



Freeborn
Mower
Electric
Cooperative

People. Power. Possibilities.

county lines

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2022 • VOLUME 83 • NO. 12



THE POWER OF WORKING TOGETHER —

Operation Round Up[®] Charitable Grants Top \$1 Million Mark

In fewer than 20 years since the program's inception, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative members have provided in excess of \$1 million in support to local charitable organizations and non-profit entities. The landmark achievement was attained with grants awarded in the third quarter of 2022.

"This is an incredible achievement and it's all solely due to the generosity of our members," stated Jim Krueger, President & CEO. #266301 "What a difference this amount of support has made in our local communities throughout the years."

Operation Round Up is a non-profit program that is administered by a five-member Board of Trustees, and operates separately from FMEC. There is no comingling of funds with FMEC. The program is a core of one of the seven cooperative principles — **giving back to the community.**

Operation Round Up is an opt-out program. FMEC members' electric bills are automatically rounded up to the next nearest dollar amount, with the difference automatically pooled together to fund Operation Round Up. The monthly contribution could be as little as a penny, but never more than ninety-nine cents. The average donation per member, per year, is around \$6.00 and is tax deductible. Non-profit and charitable organizations in our community are awarded grants via an application process. There is a quarterly review of applications from which grants are awarded.

"Thank you to FMEC members for making Operation Round Up[®] a huge success!"
— Sandy Forstner, Chair, Freeborn Mower Operation Round Up[®] Board of Trustees

ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



SQUEEZED BY WHOLESALÉ COSTS

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is your business, owned and controlled by its member-owners. The cooperative's management team and board of directors have been entrusted by the membership to operate and oversee the cooperative, keeping its financial position secure. This past year has been exceptionally challenging for numerous reasons. Just as every other business has endured inflationary pressures and supply chain issues, your cooperative has also been impacted by the nation's energy industry woes.

FMEC is a retailer of electricity, and as such we don't generate the electricity that we deliver to your home, farm, or business. FMEC purchases wholesale electricity from two utilities that own generation resources or can purchase from the wholesale market. Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC) is one of those utilities, and Alliant Energy is the other one.

While FMEC has had several good things happen throughout 2022, including an increase in retail sales, we predict the year will end with a bottom line significantly less than originally budgeted. This situation is due directly to increases in the wholesale price of electricity — something that is totally out of our local control. Recently, you have seen the increased Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) per kWh on your monthly FMEC bill. The PCA has been a pass-through of the increased cost of wholesale power.

Earlier in 2022, we worked hard to absorb rising wholesale costs to the extent that we could. In fact, during the course of the last two years, FMEC has absorbed approximately \$2 million in increased wholesale costs. #1607101 Yet, it is obvious that we cannot continue to absorb these costs. Therefore, we will begin 2023 with a new outlook on recovering costs, and we expect a retail rate change will be needed in March 2023.

There were several good highlights in 2022. There was growth in sales to our existing commercial and industrial accounts, and we also welcomed a few new businesses to FMEC. In spite of this growth, it hasn't been enough to offset increased costs for generating and transmitting electricity to the wholesale energy market.

Our recent Charged Up event was successful, and it was a great opportunity to meet one-on-one with many members. 2022 also brought back the return of an in-person annual meeting. I'm also very proud that our recent professionally conducted survey of randomly chosen members showed that FMEC maintained its ACSI score of 85. The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the only national cross-industry measure of customer satisfaction in the United States. The Index measures satisfaction with the quality of products and services received. Rest assured, FMEC will always strive to provide you with satisfaction as we deliver electricity to you safely and reliably.



Senator Tina Smith hosted a round table discussion on October 17th at the People's Energy Cooperative in Oronoco for discussion on the Farm Bill. It was a great opportunity for the Cooperatives to talk about RUS funding, REDL&G programs, Clean Energy, and Broadband. Also attending on behalf of Cooperatives were Brian Krambeer from MiEnergy, Mike Henke, from Peoples Energy, and Darrick Moe, President & CEO at MREA. The Senator appeared to be aligned with the comments we offered on the above programs.

(Photo L to R: Mike Henke, Jim Krueger, Tina Smith, Darrick Moe, Brian Krambeer)

member news

OFFICE CLOSED

In observance of the holidays, our office will be closed:

- Friday, December 23
- Monday, December 26
- Monday, January 2

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



MAY YOU HAVE A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON FILLED WITH JOY AND GOOD HEALTH!

Join us on Friday, December 2, Friday, December 9th and/or Friday, December 16th for coffee and cookies in our lobby conference room. Our new 2023 Cooperative Calendar is now available. Stop by our office to pick up your complimentary copy. A limited supply is available.

IT PAYS TO PARTICIPATE

We are pleased to award a \$100 bill credit to:

- Bailey Heideman
- Carla Koch
- Robert Graham

These members participated in our recent online survey. Their names were drawn at random. Congratulations!

MAKE SURE YOU COMPLY WITH MN COLD WEATHER RULE OCTOBER 1 - APRIL 30

If you're having difficulty paying your electric bill, you must contact our office to arrange a payment plan. Please note, your service may be disconnected, even during the winter months, if you fail to respond to the disconnect notice. For more information, contact our office at (800) 734-6421 or stop in during normal business hours, Mon. - Fri. 7:00 a.m. -3:30 p.m.

FMEC SURVEY MEASURES SATISFACTION, GATHERS MEMBER FEEDBACK

A professionally conducted online survey was taken in October with 2,181 residential members participating. The survey used the proprietary American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey model, as has been used to evaluate FMEC in years past.

The purpose of the survey was to gauge FMEC's programs and services, reliability of service, trust in the cooperative, the value provided, the effectiveness of communication methods, our ability to handle problems/complaints, and the degree to which FMEC improves the quality of life in our local communities. This will guide planning efforts.

"We are very pleased with the results," stated Jim Krueger, FMEC President & CEO. "When the results were compared to the 2020 ACSI survey, we maintained an overall satisfaction score of 85, which is identical to the 2020 results. The survey professionals rate this score as excellent. Maintaining this score during an extremely challenging economy and very uncertain times gives us a solid base from which to build."

The mean ratings for 17 of the 18 performance attributes were evaluated at or above 4.00 on a 5-point scale, which is considered **good**. Nine attributes received mean ratings of approximately 4.5 or higher, the threshold for **excellent**. FMEC employees received the highest ratings for being friendly and highly trained/professionals. None of the performance attributes measured decreased from 2020.

How does the FMEC overall satisfaction score of 85 compare to other electric utilities across the country? Way ahead, actually. All other investor-owned Utilities, as well as all other municipal utilities, have a score of 70.

While the survey revealed generally good news, it also pointed to topics in which FMEC could improve or provide more focused communication. Pages of member comments, concerns, and questions were obtained through the survey process. Many questions and comments dealt with wind and solar energy, electric vehicles, and rebates. Given the current state of the nation's energy policies, it was no surprise to find that most of the negative comments reflected the rising cost of electricity while household budgets are being pressed by inflation. The survey showed that FMEC members felt **they get good value for their money**; the comments collected revealed this to be the topic of biggest concern.

"We at FMEC are concerned about the current economic situation and energy policy decisions that are forcing up the cost of electricity. Our local cooperative purchases wholesale electricity and we've experienced increases in its cost this year. FMEC cannot continue to absorb these increases and maintain a financially viable cooperative," said Krueger.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS —

If you requested a call-back from FMEC, please know that we are still working on the list generated. Thank you for your patience.

Commitment to Grid Reliability Results in Changes to Load Management

Grid reliability is at the forefront of strategic planning for utilities – from the regional Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) all the way down to Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative’s system. To ensure generation resources are adequately available year-round, MISO recently changed its requirements for power providers, including our wholesale power provider Dairyland Power Cooperative. This has resulted in modifications to our load management program. A review of electricity peaks in the MISO system revealed that 60 percent of peaks occurred in the morning. #266301 Therefore, our winter full load control events will now be split into morning and evening events from December through February. Interruptible Heat will be controlled in the morning and manual/standby generators and grain drying control will remain in the evening. In addition, the maximum number of load control events has increased from 3 to 7.

DAILY OFF-PEAK/STORAGE CONTROL
The control periods for the 3-MF, 3-DLY, and 3-WP schedules have been modified slightly this season to improve the management of restoral peaks, but the total control durations remain the same.

A.M. Peak Alert Group: Interruptible Heat

- Control begins 6:55 a.m.
- Restoral begins 10:05 a.m.
- Seven events max, per season, three events max, per month

P.M. Peak Alert Group: Manual/Voluntary Peak Alert, Grain Drying & Dairy Water Heater

- Control begins 4:55 p.m.
- Restoral begins 8:05 p.m.
- Seven events max, per season, three events max, per month

The Current Load Control Status can be found on our website at www.fmec.coop. Click the Load Control Status tabs at the top of the page to view the current load control status.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with our Energy Solutions Team at (507) 373-6421 or by emailing info@fmec.coop.



Apply today for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour!

Apply now for the prestigious Electric Cooperative Youth Tour! The event will be held June 13 - 18, 2023.

Each year, electric cooperatives across the nation sponsor about 1,900 students to this exceptional leadership experience in our nation’s capital city. Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative will sponsor two student delegates from our service territory, all expenses paid. Past participants have described the Youth Tour as “an experience of a lifetime.”

Travel and briefings for the students will be coordinated through Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA). Because energy policy is at the forefront of the nation’s issues, this is a great opportunity to learn first-hand how government works and what the electric cooperative business model is all about. #1607101 Participants will also enjoy social opportunities, along with tours of memorials and museums around the city.

HOW TO APPLY:

See application details and a video about the tour by visiting www.fmec.coop/youth-tour or scanning this QR code.

DIRECT QUESTIONS TO:

Lori Jimenez
(507) 379-8852
lori.jimenez@fmec.coop



CO-OP PRINCIPLE #2: DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

APPLICATIONS FOR DIRECTORSHIP DUE JANUARY 4

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is governed by a nine-person board of directors. The directors are elected by their fellow FMEC members residing in the district. Elections are held in three districts each year, with each director elected to serve a three-year term.

Applications are now being accepted for the position of Director in the following districts:

DISTRICT 3: Represents areas northwest of Austin, Sargeant, Brownsdale, Nicolville, and Dexter.

DISTRICT 6: Represents Hayward, Glenville, and areas west of Gordonsville.

DISTRICT 9: Represents the northern part of the city of Albert Lea.

Applicants must meet all eligibility requirements as specified in the Cooperative’s Bylaws. Among the qualifications and responsibilities outlined in the Bylaws, nominees must be:

1. a current member receiving electric service at their primary residence and
2. the primary residence must be in the district in which the director is elected.

No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director of the Cooperative who:

1. is not a natural person and a member of the Cooperative, receiving service at the member’s primary residence in the district from which the director is elected;
2. within five (5) years preceding a director candidate’s nomination was or during service on the Board of Directors is finally adjudged to be guilty of a felony;
3. within three (3) years preceding a director candidate’s nomination was an employee of the Cooperative;
4. is an employee of the Cooperative or a grandparent, parent, spouse, co-habitant, child, or grandchild of an employee of the Cooperative;
5. is a person that is a grandparent, parent, spouse, co-habitant, child, or grandchild of an incumbent director whose district seat is not up for re-election at that time;
6. is in any way employed by or substantially financially interested in an enterprise competing with the Cooperative or any Cooperative-affiliated business;
7. is or becomes the full-time employee or agent of, or who is or becomes the full-time employer or principal of, another director;
8. is engaged in conduct that is a violation of law or violation of a Cooperative policy or policies, or whenever a director has materially failed to satisfy his/her duties as a director, including the duty to regularly attend meetings of the board of directors; or
9. is employed by, materially affiliated with, or has a financial interest in, any individual or entity possessing a material or substantial conflict of interest with the Cooperative or a Cooperative subsidiary.

ELECTION PROCESS

Completed applications are due by 3:30 p.m. on January 4, 2023. After applications have been returned, members in each of the three districts holding an election will be notified of those who have filed.

POST FILING DEADLINE — NOMINATION BY PETITION

After the filing application deadline has expired, persons may still be nominated by filing a petition form, also available from our office. To become a nominee by petition requires fifteen (15) members from the district 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, February 10, 2023.

WHEN THERE IS A SINGLE NOMINEE

Should only one nominee in a district come forward before the final deadline by petition, that applicant will be deemed elected as Director.

WHEN THERE ARE MULTIPLE NOMINEES

Should more than one nominee come forth by the petition deadline, either by direct nomination or petition, a biography of each nominee and a mail ballot will be sent to all members in the district on February 23, 2023. Returned ballots will be due on March 22, 2023.

Please return mailed ballots in the proper envelopes to the third-party ballot company and not to our cooperative. #1574200 Also, allow for any possible mail delays or you may vote electronically.

DIRECTORS BEGIN TERM

The elected Directors will be seated during the Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 22, 2023.

Contact our office for a Director Application.

LIGHT THE SEASON SAFELY

Like no other time of year, we're plugging in and lighting up to celebrate the holiday season. This often means the use of extension cords. Extension cords are a temporary extension of an electric circuit. Extension cords should never be used in place of permanent wiring. Be careful how and where extension cords are used!

- You must make certain that extension cords are sized properly for the intended use, indoor or outdoor, and meet or exceed the power needs of the appliance or device being used.
- Longer extension cords require increased conductor size to compensate for voltage drop. Information on the wire gauge and amperage rating on an extension cord is normally found printed on the cord.
- Avoid connecting two or more cords together. #1574200 Should additional length be needed, purchase a longer extension cord.
- Before use, always check extension cords for any cuts or defects. Cords should not be repaired with any kind of tape, including electrical tape. Tape does not provide the integrity of the original jacket of insulation.
- Some extension cords have plugs equipped with a ground pin. The grounding pin is there for your safety! This plug needs to be in a grounded outlet. Do not remove or cut off the ground pin in order to make

- the plug fit a two-conductor, non-grounded outlet.
- Never place extension cords under rugs or next to heating devices. Never use a cord that feels hot. Do not nail or staple extension cords to walls or baseboards. Do not place cords through doors, windows, holes in the wall or ceiling, or hinged door openings that can pinch and damage the protective covering of insulation.
 - Each year, the incorrect use of extension cords cause home fires. They can also be a tripping hazard.



Recycle Holiday Light Strings

You can recycle strings of holiday lights. Just deposit them in the bin inside the front lobby entrance of FMEC. They will be given to a sheltered workshop facility where workers will reclaim usable components.



FMEC Offers Gift Certificates

Searching for a gift that's sure to be appreciated? How about a gift certificate for electricity?

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) Gift Certificates are available in the amount you choose. The recipient must be an active member of FMEC. To purchase, you must come into our office and be able to supply the physical address of the recipient.

CLASSIFIED marketplace

FOR SALE

VEHICLES/MOTORIZED:

2008 CHEV HHR. New brakes front & back. No rust. \$3,000. Call (507) 373-0439 or (507) 402-2974.

HOUSEHOLD:

TILE REDI BRAND SHOWER PAN. 48 X 48, new in box, wrong size for construction project. \$325. Call (507) 696-1982.

FURNITURE. Recliner (\$40), end-table (\$15), and 4 wooden kitchen chairs (\$40). Good condition. Call (507) 373-8403.

KIMBALL PIANO. Upright, standard size. You haul. \$100. Call (507) 402-4599.

MISC:

DOG IGLOOS (houses). Call (507) 219-8068.

OLD TOWN CANOE. Model 147, 14'. \$400. Call (507) 383-5376.

LARGE CAGE. 35"l x 15"w. \$25. Call (507) 377-6064.

VINTAGE "FLASH GORDON" 1950's SNOW SLED. Space Rocket XS-17 orbit control. Good condition. \$250. Call (507) 402-9396.

PRESSURE WASHER. 2700 psi, gas engine works great, will demonstrate, have book for it. Call (507) 481-8153.

7.5' CHRISTMAS TREE. Northport Spruce artificial tree. Not pre-lit. Used only 2 seasons. \$85. Call (507) 567-2653.

2 CRAFTSMAN CHAIN SAWS. 50cc 18" bar with extra chains. \$150. Call (507) 271-7480.

SMALL DOG KENNEL. 22"l x 13"w x 14"h. Call (507) 373-1178.

42" LARGE DOG CRATE - \$50. New - \$90, needs new tray - buy at Walmart or Amazon. Call (507) 318-9431.

1975 ARTIC CAT 440 CHEETAH. 1,984 miles, nice condition. \$995. Call (507) 481-8945.

RECHARGEABLE WATERPIK FLOSSER with 2 new piks in sealed package. Used twice. \$25. Call (507) 373-0093.

WANTED

NEBULIZER with FACE MASK in like new condition. Call or text (507) 438-6469.

VINTAGE CERAMIC CHRISTMAS TREE. Light-up, no chips or cracks, please. Call (507) 440-4312.

LEMAX CARNIVAL VILLAGE PIECES. Call (507) 383-0364.

ANYTHING HAMMS BEER. Signs, lamps, Hamm's bear figurines, lighters, wood cases, etc. Call (507) 402-0880.

FREE

12' CHRISTMAS TREE. 4' wide with 1,400 lights. Call (507) 383-4189.

VISION FITNESS TREADMILL. Great condition. You haul away. Call (507) 369-5803, leave a message.

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 15th of the month prior to the issue in which it will be printed. Ads received after the 15th of the month will be printed a month later. Example: An ad received on or before June 15th will appear in the July issue. If it is received on June 16th 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**. 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.

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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. 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.

Congratulations to Larry Anderson!
He spotted his account number in the November newsletter.

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.



LET'S COOK



TURTLE PIE

Submitted By: Kimberly Krueger

Directions:

- 1 pkg. brownie mix
- ¾ C. chopped pecans
- 1 deep dish pie shell, thawed

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Prepare brownie mix, stir in ½ c. pecans, and pour over crust. Bake 60-65 minutes. Let cool 20 minutes. Drizzle caramel and chocolate syrup over pie and sprinkle with remaining pecans. Enjoy!

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