



Freeborn
Mower
Electric
Cooperative

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county lines

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2026 • VOLUME 87 • NO. 07



FROM THE FIRST CUP OF COFFEE TO THE LAST LIGHT OUT

Most of us do not think much about electricity as we move through the day. We simply expect the lights to turn on, the coffee to brew and the refrigerator to keep doing its job.

But from the moment the day begins, electricity is working right alongside us.

It powers the alarm clock, hot shower, coffee maker and phone charger that help get the household moving. As the day gets busier, it keeps computers, schools, clinics and local businesses running.

On farms, electricity supports water pumps, ventilation, milking equipment, grain handling and shop tools. #55403 Reliable power helps make possible the work that feeds and supports our communities every day.

At home, electricity keeps food fresh, tackles the laundry and dishes, and keeps us comfortable through Minnesota's changing seasons. At mealtime, it helps prepare dinner, gather the family around the table and clean up afterward.

Electricity also provides much more than convenience. For some members, it powers medical equipment, mobility devices or refrigerated medications. It keeps phones charged, homes secure and important services available when they are needed most.

Then there are the moments that make a house feel like home: movie nights, video calls, music in the kitchen and a lamp beside a favorite chair.

Even after the last light goes out, electricity is still on the job. Refrigerators keep humming, water heaters prepare for morning and security systems keep watch.

Every kilowatt-hour helps make something possible, from a warm meal and a completed chore to a productive workday and a comfortable night.

At Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, we are proud to power the everyday moments that matter. From the first cup of coffee to the last light out, electricity keeps life moving.

ceo message
Jim Krueger, President & CEO



THE COST AND VALUE
OF RELIABLE ELECTRICITY

At Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC), our commitment is to deliver power safely, reliably, and affordably. While the monthly bill represents the cost of electricity, it also reflects the value of a service that is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Behind every flip of a switch is a complex network of substations, power lines, transformers, vehicles, technology, and dedicated employees working to ensure electricity reaches your home or business when you need it most.

One component of your bill is the **Basic Service Charge**. This charge helps cover the fixed costs of upkeeping the electric system, regardless of how much electricity is used. It supports investments in infrastructure, system maintenance, vegetation management, equipment, and the personnel necessary to provide reliable service. These costs exist whether a member uses a little electricity or a lot.

The second component is the **Energy Charge**, which reflects the amount of electricity consumed. This charge is based on the number of kilowatt-hours (kWh) used during the billing period. A kilowatt-hour is the measure of energy usage over time. As temperatures climb and air conditioning systems run longer, energy consumption frequently increases, resulting in higher monthly bills.

There is another important factor that influences the cost of providing electricity: **Demand**. Demand measures how much electricity is being used at a particular moment. During hot summer afternoons, when air conditioners across our service territory are running at the same time, the cooperative experiences higher system demand. #1446105 Because wholesale power costs are considerably influenced by these peak periods, managing demand is one of the most effective ways to control costs.

FMEC members play an important role in this effort. By shifting activities, such as laundry, dishwashing, and other energy-intensive household chores, to mornings, evenings, or other off-peak hours, members can help reduce peak demand. Small actions taken by many members can have a considerable impact on the cooperative’s overall power costs.

Electricity is one of the best values available today. It powers our comfort, convenience, productivity, and quality of life every day. At FMEC we remain focused on delivering that value while making prudent investments in our electric system to maintain the reliability that our members depend on today and in the future.

-Jim Krueger



RATE ADJUSTMENT REMINDER

Rate adjustments will take effect with October billing statements. These changes are the result of a cost-of-service study, which helps ensure rates more closely reflect the actual cost of providing electric service to each account location.

Because the cost to serve different types of accounts can vary, some members may see an increase, while others may see a slight decrease. The goal is to keep rates fair, transparent, and aligned with the cooperative’s long-term financial strength.

We appreciate your understanding as we continue working to provide reliable service while maintaining a fair rate structure for all members.

member news

OFFICE CLOSED

Our office will be closed on Friday, July 3, 2026 in observance of Independence Day.

POLE AND EQUIPMENT
INSPECTIONS UNDERWAY

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) has contracted with Technology Inspections to inspect utility poles and underground facilities throughout our service territory. Contractors will be clearly identified and may use UTVs or side-by-sides to travel between inspection locations. Please contact FMEC at (800) 734-6421 with any questions.

CHECK YOUR CURRENT
DISTRICT AND DIRECTOR

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) recently adjusted its board district boundaries to better balance the number of members represented by each director. FMEC is required to renew district boundaries every ten years to ensure fair and equal representation.”

The changes were made in accordance with FMEC’s bylaws and approved by the Board of Directors. Only a few hundred members were affected. Members impacted by the change may notice a new district number or director listed on their recent bill. Your current district and director’s name can be found in the upper-right corner of your monthly bill.

GRANT-FUNDED PROJECT
WILL STRENGTHEN
RELIABILITY NEAR ADAMS



Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative has received a Grid Resiliency Award from the Minnesota Department of Commerce to support an important infrastructure improvement near the City of Adams.

We sincerely appreciate the legislators whose support for these grant programs helps make projects like this possible. This funding allows utilities to strengthen critical infrastructure, prepare for future needs and continue delivering the reliable electric service members depend on.

Construction is scheduled to begin June 8 and is expected to be completed and placed into service by July 1. The project includes approximately one mile of new three-phase underground cable.

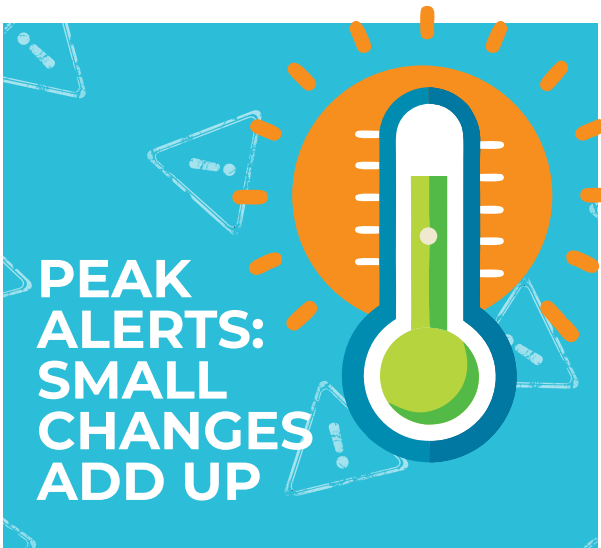
Once complete, the new line will provide an alternate electrical feed to the City of Adams. This added connection will give FMEC greater flexibility during planned maintenance and provide another option for serving the community during outages or emergency situations.

When part of the electric system must be temporarily taken out of service, an alternate feed may allow electricity to be rerouted through another section of the system. This can help reduce the number of members affected and potentially shorten outage times.

The project will improve reliability and strengthen the electric system for members in Adams and the surrounding area. It will also help FMEC respond more effectively when severe weather, equipment issues or other significant events affect the system.

FMEC remains committed to planning ahead and making responsible investments that support current members and future community growth. #1668201 This project reflects that commitment by improving operational flexibility, strengthening local infrastructure and enhancing grid resilience.

We are grateful for the state support that helped make this project possible and look forward to improving reliability to the City of Adams.



Hot summer days can place increased demand on the electric grid, especially when homes, farms and businesses are all using more electricity at the same time.

When demand is expected to be especially high, Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC) may issue a “Peak Alert” asking members to temporarily reduce or shift electricity use.

WHY PEAK ALERTS MATTER

Peak Alerts are not power outages. Electricity remains available, but wholesale power can cost more during periods of high demand. Reducing use during these limited windows can help FMEC:

- Manage wholesale power costs
- Reduce strain on the electric grid
- Support long-term affordability for members

HOW YOU CAN HELP

During a Peak Alert, consider:

- Raising your thermostat a few degrees
- Delaying laundry and dishwashing
- Charging electric vehicles later
- Turning off unnecessary lights and electronics
- Grilling outdoors instead of using the oven
- Running pool pumps and dehumidifiers later in the evening

During the summer, try to shift flexible energy use outside the peak hours of 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

No single household needs to make a major change. When many members take small steps together, the combined impact can make a meaningful difference.

STAY COOL AND SAVE ENERGY THIS SUMMER



Cooling can account for a significant share of summer electricity use. A few simple habits can help your air conditioner work less while keeping your home comfortable.

START WITH THE THERMOSTAT

- Set it as high as comfortably possible.
- Raise it a few degrees when you are away.
- Use a programmable or smart thermostat to adjust temperatures automatically.
- Avoid frequent, large temperature changes.

KEEP HEAT OUTSIDE

- Close blinds and curtains during the hottest part of the day, especially on south and west facing windows.
- Seal gaps around windows and doors.
- Limit how often exterior doors are opened.

USE FANS WISELY

- Ceiling fans can help you feel cooler without lowering the thermostat.
- Remember that fans cool people, not rooms.
- Turn them off when you leave.
- Set ceiling fans to rotate counterclockwise in summer.

REDUCE INDOOR HEAT

- Use the oven less often.
- Grill outdoors or use a microwave, slow cooker or air fryer.
- Run the dishwasher and clothes dryer during cooler morning or evening hours.

MORE WAYS TO SAVE

- Clean or replace HVAC filters regularly.
- Keep outdoor air-conditioning equipment free of debris.
- Wash full loads of laundry in cold water.
- Air-dry clothing when practical.
- Turn off unused lights and electronics.
- Unplug chargers and small appliances.
- Use kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans only as long as needed.

Small changes made consistently can reduce energy use, ease demand on the grid and help manage summer electric bills.



WHEN’S THE LAST TIME YOUR AC GOT A CHECKUP?

A professional tune-up keeps your system running efficiently, helps it last longer, and catches small problems before they turn into big ones. FMEC members may qualify for a \$25 rebate credited to their electric bill after scheduling service.

A QUALIFIED HVAC CONTRACTOR WILL:

- Clean the condenser coil
- Check refrigerant levels and pressure
- Inspect airflow
- Test system controls
- Check the filter
- Visually inspect the complete system

Depending on your equipment, service may also include checking belts and lubricating fan motors.

HOW TO APPLY

Submit the completed rebate form and a dated receipt or invoice within three months of service. Rebates are available through December 31, 2026, or until funds are depleted. Tune-up service only; repairs are not covered.

ELIGIBILITY

Your central air conditioner or air-source heat pump must be operational, more than three years old and located at a property served by FMEC. Equipment that received a tune-up rebate in 2024 or 2025 is not eligible.

IS BACKUP POWER RIGHT FOR YOUR HOME?



Most outages are brief, and Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) crews work to restore service as quickly and safely as possible. But even a short outage can affect sump pumps, private wells, medical equipment, refrigeration and heating systems. For some households, a backup generator offers real peace of mind.

WHY CONSIDER A GENERATOR?

A generator may be especially helpful if your household depends on electricity for:

- Medical or mobility equipment
- A sump pump or sewage pump
- A private well
- Electric heating
- Refrigerators or freezers with food, medication or farm products
- Remote work or a home-based business
- Livestock, agricultural or other essential operations

Your home’s location matters too. Rural or heavily wooded properties may be more vulnerable to storm damage. A permanently installed generator can also provide reassurance when the house is empty.

You don’t need to power your whole home, just the equipment that matters most. A qualified electrician or generator dealer can help you determine the right size.

PORTABLE OR STANDBY?

Portable generators cost less and can power essential appliances, but they require manual setup, fueling and outdoor use.

Standby generators are permanently installed and connected through a transfer switch. #1446105 They start automatically during outages and offer greater convenience, but at a higher cost.

MAKE SAFETY A PRIORITY

Follow the manufacturer’s instructions and always operate generators safely. Run portable generators outdoors, away from doors, windows and vents, to prevent carbon monoxide exposure.

Never plug a generator into a wall outlet. Back-feeding can endanger FMEC lineworkers. Generators connected to home wiring must use a properly installed transfer switch. Use outdoor-rated extension cords, let generators cool before refueling and maintain working carbon monoxide detectors.

CONGRATS TO OUR 2026 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) is proud to support local students as they pursue higher education and careers that strengthen our communities. In 2026, the cooperative awarded 17 scholarships totaling \$17,000 through three scholarship programs.



LINE WORKER SCHOLARSHIP

FMEC awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to Easton Schewe, who plans to pursue a career as a line worker. This scholarship helps address the need for skilled professionals who build, maintain, repair and restore overhead and underground power lines. Line workers prepare for this essential trade through certified technical college programs.

LUCK OF THE DRAW SCHOLARSHIPS

During FMEC's April 21 Annual Meeting, 15 students were randomly selected from a pool of applicants to receive \$1,000 scholarships for post-secondary education.

These scholarships are funded through forfeited Capital Credits in accordance with state law, allowing FMEC to reinvest the funds in local students and communities. We wish each recipient success as they continue their education. This year's winners are listed below.



- Avery Mauer, Albert Lea
- Miles Taylor, Austin
- Aubrielle Jacobs, Alden-Conger
- Amy Smith, Southland
- Ryan Hintz, Alden-Conger
- Betsy Kokot, Albert Lea
- Madison Vogt, Grand Meadow
- Weston Korman, Alden-Conger
- Blake Redman, Albert Lea
- Noah Teeter, Albert Lea
- Lainey Schmidt, Alden-Conger
- Axel Calderon, Albert Lea
- Landen Purdy, Alden-Conger
- Macy Mattson, Alden-Conger
- Abigayl Viktora, NRHEG



DAIRYLAND POWER COOPERATIVE SCHOLARSHIP

With support from our power supplier, Dairyland Power Cooperative, FMEC awarded one additional \$1,000 scholarship this year. #1668201 The recipient, Olivia Moore from Albert Lea, was selected through a random drawing using the same process as the Luck of the Draw scholarships.



WELCOME, WYATT!

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative welcomed Wyatt Grose to the team on May 18 as an Underground Construction Equipment Operator. Working behind the scenes and beneath the surface, Wyatt helps build and maintain the underground systems our members rely on every day. He's excited to put down roots locally, while gaining hands-on experience in the field.

When he's not on the job, Wyatt has his sights set on Alaska, where he hopes to take in the scenery and enjoy some fishing and hunting. He's also no stranger to stepping up when it counts. Wyatt serves as a volunteer firefighter in his community.



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MISCELLANEOUS:
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NEW 6-FT METAL STEP LADDER. \$45. Call (507) 377-3140.

STIHL GASOLINE BRUSH CUTTER/CLEARING SAW. Model FS 561. Like New. \$1,475. Call (507) 456-4106.

SCHOOL LUNCHROOM TABLE. Good shape. 12 ft, folds to 6 ft high/has wheels. \$40. Call (763) 639-4690.

WANTED

OLD POSTCARDS AND MAGAZINES. Call (507) 402-0880.

BROWNSDALE CREAMERY MILK CAN. Call (507) 567-2344.

FREE

WHITE VINYL GARDEN ARCH/LATTICE. Call (507) 320-0178.

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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President: Jim Krueger, President & CEO
Telephone: (507) 373-6421

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 15th of the current month to claim your \$25 bill credit.



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



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.

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

CONVENIENT AND SECURE

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- Report power outages and communicate with FMEC.



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LET'S COOK



PECAN PIE

Submitted By:
Audrey Bremer

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| • 1 C dark brown sugar | • 1-1/2 tbsp. flour |
| • 1/4 C white sugar | • 1 tbsp. milk |
| • 1/2 C butter | • 1 tsp. vanilla |
| • 2 eggs | • 1 C chopped pecans |

Directions:

In a large bowl, beat the eggs and then stir in the melted butter. Next, mix in the brown sugar, white sugar, and flour until well combined. Add the milk, vanilla, and nuts, and stir until well combined. Pour the mixture into a 9-inch pie pan. Bake in a preheated oven at 400°F for 10 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 350°F and continue baking for an additional 30 to 40 minutes, or until fully cooked.

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 \$10 electric bill credit.