

APRIL 2022 • VOLUME 83 • NO. 04



*Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative Lineworkers*

## **Say thank you on April 11th – Lineworker Appreciation Day!** **Professionalism. Dedication. Safety. Service.**

***These are the four cornerstones from which our lineworkers have built their careers. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative recognizes and appreciates its lineworkers. We invite you to do so, too!***

### **CARRYING ON THE FAMILY LEGACY**

When your lights go out, so do we! In addition to their regular daily construction and maintenance work, electric lineworkers are also called to swing into action at any time as situations arise. That means 24/7 and in any weather condition. #261308 The support and sacrifices made by their families must also be acknowledged.

Within our cooperative, we have four lineworkers with sons also making their careers in the industry.



*Logan Stadheim (l), Apprentice Lineman with BENCO Electric Cooperative, Mankato, MN and Al Stadheim (r), FMEC Director of Engineering & Operations.*



*Connor Kortan (l), Journeyman Lineworker with Dairyland Power Cooperative and Jack Kortan (r), FMEC Manager of Operations.*



*Neal Underdahl (l), Journeyman Lineworker with ITC Albert Lea, Larry Underdahl (c), FMEC Manager of Distribution Maintenance and Tyler Underdahl (r), Journeyman Lineworker at Austin Utilities, Austin MN.*



*Dillon Sprague (l), Journeyman Lineworker at Austin Utilities, Austin MN and Loren Sprague FMEC Working Foreman.*



### **INTERESTED IN A CAREER AS AN ELECTRIC LINeworkER?**

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative offers two \$1,000 scholarships annually for post-secondary training in this important and dynamic field. Application information can be found on our website or is available from our office. Application Deadline is May 1, 2022.

## ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



## WHO SPEAKS FOR THE MEMBERS?

In today's world, it's often difficult to sift through all the contradictory voices and talking heads. The public may feel overwhelmed and underrepresented. Yet, this is where our cooperative business model works for you! The needs, values, and concerns of our electric cooperative member-owners are always at the center of what we do at Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative.

Your nine-member directors are elected from and by their fellow cooperative members in each Director District. Elections are held on a rotating basis with each director elected to serve a three-year term. When it comes to decision-making, your local board of directors is your first level of representation. We thank these directors for sharing their insights, time, and talents.

Your influence, however, does not stop there. #2227100 The cooperative business model provides for multiple ways in which cooperative entities can further their goals by working together.

Cooperatives work together in regional, state, national, and even international levels. Dairyland Power Cooperative, a regional generation and transmission cooperative supplying wholesale electric power, is a great example of how electric cooperatives have worked together for decades to ensure themselves with electric power.

Working together, electric cooperatives magnify member voices through cooperative organizations on the state and national levels. Together, in a nonpartisan way, electric cooperatives work with state legislators and Congress to educate them on policy directions and regulations that will be in the best interest of local electric rate payers.

Your voices are carried far when you're an electric cooperative member-owner.

### MINNESOTA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) is a nonprofit and nonpartisan trade association serving Minnesota's electric cooperatives. MREA provides legislative and regulatory representation, director and employee education programs, technical training for electric cooperative lineworkers and serves as the focal point for cooperation among cooperatives. Minnesota's 44 distribution cooperatives serve about 1.7 million Minnesotans in all 87 counties and operate the largest distribution network in the state with more than 135,000 miles of electric lines. MREA is headquartered in Maple Grove, MN.

### NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is the national service organization that represents America's member-owned electric cooperatives. NRECA, headquartered in Arlington, VA, strives to anticipate, shape and respond to changes in technology, law and public policy, and support economic development in local communities across the country. It provides a broad range of products and services in the areas of outreach and advocacy, workforce development, operational business strategies, and employee benefits.

### TOUCHSTONE ENERGY

Touchstone Energy® Cooperative Inc. is a membership organization representing a network of locally owned cooperatives across 45 states. Touchstone Energy provides resources and leverages partnerships to help member cooperatives and their employees better engage and serve their member-owners. As a member of Touchstone Energy, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is served by a not-for-profit cooperative committed to the core values of integrity, commitment to community, accountability, and innovation. Touchstone Energy is the national branding for electric cooperatives, setting them apart from other utility business models. By working together, Touchstone Energy cooperatives stand as a source of information to their 30 million member-owners every day.

### NRECA INTERNATIONAL

The mission of NRECA International is to bring the insights, experience, and expertise of America's electric cooperatives to the underdeveloped world. For instance, countries like Zambia and Guatemala will benefit immensely from volunteer efforts to create cooperatives and build out electric systems.

## member news

### 85TH ANNUAL MEETING

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative held its 85th annual meeting at Albert Lea High School on March 26, 2022. Thank you to all members who participated either in-person or online. As a cooperative that is owned and controlled by those it serves, your participation and support is critical.

Due to our publication deadline, we will cover the annual meeting in greater detail in our May issue of County Lines.

### DIRECTOR ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to the following three members who were seated on our board of directors during the 85th Annual Meeting.

#### DISTRICT 2

Newly elected director for District 2 is Jay A. Neitzell. District 2 was the only contested election held this year. John Penkava and Jeffrey Titus also ran for the post.

Neitzell resides west of Lerdahl. He is well-versed in the electric cooperative industry, having been a 32-year employee of the cooperative until his retirement in 2017. During his career he was involved in the budget process and strategic planning, and often worked directly with cooperative members in several capacities, and in the areas of communication and information technology. He served on Information Technology committees with both Dairyland Power Cooperative and NISC (National Information Solution Cooperative), as well as having been involved with national organizations such as NRTC (National Rural Telecommunications Council) and CRC (Cooperative Response Center).

*"I believe my background strengthens my ability to understand and assist Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative members. I look forward to continuing to serve the cooperative in order to meet their needs and exceed their expectations. Thank you to the members of District 2 for their support of my candidacy."* — Jay Neitzell

#### DISTRICT 5

Frank Fryer (incumbent, ran unopposed)

#### DISTRICT 8

William Trygstad (incumbent, ran unopposed)

## COLD WEATHER RULE ENDS APRIL 30

**Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule protects residential utility customers from having electric service shut off between October 1 and April 30.**

If your account is past due, you are no longer protected under the Cold Weather Rule after April 30th. If you need to make a payment arrangement on your account, please contact our office during normal business hours.

Collection of all reconnection fees will resume May 1, 2022. If your electric service is disconnected for non-payment, the entire past due balance, \$100 reconnect fee, and deposit equal to two times the average monthly electric bill may apply. All fees must be paid in full to be reconnected.



**MOVING? SELLING?  
BUYING? RENTING?  
TRANSFERRING  
ELECTRIC SERVICE**

**Here's what you need to know.**

#### SELLER RESPONSIBILITY

- The selling member needs to contact FMEC office by calling or coming into the office.
- The account must be listed in your name to request a transfer of service. FMEC will ask for personal verification information of caller.
- The seller will be asked to provide date of closing and buyer's name, if available. We may also ask for realtor information, if applicable. FMEC will verify this information matches with the information received from the buyer.
- If the buyer hasn't already contacted us, FMEC will attempt to contact the buyer to discuss the transfer process.
- If a deposit is on the account, it will be applied to the seller's final bill, and any remaining credit will be transferred to an active account under the same membership or returned in the form of a check.

#### BUYER RESPONSIBILITY

- The buyer needs to contact FMEC by calling or coming into the office.
- An application will need to be filled out, completely, including names, phone numbers, email addresses, mailing address, social security numbers, and dates of birth.
- A soft credit check will be performed and a deposit may be required depending on the results of the soft credit check. (A soft credit check does not affect your credit score). A deposit will be credited to the member's account after the required deposit is paid in full, followed by twelve consecutive months of on-time payments or upon termination of service. Confirmation of closing date is required and it must match the date the seller has provided.

SAFETY AND SERVICE RELIABILITY

*We understand that many people are rather protective of their trees. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative also appreciates trees for all their intrinsic values, but we also recognize that trees have a proper place. That place is not within the power line right-of-way corridors. We clear trees and vegetation from power line rights-of-way because:*

- Power outages are frequently caused by trees or branches contacting overhead power lines. These outages can range from momentary blinks to a lengthy outage that impacts numerous accounts. Service quality and reliability depends on proper vegetation management.
- A tree that is in close proximity to a power line poses a lethal threat to anything that could climb it and contact an energized power line. This could be an adult, a child, or an animal. The result may be a tragic fatality. Public safety depends on utility vegetation management.
- Power lines contacting tree branches can spark fires that quickly spread out of control.

“Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative employs a professionally trained three-man tree trimming crew year around, in addition to three two-man crews from Asplundh Tree Experts. #2281600 These crews follow a scheduled four-year rotational cycle across our service territory, determined by substation and circuit,” stated Larry Underdahl, Manager of Distribution Maintenance. “I urge that homeowners never hire a private tree contractor to work within 10 feet of power lines or attempt to do the work themselves. Please contact the

cooperative so we can trim or take down the hazardous tree in a safe manner.”

Although easements often give electric utilities the right to prune or remove any tree that interferes with the maintenance of electric lines, as a courtesy to our members, our tree care professionals will first notify the property owner in person or by door card.

“There are situations where tree removal is preferable to trimming. There are certain tall or fast-growing species that should never be planted under a power line. Trimming these species will never result in a natural looking tree, either. Saplings and brush can cause problems of access to power lines and utility equipment,” explained Underdahl. “Trees that are leaning, are split, or hollow also pose safety and service reliability threats.”

If you see a tree touching power lines and sparking, or another hazardous tree condition, please contact Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative immediately.



*“A crew came at our request to heavily trim up our walnut tree in January that was near the powerlines in our front yard. They did an incredibly amazing and safe job! It was fun watching them, though a little bit nerve-racking, knowing how risky tree removal is and yet how carefully and skillfully they secured and removed the large heavy branches. A great big thanks to all of them!”*

— Received from a FMEC member

PLAN AHEAD BEFORE PLANTING

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) recommends the following guidelines when planting trees and shrubs:

- Trees that grow no taller than 40 feet may be planted 40 feet from electrical wires, not any closer.
- Trees that grow taller than 40 feet must be planted no closer than 50 feet from electrical wires and no closer than 35 feet from buildings, to allow proper root development while minimizing root damage to building foundations.
- FMEC maintains a 10 foot right-of-way clearance on either side of an overhead power line.
- Cooperative crews need space to access utility equipment. Please do not landscape or install fences near pad mount transformers or junction boxes. Maintain a clearance of ten feet from the front doors and a minimum of four feet on the other three sides.
- Planting or landscaping around the base of power poles should also be avoided.
- Please refer to the Services tab on our website, [www.fmec.coop](http://www.fmec.coop), for charts regarding farmstead power line clearances.



NOTIFY US NOW OF YOUR CONSTRUCTION OR EXPANSION PLANS

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative always strives to meet our members’ expectations. That’s why we need to be aware of your 2022 construction or expansion plans as soon as possible. Not only do we need to get your project on our construction calendar, but necessary equipment must also be ordered and there may be delays in this respect.

Rural Electric Supply Cooperative (RESCO) is the primary supplier of parts and components used by electric distribution and transmission cooperatives in nine Midwestern States. It has recently issued some warnings regarding supply chain concerns. It urged its member cooperatives, including Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, to plan for cost increases and parts shortages lingering into 2023. Among the essential components most affected are transformers.



ARBOR DAY 2022 IS OBSERVED ON  
**FRIDAY, APRIL 29TH**

# BEING PROACTIVE IS FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

As much as we are anxious to get out and enjoy warmer temperatures, there are a few tasks that are important to tackle this time of year.



## SUMP PUMP

- Flooding will damage basement walls and furnishings, possessions, and even threaten the structural integrity of your house. Your sump pump is the first line of defense, but only if it is functioning properly. It should be inspected now, as melting snow and heavy spring rains can easily raise the ground water level. If water seeps into your house, you may be dealing with a costly mess.
- Make sure your sump pump is plugged into a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlet for safety.
- Remove the sump pump lid and check for debris or any worn parts. Remove sand and debris from the pit.
- If you notice rust or rotten, moldy smells it may be time to replace the sump pump.
- To test the sump pump, slowly pour a bucket of water into the pit. #261308 The sump pump should automatically start when it reaches a certain level. If it doesn't start, it may need to be replaced.
- A fully charged back-up battery will be necessary during a power outage.
- Check with your local plumber if you have questions or concerns about your sump pump.



## CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING

Is your equipment ready to tackle summer's heat and humidity? Beat the summer rush. Now is the time to ask your local HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) service technician for an inspection!

Your service technician should:

- check refrigerant levels
- look for refrigerant leaks
- check and seal any air duct leaks
- measure airflow through the evaporator coil
- verify that electric controls are functioning, including the accuracy of the thermostat
- check for any other needed maintenance

A dirty air filter will slow down the flow of air and reduce the unit's efficiency by as much as 5 percent to 15 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Consider replacing the air filter every three months.

If you are purchasing a new air conditioning unit, make sure it's ENERGY STAR certified for the best energy efficiency. HVAC rebates are available! We also offer rebates for AC Tune Ups. Check the REBATES tab on our website, or contact our office for details.



Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative offers a wide range of programs and technologies to our members to manage electricity use, save money, and ensure reliability. Our Energy Solutions Department is here to help you find right the solution! Call us today at (800) 734-6421.



## WELCOME CINDY GOLBUFF

Our Energy Solutions Department has grown with the addition of Cindy Golbuff on January 31, 2022. "I am looking forward to supporting our membership's interest in renewable energy, load management, and educating members on the use of energy efficient products," she stated.

"My strengths include strong interpersonal skills and a lifelong focus on being able to help others succeed." Her position as Energy Solutions Specialist II will give her plenty of opportunity for positive interaction with cooperative members. #2227100

Cindy and her husband, Scott, live in the Albert Lea area and have three children and a granddaughter. She enjoys the couple's three fur babies, family time, and water activities.

For energy information or questions on any rebate offers, contact the Energy Solutions Department at (800) 734-6421.

## CLASSIFIED marketplace

### FOR SALE

#### MISC:

**ICE FISHING EQUIPMENT.** Heater, hose, tank, gas, 3 ice augers. Call (507) 373-8638.

**NEW BALANCE TENNIS SHOES.** Men's size 12, navy with gray. Perfect condition. \$10. Call (507) 460-8168.

**AMBULANCE BOX.** 12 foot long. \$1,500 or make offer. Call (507) 324-5456 or (507) 273-3936.

**FAST TRACK EXERCISER.** Easy on knees and feet. Call (507) 438-6081.

**BISSELL CARPET & FLOOR CLEANER.** Deep cleaning, floating suspension, 10' hose, little use. \$100, (507) 320-7253.

**VINTAGE 1974 JOHN DEERE SNOWMOBILE JDX8.** \$350 OBO. Call (507) 448-2969.

**TOTAL GYM HOME EXERCISE SYSTEM.** Excellent condition. \$150 firm. Call (507) 373-2234.

**WOOD BOAT DOCK.** Three sections, 4' x 6', w/poles, hardware, and bumpers. Call (507) 373-1063.

**BLUE MAX SPOTLIGHT.** \$12. Call (507) 373-8661.

### WANTED

**MATURE FEMALE HOUSE CAT.** Have very loving, caring home. Call (302) 496-0490 leave message.

**1970'S SNOWMOBILES.** TX/L, Blizzard, RV, El-Tigre, SRX. Running or non-running. Call (507) 391-1777.

**PALLETS** in good condition to use for camper deck base. Call or text photos to (507) 438-6469.

**CHAIN SAWS.** Will pay cash for your old non-running chain saws. Call (507) 391-2560.

**OLD POSTCARDS.** Call (507) 402-0880.

**TRUCK PARTS** from a 1½ ton 1948 Dodge. Call (507) 456-3033.

### 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.
- A Classified Marketplace section appears in each issue except for our special Annual Report issue, typically in March.
- We take ads in these categories: For Sale; Wanted; Free/Giveaway.
- Ads can be for: Vehicles/Motorized; Animals; Household; Farm; Miscellaneous.
- No business ads will be accepted. Ads must be submitted in writing or electronically, not by phone call.
- Ads will not be repeated.

You will find a downloadable form on our website: [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 go to the website, use the instructions above, and click on the **NEWSLETTER** tab to electronically submit an ad.

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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 in the newsletter, each two times.

If you spot your 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)



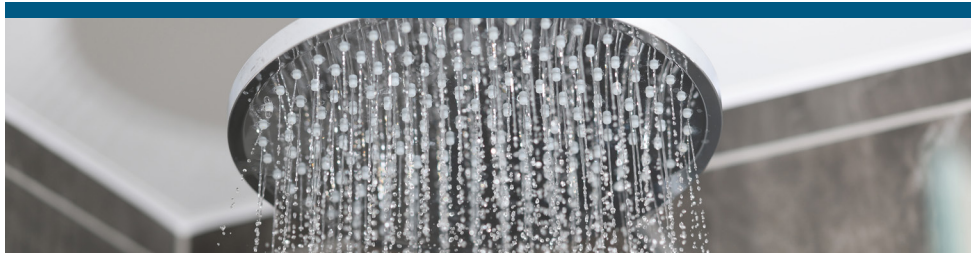
#### Office Hours:

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.*



## ELECTRIC WATER HEATER REBATE PROGRAM

***Hot running water is a necessity today. We'd be lost without it.***

Energy efficiency is also important since any household equipment that heats or cools will typically account for the largest percentage of your monthly kWh consumption. That's why Freeborn Mower offers an Electric Water Heater Rebate Program to help keep the hot water flowing in the most energy efficient way.

Rebates offered as high as \$1,600. #2281600 Visit the Rebates tab on our website, or contact our Energy Solutions Department for more information.

## LET'S COOK



### OVERNIGHT OVEN BAKED WILD RICE

**Submitted By: Barb Lysne**

#### Ingredients:

- 1 C. uncooked wild rice
- 3 C. boiling water
- 1 bouillon cube

#### Directions:

Before bed, preheat oven to 500 degrees. In 9 x 13 glass baking dish mix wild rice, bouillon cube, and water. Cover dish tight with aluminum foil. Put in the middle of the oven and immediately turn OFF the oven. Go to bed. Wake up to perfect rice. (Freeze extra rice in freezer bags.)

*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.*