



Freeborn
Mower
Electric
Cooperative

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NEWSLETTER

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Looking forward to serving you in 2025!



NEW YEAR, NEW GOALS: FMEC'S 2025 PRIORITIES

The beginning of a New Year for some is a fresh start, a time to set new goals, start a new habit, or embark on a new fitness journey. Similarly, it's an opportune time for Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) to assess our own organization, looking for opportunities to improve our processes, find efficiencies that help improve our members' experience, and to fine tune our business strategy going into the new year.

There is a lot to look forward to in 2025 as we set our sights on 5 key priorities. Some of our priorities shift year to year, but safety will consistently remain at the top of the list. Regular safety training, strict adherence to safety protocols, regular equipment maintenance, and thorough safety plans for all employees will help to keep our workforce safe.

Maintenance of our distribution system will also be a key priority in 2025. There are several large underground projects planned to improve our infrastructure which enables us to provide safe, reliable power to our members. Crews will be prioritizing this work alongside other smaller projects such as replacing poles, wire, and other components throughout the year.

Intentional focus will be given to the strategic direction of the cooperative in 2025 with support from GreatCo-ops, leading industry experts aimed at helping cooperatives succeed and prepare for the future. #210902 GreatCo-ops will come alongside FMEC to help validate the work we are already doing, while ensuring that we have a solid plan in place to support the future of the cooperative.

In conjunction with this work, we are looking forward to finding new ways to enhance our internal culture in efforts to attract and retain top-tier talent in a competitive work environment.

As always, affordability and reliability are of the utmost importance to us. In 2025, our plan is to continue operating our cooperative in a fiscally responsible way by prioritizing projects and work that bring the most value to our members. Our aim will always be for the co-op to be proactive in ensuring reliability, while doing our best to make decisions that support our desire to keep our rates affordable for our members.

ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



A NEW YEAR, A STRONGER COOPERATIVE

The beginning of a new year is an exciting time for our cooperative. It's not only a time to look to the future, but also a time to look back and celebrate all the amazing work that the cooperative accomplished in 2024. I am incredibly proud of our team and confident they will be prepared for everything 2025 will bring.

We are planning to hit the ground running, with many exciting projects on the radar that aim to set our cooperative up well for future success. Part of this will be solidifying the strategic direction of the cooperative by putting together a comprehensive multi-year plan with the support of industry experts. We will continue to remain laser focused on providing reliable service while balancing our desire to keep our rates affordable for our members.

This is no small undertaking but feel assured that this work will continue to bring value to our cooperative for years to come. #1769500 What excites me the most is the approach we are taking towards this work, which will invite our entire larger team to have a voice in the process. We are still working out details of what this will look like, but it's incredibly important for our entire team to understand our strategic direction and how their work contributes to the overall success of the cooperative. I look forward to sharing important updates with you in the coming months.

Thank you for your trust and support this past year. We are looking forward to serving you in 2025.

- Jim Krueger



SAVE BIG IN 2025 WITH ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES!

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is excited to offer a wide range of rebates in 2025 to help members save money while making energy-efficient upgrades to their homes, farms, and businesses.

These rebates are designed to encourage the adoption of energy-saving technologies and reduce overall energy consumption in our community. Here are just a few examples of the rebates available in 2025:

- **Appliances:** Rebates for ENERGY STAR® certified refrigerators, freezers, washers, and dryers.
- **Heating and Cooling:** Rebates for energy-efficient heat pumps,

water heaters, and central air conditioners.

- **Agricultural Equipment:** Incentives for variable-speed drives, livestock fans, and energy-efficient lighting.
- **Smart Energy Solutions:** Rebates for programmable thermostats and electric vehicle chargers.

To see a complete list of 2025 rebates, eligibility requirements, and application details, visit our website at www.fmec.coop/rebates. Take advantage of these savings and improve the energy efficiency of your space. Let's work together to make 2025 a year of energy-smart choices!

member news

OFFICE CLOSED:

Wednesday, January 1
Happy New Year!

Monday, February 19th
Staff Development

NOTICE:

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative will modify its lobby hours by closing on Fridays, beginning January 3, 2025. We will continue to remain dedicated to delivering the excellent customer service you deserve. You can still contact us during normal business hours on Fridays through our electronic services or by phone, and we also will be available in-person by appointment.

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.

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.

HOLIDAY FUN RECAP

SANTA CRUISE

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative participated in the Santa Cruise, part of the Holiday Bazaar in downtown Albert Lea, on December 12th. #1769500 New to the cruise this year was a made-in-house lit sign that read, "Powering your holidays."



HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

On December 12, we hosted a Holiday Open House in our lobby area to connect with our valued members this holiday season. We appreciated the opportunity to visit with those who joined us!





RURAL ELECTRIC YOUTH TOUR 2025



EXPERIENCE D.C., CO-OP STYLE! APPLICATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 7

If you are a junior or senior in high school, don't hesitate to apply for this experience of a lifetime! Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is proud to sponsor two high school students (junior or senior) from our service territory to participate in the National Rural Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. This is an all expenses paid trip, where over 1,500 students from across the nation spend a week in the nation's capital to tour national monuments, meet with legislators, gain valuable leadership skills, and make lifelong friendships!

Last year's participants returned with so many amazing stories of what they learned and the positive impact the trip had on their educational journey. You simply don't want to miss the chance to apply!

Youth Tour Travel Dates: June 16-21, 2025

Deadline to Apply: Friday, February 7 | 3:30 p.m.

Student Interviews: Monday, March 10, 2025
(Beginning at 3:30 p.m.)

For an application packet or more details, please contact your high school counselor or our office at 3366 Bridge Ave., Albert Lea MN. Our website also has Youth Tour information as well as an informational video with highlights from a past trip.

Questions can be directed to Lori Jimenez at (507) 379-8852 or by email to lori.jimenez@fmec.coop.



HAPPY RETIREMENT!

Lori Masters began her career in 2007 with Alliant Energy as the Office Administrator and later became the Operations Assistant in 2015 at Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative after FMEC acquired Alliant Energy. Throughout her career, she has proven herself to be dedicated and knowledgeable, with a balance of humor and sarcasm in the mix. #1800003 The camaraderie with the crew in back is evidence of her commitment to her role, earning their respect and trust as they work to keep safety a number one priority.

She noted that her favorite part of the job was the people and most notably, she enjoyed having a "great boss." When asked what her favorite memory was working at the cooperative, she recalled attending a former lineman's funeral during Covid, where in-person attendance wasn't allowed. The crews lined up waiting in their trucks during the service and then joined the processional afterwards. She admires the respect and honor they gave to the family.

Congratulations, Lori on a well-deserved retirement. You and your famous pumpkin rolls will surely be missed by many! We wish you all the best in the next chapter.

CO-OP PRINCIPLE #2: DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

DIRECTOR NOMINEE UPDATE

As of the December 11, 2024, filing deadline, the following members have applied for directorship:

District 2

Jay Neitzell (Incumbent)
John Penkava

District 5

Frank Fryer (Incumbent)

District 8

William Trygstad (Incumbent)

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. 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 Friday, January 17, 2025.



WHEN THERE IS A SINGLE NOMINEE

Should there be 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 Friday, January 31, 2025. Returned ballots are due on Thursday, February 20, 2025. Ballots must be returned in the provided envelope to the third-party balloting company and not to our cooperative. Allow for possible mail delays.

DIRECTORS BEGIN TERM

The elected directors will be seated during the Annual Meeting on Tuesday, April 1, 2025.



As we flip our calendars to 2025, add our event to your calendar!

FREEBORN MOWER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING

TUESDAY EVENING, APRIL 1, 2025

Albert Lea High School
Registration | Meal 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
Bingo 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Business Meeting 6:30 p.m.

We look forward to having you join us!

WINTER DOESN'T SLOW US DOWN

Old Man Winter doesn't stop our Operations Department. Throughout the winter months, our crews are hard at work, though the workload shifts from underground work to overhead work. Typically, the underground work is reserved for the spring when temperatures allow for the ground to thaw.

In 2025, Co-op crews will be doing several large underground projects in the Glenville and Austin areas. 8 miles of aging 3 phase and 1 phase overhead lines will be buried west of Glenville and 1.5 miles of overhead line will be buried north of Austin. #1800003 1 mile of 3 phase overhead line will also be buried east of Sargeant. These projects are part of a larger 12 year plan to continually improve the distribution system to continue to provide safe, reliable power to our members.

The Co-op inspects the poles and other distribution infrastructure on a 10-year cycle. Each year rejected poles are identified as well as other maintenance items from these annual inspections. Co-op crews then repair/replace these items in the following year based off the results of these annual inspections. Much of this overhead work is completed in the winter months alongside maintenance to our fleet and tree trimming.

There are a lot of moving parts in FMEC's Operations Department and it takes a significant amount of strategic planning to maintain the level of service we provide our members. Not only are the crews working on large scale projects, but they are also monitoring our distribution system looking for areas that may need repair or replacement before an outage occurs.



MINNESOTA WINTERS AND POWER OUTAGES: HOW TO STAY PREPARED

There's no mistaking that Minnesota winters have the potential to wreak havoc on our power distribution system. It is important to have a plan in place in case power is interrupted this season due to a weather event. Here's some tips on how you can prepare for winter power outages:

- 1. EMERGENCY KIT:** Assemble an emergency kit that includes flashlights, batteries, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, first aid supplies, and any necessary medications.
- 2. STOCK UP ON ESSENTIALS:** Ensure you have enough non-perishable food and water to last at least three days. Canned goods, dry snacks, and bottled water are ideal. Don't forget a manual can opener!
- 3. WARM CLOTHING AND BEDDING:** Gather extra blankets, sleeping bags, and warm clothing. #210902 Layering clothes can help retain body heat. Thermal underwear, wool socks, and hats are particularly useful.
- 4. HEATING ALTERNATIVES:** If you have a fireplace or wood stove, ensure you have a good supply of dry firewood. Portable space heaters that run on propane or kerosene can be useful, but ensure proper ventilation to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- 5. POWER SOURCES:** Consider investing in a generator for backup power. Make sure you know how to operate it safely and have enough fuel stored. Solar-powered chargers for phones and other small devices can also be helpful.
- 6. STAY INFORMED:** Keep an eye on weather forecasts and stay informed about the status of the power outage. Remember to contact the Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative emergency line at (800)734-6421 or (507) 373-6421 to report an outage.
- 7. PLAN FOR COMMUNICATION:** Have a plan to communicate with family and friends. Text messages often go through when calls do not. Keep a list of emergency contacts handy.

Our crews are committed to restoring power as safely and quickly as possible in the event of an outage. We strongly encourage our members to have a plan in place should an outage occur.

WINTER ELECTRIC SAFETY TIP

Heavy accumulations of ice and snow coupled with fluctuating winter temperatures can bring down utility poles, trees, and limbs.



In a winter storm emergency, restoring power and heat to our members is the highest priority, and electric utility crews work around the clock to restore service. Even so, it can take days to repair the devastating damage of a winter storm.

If you are in the midst of storm recovery, keep these safety tips in mind:

- Avoid going outside if possible. Downed power lines could be submerged in snow and ice and difficult to identify.
- When outside, treat all downed and hanging lines as if they are energized electric lines.
- Stay away, warn others to stay away, and immediately contact Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative at (800) 734-6421 or (507) 373-6421.
- Remember that downed power lines do NOT have to be arcing, sparking or moving to be live and deadly.

CLASSIFIED marketplace

FOR SALE

FARM:

2024 BARLEY STRAW. 5x5 wrapped. \$50. Call (507) 852-3465.

8 ROUND BALES. Grass hay, 5x5, late 1st cutting, no rain, approx. 1,000 lb. Will load, you haul. \$75 ea. Call (507) 383-7341.

HOUSEHOLD:

LEFSE GRILL, ROLLING PIN, RICER \$100. Call (507) 273-2141.

SONY CD RADIO SYSTEM. Under cabinet mount, silver. \$25. Call (507) 754-5103.

MISCELLANEOUS:

2 COLUMNS. White, 5' tall. Call (507) 373-0464.

CRICUT EXPLORE AIR 2, with **HOMEST** carrying case. Brand new in box. \$115. Call (507) 373-2123.

HONDA HS621 SNOWBLOWER. Single stage, complete tune-up December 2024. Excellent condition. \$400. Call (507) 373-3633.

PETS/ANIMALS:

FREE, 2 ADULT MALE BARN CATS. White long hair, orange short hair, neutered & vaxed. Friendly. Call (507) 433-2712.

WANTED

LIGHT-UP BLOW MOLDS, for any holiday. Call (507) 440-4312.

FREE

FLOWERPOTS. Plastic & clay. Call (507) 852-3499.

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 may also email ads to 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.

SPQ **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



Business Hours:

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

Lobby Hours:

Monday - Thursday, 7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Friday, By appointment only

Board Meetings:

Typically the last Tuesday of each month.

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

NO WORRIES THIS WINTER!

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LET'S COOK



ALMOND BARK PUFFCORN

Submitted By: Kelsey Enger

- 7 oz. butter flavor puffcorn
- 16 oz. almond bark, cut into pieces
- sprinkles

Directions:

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place puffcorn in a large bowl. Melt almond bark in a separate bowl in the microwave for 30 second intervals until smooth. Pour the almond bark over the puffcorn and mix. Add sprinkles before the bark hardens.

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.