



Be prepared for a power outage

Summer is just around the corner and so are thunderstorms. Sometimes the lights just flicker. Sometimes poles go down and electricity can be out for longer periods of time. Your electric co-op works hard to ensure outages are kept to a minimum, but it does not hurt to be prepared for power outages.

Follow these tips:

1. Do your neighbors still have power? If so, check your fuses or circuit breakers. Replacing a fuse or resetting a breaker may restore your power. If the problem is not in your home, call your electric cooperative. They will dispatch a crew to take care of the outage.

2. While the power is out, unplug things like microwaves, TVs and computers and turn air conditioners off. This will help eliminate damage to them from a voltage surge when power is restored. Waiting a few minutes before turning these units back on after power is restored, reduces demand on the distribution system. You may want to leave one light on during an outage to let you know when power is restored.

3. If you use a standby generator, make sure it is properly wired and installed with a transfer switch. If a generator is not properly installed, it could backfeed the power lines and injure the line crews working on the outage.

4. To make power outages easier and more tolerable keep the following items on hand:

- Flashlights
- Battery-operated radio
- Basic first-aid supplies
- Baby supplies, if an infant lives in the home
- A small supply of drinking water and food
- Extra batteries for flashlights and radio



Be ready! Let us shine a light on some outage preparation tips. A little work now yields brighter results.

- Candles and matches

5. Check your basement periodically for flooding. A portable, gasoline-powered pump or a battery-backup sump pump can be used if a power outage renders your unit inoperable. Never wade into a flooded basement unless the electricity supplying the sump pumps, freezers, etc. was disconnected. The power may be restored while you are in the flooded basement and the motors on these appliances may be submerged.

6. Never go near downed power lines. That is a job for line crews.

7. Keep freezers and refrigerators closed to keep food fresh. Frozen food is generally safe to eat if ice crystals still exist on it. Wrap blankets around the appliances to provide extra insulation. Bottled water, canned soda and juices

eliminate dependence on the refrigerator.

8. If the health of family members is a concern, consider staying with friends, in a community center or church where electricity is available. You can also consolidate your resources with neighbors if they have electricity in their homes. Furthermore, your electric co-op should be notified if you use life-support equipment in your home.

9. In most rural areas electricity is required to pump water into the home. Since water cannot be pumped during a power outage, keep an adequate supply of drinking water on hand at all times.

Think ahead and follow the above tips to be prepared for a power outage. Planning ahead makes such disruptions easier. Finally, remember to stay calm. The electricity will be back on as quickly as possible. Your electric cooperative is working long hours to restore your service. (e)

— Information courtesy safeelectricity.org

At A Glance



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

Keep BCREA's cool summer rebates in mind: \$50 for signing up for cycled AC; QI rebate for air source heat pumps with \$480 for 14.5 SEER, \$580 for SEER 15 and \$630 for SEER 16 or higher; ductless air source heat pump rebates \$300 with LP or other primary heat source, \$500 with electric as primary; and ground source heat pump rebates at \$1,000. (e)

This publication focuses on cooperative savings, programs and events. As this is the official member publication, member's story ideas, letters-to-the-editor and comments are welcomed.

Andrea Christoffer, CCC, Editor
"Owned by those it serves"

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Energy Wise

Never buy a central air conditioner again; Go with air source heat pump for savings

Keep your cool this summer! When your old central air conks out, upgrade to an energy-efficient air source heat pump.

The energy savings from a unit that heats and cools will provide a shorter payback even with the higher upfront purchase price. Ask your heating/cooling contractor for a quote for an air source heat pump instead of central air. Your cooperative also offers larger rebates for air source heat pumps to help offset the purchase price and smaller rebates for central air. Why? Central air runs maybe a few months, while air source heat pumps work for you year round, which is a better return on your investment.

Air source heat pumps provide heating efficiencies around 200 percent. A heat pump can be more than 100 percent efficient because it just "pumps" heat from one level to another, rather than creating heat. Keep in mind that furnaces can be from 65 to 94 percent efficient. According to Questline, "The cost of heating using the heat pump would be about the same with a natural gas furnace. However, if a customer is using electric resistance heat or propane heating, the air source heat pump would afford more significant savings."

In addition, a number of variables will impact the energy-savings payback, including building characteristics, thermostat setting, occupancy, actual weather, building insulation, number of windows and of course the price of fuel or electricity.

Using the Energy Star calculator based on a heating load of 2,976 hours for Rochester, Minnesota, a three-ton



Go with technology and not tradition. Replace your old central air with an air source heat pump for energy savings.

air source heat pump would provide energy savings over electric resistance heat. Electric resistance would cost about \$7,480 a year assuming 11.4 cent electric rate. The air source heat pump with a Heating Season Performance Factor (HSPF) rating of eight would be around \$4,300. Factor in that heat pumps are efficient down to 20 degrees and then switch to the backup system during extreme cold; thus, reduce the heating savings from \$4,300 by 30 percent to \$3,000 for annual energy savings.

To calculate the payback divide the unit's cost by the energy savings. For example, a 10 HSPF unit would only be found in a 19-SEER air source heat pump and that efficiency upgrade would cost about \$2,500 more, but the energy savings would be around \$3,500 a year. That would be an eight-month payback. After that the energy savings are dollars in your

pocket. On the other end if you go with a lower efficiency (8 HSPF/16 SEER), which costs around \$750 more, that provides a simple payback of three months.

Factor in your electric cooperative's Quality Install rebate for an even faster payback. (See Page 1 at the bottom for the rebate amounts.)

Your electric cooperative's energy expert would be happy to visit with you about our Quality Install cooling rebates. Give us a call. ☎

Energy Tips

Ductless vs. ducted

Ductless applications require minimal construction as only a three-inch hole through the wall is required to connect the outdoor condenser and the indoor heads. Ductless systems are often installed in additions. Ask about the co-op's ductless heat pump rebate.

Ducted systems simply use ductwork. If your home already has a ventilation system or the home will be a new construction, you might consider this system.

Split vs. packaged

Most heat pumps are split-systems — that is, they have one coil inside and one outside. Supply and return ducts connect to the indoor central fan.

Packaged systems usually have both coils and the fan outdoors. Heated or cooled air is delivered to the interior from ductwork that passes through a wall or roof. ☎

Power Curve Mini offers big recharging capability

Are you taking the family on a trip and everyone has devices to charge, but the hotel room lacks outlets? The Power Curve Mini gives you lots of charging options.

Maximize your charging capacity, while on the road, with the Power Curve Mobile Surge Protector from 360 Electrical. The Power Curve Mini is compact and powerful. The charger works with smart phones, tablets, laptops and other electronic devices.

Features include:

- Limited-lifetime warranty.
- 360-degree rotating outlets for flexibility with giant plugs. Just fully insert the plug and turn to fit.
- Two USB outlets can charge smartphones, iPods, iPads, tablets, etc. with 5V and 10W total output.
- Advanced surge protection of 306 Joules and a maximum spike current of 36000A.
- Green grounded light lets you know if the outlet you're using is grounded, while a blue light indicates that your device is properly protected.



The Power Curve Mini gives you lots of recharging options in a small package, plus surge protection!

- Easy fold plug lays flat (1¾ x 4½ x 1¾") for travel convenience — adding no bulk in a backpack, briefcase or carry-on.

The Power Curve Mini is available for approximately \$18 on Amazon.com. (E)

Safety

Be cautious during spring planting

As farmers return to their fields, your electric cooperative urges caution when working near overhead power lines.

- Maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from power lines. It can be difficult to estimate distance and sometimes a power line is closer than it looks. A spotter with a broader view can help.

- Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting equipment on trailer beds. Plus, many tractors are now equipped with radios and communications systems that have tall antennas extending from the cab that could make contact with power lines. Avoid raising the arms of planters or cultivators or raising truck beds near power lines. Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.

- Coming too close to a power line is dangerous as electricity can arc or "jump" to conducting material or objects, such as a ladder, pole or truck. Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay conduct electricity if damp enough.

- When guy wires (a grounded wire used to stabilize utility poles) are broken, these normally neutral wires



Go slow; use caution when planting near power lines to avoid a "splitting" headache and get a bill from the co-op for the damage.

can be harmful, as well. If you break a guy wire, call the co-op to fix it. Do not do it yourself. When dealing with electrical poles and wires, always call the electric cooperative.

- If your equipment does come into contact with power lines, stay in the cab and call for help. If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path to the ground. Even if a line has landed on the ground, potential exists for the area to be energized. Warn others to stay away and wait until the co-op arrives. If leaving the cab is necessary, as in the case of fire, jump — don't step — with both feet together and hitting the ground at the same time. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area. Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or touch the equipment before the power was shut off by the utility.

- Contact your cooperative if you want to pay to convert your overhead lines to underground on your farm yard. (E) — *Information courtesy of safeelectricity.org*

Brown County Briefs

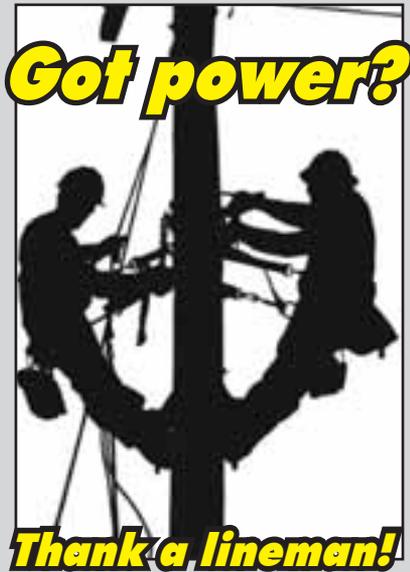
Member Advisory Council

The first meeting of the new Member Advisory Council will be Monday, April 17 at 7:30 p.m. in the Brown County REA Auditorium. Please park in the south parking lot and enter through the Auditorium door.

Tip of the month



Here's a dishwasher efficiency tip — air dry clean dishes to save energy. If your dishwasher does not have an automatic air-dry switch, turn off the dishwasher after the final rinse and prop the door open slightly so the dishes will dry faster. Source: U.S Department of Energy. 



There is more to turning on the lights than flipping a switch. Reliable electricity happens because of dedicated linemen out in the field. They build the lines, maintain them and go out in the middle of the night during storms to restore outages. Thank a lineman today for keeping your lights on! 

Katelyn Hauth wins BCREA Youth Tour



Katelyn Hauth of rural Springfield was chosen to represent Brown County REA at the Rural Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. June 10-15.

She will join high school students from across Minnesota and travel to our nation's Capitol to join more than 1,500 other students from around the nation. The students gain a firsthand understanding of the legislative process and visit historic landmarks and museums.

Katelyn is a junior at Springfield High School. She is the daughter of Roger and Diane Hauth.

Hannah Schroepfer, a Sleepy Eye Public School junior, was awarded second place. Third prize went to Tommy Richert, a sophomore at Comfrey High School. Max Heiderscheidt, a Sleepy Eye St. Mary's junior, received a consolation prize. 

Operation Round Up meeting



The Round Up Trust Board organized for 2017 at its first quarterly meeting February 7. The trust board welcomed new member Kari Berg, Searles.

Trust Board Officers elected at the meeting include President Lee Johnson, Vice President Michelle Strate, Secretary Vickie Kral and Treasurer Jim Lilleodden.

A total of \$1,660 was awarded to six organizations and two individual families. One application was tabled to request more information. Donations were given to Brown County Free Fair, GFW Dollars for Scholars, benefits for Cole Hayden and Johnny Kaseforth, and After Prom activities at GFW, Sleepy Eye Public, Comfrey and Sleepy Eye St. Mary's high schools.

We thank all the REA members who participate in Operation Round Up, making it possible to help organizations and individuals in our service area. Collectively, your change can make a difference.

Would you be willing to contribute less than \$12 per year by rounding up your bill to the nearest dollar to help Operation Round Up support local area causes? Please complete and return the form below or call Brown County REA at 1-800-658-2368 or 794-3331.

Other current Trust Board Members are Arlene Helget, Rhonda Mickelson, Ann Wendinger and Michelle Oswald. The Round Up Trust Board will again meet on Tuesday, April 11. 

Sign up for Operation Round Up

Name: _____
Address _____
City/zip _____
Phone # _____ Cell phone # _____
REA account # _____



Send in form with next bill or call 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368.

BCREA sponsors area youth to Co-ops Yes! Youth Leadership Conference

More than 100 Minnesota and Wisconsin high school students learned about the cooperative business model, co-op membership benefits, career opportunities and personal leadership development in early March as part of Cooperative Network's annual Co-ops Yes! Youth Leadership Conference in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

The Co-ops Yes! Youth Leadership Conference teaches high school students about cooperatives and leadership through presentations, case studies and networking with co-op professionals. This year's participants heard from a number of co-op speakers, including Kristen Henning and Fawn McNamara from Harvest Land Cooperative in Morgan and a "Breakthrough Leadership" presentation by motivational speaker Craig Hillier.

Each year participants elect a panel of peers to serve on the Youth Board and in turn attend events throughout the year, tour area cooperatives and aid in planning next year's conference. Clarissa Simonsen, Sleepy Eye, was among the Youth Board members selected. (C)



Brown County REA sponsored attendance at the Co-ops Yes! Youth Leadership Conference for Sleepy Eye FFA members, Cassidy Hoffmann, left, and Anna Landkammer.

Best wishes, Pat!



A historical photo of Pat Harkin practicing pole-top rescue. Above: BCREA CEO Mike Heidemann wishes Pat Harkin a happy retirement.

Long-time BCREA lineman and foreman Pat Harkin retired April 3 after 42 years with the cooperative. He reminisced about ice storms and outages from his early days and recalled how linemen's wives became dispatchers while their husbands were on call. He stressed the importance of safety at all times on the job, which helped him to have a long, successful career. We wish Pat a long and happy retirement! (C)

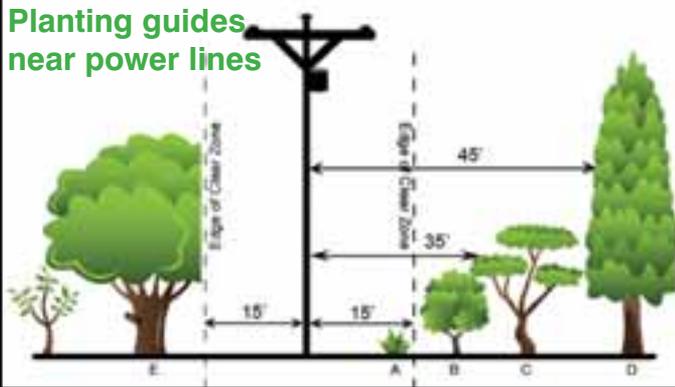
Co-op employees pitch in to help less fortunate



About 120 electric co-op directors, staffers and spouses volunteered time for painting, yard work and other clean-up activities at five homes in the low-income Encanto section of San Diego. This was part of Touchstone Energy's 9th annual Community Service Project, a prelude to National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Annual Meeting. From left: Tim (BENCO Operations Manager) and Ashley Braulick joined BCREA's Nick Horman, Brandon & Danielle Havemeier and Mike & Amy Heidemann in the day of service. (C)

Trimming trees keeps the lights on

Planting guides near power lines



Trees give us shade, cleaner air, protect our homes and make the landscape lovely. However, they can be dangerous during storms by interfering with power lines. When a tree or limb falls on the power lines, it disrupts service. This is why your electric cooperative works with tree trimmers.

Carr's Tree Trimming will be working on your electric co-op's lines again this year. BCREA is slated for July 1 to September 30, while Federated's trimming runs through April and will be back again in the fall. Their work helps ensure the safety and reliability of your electric service.

Trimming trees away from power lines is essential for maintaining service. Plus, it saves the co-op money in the long run. Less trees getting into power lines means less outages and less middle of the night calls for linemen during storms. Tree trimming is not always a popular solution, but tree trimmers try to be as respectful of the landscape as possible, while protecting power lines.

If you know of any trees growing into power lines, please contact your electric cooperative to get that area put on the list. Don't try to remove the trees yourself. Carr's Tree

Service is a professional organization hired by your local electric cooperative and is trained to deal with power lines.

If you are planting trees, be aware of where they are in relation to power lines. Think about how they will grow and spread. Consult the graphic above for minimum distances. Choose your trees, plants and locations accordingly. (U)

April 10 — Co-op Linemen Appreciation Day!



- 38 to 60 credits for lineman diploma or A.S. degree
- 7,500 hours apprentice lineman training
- 24 hours a day...respond to outages
- - 30° to 100°+ working conditions
- 30-40 hours per year on safety training
- 35-foot poles to climb
- 1,000+ miles of overhead line to maintain
- 600+ miles of underground too

**Keeping the lights on...
PRICELESS
Thank you co-op line crews!**

Grilling season arrives! Share your favorite grilling recipes today

Grill master — rev up your grill! This is the season to grill burgers, brats, beef, pork, poultry and don't forget the veggies! Send us your great grilling recipes by April 24 to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

Baked Onions by Veronica Studer, Sherburn

Use 7x11" pan and fill three-fourths full of sliced onions. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Dot with 2 T. butter and then pour 1/3 c. honey over it. Sprinkle with paprika. Cover and bake at 350° for one hour. Then uncover and bake until onions are done.

This recipe was Abe Lincoln's favorite dish. They used little pearl onions, but didn't have any measurements so I figured out how and made this recipe. ☺

Sweet & Sour Onions by Carron Klukow, Sherburn

Cut several onions crosswise in thin rings. Add:

2 c. sugar 1 c. vinegar 1 c. water

Leave overnight in the refrigerator. Makes a large batch for picnics or cookouts. ☺

Onions in Bacon by Gloria Martin, Welcome

6 medium white onions
6 cubes or 6 T. butter
6 slices bacon
1 c. brown sugar

Skin onions. Score tops. Place cubes or 1 T. of butter on each one. Wrap onion in slices of bacon. Fasten with toothpicks. Arrange onion in center of 14" square of tin foil. Top with brown sugar. Close the foil around the onion. Cook on the grill with medium heat for 30 minutes or until onions are tender. ☺

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Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. ☺

Your bottom line?



Buy your next water heater from your local electric cooperative for the best price & energy efficiency!



Darla Ruschen
Office Manager

Staff notes

2016 financials at a glance

Brown County REA's 2016 audit was conducted by CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP. Your cooperative had another good year.

Total Utility Plant increased from \$36.7 million in 2015 to \$37.4 million in 2016. The cooperative's patronage capital is just over \$12 million and will be retired back to the membership, with board approval at a later date.

BCREA's equity level is 39.4 percent. This number represents the total percent of assets owned by the membership. The current ratio meets all the co-op's loan covenants for lending.

The total revenue of just over \$16.5 million is up nearly \$3 million from 2015 to 2016. BCREA sold just over 161 million kilowatt hours in 2016, as compared to 140 million kilowatt hours in 2015. A couple factors contributed to these increases. First, members formerly served by Alliant Energy purchased energy from BCREA for an entire year. In addition, to comply with proposed U.S. accounting guidelines, the cooperative booked an additional month of revenue into 2016. This does not mean that you paid an additional bill to the co-op; it is an accounting function. The bill you paid in January of 2017 was actually for December 2016 usage so it had to be booked back into December of 2016. In the past that would have been booked in 2017.

The total expenses for the co-op also increased by just over \$2.2 million over the prior year. The largest expense to the cooperative is purchased power. BCREA purchased nearly 22 million more kilowatt hours in 2016 over the prior year's purchases. Just like on the revenue side, the same factors can be attributed on the expense side of the equation — former Alliant members served for a full year and the revenue recognition piece, causing the co-op to book an additional month of purchased power expense. Purchased power costs make up about 71 percent of total expenses to the co-op.

Net margins for 2016 are \$1,615,553. These margins will be allocated back to the membership as capital credits in the near future. We appreciate your membership and are grateful for another successful year. (C)



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

Brown County Rural Electrical Assn.
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Office hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday

Wade Hensel, General Manager
Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

James Mickelson, President — 794-6298
William Berg, Vice President — 354-4895
James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 829-6756
Brad Sprenger — 877-2633
Allen Hanson — 276-0691
Thomas Hayes — 228-8954
Reuben Kokesch — 359-2112
Greg Mages — 794-3540
Joel Christensen — 828-4550
The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.

Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting March 30 at the BENCO office in Mankato. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved February 2017 payroll and January 2016 financial statements.
- Reviewed and approved the cooperative 2016 financial audit as presented by CliftonLarsonAllen.
- Updated on plans for the 80th Annual Meeting to be held Thursday, April 6, at the New Ulm Civic Center, south arena.
- Approved appointments to the 2017 Member Advisory Council. The group's first meeting will be April 17.
- Reviewed recent safety meetings and trainings attended by linemen and operations staff.
- Updated on progress with line patrol and maintenance tasks.
- Reviewed and approved staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

The next meeting will be April 27 at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. (C)



Retirement Open House

All are invited to attend an Open House honoring retiring General Manager Wade Hensel. The Open House will be held Friday, April 28, from 2-4 p.m. at the Brown County REA Auditorium. (C)