



Freeborn
Mower
Electric
Cooperative

People. Power. Possibilities.

county lines

NEWSLETTER

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BIG LESSONS FOR YOUNG SAFETY SUPERSTARS

A spark, a flash and a room full of wide eyes can make an electrical safety lesson hard to forget. On June 12, two Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative lineworkers brought that lesson to campers at the Albert Lea Family YMCA during its “We Are the Community” week. The Safety SuperStars presentation showed campers how quickly electricity can become dangerous and what they can do to stay safe.

SAFETY COMES TO LIFE

Campers learned how to recognize electrical hazards, what to do if a vehicle contacts a power line and how to respond to downed lines and other dangerous electrical equipment.

Questions and personal stories from campers helped FMEC’s lineworkers connect those lessons to real-life situations. That interaction is an important part of Safety SuperStars, helping students understand not just the rules, but why they matter.

A live demonstration made the danger even more visible as campers watched electricity arc and create sparks. It reinforced a critical message: always consider a downed power line energized, stay far away and alert an adult.

Campers also tried on protective gloves used by lineworkers and learned about the precautions required when working around electricity. Each camper left with a hard hat, electrical safety pamphlet and pencil to help continue the conversation at home.

That hands-on approach is at the heart of FMEC’s Safety SuperStars program, turning electrical safety into lessons students can see, understand, and remember.

RECOGNIZING EVERYDAY HAZARDS

Electricity is part of everyday life, which can make its hazards easy to overlook. Children encounter electricity at home, school, outdoors and on farms, often without realizing when a situation could become dangerous. Safety SuperStars helps students recognize those hazards before an accident happens.

This free program is available to schools and community groups throughout FMEC’s service area. Classroom presentations are designed for students in grades 3 through 5, with a special focus on fourth-grade classrooms. A typical presentation lasts about one hour and is led by two trained FMEC staff members.

Continued on page 4.

ceo message
Jim Krueger, President & CEO



THE COOPERATIVE
DIFFERENCE STARTS WITH YOU

Our members are important to us, and their voices hold great importance in the governance of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC). We rely heavily on members’ active participation in our election process for our nine districts.

An election is held each year for three of the nine board seats, and I cannot stress enough how much these elections matter for the future of the cooperative. When there is an election, this is your unique opportunity to have a stake in the game and a voice in your cooperative.

Our directors have an obligation to act with integrity, set the cooperative’s direction, provide oversight, and carry out fiduciary responsibilities. As a member, your vote is an important part of that process.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial to take the time to educate yourself about the candidates, their backgrounds, and the issues that impact our cooperative. The decisions made by our board have a direct effect on FMEC’s future and the members we serve. Those decisions are paving the way for a reliable and sustainable energy future.

We are navigating a time of shifting regulations and expectations, evolving technologies, inflation and many other challenges facing the electric industry. These changes make it more important than ever for our members to stay engaged and for our cooperative to benefit from informed, thoughtful leadership as we plan for the future.

Our current directors have an important role in guiding FMEC through these changes, and continued member participation helps ensure that the cooperative remains strong, responsive and well-positioned to serve our members for years to come. We encourage every member to get involved, ask questions, learn about the candidates or even consider running for a director’s seat yourself. More information will be coming soon about this year’s election process for districts 1, 4, and 7.

Sincerely,
Jim Krueger



DIRECTOR ELECTION
BALLOTS GOING DIGITAL
FOR PAPERLESS MEMBERS

Members in Districts 1, 4 and 7 will participate in this year’s director election. This year, members in those districts who are enrolled in paperless billing or receive their bills electronically will also receive their director election and ballot information electronically. These members will not receive a paper ballot by mail.

All other members in Districts 1, 4 and 7 will receive their director election materials and ballot information by mail.

Your vote is an important part of the cooperative’s democratic process. We encourage all eligible members to review the director information and cast their vote.

member news

OFFICE CLOSED

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative’s 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 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.

SAVE THE DATE:
90TH ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendar for Monday, April 5, 2027, and join us as we celebrate our 90th Annual Meeting.

More details will be shared as the date approaches. We look forward to gathering with our members and recognizing 90 years of cooperative service.



Minnesota Statue 216B.097 regulates the disconnection of residential accounts during the heating season. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is prohibited from disconnecting the utility service of a residential member during the period between October 1 and April 30 **if** the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit **and all** the following conditions are met:

1. You declare the inability to pay by completing the Inability to Pay Form. Household income must include proof of one-month gross total household income or be verified on a form provided either by Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative or by a local energy assistance provider.
2. Your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income and/or you are a recipient of energy assistance for this heating season.
3. You must have entered into a payment agreement and remain current under that agreement.

NEED HELP PAYING
YOUR ELECTRIC BILL?
CONTACT AN ENERGY
ASSISTANCE PROVIDER

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. To learn more about EAP or to apply for assistance, contact the agency that serves your area.

EAP RESOURCES:

- SEMCAC**
(507) 864-7515 | (800) 944-3281 | www.semcac.org
- Minnesota Valley Action Council**
(507) 345-6822 | (800) 767-7139
- North Iowa Community Action**
(641) 423-9028 | (800) 873-1899
- Three Rivers Community Action**
(507) 316-0610 | (800) 277-8418

SAFETY SUPERSTAR CONTINUED...



WHAT STUDENTS LEARN

Students learn where electricity comes from, how it reaches their homes and schools, how FMEC delivers power and what it means to be served by a member-owned cooperative. The program also introduces energy efficiency before focusing on electrical safety.

Through discussions, visuals, and demonstrations, students learn how to recognize and respond to potentially dangerous situations, including downed power lines, vehicle collisions with utility poles, trees or kites near lines, exposed electrical equipment, and farm or recreational equipment near energized lines.

One message applies to nearly every electrical emergency: create distance. If students see a damaged power line or something unusual around electrical equipment, they should stay back and get help rather than investigate the situation themselves.

The goal is not to make students afraid of electricity, but to give them the knowledge and confidence to make safe choices around it.

TAKING THE MESSAGE HOME

Students can ask questions, see lineworker protective equipment up close and take home safety materials to share with their families. Those conversations help extend the lesson beyond the classroom and reinforce safe habits at home.

FMEC also offers a shorter 30-minute version for community groups and events, like the presentation at the YMCA this summer, making it possible to bring electrical safety education to students in a variety of settings.



Schedule a Safety SuperStars Visit

As the new school year begins, FMEC encourages teachers and school leaders to make electrical safety part of the classroom conversation. A Safety SuperStars visit offers a memorable, hands-on way to reinforce lessons that could one day help prevent a serious injury or save a life.

By teaching students how to recognize electrical hazards today, FMEC hopes to help create safer homes, schools, farms and communities for years to come. And when students leave a Safety SuperStars presentation excited to tell someone at home what they learned, that safety message travels even further.

Bring Safety SuperStars to your classroom this school year. To learn more or request a presentation, visit www.fmec.coop/safety-demonstration or email safetydemo@fmec.coop.

**Electricity is powerful,
learning to use it safely
is even more powerful.**



Small contributions can make a big difference when a community comes together. Through Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up® program, members are helping support organizations and programs that strengthen the communities we call home.

During the second quarter, 29 local organizations received a total of \$22,940 in Operation Round Up® funding. Grants supported a wide range of community needs, including area schools, local food shelves, volunteer fire departments, 4-H programs and other organizations serving residents throughout the region.

Operation Round Up® is made possible by participating FMEC members who round their monthly electric bills up to the next whole dollar. The difference is typically just a few cents each month, but when thousands of small contributions are combined, they create meaningful funding for local projects and programs.

Those dollars help organizations provide essential services, expand educational opportunities, support youth programs and complete community improvement projects. For many recipients, Operation Round Up® funding helps turn plans into reality by covering expenses that may otherwise be difficult to fund.

The program is a simple example of the cooperative spirit at work. One member's spare change may seem small on its own, but together, those contributions add up to thousands of dollars invested directly back into local communities.

APPLY FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF FUNDING

Local nonprofit and community organizations are encouraged to apply for the next round of Operation Round Up® grants. The next application deadline is September 15, with approved funding expected to be distributed in late October.

Through the generosity of participating members, Operation Round Up® continues to create opportunities, strengthen local organizations and make a lasting difference throughout the FMEC service area.

CELEBRATING MARK WHITE'S RETIREMENT



Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) congratulates Staking Technician Mark White, who will retire September 4 after five years of dedicated service to the cooperative and its members.

Mark joined FMEC in April 2021 as a lineworker before transitioning into his current role as staking technician. Just one month after he started, FMEC moved into its current headquarters, making the transition one of the biggest changes he witnessed during his time at the cooperative.

For Mark, however, the people have been the most meaningful part of his FMEC experience. "I am part of a hard-working team that cares about our members and the quality of work we do," Mark said.

In retirement, Mark is looking forward to spending more time with his wife, Lisa, of 38 years, as well as their son, daughter and seven-year-old granddaughter. He also plans to travel, continue operating his home repair business and tackle a few projects closer to home. "I might even get some repairs done at my own house," he joked.

As he reflects on his time at FMEC, Mark is especially grateful for the coworkers who helped make his final years on the job memorable. "Thank you all for allowing me to complete my career in the best work environment I've ever had."

We thank Mark for his dedication to FMEC and our members and wish him a happy, healthy and fulfilling retirement.



Harvest season is one of the busiest times of year on the farm. Long days, changing conditions and the pressure to keep moving can make it easy to focus on the next field, the next load or the next task.

But before moving large equipment, raising an auger or lifting a truck box, take one more look.

Overhead power lines can become easy to overlook, especially in places you travel every day. Yet combines, grain carts, augers, dump trailers and other farm equipment can extend high enough to come dangerously close to energized lines.

A few extra seconds of awareness can help prevent a serious electrical accident.

LOOK UP BEFORE YOU MOVE

Before moving tall equipment, identify where overhead power lines are located and plan a route that provides plenty of clearance. Keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines, and allow even more room whenever possible.

Remember that equipment dimensions can change. An auger may be lowered during operation but raised for transport. A truck box may clear a line when down but not when lifted. New or upgraded equipment may also be taller or wider than what you have used in the past.

Never assume that because equipment cleared a line before, it will clear it again.

SLOW DOWN IN FAMILIAR PLACES

Many electrical accidents happen in areas people know well. Familiarity can make hazards blend into the background, especially during the fast pace of harvest.

Take a moment to check for lines before entering fields, pulling into grain-handling areas or moving equipment around buildings and bins. Make sure employees, family members and seasonal workers also know where electrical hazards are located.

A short conversation before the workday begins can help keep everyone aware.

KNOW WHAT TO DO IF CONTACT HAPPENS

If farm equipment comes into contact with a power line, stay inside the cab and call 911. Warn anyone nearby to stay away from both the equipment and the surrounding area. Electricity can travel through the equipment and into the ground, creating a dangerous area around it.

Do not leave the equipment until utility personnel confirm the line has been de-energized.

An exception should be made only if remaining in place puts you in immediate danger, such as during a fire. In that situation, jump clear without touching the equipment and the ground at the same time, then move away carefully while keeping your feet close together.

Harvest will always bring long days and plenty to think about. Electrical safety deserves a place on that list.

Before you move, raise or transport equipment this fall, take one more look. It may be the most important thing you do all day.

A QUICK SAFETY CHECK CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE DURING HARVEST

- **LOOK UP.** Identify overhead power lines before moving equipment.
- **KNOW YOUR HEIGHT.** Be aware of the maximum height of combines, augers, and other equipment.
- **LOWER BEFORE MOVING.** Fully lower augers, extensions and other equipment whenever possible.
- **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE.** Maintain at least 10 feet of clearance from power lines.
- **PLAN YOUR ROUTE.** Avoid traveling beneath power lines whenever another route is available.
- **TALK WITH YOUR CREW.** Make sure family members, employees and seasonal workers know where electrical hazards are located.
- **KNOW THE EMERGENCY STEPS.** If equipment contacts a power line, stay inside, and call 911.



Planning equipment upgrades? Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative offers rebates to help agricultural members improve energy efficiency and reduce operating costs.

2026 AGRICULTURE REBATES

- Dairy plate cooler or well-water pre-cooler: \$500
- Dairy refrigeration heat recovery with electric backup: \$300
- Low- or zero-energy livestock waterer: \$50
- Exhaust and circulation fans: \$1 per inch
- Variable frequency drives: \$30 per horsepower, up to \$1,000 per unit
- Scroll refrigeration compressors: \$30 per horsepower, up to \$1,000 per unit

HAVE ANOTHER EFFICIENCY PROJECT IN MIND?

Other qualifying energy-saving equipment may be eligible for a custom rebate.

Rebate applications and required documentation must generally be submitted within three months of purchase. Rebates are available through December 31, 2026, or until funds are depleted.



Learn more and view rebate requirements at www.fmec.coop/rebates.

CLASSIFIED *marketplace*

FOR SALE

VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:
2014 ALUMACRAFT COMPETITOR 165, YAMAHA 60 HP, MINNKOTA TROLLING MOTOR SPOT – LOCK – 24 V. \$17,500. Call (507) 402-8059.

FARM:
3 DEMCO WAGON. 650 BU. Like New. Leave message. Call (507) 320-0414.

HOUSEHOLD:
GOOD DRESSER \$15. Call (507) 325-2427.

CHEST OF DRAWERS 62” L, 18” W, 30” H. Good shape. Call (507) 297-5624.

LIVING QUARTERS POINSETTIA DESSERT PLATES. Set of 8 in original box. Call (507) 383-4909.

MISCELLANEOUS:
SEVERAL DOZEN SMALL & WIDE MOUTH PINT & QUART CANNING JARS. Call (507) 383-6572.

WANTED

8’ TOPPER FOR A 2016 CHEVY PICKUP. Leave message. Call (507) 402-2821.

LOOKING FOR RHUBARB FOR BAKING. Call (507) 273-2141.

OLD WRIST & POCKET WATCHES. Call (507) 402-0880.

WATER TANKS. To be used for raised garden beds. Leave a message. Call (507) 437-7141.

BUNT CAKE PANS. Want for craft projects. Call (507) 330-4900.

CLASSIFIED MARKETPLACE RULES

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.

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

Your Voice Matters

At Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, your feedback helps us better serve you. In September 2026, we'll be conducting a Member Satisfaction Survey through a third-party vendor.

If you have an email address on file with FMEC, you may receive an invitation to participate. The survey will only take a few minutes, and your input will help us understand what we're doing well, where we can improve and what matters most to our members.

Watch your inbox and take a few minutes to share your voice. Your feedback helps shape the future of your cooperative.



LET'S COOK



QUICK SALAD

**Submitted By:
Vickie Nelson**

- 1 can peach pie filling
- 1 can chunk pineapple, drained
- 1 can fruit cocktail, drained
- 3 bananas, sliced
- 2 cups mini marshmallows

Directions:

In a large bowl, combine the peach pie filling, drained pineapple, drained fruit cocktail, sliced bananas and mini marshmallows. Gently stir until well combined. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving.

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.