** tab. You may also email ads to 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.

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FREEBORN MOWER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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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
Kiosk, Available 6:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
7 Days a Week

Board Meetings:

Typically the last Tuesday of each month.

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stay ready through every season.



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LET'S COOK



WORLD'S BEST COOKIES

Submitted By: Truman Gullord

- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup oil
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 egg
- 3½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup crushed cornflakes
- 1 cup oatmeal
- 1/2 cup coconut

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cream together the butter, oil, brown sugar and white sugar. Add the egg, flour, baking soda, chopped nuts and vanilla, and mix well. Stir in the crushed cornflakes, oatmeal and coconut. Roll the dough into balls, flatten slightly and bake for 8-10 minutes.

Members may submit one short recipe per month by email to 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 \$20 electric bill credit.