



Freeborn
Mower
Electric
Cooperative

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county lines

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2026 • VOLUME 87 • NO. 05



MAY IS ELECTRIC SAFETY MONTH



SPRING PROJECTS START WITH SAFETY

Electricity powers nearly every part of our daily lives. It keeps our homes comfortable, our food cold, our devices charged, and our routines moving. Because we rely on it so often, it can also be easy to forget the importance of using electricity safely.

That is why May is recognized as Electric Safety Month; a timely reminder to slow down, pay attention, and protect the people and places we care about most.

Many electrical hazards can be prevented with a few simple precautions. Inside your home, avoid overloading outlets or extension cords, replace damaged cords right away, and keep electrical devices far from water. Make sure smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working properly, and talk with children about the dangers of outlets, power cords, and electric equipment.

Outside, safety matters just as much. Always look up before working near overhead power lines, including when using

ladders, long-handled tools, or moving equipment. Stay far away from downed power #14821 lines and assume every line is energized. If you see one, keep others away and call 911 or your local electric company immediately.

Planting trees, digging, or starting outdoor projects this spring? Be sure to plan ahead. Underground utility lines may be closer than you think, so always contact 811 at least two business days before you dig to have lines marked.

At Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, safety is part of everything we do, from maintaining power lines to serving our members. During Electric Safety Month, we encourage everyone to take a few moments to think about the simple habits that can prevent serious accidents.

Because when it comes to electricity, awareness is one of the most powerful safety tools you have.

ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



LISTENING, LEARNING, AND LOOKING AHEAD

In early March, a group representing Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) joined colleagues from cooperatives across the state at the Minnesota Rural Electric Association's (MREA) Annual Meeting, held in St. Paul, Minnesota. We listened to a panel of industry professionals who offered differing perspectives on hot topics such as demand growth, impacts of AI, and what the future holds as we look at the generation landscape. It is always important to hear differing perspectives through respectful, moderated dialogue.

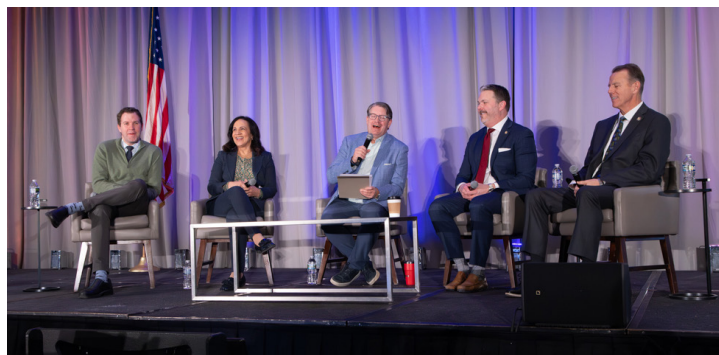
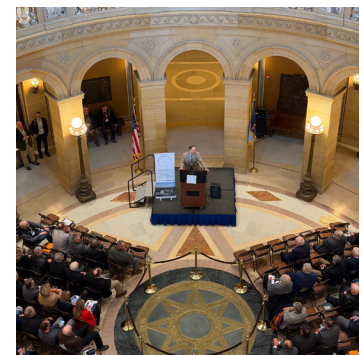
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) also gave us an update, and we heard from Mike Partin, Board Chair of NRECA. One key takeaway that was very eye-opening, was the discussion that happened around how energy security is national security. As complex as that seems, energy is the foundation of how our nation thrives. We need energy to power our businesses, manufacturing industries, healthcare systems, schools, and the everyday lives of our nation. Without reliable,

affordable electricity, economic growth and national stability are at risk.

The conversation reinforced how critical it is for electric cooperatives to remain engaged, forward-thinking, and collaborative as we navigate an evolving energy landscape. #1902100 From increasing demand driven by new technologies to the need for resilient infrastructure and diverse generation sources, the challenges ahead are complex, but not insurmountable.

Meetings like this provide a valuable opportunity to learn, network, share ideas, and strengthen our collective commitment to advocacy as we seek a reliable energy future for our members.

Sincerely,
Jim Krueger



member news

OFFICE CLOSED

Our office will be closed on Monday, May 25th in observance of Memorial Day.

COGENERATION AND SMALL POWER PRODUCTION — POLICY 5.904

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.

NOVA POWER PORTAL™

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 megawatts (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 interconnection plans.

HONORING THE LEGACY OF BRYAN SKOGHEIM



It is with profound sadness that we share the passing of our colleague and friend, Bryan Skogheim. Bryan's journey with Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) as the Director of Business Development & Energy Solutions spanned just over eleven years, and his dedication to our cooperative left an indelible mark on all of us.

Throughout his career at FMEC, Bryan poured his energy and passion into his role, driving innovation and fostering growth within our cooperative. His commitment to excellence and his visionary leadership were integral to the development of numerous successful projects that have benefited our members and our community. Bryan's unwavering dedication to sustainable energy solutions has set a standard for future initiatives and significantly contributed to our mission of providing reliable, efficient energy.

Beyond his professional achievements, Bryan was a cherished friend to many. His warm smile and kind words brightened our days, and his ability to inspire those around him was unparalleled. Bryan valued teamwork and believed in empowering his colleagues, often going above and beyond to support and mentor them.

Bryan's legacy will continue to inspire us. In honor of his contributions, we are committed to carrying forward the projects he was passionate about. As we reflect on Bryan's life and career, we are reminded of the importance of community and the values he held dear.

Bryan's memory will forever remain a cherished part of the Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative family.



SPRING PROJECTS SUPPORT RELIABLE SERVICE

As winter gives way to spring, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative enters one of the busiest times of the year: construction season.

Warmer weather allows crews to take on many of the outdoor projects that help keep our electric system safe, reliable, and ready for the future. While some of this work involves new construction, much of what happens each spring is focused on maintenance and system improvement. That includes inspecting equipment, replacing aging poles, upgrading transformers, trimming vegetation near power lines, and making repairs identified throughout the year. These projects may not always be highly visible, but they play an essential role in preventing outages and maintaining dependable service for our members.

In addition to ongoing maintenance work, FMEC crews will also be focusing on several important operations projects this spring and early summer.

In Adams, crews will be changing transformers in preparation for a voltage conversion planned for this fall. They will also be installing new underground lines in Adams for a future tie line. #187605 Similar underground work will take place in Alden, where crews will install new underground lines for another future tie line. These projects are part of the cooperative's continued efforts to strengthen the system, improve flexibility, and support reliable service across the area.

FMEC will also be changing out poles across the service territory that were identified through our annual pole inspection process. Replacing poles before they fail is one more way we proactively maintain the system and reduce the risk of future service interruptions.

Construction season is an important part of how FMEC serves members year-round. Some projects prepare us for future growth, while others focus on maintaining the strong foundation already in place. Together, this work helps ensure your cooperative can continue delivering safe, reliable electricity to homes, farms, and businesses throughout our service area.



GIVE UTILITY CREWS ROOM TO WORK

FMEC employees often work along roads and highways, especially during construction and maintenance season. Please slow down, stay alert, and give crews extra space to work safely.

Some jobs involve bucket trucks, cones, signs, and flashing lights. Others may be smaller, with just one truck or a few employees on site. No matter the size, utility crews need room to work.

Minnesota's Move Over Law includes utility vehicles, so when you see flashing lights, move over if it is safe. If you cannot change lanes, please slow down and pass with caution.

CELEBRATING OUR LINeworkERS

Last month, FMEC celebrated Lineworker Appreciation Day by honoring our lineworkers with a breakfast gathering. While that day gave us a special opportunity to say thank you, we appreciate their hard work all year long.

From outage response and repairs to ongoing maintenance and system improvements, FMEC lineworkers play an essential role in safely delivering reliable electricity to our members. We are grateful for their dedication, service, and commitment every day.

SPRING INTO ENERGY SAVINGS



Spring is the perfect time to make small changes that can improve comfort, reduce energy use, and help you prepare for warmer weather ahead. As temperatures begin to shift, a little seasonal maintenance can go a long way toward keeping your home running efficiently.

Here are a few smart ways to save energy this spring:

- Replace or clean HVAC filters. A dirty filter makes your heating and cooling system work harder than necessary. Check filters regularly and replace them as recommended.
- Schedule air conditioner maintenance. Spring is a good time to have your cooling system inspected before summer arrives. Routine maintenance can improve performance and help prevent costly breakdowns.
- Clear debris around outdoor units. Leaves, grass, and other debris can block airflow around your air conditioner. Keep the area around the unit clean and open.
- Seal air leaks. Check around windows, doors, and other openings for drafts. Sealing leaks with weatherstripping or caulk can help keep cool air inside when temperatures rise.

- Use ceiling fans correctly. In warmer months, ceiling fan blades should rotate counterclockwise to create a windchill effect that helps you feel cooler.
- Open blinds and curtains strategically. Take advantage of natural light on cooler days, #1902100 but close window coverings during hot, sunny afternoons to reduce unwanted heat gain.
- Adjust thermostat settings. As the weather warms, adjust your thermostat gradually for the season. Even a small change can help reduce energy use.
- Watch for energy waste. Spring is a great time to unplug unused electronics, replace older light bulbs with LEDs, and pay attention to everyday habits that affect your electric bill.

A few simple steps each spring can help you head into summer with a more comfortable, efficient home — and better control over your energy use.



SPRING PLANTING AND DIGGING SAFETY



Spring is also a busy season for yard projects, landscaping, and tree planting. Before you dig, it is important to plan ahead and protect both your property and underground utilities.

Always contact 811 before digging so underground utility lines can be marked. Even when working on small projects, like planting a tree, installing a fence post, or placing a mailbox, there is possibility of encountering buried lines. Calling before you dig is a simple step that helps prevent outages, injuries, and costly damage.

When planting trees and shrubs, be mindful of electric equipment and rights-of-way. Avoid planting beneath overhead power lines or in utility rights-of-way, where growth can create safety hazards and service issues. The right tree in the right place can improve your property, support efficiency, and keep the system safe and accessible.

FMEC NAMED BEST PLACES TO WORK 2026



Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) is proud to be named one of Southeast Minnesota's 2026 Best Places to Work by Workforce Development, Inc. The award was presented at the annual Workforce Development Forum on Thursday, April 9, and recognizes FMEC alongside 14 other organizations across the region's 11 counties. We are honored to receive this recognition and proud of what it says about our team and workplace culture.

The Best Places to Work program is a regional initiative based on a comprehensive employer survey conducted by national consulting firm Personnel Dynamics. It evaluates areas such as workplace culture, employee engagement, and organizational excellence. Being selected reflects the positive, supportive environment we work to create and maintain every day.

At FMEC, we know that when employees feel supported, valued, and empowered, they are better able to serve our members and communities. By investing in well-being, professional growth, collaboration, and a strong sense of purpose, we create a workplace where people can thrive, contribute, and build lasting careers. That strong internal culture helps us deliver the dependable, member-focused service our cooperative is known for.

This award reflects our cooperative values and our commitment to working together in service of others. We are grateful for this honor and remain dedicated to strengthening our workplace for the benefit of both our employees and the members we serve. It also reinforces our belief that a strong workplace culture is essential to long-term success.



HAPPY RETIREMENT, MARY THOMPSON!



Congratulations to Energy Solutions Specialist Mary Thompson, who is retiring on May 1, after 18 years of dedicated service to Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC).

Mary began her career as a Member Service Representative, providing exceptional assistance to our members with billing inquiries and payments, as well as other member-related services. In 2014, she advanced to the position of Energy Solutions Specialist. In this role she continued to serve our members, focusing specifically on rebates, energy efficiency, and water heater sales.

Mary collaborated closely with Dairyland Power Cooperative to transition the rebate system from paper to electronic formats. "I'm proud to have been part of the process of moving from paper to digital during my time here, as well as updating the load control system and inventory. It's a rewarding feeling to know I contributed to this change." Mary shared.

One of her favorite memories was riding in the first Santa Cruise in downtown Albert Lea. She rode high up in a bucket truck, dressed as Willie Wirehand. "It was so much fun, and the crowd really seemed to enjoy it," she recalled.

Another highlight she recalled was chaperoning high school students on the #14821 Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C. twice - once in 2011 and again in 2022. "It is an amazing opportunity for these students, and I thoroughly enjoyed it as well."

Mary and her husband Steve have five grown children and ten grandchildren. She looks forward to not having to work early in the mornings or drive in the winter weather. Mary is also excited about spending more time with family and traveling when her schedule allows.

We wish you a happy and healthy retirement, Mary!

WELCOME! AARON OLSON

Aaron recently joined Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative on March 30 as our Manager of Distribution Right of Way.

Aaron is eager to share the skills he's learned over the years and emphasize the importance of safety in everything that we do. In his free time, he enjoys hunting and fishing. #187605 One of his favorite books is "Cosmos" by Carl Sagan, and one of his most adventurous experiences thus far was spending two weeks in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.



CLASSIFIED marketplace

FOR SALE

VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:
2003 BLACK/SILVER ANNIVERSARY HERITAGE SOFT TAIL. Maintenance records, 2 matching helmets, 2 covers. \$8,500, OBO. Call (507) 373-7661.

FARM:
3-POINT 165 GALLON TANK SPRAYER. 30 ft. Call (507) 402-3614.

NEW IDEA GROUND-DRIVEN MANURE SPREADER. Good working order. Call (507) 402-4721.

HOUSEHOLD:
CLASSIC OAK COLOR WOOD ROCKER. Excellent condition. Price \$35. Call (507) 460-8168.

VINTAGE WASHTUBS WITHOUT STANDS. Call (507) 279-1856.

CORONADO 15 CU FT. CHEST TYPE FREEZER. Clean, runs well. \$75, OBO. Call (507) 438-6134.

MISCELLANEOUS:
ANTIQU BEVELED CLEAR GLASS WINDOW IN WOOD FRAME. 51 3/4 x 19 L Call after 9 a.m. (507) 402-8071.

VARIETY OF STREATER SHELVING. Inquire about sizes and pricing. Call (507) 574-3152.

RV LP TANKS. Two full tanks. \$90 for one/\$160 pair. Call (507) 438-1848.

CUB CADET TRACTOR WITH MOUNTED TILLER. \$1,350. Call (507) 273-6063.

MINNKOTA MAG 18 TMX TROLLING MOTOR 28 LB. THRUST. \$20. Call (507) 373-3633.

HEAVY UPRIGHT COMBINATION SAFE ON CASTERS. 54x26x28. \$150. Call (507) 383-0802.

PARMAK PRECISION SOLAR PAK 6 ELECTRIC FENCE CHARGER. Battery-operated. Never used. \$50. Call (507) 383-2086.

GLASS TOP PATIO TABLE WITH 4-CHAIRS. Gray in color, excellent condition. \$125. Call (507) 261-0749.

PATIO TABLE AND 4-CHAIRS. Call (507) 373-2182.

2-VINTAGE PHOTO/SCRAP BOOKS, PAGES 8 1/2 X 11. Padded decorative covers. \$15. For both. Call (507) 373-0093.

PETS/ANIMALS:
BARNYARD BABY CHICKS. Call (507) 475-1468.

WANTED

RED WING CROCKS. Call (507) 402-0880.

JUNK VEHICLES. Will pay cash, will come to you. Call (507) 440-3173.

FLAT TOP TRACTOR FENDERS. Call (507) 383-8651.

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 info@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 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.

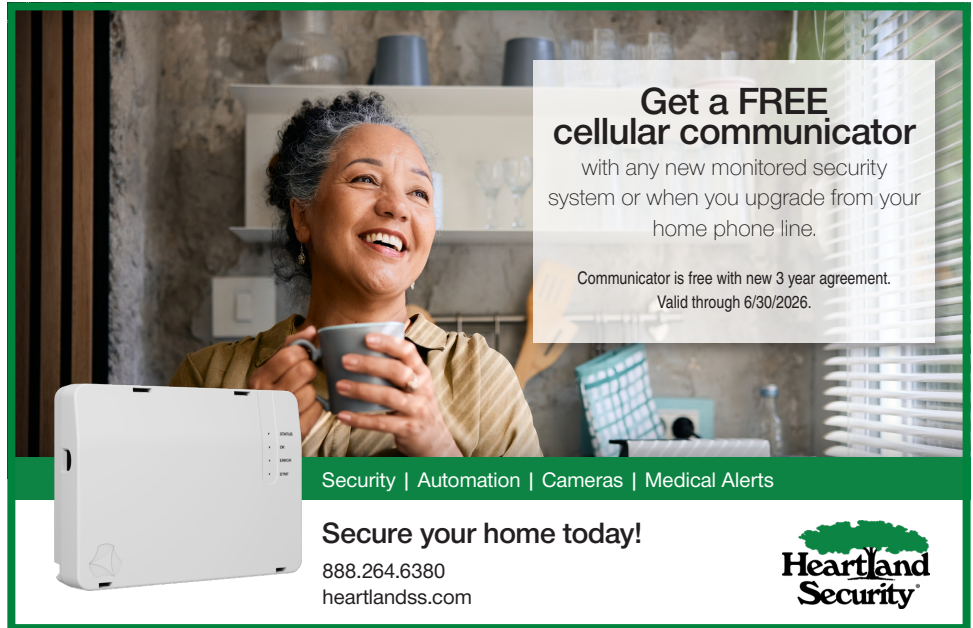
Lobby Hours:

Monday - Thursday, 7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Friday, By appointment only
Kiosk, Available 6:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
7 Days a Week

Board Meetings:

Typically the last Tuesday of each month.

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



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LET'S COOK



PICKLE ROLLS

Submitted By:
Sharon Hanson

- 1-32 oz. jar Kosher Dill pickles
- 1-8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 lb. sliced ham
- 10-6 in. tortilla shells

Directions:

Spread cream cheese on the shells, then place 1-2 slices of ham on top. Add another layer of cream cheese to the ham. Roll a pickle in the tortilla, then slice the roll into bite-sized pieces. Refrigerate & enjoy!

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