



Freeborn
Mower
Electric
Cooperative

People. Power. Possibilities.

county lines

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2024 • VOLUME 85 • NO. 09



Photo captured by Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative member-owner.

HARVEST SAFETY ALERT: AVOIDING ELECTRICAL HAZARDS ON THE FARM

On September 22nd, we observe the autumn equinox, a time when daylight dwindles and the telltale signs of autumn appear, such as students heading back to school. The air grows cooler in the evenings, and the foliage transforms into a tapestry of reds, oranges, and yellows. This seasonal shift also marks the start of the harvest season in our region, a critical time for farmers and workers. They begin their laborious work with combines, tractors, grain carts, and other machinery, tackling tasks on the farm and in the fields, sometimes working tirelessly through the night. It's essential to recognize that agricultural activities can present serious safety hazards if not handled with care.

Electricity is the lifeblood of various farm equipment, including grain dryers and irrigation systems. The safeguarding of lives and property starts with being

informed and properly trained. For both veteran farmers and those assisting during the harvest, it's crucial to be aware of the electrical dangers present on a farm to avert damage, injuries, or fatalities. Recognizing overhead power lines, being mindful of the perils associated with damp weather conditions, and detecting signs of electrical equipment in need of repair or replacement, are all precautions that can mitigate risks on the farm.

While much attention is paid to the risks associated with overhead power lines and the potential for contact with farm machinery, it's important to remember that farmers' work isn't limited to operating large equipment. #222101 They are also frequently found repairing broken equipment in shops, where numerous electrical hazards can lurk. Frayed cables and bare wires pose a risk of electric shock, especially in moist environments.

ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



POWERING THROUGH: STRATEGIES TO COMBAT MISO'S PROJECTED POWER SHORTFALL

As we continue to navigate the inevitable inflationary pressures in the energy industry, we are obligated to balance the cooperative's fiscal health and the reliability of service to our members. To continue providing energy services that you can depend on, we have to make difficult decisions, which sometimes means increasing rates.

We understand the pressures individuals and families are facing as the cost of goods continues to rise. We feel it, too. On the contrary, we also know how important it is to our members to keep their lives powered and their lights on. #1685900 This is why a rate increase is reflected on this month's electric bill.

Many components impact the decision to increase rates. Some contributing factors are the increased costs of supplies needed for maintenance, such as poles, transformers, wire, and other equipment, wholesale electricity costs and demand.

Wholesale electricity costs are closely linked to natural gas prices because natural gas is frequently the most expensive fuel used by generating units to produce electricity. Therefore, when natural gas prices rise, the cost of generating electricity also increases, leading to higher wholesale electricity prices.

The good news is that a rate increase doesn't happen so that we can make a profit. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit organization, which means any extra revenue is distributed back to our member-owners in the form of Capital Credits.

We take great pride in serving our members and being good stewards of our resources and are making every effort to navigate this volatile energy environment with great care and consideration of our members. We appreciate your continued support.



WELCOME JACKIE SCHLAAK

Jackie Schlaak joined our cooperative on August 1 as a Payroll and Financial Accountant.

She comes from a wealth of experience in finance and is looking forward to a wonderful working environment at Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative. Jackie grew up in Kasson, MN and now resides in the Hartland area. She and her husband Gary enjoy spending time with their 7 grandchildren.

Welcome to the cooperative, Jackie!

member news

OFFICE CLOSED

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative will be closed Monday, September 2nd in observance of Labor Day.

SAVE THE DATE

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative's 88th Annual Meeting will be held Tuesday, March 25th, 2025.

REBATE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR MEMBERS

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative offers a wide variety of energy efficiency rebates. Details can be found at www.fmec.coop. Rebate applications must be submitted within three months of the equipment or appliance purchase/installation.

EVERGREEN EVERYWHERE

Evergreen is an opportunity for electric cooperative members to voluntarily contribute to the increased use of renewable energy sources. #1798301 Our residential members were able to retire 2,989 Evergreen Blocks at 100kWh each! Each Evergreen block is tracked by wholesale power provider Dairyland Power Cooperative and is renewable energy coming from regional solar, wind, hyrdo, and biogas generation sources.

HARVEST SAFETY CONTINUED...

Continued on page 3.

Moreover, the misuse of extension cords or those not intended for outdoor use can lead to injuries or even fires. Because of the dangers associated with electrical work, it is recommended to contact an area professional if you encounter an electrical issue on the farm.

As always, remember to LOOK UP AND AROUND and keep all equipment at least 10 feet away from any power line or electric source. Safety begins with you. Take time to plan your work, train your harvest crew and pass along farm safety knowledge to the next generation of farmers.

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative wishes all of our area farmers a safe and successful harvest season.

FALL SAFETY WORD SEARCH



Fall is finally here! The leaves are changing, the weather is cooler and the holidays are just around the corner. But Fall also brings greater risks of home fires and electrical hazards.

Read the safety tips below, then find and circle the **bolded** words in the puzzle.

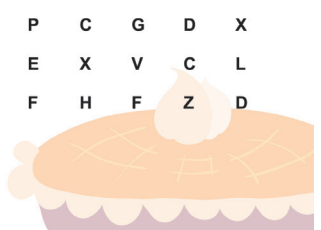
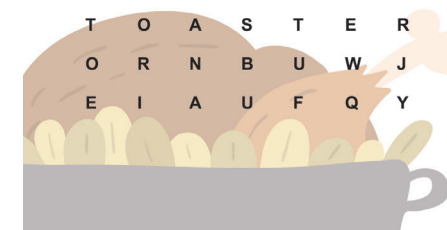
Adults should always stay in the **kitchen** while food is **cooking**.

Smoke alarms should be tested monthly to ensure they're working properly. **Batteries** should be replaced every year or right away if the alarm starts to chirp.

Candles should never be left burning when someone isn't in the room.

Keep flammable items away from the **stove, toaster** and other cooking **appliances**.

S	M	R	A	L	A	E	K	O	M	S	E	C	A	W
S	M	C	K	J	P	M	H	G	X	V	O	B	P	S
X	E	K	A	H	O	R	I	E	O	O	M	Z	P	C
R	B	I	X	T	F	O	A	T	K	H	C	U	L	N
P	O	Y	R	Y	U	G	S	I	T	G	X	M	I	K
K	E	G	K	E	L	L	N	L	V	F	H	K	A	C
T	I	W	U	D	T	G	R	I	C	D	S	H	N	H
S	W	T	D	Q	Q	T	M	E	K	Z	E	V	C	O
M	Q	Y	C	E	R	W	A	Z	X	S	L	K	E	Q
P	D	M	L	H	P	Z	X	B	E	W	D	N	S	Q
C	H	T	B	K	E	W	U	R	I	S	N	W	W	H
A	K	R	S	C	G	N	W	U	L	R	A	R	X	A
T	O	A	S	T	E	R	O	K	F	P	C	G	D	X
O	R	N	B	U	W	J	G	D	K	E	X	V	C	L
E	I	A	U	F	Q	Y	L	U	H	F	H	F	Z	D





CO-OPS VOTE

A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

WWW.VOTE.COOP

Federal, state, and local elections offer opportunities to vote for leaders who support energy policies that promote safe, reliable, and affordable energy. In particular, they allow us to elect public officials who understand America's electric cooperatives and will vote to support issues important to 42 million electric co-op members across the country. Co-ops Vote is a program built to give members community access to resources and information needed not only to vote, but to vote with co-op issues in mind.


Voting with co-op issues in mind helps ensure continued access to reliable electricity and innovative energy solutions. #1798301 Together, we have the power to educate lawmakers, build awareness about our issues and concerns, and support legislative issues that are important to our communities.

BECOME A CO-OP VOTER IN 5 EASY STEPS:

- **Register to Vote:** Check to make sure your registration is current.
- **Learn Voter Details:** Get information on deadlines, absentee voting, and polling places.
- **Get Educated:** Learn about issues critical to keeping your electricity affordable and reliable.
- **Know the Candidates and Policymakers:** Find out how they support affordable, reliable electricity in your community.
- **Share Your Story:** Talk to your family and friends about your coop, tell them why you're a Co-op Voter and ask them to join you at the polls.

Rural communities depend on Co-op Voters like you. Get out and VOTE each and every Election Day.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CO-OPS VOTE:
WWW.VOTE.COOP



RURAL ELECTRIC YOUTH TOUR 2024

The National Youth Tour, a scholarship program created by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is nothing short of a once in a lifetime opportunity. This June, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative was thrilled to send students Nolan Brooks and Kaci Wallin on the week-long trip to Washington, D.C. with over 1,900 other students from around the United States to explore historic monuments, learn about government and processes by meeting with representatives and senators, and of course, socialize with new friends.

What's the best way to meet new friends on such an adventure? A state pin scavenger hunt with a posed challenge: who can get the most pins and/or pins from every state. Our FMEC delegate, Kaci, was eager to not only share about the forever friendships she built through this opportunity, but also her bucket hat, which was neatly adorned with pins from nearly every state.

Nolan echoed that same sentiment and said, "It was cool to see everything, but being with the other people and building life-long friendships was the highlight for me." When asked if he's talked to anyone from the trip since, he replied, "Oh definitely. There's a group of 5-6 guys that got really tight on the trip. A couple of them are coming to visit me this weekend."



Not every student that had this opportunity is a frequent flyer though. For some, including Kaci, it was her first time being on an airplane. "It was quite the jaunt!" she said. She also added that the trip was the "perfect balance of education and fun."

When asked what her favorite part of the trip was? Without skipping a beat, she said, "The Air and Space Museum and the Smithsonian Museum." These are just two of the many stops the students made on the agenda-packed trip. Other locations they visited included the D.C. War Memorial, Arlington Cemetery, Capitol Hill, Mount Vernon, and the Holocaust Museum.







In addition to visiting these historic sights, students also learned about the rich history of electric cooperatives and the importance of being an active participant in our democracy.

Kaci is one of four children in her family and came home from the trip so filled with excitement, she shared that she is still talking about the amazing experience and has been encouraging her brother to apply. She has a bright future ahead of her and plans to take up welding as a career, following in the footsteps of her dad.

Nolan is settling into his first apartment at Minnesota State University-Mankato and plans to pursue a career in sports. Students from our area on FMEC lines will be able to apply for the 2025 National Youth Tour beginning later this fall. Watch for more details.

DIY Projects That Could Save You Money This Fall

Do you hear the term “DIY” and cringe? Or perhaps you are a DIY extraordinaire, looking for the next project to complete. Along with crafty DIY projects, there are some energy efficient ones that can help you save money this fall.

-  Insulating your hot water pipes to help reduce heat loss and raise your water's temperature.
-  Insulating and reducing air leaks in floors over garages. You can seal air leaks and add insulation to make the living space more comfortable and make that part of your home more energy efficient.
-  Depending on how well your attic is insulated, consider adding more insulation. There are several types of insulation and the R- or Resistance-value that you will need depends on several variables, including where you live and your climate. Energy.gov and Energystar.gov publish maps that outline recommended R-values.
-  Consider installing an attic stairs cover box to improve air leaks and comfort. You can build your own box, purchase a kit, or even buy a pre-built box. #222101 According to Energy.gov, the box should be durable enough to withstand repeated openings and closings, have an R-value similar to the rest of your attic insulation, and provide an air seal.
-  Here is an easy one: applying frosted contact paper to the windows in or by your front door. Not only can you increase privacy, but you will decrease heat transfer.
-  If you do not have one, consider installing a programmable thermostat or a smart thermostat. Either improvement can make a difference on your energy bill, especially if you select a higher temperature in the summer and lower temperature in the winter when you won't be there.

NOTICE OF COLD WEATHER RULE

Minnesota Statute 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, 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, 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. #1685900 If you are in threat of disconnection, contact the Semcac office and they will let you know what is available.

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.

SEMCAC
(507) 864-7515 | (800) 944-3281
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

CLASSIFIED marketplace

FOR SALE

VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:
2001 YAMAHA BIG BEAR ATV. New tires, 2-wheel drive, stored inside, great shape. \$2,495. Call (507) 383-4459.

2003 F150 FORD PICKUP. 4-wheel drive, runs good, body has rust. \$4,000. Call (507) 438-5259 or (507) 433-1628.

FARM:
2 BRENT 744 WAGONS. Excellent condition. \$18,500 each. Call (507) 318-9645.

1979 FORD 880 TANDEM GRAIN TRUCK w/Scott 20' box. Call (507) 279-0949 or (507) 279-0838.

HOUSEHOLD:
BEDSPREAD SET. Sateen sheen textured set. 2 shams, bed skirt, & 3 accent pillows. Blacks, golds, & red. \$60 OBO. Call (507) 402-8071.

MISCELLANEOUS:
CARRY ALL for RV or SUV. \$100. Call (507) 325-2427.

14' LOAD TRAIL DUMP TRAILER. One owner. \$7,800. Call (507) 440-0909.

USED GALVANIZED SHEETING. 100 sheets, rippled, approximately 24" x 60". \$2 a sheet. Call (507) 402-9019.

2017 STARCRAFT TRAILER 24 RLS w/Hensley hitch, in excellent condition with many extras. \$19,000. Call (507) 383-2553.

2 WAYNE SUMP PUMPS w/back up systems. NEW, box never opened. \$450 ea. Call (507) 874-3152.

WELDING TABLE. 4' x 80" x 1/2", thick, very heavy duty. \$1,100. Call (507) 440-8549.

RIDGELINE TARGET COMBO SET. 3 piece, heavy-duty, never used, still in box. \$70. Call (507) 460-8601.

2 ANTIQUE WOODEN SPOKED WAGON WHEELS. Very good condition. \$100. Call (507) 373-3633.

CADILLAC PRODUCTS, PORTABLE INDUSTRIAL CLEANER, BLOWER, VACUUM. Model LVU, 115 V, 50/60 HZ, 2.5 amps, like new. \$800. Call (507) 402-9959.

JAMESWAY HENS NESTS. Metal, 10 hole. Call (507) 279-9761.

PATIO & CONCRETE BLOCKS. Different sizes and shapes. Call (507) 437-1615.

OUTSIDE DOG KENNEL 4 x 7 and IGLOO DOG HOUSES. Call (507) 219-8068 or (507) 219-9555.

PETS/ANIMALS:
PYGMY KID GOATS. Call (507) 475-1468.

WANTED

VINTAGE BRASS & COPPER FIRE EXTINGUISHERS. Call (507) 402-0880.

USED T POSTS. Call (507) 383-5322.

IRIS BULBS or any **PERENNIAL ROOTS** if dividing your plants this fall and tossing. Call (612) 618-0532.

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

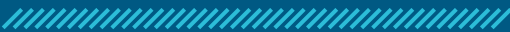
You may also email ads to michelle.rayman@fmec.coop or go to the website, use the instructions above, and click on the **NEWSLETTER** tab to electronically submit an ad.

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 15th 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.



SCAM ALERT

You may be aware that scammers often target the utility industry in an effort to coerce individuals into providing private information or making payments. Scammers often succeed because their tactics appear genuine and catch people off guard. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) wants to reassure you that we will never show up to your door in an unmarked vehicle, threaten legal action, or pressure you over the phone. FMEC has several procedures in place to protect member information, including investing in security technology and rigorous identity verification processes. If you receive a suspicious phone call, trust your instincts and hang up. Please let FMEC know about your experience so that we can take proactive measures to protect others from falling victim to similar scams.

LET'S COOK



CORN FREEZING

Submitted By: Cheri Chapek

- 36 Ears of Corn
- 1 lb. butter
- 16 oz. half & half

Directions:

Cut the corn off the cobs and place in a roaster or large baking dish. Add butter and half & half. Bake at 350°F for 1 hour, uncovered, stirring every 15 minutes. Allow the corn to cool completely, then freeze it in a freezer bag, laying flat.

Members may submit one short recipe per month by email to 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.