



Freeborn
Mower
Electric
Cooperative

People. Power. Possibilities.

county lines

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2026 • VOLUME 87 • NO. 10



NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

LOCAL OWNERSHIP. LOCAL DECISIONS. LOCAL IMPACT.

October is National Co-op Month, a time to celebrate the cooperative difference and the role member-owned businesses play in the communities they serve. At Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC), that difference begins with you. FMEC exists to serve its members, providing safe, reliable electricity while keeping the long-term needs of our members and communities in mind.

Being a cooperative is about more than delivering electricity. It means investing in the system that serves you, supporting local organizations and programs, giving members a voice and strengthening the communities we call home. The numbers featured here offer a snapshot of FMEC and the people, infrastructure and resources it takes to serve our membership.

The cooperative model also means FMEC is accountable to the people it serves. From local leadership and member participation to Capital Credits and community involvement,

members are part of something built around shared ownership and purpose. That connection keeps FMEC focused on serving members well today, while planning responsibly for the future.

During Co-op Month, we are proud to celebrate that connection and grateful to the members who make our cooperative what it is.

FMEC is powered by nearly 18,000 member-owners across 1,234 square miles of service territory and guided by nine locally elected board members. Together, those numbers reflect what makes the cooperative model different: local ownership, local leadership and a shared commitment to the communities we serve.

ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



CELEBRATING WHAT MAKES US A COOPERATIVE

Service, community, and shared ownership remain at the heart of FMEC.

October is National Co-op Month, a time celebrated not only nationally but internationally as cooperative organizations across industries recognize a decades-old business model that has stood the test of time, built on the foundational belief that individuals can accomplish more together than they can separately.

As the CEO of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC), I get to see the value of the cooperative business model firsthand. Every day, our employees work together to serve our members with excellence in every interaction, every service call, and every community event we participate in.

Our cooperative exists today because people came together to solve a challenge that was too great to tackle on their own: bringing reliable electricity to Freeborn and Mower Counties.

That same spirit of cooperation continues to define who we are today. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is not simply an ordinary business. Our members are more than customers who purchase the service we provide, they are the owners of the cooperative. That ownership gives our members a voice and a vested interest in the success of the cooperative and the communities we serve.

The cooperative model also reminds us that success is not measured solely by the bottom line. It is measured by the service we provide, the investments we make in our communities, the reliability of the electric system we maintain, and the relationships we build with the people we serve. This is the Cooperative Difference.

As I reflect on what makes Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative special, I am reminded that our success is truly a shared effort. I am grateful for our employees who bring dedication and professionalism to their work every day, for our board members who provide leadership and keep the interests of our members at the forefront, and most importantly, for our members who make FMEC possible.

Thank you for being such an important part of FMEC. We are grateful for your continued trust and support.

Sincerely,
Jim Krueger

COUNTY LINES NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

United States Postal Service Requirement for Second Class Publications

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

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member news

SAVE THE DATE: FMEC CELEBRATES 90 YEARS

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is celebrating 90 years of serving our members and communities! Mark your calendar for Tuesday, December 8, 2026, and join us for a special 90th Anniversary Open House. Guests will have an opportunity to look back at FMEC's history, connect with others and enjoy hors d'oeuvres.

More details and a formal invitation will be shared as the event approaches. We hope you'll celebrate this milestone with us!

A NEW LOOK IS COMING TO WWW.FMEC.COOP

The Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative website is getting a fresh new look! Our updated site is being designed to make it easier for members to find important information, explore programs and rebates, access helpful resources and stay connected with cooperative news.

The refreshed website will feature an updated design and a more user-friendly experience while keeping the information members rely on close at hand.

Watch for the new FMEC website coming soon!

YOUR COOPERATIVE, YOUR VOICE: 2027 DIRECTOR ELECTION INFORMATION

Throughout our history at Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC), we have never strayed from our commitment to serve our member-owners. We do not take this responsibility lightly, and part of ensuring we continue to operate with our members' best interests in mind is through the governance of our board of directors. Directors elected from and by our cooperative membership provide the policy direction for FMEC.

2027 DIRECTOR ELECTION INFORMATION

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is governed by nine directors who are member-owners of the cooperative. Elections are held in three different districts each year. Board members are elected by the membership and serve a three-year term. Directors meet monthly at the cooperative headquarters, typically on the last Tuesday of each month.

Applications are now available for interested members in District 1, District 4, and District 7.

- 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.

If you are a member of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative who lives in one of the districts up for election and would like to run for the position of FMEC director, stay tuned for more details in the November issue of the County Lines Newsletter, or contact our office.

- Board members must attend monthly board meetings and other special meetings as they are called.
- They are responsible for the adoption of policies, to assure the democratic functioning of the cooperative in accordance with the Bylaws, and respect the confidentiality of information provided, among many other duties.

Any member meeting the Bylaw Qualifications who has a desire to become a director of the cooperative, may apply for an open board position. This includes minorities, women, and individuals with a disability.

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 incluye miembros de grupos que son minorias, mujeres, y personas con discapacidades.

GET AHEAD OF HEATING SEASON



The first cool mornings of fall are a reminder that heating season is not far away. Before winter settles in, October is a good time to make sure your home and heating system are ready for colder weather. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) offers several programs and rebates that can help members improve comfort, efficiency and energy savings.

THINKING ABOUT A HEATING UPGRADE?

If your heating system struggled last winter or is nearing the end of its useful life, fall is a good time to explore your options before the coldest temperatures arrive.

FMEC offers rebates for qualifying equipment, including:

- Air-source heat pumps and mini-splits: \$300 per ton
- Geothermal heat pumps: \$500 per ton
- Variable-speed ECM furnace blower motors: \$35
- Qualifying Honeywell or Emerson Wi-Fi thermostats: \$25 with enrollment in FMEC's Load Management Program

Heat pumps are an energy-efficient option that can provide both heating and cooling, while Wi-Fi thermostats can help members better manage temperatures throughout the day.

GIVE YOUR HOME A FALL ENERGY CHECKUP

A few simple steps now can help your home operate more efficiently when colder weather arrives:

- **Schedule heating system maintenance.** Have your furnace, boiler or heat pump inspected before it begins working overtime.
- **Check your furnace filter.** A dirty filter restricts airflow and makes your heating system work harder. Check it regularly throughout heating season.
- **Stop drafts.** Check windows and exterior doors for air leaks and add caulk or weatherstripping where needed.
- **Put your thermostat to work.** Adjust temperatures when you are sleeping or away from home. For many heating systems, setting the thermostat back 7 to 10 degrees for eight hours a day can reduce annual heating costs.
- **Use the sun.** Open curtains or blinds on sunny windows during the day and close them at night to help retain heat.
- **Look beyond the heating system.** Insulation and air sealing can make a significant difference in how well your home holds onto the heat you are already paying for.

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

A Comfort Plus Homes energy audit can help identify areas where your home may be losing energy. For \$75, the audit evaluates your home's air tightness and provides recommendations for improvements.

FINANCING MAY BE AVAILABLE

For larger energy-efficiency projects, FMEC's Beneficial Electrification Financing may help make improvements more affordable.

START PLANNING BEFORE THE COLD ARRIVES

Taking action now gives you time to compare equipment, schedule contractors and explore available incentives before your heating system is working its hardest.

FMEC's 2026 HVAC rebates are available through December 31, 2026, or until funds are depleted. Required documentation must be submitted within three months of the purchase date.

Before purchasing equipment, review current rebate requirements or contact FMEC's Energy Solutions Department at (507) 373-6421 to learn which programs may be available for your home.

WINTER LOAD MANAGEMENT REMINDERS

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative offers members load management programs to help reduce electricity consumption during high-demand times, while energy market prices are elevated. These programs support our commitment to grid reliability, and serve to lower overall energy costs, promote sustainable energy use, and ensure dependable service for all members.

Residential electric water heaters and auto-start generators enrolled in load management will be controlled in the following situations:

- During a Maximum Generation Event, a minimum of four times per year (once each season) to a maximum of 16 times per year. A Max Gen Event can be declared at any time of the year.
- When electricity prices increase in the regional grid through the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) market, or when local conditions may impact reliability of the FMEC system, we take proactive steps to ensure continued service and stability for our members.

Additionally, winter load control events will be split into morning and evening events during December through February. During times of highest demand for electricity, enrolled interruptible heat (dual fuel) loads will be managed in the mornings, beginning at 6:55 a.m., with restoral starting at 10:00 a.m. Enrolled dairy water heaters, grain dryers, and manual standby generators are on the traditional winter control schedule, beginning at 4:55 p.m., with restoral starting at 8:00 p.m.

If you're a member and want to learn more or enroll, you can contact FMEC's Energy Solutions Department at (507) 373-6421.



COLD WEATHER RULE IN EFFECT



Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative members who may have difficulty paying their winter energy bills are reminded the Cold Weather Rule is in effect from October 1 through April 30.

If you are unable to pay your electric bill by the due date, you must contact our office to arrange a payment plan. Your service may be discontinued, even during the winter months if you fail to respond to the disconnect notice.

RESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC HEAT TAX EXEMPTION

Residential consumers using electricity as their primary heat source (50% or more) are exempt from sales tax for the billing months of November, December, January, February, March, and April.

FMEC requires a signed certificate stating that your primary source of heat is electricity. The purpose is: 1) It notifies FMEC to remove the sales tax from your bill for the qualifying months. 2) Should FMEC be audited by the Department of Revenue, FMEC would utilize the exemption certificate signed by you as our authority to remove the sales tax. This is for the protection of the cooperative. If FMEC were audited and it was found that the consumer's bill was illegally exempted, it would be the responsibility of the individual consumer to pay any amount due, plus penalties.

If this tax exemption applies to you, please submit a completed certification form to FMEC. The certificate is available from our office or can be downloaded from our website: **www.fmec.coop**. The downloadable form can be found under the **SERVICES** tab, Forms, Downloadable Information, Exemption Forms.

If you have previously submitted a form, there's no need to submit a new form. However, if you are no longer exempt from sales tax, please contact our office.

Separately metered electric heat does not require the completion of this form. Your electric heat usage is already exempt under that agreement.

MINNESOTA CO-OP LEADERS FOCUS ON AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE POWER AMID RISING DEMAND

As electricity demand grows and the cost of maintaining and expanding the electric system continues to rise, electric cooperatives across Minnesota are focused on keeping power reliable and affordable for members.

That was a key theme at the Minnesota Rural Electric Association's Energy Issues Summit, held August 5-6 in Bloomington. Cooperative leaders and industry experts discussed rising infrastructure costs, aging equipment and the need for additional generation and transmission resources.

After nearly two decades of relatively flat electricity use, demand is expected to increase. Meeting that growth will require continued investment and thoughtful long-term planning. Regional studies within the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) footprint indicate that significant new generation will be needed in the years ahead to maintain reliability.

"Our member cooperatives are focused on planning for the future while keeping electricity reliable and affordable," said MREA CEO Darrick Moe. "The conversations at this year's Energy Issues Summit underscored the importance of thoughtful energy policy, long-term planning and continued investment in the electric system that powers Minnesota communities."



Summit discussions also covered transmission investments, federal energy policy, nuclear energy, cooperative governance and utility regulation. Across each topic, affordability, reliability and resource adequacy remained closely connected.

For Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, these conversations are an important part of planning for the future. As the energy landscape continues to change, FMEC remains focused on making responsible decisions that support reliable service and manage costs for members.



MEET OUR NEW DATA ANALYST: RUTHIE CROCKATT

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) welcomed Ruthie Crockatt to the team on September 8 as our new Data Analyst.

Ruthie comes to FMEC with nine years of electric cooperative experience from Bandera Electric Cooperative in Texas. She is looking forward to learning how FMEC operates, expanding her skills and finding ways to support the cooperative and its members.

Ruthie recently relocated to be closer to family and has a 15-year-old son. The two enjoy drawing, swimming and learning more about coding together. She is also a Canadian citizen, spent several years boxing and has a knack for finding keyboard shortcuts and digital tools that make everyday tasks easier.

"I'm really looking forward to getting to know everyone, becoming part of the team and finding ways to be a helpful and dependable asset to the cooperative," Ruthie said.

DOES THIS MESSAGE PASS THE TEST?

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, a good reminder that staying safe online starts with knowing what to watch for. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative encourages members to take a few simple steps to protect their personal information, accounts and finances. Online scams are becoming more convincing, so when a message lands in your inbox or on your phone, use these three levels to decide whether it looks right, deserves a closer look or is a sign to walk away.



TRUST

The message feels familiar and expected.

- You recognize the sender.
- You were expecting the message.
- The request makes sense.
- Nothing feels rushed or unusual.

WHAT TO DO: Proceed, but stay alert for anything that seems out of place.



PAUSE

Something about the message feels unusual.

- You weren't expecting it.
- The sender looks slightly different.
- It includes a link or attachment.
- The message creates urgency or fear.

WHAT TO DO: Pause. Check the details and verify the request.



STOP

The message includes major warning signs.

- It asks for passwords or codes.
- It demands unusual payment methods.
- It threatens immediate consequences.
- It tells you not to tell anyone.

WHAT TO DO: Don't click, respond or pay. Contact the organization directly.

CLASSIFIED *marketplace*

FOR SALE

VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:

4-DEXTER TIRES ONLY. 500 miles, R235/75/15. 4-chrome wheels, off 97 GMC. Call (507) 373-6356.

FARM:

1500 GALLON POLY TANK W/HOSES & PUMP ON JD 1065 GEAR. \$1,500. Call (507) 460-0248.

2013 NEW HOLLAND WORKMASTER 45, 2 WD, CAB W/HEAT. \$9,500. Call (507) 383-7359.

HOUSEHOLD:

FIELD & FOREST WELL-INSULATED COVERALLS. Size L, Like new condition. Call (507) 279-1856.

INSULATED CARHARTT OVERALLS.

Size 50 reg. Excellent condition. Call (507) 383-2086.

OAK ROLLTOP OFFICE DESK. \$200 OBO. Call (507) 259-6872 or (507) 280-4132.

MISCELLANEOUS:

CENTURY PUNCHING BAG W/ PLATFORM FOR SPEED BAG. 150 lb. for counterweights, gloves. \$300 OBO. Call (507) 383-5912.

2-WHEEL DOLLY TO LIFT SNOWMOBILE. \$150. Call (507) 325-2427.

BLUEBILL DECOYS. Roughly 4-dozen. \$50.00. Call (507) 402-2387.

WANTED

ADVERTISING SIGNS. Call (507) 402-0880.

FREE

RAILROAD TIES 8 TO 12 FEET LONG. Call (507) 402-0660.

DEMICHORD HADDORF PIANO. Spinet size. Dark wood. Call (507) 402-7188.

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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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.

WHAT IS ELECTRIC DEMAND?

Electric demand is based on how much electricity you use at one time, not just how much you use overall. Understanding demand can help you better understand your energy use and your electric bill.



*Scan the QR code
to watch a short
video and learn
how electric
demand works.*

LET'S COOK



OATMEAL QUICK BARS

Submitted By: Patti Bangert

- 4 c. oatmeal (quick-cooking)
 - 1/2 c. white sugar
 - 3/4 c. brown sugar
 - 1 c. butter, melted
- Topping
- 1 (10oz) package chocolate chips
 - 1 c. peanut butter (creamy or crunchy)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix the first four ingredients thoroughly and press into a flat, greased cookie sheet. Bake for 12 minutes, or until the edges are golden and it stops bubbling. Once out of the oven, melt the chocolate chips with peanut butter and spread the mixture over the baked oatmeal bars. Let cool before cutting.

Bars can be frozen for later use.

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.