Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative
People. Power. Possibilities.

county lines NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2026 • VOLUME 87 • NO. 11



IT TAKES A TEAM: MEET THE CREWS BEHIND THE WORK THAT KEEPS FMEC'S SYSTEM STRONG

When most people picture employees working outside at Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC), lineworkers may be the first to come to mind. While they play an essential role in keeping the lights on, they are part of a much larger team working throughout FMEC's service territory every day.

Meter technicians, service representatives, underground construction crews, tree trimmers, warehouse personnel and staking technicians all contribute to building, maintaining and improving the electric system our members depend on.

Through September, FMEC crews responded to more than 2,000 member outage events, replaced more than 125 wood poles and upgraded 110 street and security lights to energy-efficient LEDs. Crews also completed several significant construction projects to strengthen system reliability.

Behind each accomplishment is a team working together.

PLANNING AND BUILDING THE SYSTEM

For many projects, the work begins with FMEC's staking technicians, who help plan new services, system improvements, and construction projects while coordinating with members, contractors, and employees.

In 2026, FMEC completed several major tie-line projects, including approximately one mile of rebuilt and new three-phase underground distribution lines serving the City of Adams, with 71% of the project funded through a State of Minnesota resiliency grant. Similar projects included approximately three miles serving Alden and ten miles serving LeRoy.

These improvements strengthen connections within the electric system, providing more options for delivering power when outages occur.

Continued on page 6.

ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



90 YEARS OF PURPOSE, PROGRESS AND PEOPLE

As we enter our 90th year as an electric cooperative, I can't help but reflect on how grateful I am to be part of an organization that has relentlessly pursued a vision of bringing reliable power to communities in southern Minnesota.

It all started with a handful of people and an idea. Since then, dozens of board members and leaders before me, have helped build on that vision, making decisions and laying a solid foundation that has allowed Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative to grow, evolve, and serve Freeborn and Mower Counties for generations.

There's something pretty special about being part of an organization where the work we do today is connected to a vision that began 90 years ago, and where the decisions we make now will help shape its future for the next 90 years and beyond.

I'm incredibly grateful to be part of that story and to have the opportunity to help carry that legacy forward. Ninety years is a remarkable milestone, one worth pausing to recognize and celebrate. We hope that when you turn on your lights, you take a moment to appreciate the people, commitment, and history behind the power that serves your home, your business, and your community.

As we celebrate this milestone, we're also proud of our American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score of 85, which reflects our members' satisfaction with the service we provide. While we're proud of this achievement, we know satisfaction is something we must continue to earn every day. It challenges us to keep listening, improving, and finding ways to better serve our members.

Our history reminds us that a strong cooperative is built on trust, commitment, and a shared purpose. Our ACSI score is one measure of how well we're honoring that responsibility today.

As we look back on 90 years of progress, we're grateful to those who built the foundation before us and to the members who make this cooperative what it is today. Together, we'll continue building a future that honors our past while delivering the reliable power, exceptional service, and member-focused commitment our communities deserve for generations to come.

Thank you for being a part of
Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative.

Sincerely,
Jim Krueger



member news

HOLIDAY HOURS
Our office will be open during regular business hours on Veterans Day, Wednesday, November 11.

Our office will be closed on Thursday, November 26 and Friday, November 27 to allow our employees time with their families over the Thanksgiving Holiday.

NOTICE OF INTERCONNECTION DISTRIBUTED ENERGY: CO-GENERATORS AND SMALL POWER PRODUCERS
In accordance with the adopted Cooperative Rules implementing 216.B.164, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers that satisfy the conditions and become a Qualifying Facility. A Qualifying Facility is a cogeneration and small power production facility that satisfies the conditions in the 18 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 292.101 (b).

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative has posted the current interconnection documents on the cooperative's website (www.fmec.coop).

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.

The Nova Power portal application fee for distributed generation projects is $125 + $1 per kW ac for certified systems and $125 + $2 per kW ac for non-certified systems.

For further information contact our office at (507) 373-6421 or (800) 734-6421.

NOTICE OF RIGHTS FOR HOUSEHOLDS OF MILITARY SERVICE PERSONNEL
The Minnesota State Statute (325E.028 Utility Payment for Military Service Personnel) provides protection against a utility disconnection if a member of your household has been ordered into active military duty, for deployment, or for a permanent change in duty station during a period of active duty.

For more information or to apply for shut-off protection contact our office or go to https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/325E.028.



This Veterans Day, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) proudly recognizes four employees who have served our country: Allen Hendriks, Army National Guard; T.J. Kalis, Army National Guard; Nick Rolfing, Army National Guard; and John Kalis, U.S. Air Force.

Service, dedication, and commitment to others are values we hold close at FMEC, and we are especially proud of the veterans who bring those qualities to our cooperative. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to these employees, their families, and all veterans throughout the communities we serve. Your sacrifices, courage, and willingness to serve have made a lasting difference.



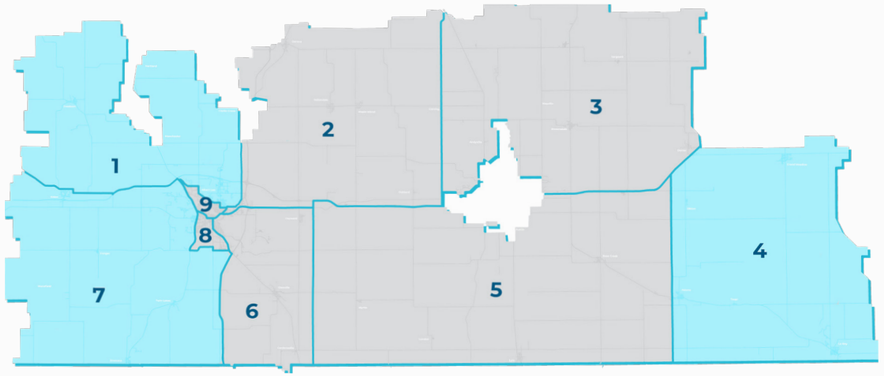
Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) is pleased to welcome Jason Bolinger, who joined the team on September 28 as a Staking Technician.

Jason will help plan electric line construction and maintenance projects, including designing line routes, identifying equipment, and coordinating with crews. He looks forward to the challenge of learning his new role and developing new skills.

A lifelong Albert Lea resident, Jason enjoys spending time with his wife, Stephanie, and their four children, Josie, Jorja, Ila and Ike. His perfect weekend is spent at home, working around the yard and enjoying family time.

Welcome to FMEC, Jason!

SEEKING APPLICANTS FOR THREE DIRECTOR SEATS



Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is governed by a nine-person Board of Directors. The directors are elected by their fellow FMEC members residing in the district. Elections are held in three districts each year, with each director elected to serve a three-year term.

Applications are now being accepted for the position of director in the following three districts:

DISTRICT 1: Represents areas northwest of Albert Lea, Freeborn, Hartland, Manchester, and Clarks Grove.

DISTRICT 4: Represents areas near and including Elkton, Grand Meadow, Adams, Taopi, and LeRoy.

DISTRICT 7: Represents areas in and around Alden, Conger, Twin Lakes, and Emmons.

Applicants must meet all eligibility requirements as specified in the cooperative's bylaws. Among the qualifications and responsibilities outlined in the Bylaws, applicants must be:

1. a current member receiving electric service at their primary residence, and
2. the primary residence must be in the district in which the director is elected.

No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director of the cooperative who:

1. is not a natural person and a member of the cooperative, receiving service at the member's primary residence in the district from which the director is elected;
2. within five (5) years preceding a director candidate's nomination, or during service on the Board of Directors, is finally adjudged to be guilty of a felony;
3. within three (3) years preceding a director candidate's nomination was an employee of the cooperative;
4. is an employee of the cooperative or a grandparent, parent, spouse, co-habitant, child, or grandchild of an employee of the cooperative;
5. is a person that is a grandparent, parent, spouse, co-habitant, child, or grandchild of an incumbent director whose district seat is not up for re-election at that time;
6. is in any way employed by or substantially financially interested in an enterprise competing with the cooperative or any cooperative-affiliated business;
7. is or becomes the full-time employee or agent of, or who is or becomes the full-time employer or principal of, another director;
8. is engaged in conduct that is a violation of law or violation of a cooperative policy or policies, or whenever a director has materially failed to satisfy his/her duties as a director, including the duty to regularly attend meetings of the Board of Directors; or
9. is employed by, materially affiliated with, or has a financial interest in, any individual or entity possessing a material or substantial conflict of interest with the cooperative or a cooperative subsidiary.

DIRECTOR ELECTION APPLICATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED

If you are a member of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative residing in one of the districts holding an election and would like to run for the position of FMEC director, please contact our office at (507) 373-6421 for an information packet. If you are unsure of the district in which you reside, it is shown at the top of your monthly electric bill.

Applications are due in our office by Friday, December 18, 2026 at 3:30 p.m.

MEMBER GOVERNANCE

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is owned and controlled by the members using its services. This core principles set us apart from other forms of utilities. Additionally, we operate on a not-for-profit basis through our Capital Credit retirement (return) of margins. Because we are so close to the members and their communities, we take pride in being both accountable and accessible.

Any member who meets the bylaw qualifications and has a desire to become a director of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative may apply for an open board position. This includes minorities, women, and individuals with a disability. Nominations are now open for members of District 1, District 4, and District 7. If you are unsure of the District in which you reside, see your monthly billing statement or call our office.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIRECTORS

While representing the members of their district, elected directors become a part of a nine-member board tasked with making decisions in the best interest of all members and the cooperative business. Directors work with the management team to provide direction and general oversight of the cooperative. Directors set policies, including retail rates.

To be effective, directors must be able to read financial statements, forecasts, and strategic reports. Director oversight ensures the democratic functioning of the cooperative in accordance with the cooperative's bylaws and respects the confidentiality of information provided or discussed. Directors must attend monthly meetings at the cooperative headquarters, typically on the last Tuesday of each month. They may also be called to additional meetings and training sessions.

RECORDATORIO:

Cualquier miembro que cumpla con los requisitos de los reglamentos internos y que tenga interes en ser director/a de la cooperative puede aplicar para puestos vacantes en la mesa directiva. Esto inlcluye miembros de grupos que son minorias, mujeres, y personas con discapacidades.

ELECTION PROCESS

Completed applications are due by 3:30 p.m. on Friday, December 18, 2026. After applications have been returned, members in each of the three districts holding an election will be notified of those who have filed.



POST FILING DEADLINE — NOMINATION BY PETITION

After the filing application deadline has expired, persons may still be nominated by filing a petition form, also available from our office. To become an applicant by petition requires fifteen (15) members from the district in which the election is being held to sign in support of a particular applicant on the petition form.

The petition form must be submitted to the cooperative office by 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 3, 2027.

WHEN THERE IS A SINGLE APPLICANT

Should only one applicant in a district come forward before the final deadline by petition, that applicant will be deemed elected as director.

WHEN THERE ARE MULTIPLE APPLICANTS

Should more than one applicant come forth by the petition deadline, either by direct application or petition, a biography of each applicant and a ballot will be sent to all members in these districts. Election opens on Wednesday, February 17, 2027 and closes on Friday, March 5, 2027. Please return mailed ballots in the proper envelopes to the third-party ballot company and not to our cooperative. Also, allow for any possible mail delays. If you received an electronic ballot, follow electronic voting instructions.

DIRECTORS BEGIN TERM

The elected directors will be seated during the Annual Meeting on Monday, April 5, 2027.

OUTDOOR CREWS CONTINUED...

FMEC's underground construction crew helps bring these projects to life, installing cable and equipment that support new construction and system improvements.

Meanwhile, tree trimming crews help prevent outages by managing vegetation near power lines, keeping rights-of-way clear and reducing potential damage during storms.

SERVING MEMBERS EVERY DAY

Not every job involves a major construction project. FMEC's meter technicians maintain and troubleshoot metering equipment to help ensure electric use is measured accurately.

Service representatives work directly with members in the field, assisting with service needs, investigating issues and helping resolve problems.

These roles are essential to the day-to-day service members rely on.

SUPPORTING THE WORK BEHIND THE SCENES

Before crews head into the field, FMEC's warehouse personell help ensure the materials, equipment and supplies needed for each job are ready and available. From transformers and cable to hardware and tools, that preparation keeps projects moving safely and efficiently.

It's especially important during outages, when employees across multiple roles must coordinate quickly to identify problems, gather materials, make repairs, and restore service.

ONE TEAM, ONE SYSTEM

Every pole replaced, mile of line constructed, tree trimmed, meter maintained and outage restored represents the efforts of more than one person.

Lineworkers may be the most visible members of FMEC's outside crews, but they never work alone. Behind every project is a team dedicated to keeping our electric system safe, strong and reliable for the members we serve.



SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT COMES FULL CIRCLE





For Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative's (FMEC) lineworker Dawson, a connection to the cooperative began years before he joined the team.

As a student, Dawson received two scholarships from FMEC, including a lineworker scholarship and a Luck of the Draw scholarship. Those awards helped make his education more affordable and ultimately supported the career path that would bring him back to the cooperative.

Dawson did not always know he wanted to work in the utility industry. He had considered becoming a lineworker when he was younger, thanks in part to encouragement from his dad, but his plans became clearer after spending two years at Riverland Community College. He eventually enrolled in the lineworker program at Minnesota West Community and Technical College.

The scholarships made a significant difference along the way. "They paid for most of my schooling with zero debt to pay off," Dawson said.

At the time he received the scholarships, Dawson never expected he would eventually become an FMEC employee, especially because he already had family members working at the cooperative. But on November 10, 2025, his connection to FMEC came full circle when he joined the team.

Looking back, Dawson sees the value of getting involved and taking advantage of opportunities available to students. "The more you get involved with an organization, even through something like applying for a scholarship, the more opportunities it can create down the road," he said.

His advice for today's students is simple: apply.

"Apply for as many scholarships as possible," Dawson said. "They can take time to fill out sometimes, but it's worth it." For Dawson, that effort helped reduce the cost of his education and supported a career that eventually brought him right back to FMEC.



WINTER IS COMING: IS YOUR BACKUP HEAT READY?

DUAL FUEL WINTER PREPAREDNESS TEST FOR INTERRUPTIBLE HEAT WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

This load control test is performed in advance of the winter Full Load Control season to ensure member familiarity with the control sequence and to ensure that backup heating systems have been validated for proper function.

The control test will begin at 6:55 a.m. on Wednesday, November 18, 2026. Heating services will be fully restored by 11:00 a.m. Please contact our Energy Solutions Department with any questions regarding this test.

WINTER LOAD CONTROL HOURS BEGIN DECEMBER 1

As colder weather approaches, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) is preparing to transition to its winter load control schedule, effective December 1.

Members participating in full load control programs should be aware of the following winter control periods, which run December through February:

- Morning: 7–10 a.m.
- Evening: 5–8 p.m.
- Maximum Control Events:
  3 per month and 7 per season for each time period.

These control periods help FMEC manage electricity demand during peak usage times, supporting a more efficient and reliable electric system throughout the winter months.

CLASSIFIED *marketplace*

FOR SALE

FARM:

JOHN DEERE 7' MANURE BUCKET. $500. Call (507) 440-0909.

SMALL SQUARES OF GRASS HAY. $4.00 each. Call (507) 391-2347.

SNOWPLOW BLADE. 8 ft. Very good condition. Came off a 1 ton. $200. Call (507) 383–0802.

HOUSEHOLD:

NEWER ELECTRIC LIFT POWER RECLINER CHAIR. Many adjustments. Light gray used 3 months. $900 OBO. Albert Lea area. Call (218) 324-1197.

BLUE CORN FLOWER CORNING WARE. Different-sized pans. Perfect condition. Call (507) 383-4909.

5-PIECE COUNTER-HEIGHT AMISH-MADE PUB TABLE. Beautiful dark wood. $600. Call (507) 402-6880.

MISCELLANEOUS:

2-LIGHT FLUSH MOUNT OUTDOOR LIGHTING. 5 3/4" x 12 1/8" matte black/glass inset. Box never opened. $30. Call (507) 402-8071.

LARGE CHEST OF DRAWERS. Good shape. $50. Call (507) 297–5624.

10-INCH COMPOUND BOSCH MITER SAW. $150. Call (507) 373 – 2512.

LARGE METAL GARDEN WAGON. Openwork design. Perfect for holding plants. $50 OBO. Call (507) 373-0093.

WANTED

CAST IRON SKILLET AND WAFFLE. Call (507) 402-0880.

FREE

CANNING JARS. Quart & pint sizes. Call (507) 383-2355.

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.

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative

People. Power. Possibilities.

USPS 209-540 ISSN 8755-9099

Periodicals Postage Paid at Albert Lea, MN and other locations.

Postmaster: Send address corrections to:
County Lines, P.O. Box 611, Albert Lea, MN 56007-0611

County Lines is published monthly, except for the Annual Report edition, by Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, 3366 Bridge Avenue, Albert Lea, MN 56007. This monthly publication is designed to provide information about the cooperative to the member-owners of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative.

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

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.



Recycle Holiday Light Strings

Give your old holiday lights a new purpose! Recycle your unwanted holiday lights at FMEC through January 31, 2027. Drop them in the collection bin inside the front lobby. Lights will be donated to a southern Minnesota organization to recover reusable components.



TORTILLA SOUP

Submitted By: Amy Vogt

- 1 lb. ground turkey or beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 pkg of taco seasoning
- 1 pkg of powdered ranch
- 1 can red kidney beans
- 1 can chili beans
- 2 cans diced tomatoes
- 1 sm. can green chilis
- 1 can of corn

Directions:
In a large pot, brown ground turkey or beef over medium heat. Add onion, taco seasoning and ranch seasoning. Cook for 2–3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in the beans, tomatoes, green chiles and corn, including their liquids. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 10–15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve hot with sour cream, shredded cheese, tortilla chips or your favorite taco toppings.

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.*