

# Cheers!

## TO 2024

## TOGETHER WE SHINE BRIGHTLY

As we bid farewell to the past year, we extend a heartfelt thank you for your patronage, confidence, and support. Stepping into 2024, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) looks forward to:

- Providing the power that local communities will need to grow and thrive.
- Helping you to make the most efficient use of your energy dollars.
- Accessing the larger network of electric cooperatives to draw from the tools, resources, and best practices to make our local cooperative stronger.
- Participating in a variety of local community events.
- Embracing innovations that increase electric reliability and public/employee safety.
- Serving you with the honest and clear communications you deserve as member-owners of FMEC.
- Implementing forward-thinking plans and policies that set a solid course for FMEC's future.

Our dedication remains steadfast — to serve you with excellence, quality, and an unwavering emphasis on safety and reliability.

As a local and easily accessible electric cooperative, FMEC remains deeply rooted in the not-for-profit business model, dedicated to serving our member-owners. #246401 Providing power to enrich your lives has been our constant mission, a legacy we proudly carry into our 88th year!

Thank you for being an integral part of FMEC. We look forward to many more years of shared growth, progress, and success.

### OUR MISSION

*Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative  
is committed to serving our members  
by providing power to their lives.*

Happy New Year!  

ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



OUR PART OF THE GRID

The system that delivers your electricity is often described as the most complex machine in the world, and it’s known as the electric grid.

We all use different amounts of electricity throughout the day, so the supply and demand for electricity constantly fluctuate. Most households use more electricity in the mornings when we are starting our day, and also in the evenings when we’re cooking dinner and using appliances. Severe weather and other factors also influence the amount of electricity consumed.

The electric grid is a network of utility infrastructure — generation facilities, transmission lines, substations, transformers, distribution power lines, and various other electric equipment. What role does FMEC play in the grid? We are a distribution cooperative, so our role in the grid network is to provide local electric service. Additionally, FMEC and 23 other electric cooperatives own the electric power generating and transmission source, Dairyland Power Cooperative.

The first challenge for electric providers is to plan for, produce, and purchase enough electricity so it will be available exactly when we need it. #534703 The next two challenges are to transmit this electricity and then distribute it to the end-user. For the whole system to stay balanced, the electric grid must adjust in real-time to changing demand and unforeseen events.

While our focus is local to southern Minnesota, on behalf of our board of directors I assure you that we also keep abreast of statewide and national energy issues, the changing regulatory environment, emerging technologies, and energy consumption trends.

Our goal is to make sure that you have access to all of the electricity you need, when you need it. FMEC is proud to be your trusted, locally controlled, and member-owned energy provider.

member news

OFFICE CLOSED

Monday, January 1  
Happy New Year!

Monday, February 19  
Staff Development

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

PRIVACY NOTICE

As a member of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, you trust us with certain personal information. We value your trust and take it very seriously. The cooperative has and enforces a Privacy Policy that is reviewed periodically to ensure that it meets current standards and that your information remains secure.

The Privacy Notice and Disclosure Statement is included with your January billing statement. Those members utilizing paperless billing will be provided with a link to this information.

Please contact the cooperative to make changes to your personal and/or contact information that is on file. Call (507) 373-6421.

A complete copy of our privacy policy is available at [www.fmec.coop](http://www.fmec.coop).

PUBLIC PHOTOS POLICY

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative reserves the right to photograph or video participants in cooperative programs and special events. The cooperative may choose to use these images in print, on its website, or in any other communication materials. No person may use or reproduce these images for any purpose without prior authorization and express written permission from the cooperative board of directors.

UPGRADE  
FOR ENERGY  
EFFICIENCY



Is it time to replace a household appliance or HVAC equipment? FMEC offers a variety of rebates to incentivize the purchase and installation of energy-efficient lighting, appliances, and equipment.

“LED lighting rebates are available again in 2024,” explained Bryan Skogheim, Director of Business Development & Energy Solutions. “However, there are some changes to our rebate program this year. Complete rebate information for 2024 is posted on our website or available from our Energy Solutions Department.”

THE CHANGES ARE:

- The Electric \$ense New Home requirements are updated from the 2015 Energy Code to the 2020 Energy Code.
- The \$25 Smart WIFI Thermostat incentive now requires the thermostat to be a Honeywell® or Emerson brand which must be enrolled in the FMEC load management program.
- Air Conditioning and Heat Pump rebate requirements include new SEER2 requirements.
- Central Air Conditioning qualification SEER ratings have increased from 16 SEER or 15.3 SEER2 to 19 SEER or 18.1 SEER2.
- The Heat Pump Water Heater UEF factor will be a minimum value of 2.2.
- Due to low participation, the solar water heater rebate has been discontinued.

Additionally, FMEC provides funding to SEMCAC for low-income members to utilize SEMCAC for energy-efficient upgrades and incentives.

HOW ELECTRICITY GETS TO YOU



step 1  
**Generation**  
Electricity is generated from various sources.



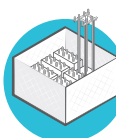
step 2  
**Step-Up Transformer**  
Voltage is increased to push the electricity over long distances.



step 3  
**Transmission Power Lines**  
Lines carry electricity over long distances.



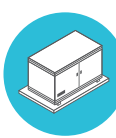
step 4  
**Transmission Substation**  
Voltage is lowered so electricity can travel across the local system.



step 5  
**Distribution Substation**  
Voltage is lowered further for safe distribution.



step 6  
**Distribution Power Lines**  
Electricity travels across these lines in your community.



step 7  
**Final Stop**  
A transformer reduces voltage a final time, and electricity is sent to your home.



From the time it’s created to the time it’s used, electricity travels great distances to be available at the flip of a switch. That’s what makes the electric grid our nation’s most complex machine– and one of our nation’s greatest achievements.



CO-OP PRINCIPLE #2: DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

DIRECTOR  
NOMINEE UPDATE

As of the December 11, 2023, filing deadline, the following members have filed for directorship.

- DISTRICT 1: Dennis Anderson (incumbent)
- DISTRICT 4: Richard Schaufler (incumbent)
- DISTRICT 7: Jack Korman (incumbent)  
Larry Gooden

POST FILING DEADLINE FOR NOMINATION BY PETITION


After the December filing deadline has expired, persons may still be nominated by filing a petition form that is available from the FMEC office. #1877200 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 come forward in the district by the Nominee by Petition deadline, that applicant will be deemed elected as Director.

WHEN THERE ARE MULTIPLE NOMINEES

Should multiple names be filed in a particular district, a biography of each nominee will be sent to all members of the district on Wednesday, January 31, 2024. Returned ballots are due on Monday, February 19, 2024. Ballots must be returned in the provided envelope to the third-party balloting company and not to our cooperative. Allow for possible mail delays.



RURAL ELECTRIC  
YOUTH TOUR 2024

**Experience Washington, D.C., Co-op Style June 18 - 23!**  
Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative will sponsor two high school students (junior or senior) from our service territory to an all-expenses paid trip and “an experience of a lifetime.”

Applicants must be the child or dependent of a current FMEC member and reside in our service territory. The delegates will be chaperoned and travel arrangements will be made by our statewide trade association, Minnesota Rural Electric Association. For more information, go to [www.fmec.coop/youth-tour](http://www.fmec.coop/youth-tour) or contact Lori Jimenez at [lori.jimenez@fmec.coop](mailto:lori.jimenez@fmec.coop) or (507) 379-8852.

**! DEADLINE TO APPLY: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2024 BY 3:30 P.M.**



SAVE THE DATE

**FREEBORN MOWER  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
ANNUAL MEETING**

As we flip our calendars to 2024,  
add our event to your calendar!

**TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH 26, 2024**  
Albert Lea High School  
Registration | Meal 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.  
Bingo 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.  
Business Meeting 6:30 p.m.

We look forward to having you join us!



WORKING THROUGH  
WINTER’S CHILL

Our Operations Department employees work diligently all year round, even in the harshest weather conditions. However, the frozen ground makes it difficult to install underground cables, so we delay this task until spring. #534703 Nonetheless, plenty of work is still suitable for the winter months. During this period, our underground installation crews shift gears to focus on fleet maintenance and tree trimming.

“Keeping our fleet of cable plows, backhoe, and directional drilling machine take significant maintenance in the off-season to ensure maximum uptime during the winter months,” explained Al Stadheim, PE, Director of Engineering and Operations. “The line crews that work primarily with the underground construction also transition to maintenance work on the overhead system during the winter months. This work includes changing out poles, conducting line patrols to locate areas in need of repairs, and locating various overhead equipment that needs to be taken out of service periodically for required inspection and repair.”

Winter is also when Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative focuses on completing required annual trainings for our outside crews. Trainings are usually held on the most inclement of winter days. “These trainings include CPR/First Aid, oil spill and hazmat, forklift certification, and many other OSHA-required classes. Crews also must perform annual testing and certification on many types of tools and specialty equipment used every day in the field.”



TREE TRIMMING FOR RELIABILITY AND SAFETY



We trim trees to keep branches from contacting or falling across power lines. This is an important activity because it helps reduce outages, whether they are momentary “blinks” or for extended periods.

Interference from tree branches is a frequent cause of power outages, especially following high winds, ice, and heavy snowfalls. This is why Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative takes proactive measures and uses a systematic approach to make sure that right-of-ways are free from potential hazards.

If you see our tree-trimming crews working along the roadside, please slow down and give them plenty of space to work safely.



# FRIENDS. NEIGHBORS. COMMUNITY.

Staying in touch with our members gives Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative a special kind of strength. #246401 It's part of what we call *The Cooperative Difference*.

We appreciate each of our members who joined us during the Holiday Open House on Friday, December 15th. Thank you for stopping in to visit!



Members enjoyed using special "Holiday Specs" to view the Christmas tree lights and see them transform into various shapes.



Staff was on hand to speak with members regarding various cooperative-related programs, services, and issues.



A highlight was the opportunity to visit with neighbors over holiday snacks.

# HAPPY RETIREMENT, RAANNA PESTORIOUS!



Many Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) members have been helped by Member Services Representative RaAnna Pestorious since she joined the cooperative as a front-line employee on December 28, 2015. "Working with members who have become good acquaintances has been the most positive aspect of my job," noted RaAnna. "I've appreciated their positive feedback."

Her daily work has included a variety of tasks. #1877200 These include maintaining records, processing payments, handling or redirecting service location calls, taking power outage calls, transferring services, and obtaining applications for electric service. When needed, she also provided backup services to the Operations Department.

What have been some of the biggest challenges she's encountered? "Moving from the old office location to the new building, along with learning new systems," she replied.

A memory that stands out from working at FMEC is working through Winter Storm Wesley in April 2019. "The extensive damage caused by the ice storm brought in so many line workers from different cooperatives and states to assist FMEC line crews to restore power to our area," recalled RaAnna. "It was great to see how well everyone worked together."

As RaAnna retires on January 19, 2024, she looks forward to spending more time with her family. She and her husband, Paul, have three children and seven grandchildren. Retirement will also allow time to focus on her artwork and perhaps take some "dream vacations."

*Thank you very much for your dedicated service to the FMEC members. We wish you many years of a healthy and enjoyable retirement, RaAnna!*

# KEEP YOUR MOST PRECIOUS VALUABLES SAFE

Our security and medical alert systems protect your loved ones from intruders, carbon monoxide, fire, medical emergencies, and other threats. Call for information on the variety of protection services available.

*For affordability and reliability, trust Heartland Security.*  
**(888) 264-6380 | heartlandss.com**

*A subsidiary of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative.*



# CLASSIFIED marketplace

## FOR SALE

**FARM:**  
**CAT 3 QUICK HITCH.** Call (507) 383-1714.

**HOUSEHOLD:**  
**ROUND MAPLE TABLE, 4 CHAIRS, & 2 LEAVES.** \$50. Call (507) 297-5531.

**FLANNEL SHEETS.** Double. \$5.  
Call (507) 297-5477.

**CHRISTMAS DISHES.** 4 place setting. \$25.  
Call (507) 377-9159.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**  
**MENS 560 LEVI JEANS.** Black, 38 x 36 and 40 x 36. In good condition. \$10 each.  
Call (507) 448-3491.

**CHUCK NORRIS TOTAL GYM.**  
Call (507) 440-0679.

**4' STEEL FENCE WOVEN WIRE STRETCHER.** \$75.  
Call (507) 383-3088 or (507) 373-1713.

**4 MICHELIN TIRES.** Latitude Tour HP, 245/60/R18, under 17,000 miles. Like new. \$100 for all. Call (507) 279-8910.

**ICE CASTLE FISH HOUSE.** 16', never used.  
Call (507) 440-9482.

**MOOSE CREEK SWEATSHIRT.** XL, black, hooded, pile lined. In good condition. \$10.  
Call (507) 448-3491.

**DULUTH TRADING WINTER PARKA.** Men's XL, black, hooded. Like new. Original \$150. Asking \$75. Call (507) 754-5103.

**PLUS START 12 VOLT BATTERY 150 AMP ENGINE STARTER.** 20 amp boost, 6 or 2 amp charge maintain. \$90.  
Call (507) 460-8601.

**NEW RUBBER FLOOR MATS** for a 2018 Chevy Silverado. \$85. Call (507) 402-5050.

**SIMPLICITY SNOW BLOWER.** 24", 5 hp. \$200. Call (507) 433-3500.

## WANTED

**PYREX BOWLS.** Call (507) 402-0880.

**USED TROPHIES** to recycle.  
Call (507) 440-0682.

**2005-2009 GMC ENVOY or SILVERADO.** In good condition, 110,000 miles or less. Will pay reasonable price. Call (507) 383-4194.

**FREE TUBA.** Call (507) 383-5082.

**1-3 STEEL BARRELS.** 50 gallon.  
Call (507) 373-6670 or (507) 213-9760.

**CD PLAYER** for under-the-counter or any other kind of CD player. Call (507) 373-0539.

**GAS POWERED WOOD SPLITTER.**  
Call (507) 383-2299.

**TORTILLA PRESS.** Cast iron, 8" or larger.  
Call or text (507) 438-6469.

**LEFSE MAKING EQUIPMENT.**  
Call (623) 734-6252.

# CLASSIFIED MARKETPLACE RULES

Classified Marketplace ads are printed in our monthly **County Lines** newsletter **FREE OF CHARGE** to our current members.

- Ad deadline is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to the issue in which it will be printed. Ads received after the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month will be printed a month later. Example: An ad received on or before June 15<sup>th</sup> will appear in the July issue. If it is received on June 16<sup>th</sup> or later, it will appear in the August issue.
- No business ads will be accepted. Ads must be submitted in writing or electronically, not by phone call.
- Ads will not be repeated.
- One ad/item per member, per month.

You will find a downloadable form on our website: **www.fmec.coop**. Select **MY COOPERATIVE**. Click on **NEWSLETTER** under **NEWS & INFO** tab.

You may also email ads to **michelle.rayman@fmec.coop** or go to the website, use the instructions above, and click on the **NEWSLETTER** tab to electronically submit an ad.



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  
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.*

## SANTA CRUISE

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative participated in the Santa Cruise, part of the Holiday Bazaar in downtown Albert Lea, on December 8.



## LET'S COOK



### IMPOSSIBLE QUICHE

Submitted By: Leola Anderson

- 12 slices bacon, crisp & crumbled
- 1 cup (4 oz.) shredded Swiss cheese
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 2 cups milk
- 1/2 cup Bisquick
- 4 eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°F (325°F for glass). Grease a 9-inch pie plate or square cake pan. Mix bacon, cheese, and onion; spread in the prepared dish. In another bowl, blend milk, Bisquick, eggs, salt, and pepper until smooth. Pour over bacon mixture evenly. Bake for 55 minutes until slightly browned and a knife comes out clean. Allow to stand for 5 minutes before serving.

*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.*