



Freeborn
Mower
Electric
Cooperative

People. Power. Possibilities.

county lines

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2023 • VOLUME 84 • NO. 01

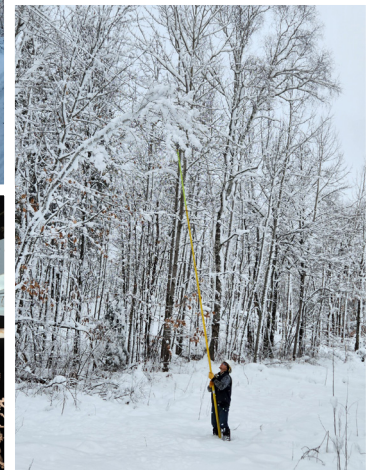
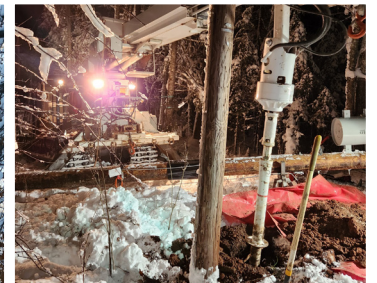


FMEC employees prepared to head north. (l-r) Alan Casterton, Working Foreman; Scott Sheely, Journeyman Lineworker; Hunter Guyette, Apprentice Lineworker; Tristan Varpness, Apprentice Lineworker; Ethan Eggum, Working Foreman; and Alex Nelson, Apprentice Lineworker

COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES — EMPLOYEES AND EQUIPMENT SENT NORTH

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative (FMEC) sent three trucks and six linemen to northern Minnesota to provide mutual aid in power restoration following a recent multi-day storm. Trees, heavily laden with heavy, wet snow and ice, toppled and lost branches which tore down power lines and broke poles. The local linemen worked with crews from five other entities in support of restoring power to more than 12,000 members of Lake Country Power. Lake Country serves about 43,000 members in parts of eight counties. FMEC linemen were dispatched to areas in Carlton and Pine counties near Moose Lake, Sturgeon Lake, and Kettle River.

Repairing widespread storm damage is a daunting task usually undertaken in harsh weather. “Electric cooperatives have a long history of providing mutual aid during emergency situations,” said Jim Krueger, FMEC President & CEO. “FMEC has been on both the sending and receiving ends of mutual aid. When storms create havoc with electric infrastructure, the influx of needed personnel and equipment is extremely valuable. People need electricity and cooperatives always put forth their best efforts to restore power as safely as conditions allow.”



ceo message

Jim Krueger, President & CEO



RATE INCREASE NEEDED

Last month, I wrote about how inflation has been impacting the electric distribution operation of Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative, as well as the pressures of rising electric generation costs. After much consideration, we have deemed it necessary to adjust our rates.

Let me assure you that FMEC remains steadfast in our mission to provide our cooperative members with reliable electric service to power their lives. It's not easy to do so while facing such high inflationary pressures, but we are focused on making it happen without compromising on safety or reinvestment in our electric facilities. The only way forward is to adjust our retail rates this spring. Absorbing cost increases will no longer be feasible for the cooperative if we are to maintain our solid financial position. This being a member-owned utility, it is in the best interests of all of our members to retain fiscal integrity. So, while we've put it off as long as we can, we anticipate having a rate increase effective

April 1, 2023. Members will soon be formally notified of the rate change via mailed letters.

On another note - once again this year the members of three districts will be electing their directors to represent them on the FMEC board of directors. Your participation in director elections is important. Directors are members just like you and are from your local area. They are close to our communities and are aware of issues, challenges, and opportunities. Directors serve as your link to the cooperative's decision-making processes, policies, and plans.

Our recent survey of randomly selected members has provided our staff with great data that is being used to develop action plans. We continue to sort through the information and follow up with members on specific requests or questions. Thank you for your patience.

INFLATIONARY IMPACT

Many costs have continued to climb including the equipment needed to distribute electricity to our members. Here are some of the per-unit prices.

INCREASE OVER 2020

Poles	37% – 95%
Underground Cable	37%
Transformers	50%



LOOKING AHEAD

We have three large construction projects planned for 2023.

- New underground feeder line to the City of Emmons from the Mansfield substation.
Projected cost = \$800,000.
- New underground feeder line to the City of Lyle from the London substation.
Projected cost = \$800,000.
- New underground feeder line to the City of Myrtle from the Glenville substation.
Projected cost = \$600,000.

Additionally, across our entire service territory, we will replace several miles of older underground tap lines with new underground cable.



member news

OFFICE CLOSED

Monday, January 2
Happy New Year!

Monday, February 20
Closed for a Staff Development Day.

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

SAVE THE DATE

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative will hold its 86th Annual Meeting on April 22, 2023. #1703902 Watch for details in the Annual Report available in April.

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.



ENERGY STAR AND REBATES = SAVINGS

Products that earn the ENERGY STAR label meet strict energy-efficiency specifications set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, helping you save energy and money by making choices that also help build a clean energy future.

- Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative offers its members \$25 rebates for the purchase and installation of energy-efficient appliances (with the ENERGY STAR logo) in their homes. The rebates apply to electric clothes washers, electric clothes dryers, dehumidifiers, freezers, refrigerators, and inductive range/cooktops.
- You can even get a \$25 rebate for recycling your old freezer, refrigerator, or room air conditioner provided the appliance is in working order!
- More details on home appliance rebates are posted on our website: www.fmec.coop

Please note there are also rebates available for a variety of agricultural, commercial, and industrial equipment. #155003 Our Energy Solutions Department will be happy to help you determine energy-efficient equipment upgrades.

SANTA CRUISE

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative participated in the Santa Cruise, part of the Holiday Bazaar in downtown Albert Lea, on December 8.



FMEC Employees (l to r); Bryan Severtson, Mary Thompson, Allen Hendriks, Cindy Golbuff, and Lori Jimenez

CO-OP PRINCIPLE #2: DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

DIRECTOR ELECTION PROCESS REMINDER

Applications will be accepted until 3:30 p.m. on January 4, 2023. Elections will be held in Districts #3, #6, and #9.

NOTIFICATION

After applications have been returned, the members residing in Districts #3, #6, and #9 will be notified of those who have filed an application.

NOMINATION BY PETITION

After the filing application deadline has expired, persons may still be nominated by filing a petition form, 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. Mailed ballots must be returned in the provided envelopes to the third-party ballot company and not to our cooperative. Please allow for any possible mail delays. #155003 There is also an option to vote electronically, details of which will be included in the mailing.

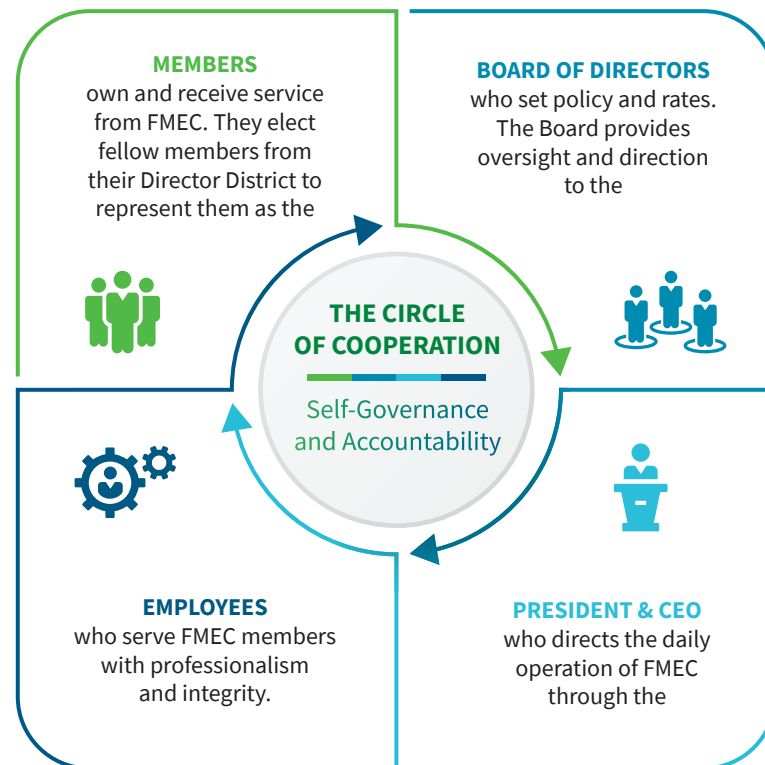
ELECTED DIRECTORS WILL BE SEATED DURING THE ANNUAL MEETING ON SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 2023.

Your Vote. Your Voice. Your Cooperative.

The cooperative model depends on its members to provide leadership and guidance.

As an electric cooperative, Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative is guided by an elected Board of Directors who represent its members' best interest when making important decisions that impact rates, capital credits, services, and work plans for the cooperative.

Your decision to run for a position on the board or to vote in the director election is your voice in your cooperative. Your active involvement is important for a healthy and vibrant cooperative.



Nominee Update

As of the time of this newsletter printing, the following members have filed:

- STEVE GARBISCH — DISTRICT #3
- MATT MARAS — DISTRICT #6
- JOE PACOVSKY — DISTRICT #6
- LARRY IRVINE — DISTRICT #9

NEW EMPLOYEE

WELCOME KATIE WILLIAMSON



Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative proudly announces that Katelyn Williamson recently joined our team as Meter Data Analyst. Her background includes a college degree in Actuarial Science, supported by minors in Math and Statistics. She also has previous experience as a corporate administrative assistant.

New metering technologies have the capacity to provide an immense amount of data on electric use trends. #1703902 Correlating and analyzing this data provides valuable insights as Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative seeks to implement the best fact-based policies and procedures in a rapidly changing energy industry.

“The atmosphere and culture; being a part of a team,” are what Katie looks forward to experiencing in her new role at the cooperative. She resides in her hometown of Albert Lea.



RURAL ELECTRIC YOUTH TOUR 2023

EXPERIENCE D.C., CO-OP STYLE! APPLICATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 10

Every June, as many as 1,500 high school students from across the country spend a week in the nation's capital as part of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. Sponsored by their electric cooperative, the Youth Tour participants embark on “an experience of a lifetime.” #1441000 The Youth Tour is an awesome way to learn about this great nation, develop leadership skills, gain a better understanding of electric cooperatives, and make friendships that will last well beyond the week!

Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative will sponsor two high school students (junior or senior) from our service territory, all expenses paid.

Youth Tour Travel Dates: June 13 - 18

Deadline to Apply: Friday, February 10 by 3:30 p.m.

Student Interviews: Tuesday, March 7 (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 and application materials, as well as a video from last year's highlights.

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



RESOLVE TO USE ENERGY EFFICIENTLY

We associate the New Year with making resolutions, so why not resolve to minimize energy waste? Some steps such as adding insulation, or replacing doors and windows are better suited for warmer months. However, there are still things you can do around the house to make more efficient use of electricity.

HEATING AND COOLING

First focus on things that heat or cool, because these appliances or equipment typically consume the most electricity.

- Change furnace filters according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Dirty filters negatively impact home comfort and may increase electric use.
- Check home ductwork for leaks.
- A programmable thermostat will help manage your heating costs.
- Eliminate unnecessary refrigerators or freezers, especially if they contain very few items. Think about recycling them for an FMEC rebate! Older models may be so inefficient that it makes sense to get rid of them or replace with a new energy-efficient model.
- Check the door seals of refrigerators and freezers. Close a dollar bill in the door and see if it pulls out easily. #1441000 If it does, replace the door sealing strip.
- Many manufacturers set storage water heater thermostats at 140 F, which is higher than most households need. Reduce both the upper and lower thermostats on electric water heaters to 120 F. For households of one or two, a 115 F may be suitable.
- Fix water leaks including drippy faucets. You could be sending a lot of heated water down the drain. There is also a cost involved with pumping water into your home.

HOUSEHOLD HABITS

- Only run the dishwasher when fully loaded.
- Dry clothes in successive loads to make use of residual heat in the dryer tumbler.
- Prepare more than one dinner item in the oven at the same time.
- Close off seldom used rooms. Just make sure that no plumbing in the walls will be affected and able to freeze.

LIGHTING

- Let LEDs shine on. Long-life LED light bulbs are the best for energy savings. Switch to LEDs, especially in fixtures that are used more than one hour each day or are situated in difficult-to-reach locations.
- Open the curtains and use natural lighting during the day. Close curtains at night to minimize heat loss through window glass. Insulated curtains can be very effective.

**NATIONAL CUT
YOUR ENERGY DAY
IS JANUARY 10**

Remember that your recent holiday activities may have increased your household's electric consumption. More people, more hot meals, more showers, and so forth all impact electric use.



REMINDER:

The 2023 deadlines for Operation Round Up Applications are: March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15. Go to <https://www.fmec.coop/operation-round> to apply, or contact our office for more information.

Recycle Holiday Light Strings

You can recycle strings of holiday lights, now through January 31. 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.

CLASSIFIED marketplace

FOR SALE

FARM:

CHICAGO EASTERN GRAIN BIN. 26', 10,000 bushel, seven rings. Call (507) 391-1539, leave message.

HAY. Small square bales of good quality mixed hay. No rain. About 1,000 available. Call (507) 440-2255 anytime.

HOUSEHOLD:

APPLIANCES. Gas Whirlpool dryer - \$100. Gas hot water heater - \$50. Call (507) 377-3685.

SMALL CONN ELECTRIC ORGAN w/bench and some music. \$25. Call (507) 373-8858.

OAK TABLE & 4 CAPTAIN CHAIRS. 52" with 2, 15" leaves. Good condition. \$150. Call Mike (218) 820-1538.

MISC:

2 WHEEL DOLLY for moving snowmobile. \$1,200. Call (507) 325-2427 in evening and ask for Ricky.

2 TITAN BARN HEATERS. 1300-1500w. \$10 each. Call (507) 402-6796.

WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL CLOTHES.

Sizes 8-10. Excellent condition, name brand. Tops, pants, blazer, dresses, shoes 8.5. Call (507) 219-7728.

PETS/ANIMALS:

GOLDEN RETRIEVER PUPPIES ready to find homes. Text (507) 440-4184.

WANTED

SINGER PORTABLE SEWING MACHINE in black case. Call (507) 402-0880.

VINTAGE ALUMINUM CHRISTMAS TREE. Tinsel type. Call (507) 440-4312.

LEFSE MAKING EQUIPMENT. Call or text (507) 438-6469.

FREE

WORKING TV. 31 wide X 43 long. Call (507) 377-6064.

PIANO. Located on main floor of home. You haul. Call (507) 319-5231.

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.

- Ads will not be repeated.

You can review the complete 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 go to the website, use the instructions above, and click on the **NEWSLETTER** tab to electronically submit an ad. Ads will not be accepted over the phone.

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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 Dan Gilster!
He spotted his account number in the December 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.

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LET'S COOK



MISSOURI STYLE CORN BREAD

Submitted By: **Sandy Stephens**

- 1 C. cornmeal
- 1 egg
- 1 C. buttermilk
- ½ tsp. baking soda

Directions:

Put 2 tbsp oil in an 8-inch skillet and put in a 375-degree preheating oven. Once preheated add above ingredients and bake for 20 minutes. 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.