

SEPTEMBER 2023 • VOLUME 84 • NO. 09

## September is **NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH**



## Disasters don't wait. Make your plan today!

Each year, the United States observes National Preparedness Month during September to remind Americans to be ready for any disaster, man-made or natural. Preparedness requires you and your family to take steps to protect yourself, your home, personal property, and manage risks.

Remember to be inclusive in your disaster planning. Consider the needs of children, the elderly, those with disabilities or access and functional needs, and pets.

Whether in your household or business, a communications plan is of utmost importance. Prepare both for evacuation and sheltering in place. When a disaster hits, every second counts. Discuss emergency procedures with your family and employees. Situational awareness is knowing what is happening around you and also recognizing the critical decisions that must be made based on current circumstances. Having a well-understood disaster plan will help ease fear and panic.

Put together a kit of emergency supplies for your household. Include critical information and important documents that you will need to start your recovery. Know how to contact family members. #895100 Designate someone who is out of your immediate area as a point of contact. This will enable everyone in your family to share updates with that person should local communication become unavailable. Also, realize that using an ATM may not be an option post-disaster.

***We're prepared! As part of your community, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative stands ready to quickly respond to emergency situations and power outages.***



**DON'T WAIT!  
COMMUNICATE.  
MAKE YOUR  
EMERGENCY  
PLAN TODAY!**

### COME TO ALBERT LEA'S SAFETY DAY!

SEPTEMBER 19 | 4:00 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M. | MORIN PARK IN ALBERT LEA

*We'll be there with safety information, games and prizes, and a bucket truck on display. It's a fun and informative event for the entire family!*



## ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



## AS THE SEASONS CHANGE

Change is in the air, making autumn a season of preparedness.

While our weather is still warm, check your home for potential areas of heat loss and drafts. Take a close look at weatherstripping and caulking around doors and windows. At some point, repairs may be too costly or time-consuming and replacement may make more sense. Does a door or window need to be replaced? You still have time to act before icy winter winds begin to howl.

Make an appointment to have a qualified technician inspect your furnace for operational efficiency and safety. #1909900 Check, clean or replace the filter.

As we spend more time indoors, now is a good time to review your home lighting. LED (light emitting diode) bulbs are your most energy-efficient option, using less energy while lasting longer. Note that in August 2023, federal rules changed the types of bulbs available for purchase. You may need to do some research to match

your lighting needs with new styles of bulbs. FMEC provides an incentive to recycle your standard compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs. You will also receive \$.50 off the recycling fee when you recycle fluorescent tubes and high-intensity discharge (HID) lamps. Program details and recycling coupons are available on our website.

Equipment that heats or cools account for the bulk of your home energy bill. If you are replacing equipment, make sure you look for the ENERGY STAR label. FMEC provides rebates on a variety of items. See the Rebate section on our website for details.

The Minnesota Commerce Department, Division of Energy Resources, offers a great Home Energy Guide online. You'll find this comprehensive publication at <https://mn.gov/commerce-stat/pdfs/home-energy-guide.pdf>.

FMEC is here throughout the year to help you live your life in energy-efficient comfort. If you have questions, please give us a call.

## DOWNTOWN EV CHARGING STATION INSTALLED



The city of Albert Lea has completed the installation of the ZEF Energy, Level 2 charger. The new EV charging site is the result of a partnership between Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, Dairyland Power, and the City of Albert Lea.

"The charger location is nestled in Albert Lea's historic downtown. The site includes views of Fountain Lake, and within a short walking distance, you will find food, beverage, shopping, and entertainment," explained Bryan Skogheim, FMEC Director of Business Development and Energy Solutions.

"Thank you to Dairyland Power and the City of Albert Lea for their partnership with Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative and their continued commitment to the community," said Skogheim. "Commitment to community is one of the seven guiding principles for cooperatives. This project exemplifies how Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative works for the sustainable development and betterment of its local communities."

## member news

### OFFICE CLOSED

Our office will be closed on Monday, September 4th in observance of Labor Day.

### ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

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.

#### SEMCAC

(507) 864-7515 | (800) 944-3281  
[www.semcac.org](http://www.semcac.org)

#### Freeborn County Human Services

(507) 377-5400

#### Mower County Human Services

(507) 437-9701

#### Minnesota Valley Action Council

(507) 345-6822 | (800) 767-7139

#### Minnesota Prairie County Alliance

(888) 850-9419

#### Faribault County Human Services

(507) 526-3265

#### Fillmore County Social Services

(507) 765-2175

#### North Iowa Community Action

(641) 423-9028 | (800) 873-1899

If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill please contact our office to set up a payment plan.

## NOTICE OF COLD WEATHER RULE

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 1st and April 30th **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.

## PLAN AHEAD FOR ENERGY ASSISTANCE

**When can I apply?** The Energy Assistance Program season begins October 1 each year and runs until the end of May the following year. You can apply one time per heating season.

**Where do I get an application?** Applications are available on the Semcac website [www.semcac.org](http://www.semcac.org), or call (800) 944-3281, and your local county Semcac office has applications available. If you need help to complete the application yourself, please call for an appointment.

**What information do I need to submit with my application?** Please refer to the detailed instructions that come with the application for income/benefit verification.

**Where can I submit my application?** You can mail your application to Semcac, PO Box 549, Rushford, MN 55971, email to [eap@semcac.org](mailto:eap@semcac.org), or fax to (507) 864-2597.

**How long will it take to process my EAP application?** You will receive confirmation that Semcac received your application. Applications are processed on a first-come/first-serve basis and are generally processed within 30-60 days, depending on the information you provide.

**IMPORTANT- an incomplete application will delay processing.**

**Do I need to wait for a disconnect or final notice to apply?** No. If you feel you meet the eligibility guidelines for the Energy Assistance Program, apply as soon as you can. This program has limited funding.

**What if I need more assistance with my utility bills?** If you received the Primary Energy Grant, then you could be eligible for Energy Assistance Crisis funds. #895100 If you are in threat of disconnection, contact the Semcac office and they will let you know what is available.





## BENEFITS OF ELECTRIC LAWN EQUIPMENT

We rely on mowers, string trimmers, edgers, and leaf blowers to make routine yard work easier. The electric lawn equipment industry has made huge improvements to the versatility, quality, variety, and service life of devices. It's time to take a serious look at replacing gas-powered equipment with electric yard tools, whether they are battery-powered or corded.

**CONVENIENCE** Switching to electric devices allows you to break free from dangerous gas cans, oil, spark plugs, and the need to constantly change air filters. Electric models beat gas-powered equipment when it comes to easy maintenance.

**PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT** Electric equipment does not emit carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, or volatile organic compounds which damage our environment.

**REDUCED WASTED ENERGY** Gas motors typically generate a significant amount of heat energy, which is simply wasted energy. Electric motors don't have this problem. #1781602 The result is that more of the energy they generate goes directly to powering the tool.

**RECHARGEABLE** Battery-powered equipment can be recharged. Additionally, if you purchase multiple tools from the same manufacturer, it is possible that the battery is designed to be interchangeable between devices.

**WEIGHT** Electric equipment is often lighter weight for easy use.

## CLEANING YOUR GUTTERS?

Metal extension ladders conduct electricity. Keep them away from overhead powerlines and electric service entrances.

Use the buddy system when working on a ladder. Always place the ladder's leg pads on an even and solid surface. To reduce the chance of slippage, the top contact point of the ladder should be placed three feet above the surface edge of the roof. Climb down and move the ladder rather than stretching and reaching while on the ladder.



## COMPREHENSIVE IN-HOME ENERGY AUDITS AVAILABLE

*FMEC is partnering with Minnesota Energy Resources to help Albert Lea residents figure out what energy-saving improvements make the most sense for their homes.*

Appointments are being scheduled for October 10-12. This service is valued at more than \$300, but the homeowner only pays \$50. To be eligible, the home must receive natural gas service from Minnesota Energy Resources and electric service from Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative.

### WHAT YOU GET:

- A comprehensive analysis of your home's energy use, both natural gas and electric.
- A blower door test to locate heating / AC leaks.
- Safety tests: combustion safety, depressurization, and carbon monoxide.
- A comprehensive review of all relevant rebate opportunities.

Call (800) 376-0517 or visit [cashrebatesnow.com](http://cashrebatesnow.com) to schedule!

## COMMITTED TO AGRICULTURE



(l-r) Matt Maras – District 6; Larry Irvine – District 9; Jack Korman – District 7; Jim Krueger – President & CEO; Bill Trygstad – District 8; Dennis Anderson – District 1

Our cooperative directors were very pleased to recently have Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative inducted into the Agriculture Hall of Fame at the Freeborn County Fair. The recognition was given for our long-term commitment to building the agriculture industry in the county.

A bit of our cooperative's history will be included in a permanent display at the fairgrounds. This is a very fitting acknowledgment since the idea of developing an electric cooperative took root in addressing farmers' needs. The year was 1936 and these local farmers worked together to bring themselves the power of an extra hand — the wired hand — of electricity. The birth of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative would transform rural lives. We continue to do the same today. **People. Power. Possibilities.**



## PREPARE FOR A SAFE HARVEST



**Harvest season is crunch time for farmers. Increased stress, long hours, and hard physical work can converge to create hazardous situations. Plan so you approach the tasks in an organized and safe manner. Train your harvesting team. Evaluate the jobs that you have tasked your harvest help with and ensure they are not taking on more responsibility than they are mentally, cognitively, and physically able to perform.**

**IT ONLY TAKES A SPLIT SECOND** Accidental contact with an energized power line could be deadly!

**LOOK UP AND LOOK AROUND** Start the day with a safety meeting. Know the location and height of all overhead power lines. You must keep all equipment at least ten feet away, in all directions, from power lines.

**PLAN YOUR ROUTE** Your equipment may be taller during transport than during field use. Make sure that clearances are sufficient. Also, be aware of the location of power pole guy wires and underground utility junction boxes and transformers. Accidentally pulling down a guy wire can break a power pole or dislodge an energized power line.

**LOWER EXTENSIONS** Remember to lower extensions when moving loads. Designate a spotter to verify proper clearances. Never try to lift a power line out of the way!

**KNOW HOW TO EXIT SAFELY** If your farm equipment does contact a power line, remain seated until help arrives. Call 911 immediately. Many electrocutions occur when the operator dismounts and lands incorrectly or tries to climb back on. Warn others to stay at least fifty feet away and not approach the equipment since it may be energized. Should there be an immediate danger, like fire, put your feet together and keep them together while leaping as far away as you can. Shuffle as you move away. Do not let any part of your body contact the ground and the electrified equipment at the same time.

**AFFIX A SLOW-MOVING VEHICLE SIGN AND CAUTION LIGHTS** Most roadway accidents involving farm equipment happen in the low light conditions of dawn or dusk.

**SHIELD FROM MOVING PARTS** Machinery entanglements are a leading cause of injury and death on the farm. Components may continue to rotate for several minutes after the power is shut off.

**KEEP CHILDREN AWAY FROM MOVING FARM EQUIPMENT** Keep young children out of the worksite and off equipment. Enforce a policy of no extra riders.





# POWER OUTAGES FROM A LINEMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

*Written by Ethan Eggum, FMEC Line Foreman*

Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty-five days a year, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative has linemen who are on call. We miss birthday parties, holidays, and many special events, working unpredictable schedules, but we are committed to serving our members and keeping power flowing.

## OUTAGE

A typical outage call comes from our dispatch center. The dispatcher will notify us of the power outage location and number of members who are impacted. The first thing I do is take a few minutes to look at our mapping system. This will help me answer a few questions like, where is the normal power source? Is it overhead or underground? Will we need any specific equipment? #1909900 At this point, if it is a larger outage, I will take the time to read the comments that have been called in to our dispatch to help identify a possible cause for the outage. I'm hopeful to find information that can pinpoint the location of an issue. Tips from our members that can be helpful are reporting things like hearing a loud bang and where they heard it, if there is a tree branch on their powerline, an accident (car vs pole/farm equipment), and so forth.

## ARRIVE

The next step is to head to the outage. Location and weather are significant factors in our response time. Once we arrive at the scene of the power outage, we always start at the source. At the source point, we can find if the line is de-energized. We then install a "hold card" on this piece of equipment. This tag lets others know that there are problems on this line and, most importantly, other workers.

## PATROLLING

Patrolling is what comes next. Patrolling is the act of visually inspecting everything down the line from the source point. This is a crucial step. The last thing we would want to do is re-energize a power line that has been compromised and possibly endangers the public. In a rural setting, most of our patrolling is done from the truck. In a residential area, we may be on foot, walking through backyards.



## CAUSE

With time and effort, we find the cause of the outage. At this time, we evaluate the severity of the issue. If it is a smaller issue, we may be able to use one of our extendable fiberglass sticks to remove a branch, animal, or a piece of broken equipment. If it's a larger issue like a broken pole or wires on the ground, we then must install a "ground set." A ground set is a series of wires that we install on the power line that will short the circuit to the ground, making the power lines safe for the linemen to proceed with their work. With larger issues, we will often cut the power lines apart so we can re-energize as many members as possible by isolating the issue further down the line.

## COMPLETION/RESTORAL

The time it takes to complete all these steps is greatly influenced by the weather and the overall scope of the outage. After repairs are made or the problem is isolated, we return to the source on which we installed our hold tag. #1781602 After clear communication with our crew members, we can safely energize the line.

Being able to turn the power back on for families, friends, and the community of which we are a part, brings us great satisfaction and a strong sense of purpose.

# CLASSIFIED marketplace

## FOR SALE

### VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:

**88 FORD F250 PICKUP.** Good condition, many new parts. \$4,000. Call (507) 402-0118.

**2002 CHEVY Z-71 PICKUP.** 4wd, topper, 168,000. Lots of new parts. Some rust. Clean truck! \$4,500. Call (507) 383-4944.

**2007 HONDA ACCORD.** 4-door, 6-cylinder automatic, charcoal grey, 114,000 miles, no rust, everything works. \$6,300. Call (507) 377-2757.

**2005 DODGE CARAVAN.** Good tires, runs good, no air. 197,000 miles. \$1,500. Call (507) 402-7820.

### FARM:

**2 TILT BED TRAILERS.** 1-bumper tilt & 1-5th wheel tilt. Call (507) 438-3267 or (507) 438-4284.

**1951 FARMALL M TRACTOR.** Call (507) 383-6360.

**JOHN DEERE #25 CORN SILAGE CHOPPER.** Fully mounted, works really well. \$750. Call (507) 318-9110.

**IH 560 DIESEL TRACTOR.** Call (507) 383-0411.

**LINCOLN ARC WELDER .** \$175. Call (507) 226-6024

### HOUSEHOLD:

**KIRBY VACUUM CLEANER.** All attachments, 2 owners manuals, and 2 extra bags. \$75. Call (507) 440-4818.

**DANSK BISTRO MARIBO DINNERWARE.** 6 place settings, 30 total pieces. \$50. Call (507) 852-3499.

**3 PIECE WICKER SET W/CUSHIONS.** 2 chairs & 1 settee. \$25. Call (507) 481-8797.

### MISC:

**WW "TRAIL BOSS" HORSE TRAILER.** 2 stall, sound flooring, needs 2 tires, new tabs, & possible electric work. \$3500 OBO. Call (952) 484-0130.

**LARGE DOG CRATE.** 34 X 32 X 48, \$45. Text only (507) 269-8992.

**15' ALUMINUM FISHING BOAT & TRAILER.** 6.5 HP Mercury & cover. \$799. Call (507) 481-8945.

**MICRO PICKUP CAMPER.** 81 1/2" long, 76 1/2" wide, 71 1/4" high. Brand new. \$7,250. Call (507) 383-3871.

**PYLE OUTDOOR, WATERPROOF SPEAKERS.** \$20 pair. Call (507) 460-8017.

**STANLEY LADDER STABILIZER.** \$20. Call (507) 369-5172.

**CLOTHING.** Large men's heavy flannel shirt, brown/black/tan. \$8. Large, khaki pants, easy waist. \$6. Call (507) 460-8168.

**ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD PIANO** with stand. \$40. Call (507) 383-9055.

**2005 POLARIS SPORTSMAN 400 ATV.** 4,200 miles, good condition, adult ridden. \$3,200. Call (507) 421-3816.

**JOHN DEERE LA145.** 550 hours, 48" mower, 44" blower, and cab. \$2,000 OBO. Call (507) 460-9416.

### PETS/ANIMALS:

**PIGMY GOATS.** Babies and adult females. Call (507) 475-1468.

## WANTED

**USED STOCK TANKS.** Any condition. Call (507) 383-4459.

**WOODEN THOMAS THE TRAIN SET.** Call (507) 373-1965.

**CROCKS, JUGS, & POTTERY.** Call (507) 402-0880.

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](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.*



### **Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is collecting school supply donations. Donate through September 8th!**

As children head back to school, you can help them out by donating supplies. A wide variety of items are needed. Again, this year, FMEC will be a drop-off location for supplies. Donate now through September 8 at our office, located at 3366 Bridge Avenue, Albert Lea, during normal business hours.

**The supplies will be divided between schools in Freeborn and Mower Counties.**

## LET'S COOK



### TACO DIP

**Submitted By:  
Mary Wilson**

- 8 oz. cream cheese
- ½ C. sour cream
- ½ pkg. taco seasoning

#### Directions:

Mix all together and spread in 8 x 8 pan. Put lettuce, onions, shredded cheese, and tomatoes on top.

*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.*