



Freeborn  
Mower  
Electric  
Cooperative

People. Power. Possibilities.

# county lines

## NEWSLETTER

MAY 2023 • VOLUME 84 • NO. 05

Electrical Safety Month

Never use  
electrical  
equipment near  
water & other  
liquids.

## May Is Electrical Safety Month

***We recognize National Electrical Safety Month every May, but we encourage all Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative members to take simple, practical steps to ensure home safety year-round. Here are some tips:***

- Don't landscape or garden near the cooperative's padmount transformers or around the base of utility poles. Our crews need access to electric facilities.
- Do not use electrical equipment or appliances in dusty or wet environments. Water and electricity can be a deadly combination.
- Check your equipment. Be aware of any frayed cords or missing ground plugs. #1593401 Tools can be replaced, but lives cannot.
- If you see a tree touching a power line and sparking, or any other hazardous situation, please contact the cooperative immediately.
- Never overload an electric circuit by plugging in too many devices or tools. If you're overloading electrical outlets, it's time to call a licensed electrician to install additional outlets.
- Only make temporary use of extension cords. Make certain your use will not exceed the rated wattage of the cord. Never "daisy chain" extension cords together as this can lead to overheating and a potential fire.
- Make sure all light bulbs are properly rated for the lamp or fixture.
- Talk to your children about playing it safe around electricity. Don't let them play on or around a padmount transformer or junction box. It's the green utility box that may be in your yard.
- Ensure that portable electrical tools are equipped with three-prong grounding plugs to deter shocks. Never remove the third prong!
- It is essential that standby generators are properly sized, correctly installed, and routinely maintained. An improperly installed standby generator can create an electrical hazard by sending out back-fed electricity through the utility power lines, endangering our lineworkers and the public. Transfer switches require installation by a qualified electrician.

## ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



### MAKE SAFETY A PRIORITY

Electricity is a necessity. It powers our daily lives. Unfortunately, we are so familiar with it that it becomes easy to let down our guard, putting ourselves and others in danger of an electrical accident. Each year, thousands are injured or electrocuted resulting from an accident or unsafe situation. The sad truth is that many of these occurrences were preventable.

The professionals at Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative know first-hand how dangerous electricity can be because we work with it year round. Our employees are reminded daily to use safe work procedures. We also routinely conduct meetings focused on various aspects of safety as it relates to the workplace. Since the workplace extends to our entire service territory, we ask that you pay attention to all signs indicating that utility work is being conducted. As we swing into high gear for line maintenance and construction, as well as right-of-way maintenance along the highways and streets, make sure you slow down, move over, and give our workers plenty of space.

This is the time of year when people are active outdoors, cleaning up winter debris and prepping for field work. With these activities, remember to look up and all

around when moving tall equipment. Keep away from overhead powerlines and guy wires. Know the location of underground facilities such as transformer and junction boxes. Never burn near electric utility equipment or around the base of power poles.

Remember that water and electricity make an extremely dangerous combination. This is a silent and invisible danger. Pools and docks that are electrified should be checked to make certain that all is functioning properly. Danger occurs when faulty wiring in a pool light or on a boat dock or boat launch releases an electrical current into the water, thus electrifying the water, and a person such as a swimmer contacts the electrified water.

Electric Shock Drowning is the result of the passage of a typically low-level AC current through the body with sufficient force to cause skeletal muscular paralysis, rendering the victim unable to help themselves, while immersed in fresh water, eventually resulting in the drowning of the victim. Higher levels of AC current in the water will also result in electrocution.

Let's work together to make this summer fun and safe for all!

### POLITICAL ADVOCACY TAKES A NEW NAME

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is building on a successful legacy with the announcement of a new name for its political action committee (PAC). The new name, America's Electric Cooperatives PAC, and its accompanying logo are designed to make it clearer to federal candidates and the public that the PAC directly represents electric cooperatives. #1593401 America's Electric Cooperatives PAC will still be funded by grassroots contributions from electric cooperative member-owners and eligible employees in the 48 states where electric cooperatives operate.

A simple, straightforward PAC name is especially important in dealing with first-time federal candidates. The new name replaces the acronym ACRE, which stood for Action Committee for Rural Electrification, which had been used for 56 years.

"The name change just makes sense," said Gabe Snow, the PAC's director. "The name America's Electric Cooperatives PAC capitalizes on the fact that electric cooperatives are already held in high regard in Washington, D.C.," Snow said. "It capitalizes on that brand and the reputation NRECA has as a strong bipartisan organization."

# member news

## OFFICE CLOSED FOR MEMORIAL DAY

Our office will be closed for Memorial Day, Monday, May 29.

We honor and remember the U.S. military personnel who have died while serving in the United States armed forces.

## CONTINUITY OF SERVICE STATEMENT

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) will always strive to furnish continuous service yet acknowledges that interruptions are possible for a variety of reasons. By accepting service, the member agrees to hold the cooperative harmless from any losses or damage to life or property resulting from power interruptions caused by circumstances beyond the cooperative's control, and/or failure on the members' part to have their premises wired according to the National Electric Code and the State of Minnesota Wiring Regulations.

The member has the sole responsibility for any wiring done, and the maintenance of said wiring, beyond the metering point. The cooperative shall not be responsible for voltage reduction brought on by its wholesale power supplier. #1395701 Refer to our website or contact the office if you want to view Policy 4.001 — Continuity of Service.

## INTERCONNECTION OF COGENERATION AND SMALL POWER PRODUCTION

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from co-generators and small power producers which satisfy the conditions and become a qualifying facility. The member is required to execute the "Cooperative Agreement for Cogeneration and Small Power Production Facilities" with the Cooperative. A Qualifying Facility (QF) is a cogeneration and small power production facility that satisfies the conditions in the 18 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 292.101(b). FMEC is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. The current interconnection documents and applications are posted on the cooperative's website — [www.fmec.coop](http://www.fmec.coop).

Members who are interested in installing their own distributed energy resource such as solar for interconnection, must use the **NOVA Power Portal™**. Applications and resource documents are available through our website. Search under Services, Renewables, and then the Interconnection Information tab. Also found on the FMEC website is an abstract of the Interconnection Process for Distributed Energy Resources less than 10 megawatt (MW) interconnected to the Distribution System of a Cooperative in the State of Minnesota. 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.

We invite you to contact the FMEC office to discuss cogeneration or interconnection plans.

# SAVE THE DATE!



RECHARGE ALBERT LEA:

## EV Expo and Test Drive

**MAY 6, 2023**

**10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

Design Ready Controls Albert Lea Facility  
590 East 14th Street, Albert Lea, MN

# FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Take an EV out for a spin, get hands-on experience with charging, and get a feel for how EVs can fit into YOUR life. Learn about the Design Ready Controls facility manufacturing EV chargers in Albert Lea and about the career opportunities available.

**SCAN  
HERE  
TO RSVP**



**R=CHARGE**  
MINNESOTA



# PREPARE FOR POWER OUTAGES

## WHEN YOUR POWER GOES OUT, SO DO WE

***Severe storms unfortunately happen, often with devastating impacts. Storms can take down power poles and electrical lines, creating a dangerous situation for all of us — you, the public, and our crews.***

How long it takes to restore your electric service depends on the extent of the damage and when it is safe for utility personnel to get into the damaged areas. It may take time to deal with the aftermath of high winds, tornadoes, and equipment damaged by lightning strikes. We appreciate your patience and rest assured that we won't quit until power is restored.

It is extremely important to report any downed power lines. #351701 Always treat a downed power line as if it is still energized. Stay away and warn others!

Always report an outage to help line crews isolate local issues. However, first take the following steps:

- Check the fuses or circuit breakers and replace or reset as needed. If this restores the power, the problem is most likely with your own wiring. At this point, it may be wise to bring in a licensed electrician.
- If your neighbor is also without power, the trouble is most likely somewhere on the cooperative's lines.
- If our crew responds to an outage call and the trouble is with your own electric service wiring, you may be charged for a service call.

## SEQUENTIAL APPROACH TO POWER RESTORATION

When a power outage occurs, we always work to restore power to the largest number of members first before inspecting individual sites.

- STEP 01** **High-Voltage Transmission Lines** supply electricity to substations. While they rarely fail, these facilities must be repaired before substations will operate.
- STEP 02** **Distribution Substations** can each serve hundreds or even thousands of members. When a substation is out of service, repairs must be made before electricity can flow to the main distribution lines.
- STEP 03** **Main Distribution Lines** carry electricity to large groups of members in a geographic area. A problem with a main distribution line will disrupt the flow of electricity to tap lines.
- STEP 04** **Tap Lines** deliver electricity to the transformers. Transformers may be mounted on power poles or placed on pads for underground service to individual homes, farms, and businesses.
- STEP 05** **Individual Sites** may remain without power should a problem exist between the transformer and your premises. This is often the case if your neighbors' power has been restored but there is no electricity at your site. Always report an outage to help line crews isolate local issues.

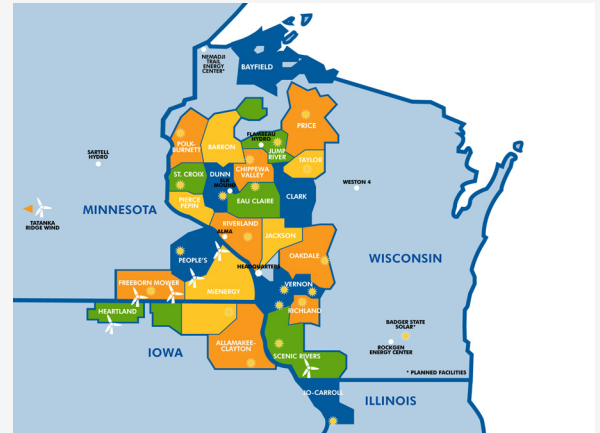
*"The automated metering system used by our cooperative does a great job of keeping us updated on the number and location of outages. However, if a member has specific information to share about an outage, such as line down or broken pole, please call and share that with us. This information greatly helps to reduce patrol times and restore outages faster."*

**Al Stadheim, PE**  
**Director of Engineering & Operations**



# IMPROMPTU DRILL SHEDS LOAD

The Energy Solutions Department, Engineering and Operations Department, and Communications Team were quickly called into action when our cooperative was notified of an impromptu emergency drill on March 7. MISO (Midcontinent Independent System Operator) issued a directive through wholesale power supplier Dairyland Power to Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative to reduce 25 percent of our cooperative's electric load by 11 a.m. that morning.



The scenario for this emergency electric load reduction drill was that extreme weather conditions caused electric load to increase above normal levels throughout MISO's central and north regions. #1395701 Other contributing factors in this scenario were outages of electric generation facilities placing limited availability for the electric grid to meet higher than forecasted energy demand.

MISO is an independent, not-for-profit, member-based organization focused on three critical tasks:

- Managing the flow of high-voltage electricity across 15 U.S. states and the Canadian province of Manitoba.
- Facilitating one of the world's largest energy markets with more than \$40 billion in annual transactions.
- Planning the grid of the future.

The drill was a real-time exercise in preparing the steps necessary to deal with a developing situation that may bring serious consequences to the region's electric grid. "It is important for all involved entities to know how to respond to an emergency that requires the shedding of electrical load. Without being prepared, we could see an unintended cascading and escalation of electric reliability issues across an extensive region," explained Jim Krueger, FMEC President & CEO. "We thank our members for understanding the grave importance of this type of emergency drill."

## SAFE DIGGING IS NO ACCIDENT!

If you're planning a digging or construction project, you must call 811 before you begin. Never assume that utility lines are buried deeper than you plan to dig!

811 is the national call-before-you-dig phone number. Anyone who plans to dig should call 811 or go to the website (<http://www.gopherstateonecall.org>) before digging to request that the approximate location of buried utilities be marked with paint or flags so that you don't unintentionally dig into an underground utility line. The call and service are free.

Private facilities that are not part of a public utility will not be marked. Private facilities may include but are not limited to, heating systems for pools, electricity to outbuildings, invisible pet fences, and private septic system lines.

Please call a few business days before you begin any digging, including common projects like planting trees and shrubs or installing fences and mailboxes. You will need to know the address of where you plan to dig, including the county and nearest cross street, as well as the type of project you're completing and the exact area on the property where you're planning to dig. Whether you call 811 or make your request online, you'll need the same info.

## REPORT YOUR POWER OUTAGE

Power outages and emergencies may be reported 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



### PHONE

(800) 734-6421



### ONLINE

Log into your  
SmartHub account.



### MOBILE APP

Download the  
SmartHub app.

# HAPPY RETIREMENT!

## DEB KOLLING AND LARRY UNDERDAHL



***Following nearly 21 years with Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, Deb Kolling retired on March 31, 2023. We honored Deb with our sincere thanks and best wishes for a wonderful retirement.***

Many cooperative members have come to know Deb in her former positions as Customer Service Representative and Senior Customer Service Representative, to which she was promoted in 2013. “I enjoyed the interaction with our members,” she said. “I had great co-workers.”

There have been many changes in technologies used by the cooperative, as well as growth in membership and kWh sales. “Some of the biggest challenges were due to the acquisition of service territory and assets from Alliant Energy,” she recalled. “The cohesiveness of our frontline employees was very positive.” In 2017, Deb was promoted to the position of Business Analyst.

Deb and her husband Randy reside in Albert Lea. The couple has three grown children and two grandchildren. In retirement, Deb looks forward to being with family and friends. “I’m excited to spend time with my grandkids now and we’ll try some traveling, too!”

Happy retirement, Deb! We appreciate your dedication and proficient service to FMEC and its members. Your familiar face will be missed by many.



***Our thanks and best wishes go to Larry Underdahl on his retirement following more than 36 years of service with Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative. He retired as Manager of Distribution Maintenance on April 7, 2023.***

“Serving our members and working with professionals every day has been what I’ve enjoyed the most,” said Larry. During his decades of service, Larry also recalled several industry changes and challenges. “The acquisition of Alliant Energy service territory and our introduction of automated metering were significant changes. Responding to the massive 1991 ice storm will always be a stand-out memory, too.”

Larry joined the cooperative as an Apprentice Lineman. His training and apprenticeship led to the positions of Journeyman Lineman and Line Foreman. He also served many years as Director of Operations before tackling the tasks of Manager of Distribution Maintenance in which he diligently supervised the vegetation management program, tree trimming crews, and contracted services. #351701 The cooperative’s pole maintenance program was also under Larry’s oversight.

Larry grew up on a farm near Moscow, MN. He and his wife Kim have five grown children and six grandchildren. The couple currently resides south of Albert Lea. Spending time with the grandchildren figures prominently in Larry’s retirement plans, along with some travel.

We wish you a very happy retirement, Larry! Thank you for a job well done!





## WELCOME, TERRAN HABERMAN!

FMEC welcomes a new employee — Terran Haberman. She joined our team of professionals on February 27, 2023, as a Member Service Representative.

“I’m looking forward to new opportunities and learning more about Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative and the electric utility industry,” said Terran, who comes to us with previous experience in customer service. Terran loves animals, especially the exotic ones that her family has raised in Iowa. She resides in Northwood, Iowa.

We’re happy to have you with us, Terran!

## CLASSIFIED *marketplace*

### FOR SALE

#### VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:

##### 1984 ZX550 KAWASAKI MOTORCYCLE.

4-cyl, silver. Not used in years. Needs complete go-through. \$750. (507) 402-8913.

**1983 MERCURY COUGAR.** 2-door, low miles. \$2,500 OBO. Call (507) 402-3640.

**1982 SUZUKI GS 550L.** Runs, pay for, and drive home. \$2500. Call (507) 325-2427.

##### 1989 WINNEBAGO SPECTRUM 2000.

32', new tires, 460 Ford pusher. \$13,500. Call (507) 437-1615.

#### FARM:

**2 TRAILERS/TANKS.** 2017 Wilson grain trailer. Drop deck trailer 48' w/tanks. 2 1500 gallon tanks. Call (507) 402-3614.

**7080 ALLIS.** Black belly, has been overhauled, like new tires. Call (507) 754-5028.

**TRACTOR TIRES.** Goodyear 11-2-38. \$100. Firestone 10-38. \$60. Call (507) 383-0802.

#### HOUSEHOLD:

##### FRAMED ART PRINTS & ORIGINAL.

Make reasonable offers. Make appointment. Call (507) 440-9091.

##### CHENILLE QUEEN BEDSPREAD.

Open geo design, ivory, cotton, washable, new condition. \$100, now \$50. Call (507) 373-0093.

##### MISSION-STYLE SOLID WOOD FURNITURE.

Sofa, loveseat, 2 end tables, rocking chair, lamps, ottoman, rug. Call (507) 383-7880.

##### MONTGOMERY WARD POT BELLY STOVE.

Model YMT 7326. 16" x 32". \$300 OBO. Call (507) 438-5068 leave message.

**DINING TABLE & 4 CHAIRS.** Solid pine, table – 3.5' x 6' without 2 leaves. Excellent condition. \$100 OBO. Call (507) 383-6121.

**DECORATIVE TOPIARY TREE.** Silk ivy, 2' high, (call for photo). \$7. Call (507) 373-0539.

#### MISC:

**CHERRY PICKER.** \$350. Call (641) 257-9438.

##### MASTERBUILT ELITE ELECTRIC SMOKER

with cover and stand, on casters. \$95. Call (507) 373-1897.

**HOBART STICKMATE LX WELDER.** 235-160 max amps, AC-DC, cart, helmet, gloves, etc. Used twice. \$400. Call (507) 460-8601.

**TOOLS.** Craftsman HD 6 1/2" jointer planer, 1 1/2 HP router, and router table. Both like new. Call (507) 373-8351.

##### 2014 KEYSTONE OUTBACK 316RL.

Sleeps 4, queen bed, sofa sleeper, 3 slide-outs, 35'6" long. Call (507) 874-3643.

**TORO WHEEL HORSE LAWN MOWER.** 38" cut and 13 hp. \$450. Call (507) 391-3883.

**CONCRETE BLOCKS.** Large pile, different sizes, and colors. Call (651) 739-2715.

**WEBER GAS GRILL** with cover & tank. \$295. Call (507) 383-2258.

**WOMEN'S HD CHAPS & JACKET.** Chaps small, jacket medium. Good condition. \$150 for both. Call (507) 261-0749.

##### 48 BASS PIANO ACCORDION with case.

Good condition, plays well. \$150. Call (507) 383-9055.

**TREK 400 MOUNTAIN BIKE.** Very few miles, very good condition, new tires. \$350 firm. Call (507) 373-5690.

#### PETS/ANIMALS:

##### PUREBRED GERMAN SHEPHERD PUPPIES.

5 males, 2 months old, end of March. Rehoming fee applies. Call (507) 256-4617.

##### REGISTERED LAB PUPS.

Great hunters/family dogs. Available April 18. Call (507) 473-0184.

**CHICKENS.** Mixed colors and sizes. 6 hens and 3 roosters. \$3 each or all 9 for \$25. Call (507) 433-4874.

### WANTED

**ANVIL.** Call (507) 402-0880.

##### 1953 FORD JUBILEE TRACTOR.

Call (507) 259-6872 or (507) 280-4132.

**OLDER 50'S-70'S TRACTOR** with fully hydraulic loader. Must run. Call (507) 383-8190.

**USED CAR.** Good condition. Max of \$3,000. Call (507) 433-5725.

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.

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

## 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](http://www.fmec.coop)  
[info@fmec.coop](mailto: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.*

## MINNESOTA'S COLD WEATHER RULE ENDED ON APRIL 30.

**The Energy Assistance Program  
Crisis Benefit maximum recently  
increased to \$3,000.**

If you need help paying your bill, contact SEMCAC by June 30 or contact EAP at [eap.mail@state.mn.us](mailto:eap.mail@state.mn.us). Please note that SEMCAC Energy Assistance applications have a deadline of May 31. Call SEMCAC at (800) 944-3281.

Applications are available from the SEMCAC website: [www.semccac.org](http://www.semccac.org)



## LET'S COOK



### LAKE PEPIN BRUNCH BAKE Submitted By: Marlys Lerum

- 1-12 oz. pkg. frozen hash browns, thawed
- 1 ½ C. cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 C. ham, finely diced
- ½ C. green onions, sliced
- 1 ½ C. milk
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. crushed red pepper
- 6 eggs, beaten
- Paprika

#### Directions:

Heat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl combine everything except the paprika. Mix well and pour into greased 11 x 7 baking dish. Sprinkle paprika over the top. Bake uncovered for 40-45 minutes.

*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.*