

# Merry + Bright

## WISHING YOU A JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON

### WISHING YOU A BRIGHT AND JOYFUL HOLIDAY SEASON!

As we approach the holiday season, we want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude for your continued patronage and trust in Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative. Your support is the driving force behind our commitment to providing reliable electricity that powers the lives of each and every one of our valued members.

May your holidays be filled with warmth, joy, and the company of loved ones. #1611305  
As we look forward to the coming year, let us continue working hand in hand to illuminate our community and power the aspirations that make it thrive.

Wishing you a happy holiday season filled with the promise of a bright future.

## you're invited

### HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Friday, December 15, 2023 | 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative Lobby Area  
3366 Bridge Avenue, Albert Lea

### HOLIDAY TREATS AND REFRESHMENTS

Join us for Holiday treats, apple cider, and coffee.

### UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATER CONTEST

Wear an ugly Christmas sweater, and you can sign up for a chance to win a prize basket. Let the festive fashion competition begin!

### CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

There will be an ornament-making station for the children.

ceo message  
Jim Krueger, President & CEO



STAYING MISSION FOCUSED

I’ve been reflecting on the many ways throughout the year that Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative has fulfilled our commitment to power our members’ lives. There are so many disparate aspects to our mission it is impossible to cover them all in one article, so I’ve narrowed it down to just a few.

RELIABILITY:

This involves everything from the energy source, the electric generation and transmission system, to our substations, and then through our FMEC distribution system, all the way to the meter at your home or business. #254808 The Operations Department focused on redundancy of our main feeder lines, replacement and upgrades to infrastructure equipment, and reducing the susceptibility of exposed powerlines.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS:

Energy policy has been a hot topic, especially as society moves toward drastic reductions in carbon. The electric industry cannot turn on a dime. It requires long lead times to ensure there will be enough capacity consistently available to supply the growing demand and consumption of electricity. To this end, we remain engaged with lawmakers on the state and federal levels.

SAFETY:

The safety of the public and our employees is of utmost importance. We place a strong emphasis on ongoing

training and safety protocols, along with participating in community safety programs and providing information through our County Lines newsletter and social media outlets.

TECHNOLOGY:

We continue to incorporate technologies that help us track and analyze our electric reliability, demands, and consumption patterns. Additionally, we’ve translated information into reports that are useful to our members regarding their individual accounts. You can easily access important information through SmartHub. A review of the information now included on your monthly billing statement shows a lot more than the amount due. You will find a snapshot on your electric consumption that also shows the average temperature and the last 12 months of use. We also give you a breakdown of your current bill on a daily cost basis. There are also important messages printed on the statement. By providing this information, we hope to give you the tools to increase your understanding and control of your electric consumption.

*From all of us here at FMEC, we look forward to continuing to deliver on our commitment to our members during the year ahead.*



SMALL  
CHANGE =  
IMMENSE  
GOOD

In the third quarter of 2023, Operation Round Up® grants were awarded to 51 area organizations and totaled \$25,021.49. The cost of participating is minimal, between 1 and 99 cents per month, yet the program’s impact on communities throughout FMEC’s service territory is making a great difference. #254808, This program is built on the cooperative objective of working together, working for you.

Operation Round Up® is a nonprofit, opt-out program that “rounds up” your electric bill to the next whole dollar amount. The difference of just a few cents each month is pooled to fund worthy endeavors. Only nonprofit organizations/endeavors are considered for grants. The money collected for the program is held separately from FMEC’s finances. Grants are awarded quarterly and are determined by the program’s board of trustees. Your donations are tax-deductible.

Program information and applications are available on our website, [www.fmec.coop](http://www.fmec.coop), or from our office. The next deadline for submitting an application is December 15, 2023.

member news

OFFICE CLOSED

In observance of the holidays, our office will be closed:

- Monday, December 25
- Tuesday, December 26
- Monday, January 1

Call (507) 373-6421 or (800) 734-6421 for 24/7 emergency and outage reporting.

REBATE REMINDER

Don’t wait to submit your application for a 2023 energy efficiency rebate, as funds are limited. More information and rebate forms may be found at <https://www.fmec.coop/rebates>.

COLD WEATHER RULE

Members experiencing difficulty paying their winter electric bills are reminded that Minnesota’s Cold Weather Rule is in effect through April 30. If you cannot pay your electric bill by the due date, you must contact our office to arrange a payment plan. Electric service may still be discontinued, even during the winter months, if you fail to respond to the disconnect notice.



**SAVE THE DATE**

**NEW DAY — MARK YOUR CALENDERS**

Our next Annual Meeting will be held on a new day and time of the week. We will meet on Tuesday evening, March 26, 2024 at Albert Lea High School. Watch our newsletter and the Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative social media accounts for further announcements.



SMART  
LIGHTING  
CHOICES

Daylight hours are shorter and we’re indoors for longer periods of time. Along with increased use of our home heating systems, we are also using more lighting.

This doesn’t necessarily mean that we must consume more electricity for home lighting. You can choose to change many lighting fixtures to long-lasting and energy-efficient LED bulbs.

When purchasing LED, or light-emitting diode bulbs, read the Energy Facts label. #16002 Look for the ENERGY STAR label. It will provide information on life expectancy for that bulb and the amount of energy it will use. Probably the most significant information to a purchaser will be the brightness and color appearance of the light emitted.

BRIGHTNESS

Regarding brightness, you will no longer be looking for a bulb of a specific Wattage, but instead will be comparing Lumen ratings.

This is a comparison according to the Department of Energy:

INCANDESCENT	LED EQUIVALENT
100 Watts	1,600 Lumens
75 Watts	1,100 Lumens
60 Watts	800 Lumens
40 Watts	450 Lumens

COLOR APPEARANCE

How the light will appear from cool to warm is measured on a color gradient known as the Kelvin scale. Select the appearance of the bulb based on the task area in which it will be placed and your personal preference.

PLACES OF USE

If you are replacing a bulb within a tightly enclosed fixture, you may want to inquire from the retailer if the new bulb is approved for that use. Although the heat output of LED bulbs is considerably less than that of incandescent, an enclosure that is too tight may not allow enough heat to escape and therefore reduce the life of the new bulb.

LED bulbs are not designed for use in an oven.



# DEADLINE FOR DIRECTOR APPLICATIONS

*Are you interested in serving within Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative's leadership? Three districts will soon be holding an election for their director representative.*

Elections will be held in districts 1, 4, and 7. Each term will be for three years. You must reside in the district in which you are running for director. Your director district is shown on your electric statement.

- DISTRICT 1:** Represents the northwest part of Albert Lea, Freeborn, Hartland, Manchester, and Clarks Grove areas.
- DISTRICT 4:** Represents areas near and including, Elkton, Grand Meadow, Adams, Taopi, and LeRoy.
- DISTRICT 7:** Represents the 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, nominees must be:

1. a current member receiving electric service at their primary residence,
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 was or during service on the Board of Directors is finally adjudged to be guilty of a felony;
3. is in any way employed by or substantially financially interested in an enterprise competing with the Cooperative or any Cooperative-affiliated business;
4. 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

A complete list of qualifications can be found on our website at <https://www.fmec.coop/bylaws-and-articles>

*Applications are due by 3:30 p.m. on December 11, 2023. Please contact our office to obtain a Directorship Application Packet.*

# ELECTION PROCESS

Completed applications are due at our office by 3:30 p.m. on December 11, 2023. 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 a nominee by petition requires fifteen (15) members from the district in which the election is being held to sign in support of a particular nominee on the petition form. The petition form must be submitted to the cooperative office by 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 17, 2024.

**WHEN THERE IS A SINGLE NOMINEE**  
Should only one nominee in a district come forward before the final deadline by petition, that applicant will be deemed elected as Director.

**WHEN THERE ARE MULTIPLE NOMINEES**  
Should more than one nominee come forth by the petition deadline, either by direct nomination or petition, a biography of each nominee and a mail ballot will be sent to all members in the district on Wednesday, January 31, 2024. Returned ballots will be due on Monday, February 19, 2024. **Ballots will be accepted through February 20 due to President's Day.**

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.

**DIRECTORS BEGIN TERM**  
The elected Directors will be seated during the Annual Meeting on Tuesday evening, March 26, 2024.



## RURAL ELECTRIC YOUTH TOUR 2024

**An All-Expenses Paid Trip to Washington D.C. open to high school juniors and/or seniors!**  
**Rural Electric Youth Tour**  
**June 18–23, 2024**



## SEEKING STUDENT APPLICANTS

Each year, rural electric cooperatives from across the nation sponsor roughly 1,900 students for a prestigious leadership experience to Washington, D.C. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) is looking for two area high school students to represent our cooperative for an all-expense paid opportunity, to learn how the government works, and what the electric cooperative business model is about. #1611305 Students will visit Congressional offices, tour monuments and museums, gain leadership skills, and enjoy special social events.

Applicants must be the child or dependent of a current FMEC member and reside in our service territory. Applicants must be in their junior or senior year of high school. The student delegate will be chaperoned, with flight and travel arrangements made by our statewide trade association, Minnesota Rural Electric Association.

**DO YOU KNOW A STUDENT WHO WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND?**  
For more information and to apply, go to [www.fmec.coop/youth-tour](http://www.fmec.coop/youth-tour) or contact Lori Jimenez at (507) 379-8852 or [lori.jimenez@fmec.coop](mailto:lori.jimenez@fmec.coop)

## PAST TOUR HIGHLIGHTS HAVE INCLUDED:

- Arlington Cemetery
- Holocaust Memorial Museum
- John F. Kennedy Center
- U.S. Capitol
- Potomac River
- Smithsonian Institution
- 911 Pentagon Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial
- WWII Memorial
- Mount Vernon
- Martin Luther King Memorial
- Korean War Veteran's Memorial
- Iwo Jima Memorial
- Museum of Natural History
- Jefferson Memorial
- Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial
- National Museum of Air and Space
- Washington Monument
- Social Events
- Legislator Visits
- Cooperative Learning Sessions





## IS YOUR HOLIDAY ENERGY USE NAUGHTY OR NICE?

'Tis the season for decking the halls, indulging in delicious treats, and celebrating with family and friends. It is also a time when energy usage can increase; leaving an impact on your electric bill. However, you don't have to become a Scrooge to conserve energy during the holidays. Whether you're visiting family, decorating the brightest house on the block, or staying in with festive movies and treats, here are some ways to save energy during the holiday season. #16002 Here are a few simple ways to be energy-conscious while celebrating the most wonderful time of the year!

### LIGHTING AND DECOR

Make the switch to LED Christmas lights; they're brighter, longer-lasting, and more energy-efficient than traditional incandescent lights. Fiber optic decorations, with their LED bulbs, offer energy savings along with shatterproof and shock-resistant features. Use timers to manage lights, setting them for eight hours or less to minimize costs. Consider decorating without lights, opting for reflective ornaments, candles, ribbons, and garlands to add festive charm without increasing your electric bill.

### HOME HEATING

Install a programmable thermostat, and set it to turn down when you're sleeping or not home. If you're cooking, leave the oven door open after use to circulate warm air. Light the fireplace for both ambiance and added warmth, and consider closing off unused rooms to conserve heat. Embrace winter apparel indoors, like your favorite sweater or cozy onesie, to stay warm without cranking up the heat.

### HOLIDAY COOKING

Conserve energy in the kitchen by keeping lids on pots, keep the oven door closed while cooking, and using a timer to prevent overcooking. Optimize oven usage by cooking or baking multiple dishes simultaneously. For quick tasks, rely on small kitchen appliances like microwaves and toaster ovens, which use significantly less energy than the oven.

### SHOPPING

Give the gift of energy efficiency by choosing appliances and electronics with ENERGY STAR certification, which can use up to 60 percent less electricity. Check ENERGY STAR for a list of qualifying models to ensure your gifts contribute to both joy and energy savings.

### TRAVELING

Beware of "Energy Grinches" - unplug electronics like TVs, DVDs, gaming consoles, and computers before leaving for an extended time. These devices, when plugged in but not in use, still consume phantom energy, contributing to unnecessary costs.

By following these tips, you can enjoy a festive season while reducing energy consumption and avoiding the shock of an inflated post-holiday energy bill. Happy holidays from our Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative family to yours!

## GIVE THE GIFT OF POWER

We offer gift certificates for Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) electric service in any amount you choose! The recipient must be an active member of FMEC. To purchase, please come into our office and bring the recipient's name and physical address.

## CLASSIFIED *marketplace*

### FOR SALE

#### FARM:

**FARM BELT.** Flat, 6" wide x 20' for small farm equipment. \$50. Call (507) 383-3088 or (507) 373-1713.

**2 HORSE TRAILER.** Completely rebuilt. Needs nothing but new owner. \$4,500. Call (507) 219-0334.

#### HOUSEHOLD:

**FARBERWARE COUNTERTOP CONVECTION OVEN.** Toast, bake, broil, rotisserie, pizza. \$40. Call (507) 377-3695, leave message.

**ULTRACOMFORT POWER LIFT CHAIR.** Beige, excellent condition. \$400 OBO. Call (507) 373-5690.

**HOLIDAY WREATH.** 36", working battery lights, large bow. New \$99. Asking \$40. Call (507) 373-0093.

**INSTANT POT PRO CRISP & AIR FRYER.** 8 qt. New in box. Never used. \$50. Call (507) 383-1394.

**ARMOIRE** with 2 drawers, DRESSER, upright, 7 drawers. \$100 ea. Call (507) 377-3695, leave message.

**LEFSE GRILL, ROLLING PIN, AND RICER.** Used, in good working condition. \$80. Call (507) 273-2141.

**MARVIN PERMANENT SHIELD WINDOW.** 5' 2" wide, 5' 7 1/2" high. Nail fins. New - make offer. Call (507) 438-5068, leave message.

#### MISCELLANEOUS

**BLOCKS/BRICKS.** 19-16 X 16 square cement patio blocks. 38-4 x 8 cement bricks (gray, red, & tan). Call (507) 440-0679.

**WOOD ROUTER and TABLE.** \$75. Call (507) 373-0263.

**2 - MEN KEY IMPERIAL COVERALLS.** Green, insulated, 31" inseam, shoulders 44" & 46". In good condition. \$10 ea. Call (507) 448-3491.

**1969 SCHWINN BIKE.** Excellent condition. \$85. Call (507) 297-5531.

**MENS LEATHER JACKET.** XXL, in very good condition. \$25. Call (507) 373-1743.

**MASTERFORCE BAND SAW.** Vertical wood cutting saw with stand. \$100. Call (507) 460-8601.

**KOBALT CORDED ELECTRIC SNOW THROWER.** 2 yrs. old, 21" cut, snow depth 12", discharge to 26'. \$200. Call (507) 383-9029.

**GLO-WARM NATURAL GAS HEATER.** Blue flame, vent free, 10,000 & 6,000 btu/hr., with thermostat. Like new. \$75. Call (507) 754-5672.

**ICE FISHING SUPPLIES.** Otter Lodge Ice House, Marcum depth finder, and ION electric auger (used once). Call (507) 219-8068.

**BOYS CASTLE X WINTER JACKET.** XL, black with red lettering. Has zip-out liner. In good condition. \$20. Call (507) 448-3491.

**LARGE CHRISTMAS STABLE,** 6' X 8', handcrafted wood with **NATIVITY FIGURES, BALES, & WIRED LIGHTS.** \$300. Call (507) 383-0410 or (507) 383-0411.

### WANTED

**OLD PAULSON LOADER** to fit 50's - 70's tractors. Call (507) 383-8190.

**FENTON GLASS.** Call (507) 402-0880.

**VINTAGE CERAMIC CHRISTMAS TREE.** Light up. No chips or cracks, please. Call (507) 440-4312.

### FREE

**SPINET BLONDE ACROSONIC PIANO.** You move, located on main floor. Call (507) 437-7141.

**ASSORTED FLOWER POTS AND GARDEN TOOLS.** Call (507) 297-5477.

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](http://www.fmec.coop). Select **MY COOPERATIVE**. Click on **NEWSLETTER** under **NEWS & INFO** tab. You may also email ads to [michelle.rayman@fmec.coop](mailto:michelle.rayman@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 15<sup>th</sup> 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



#### Office Hours:

Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

#### Board Meetings:

Typically the last Tuesday of each month.

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



## UPDATE YOUR ACCOUNT INFORMATION

- Have you changed your mailing address, phone number(s), or email address?
- If you use Automatic Bill Payment, have there been changes to your credit card, checking, or savings account information?

If so, please contact our office to update the information we have on file.

## LET'S COOK



### CORN CASSEROLE RECIPE

Submitted By: Sharon Hanson

- 1 can whole kernel corn
- 1 – 8.5 oz. Jiffy corn muffin mix
- 1 can cream-style corn
- 1 egg
- 1 - 8 oz. container of Top the Tator

#### Directions:

Mix all together, putting the corn muffin mix in dry. Put in a greased casserole dish. Bake for 45 min. in a 350-degree oven.

*Members may submit one short recipe per month by email at [michelle.rayman@fmec.coop](mailto:michelle.rayman@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.*