

Connections

July 2017

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 21, Issue 7

Linemen practice rescue they hope to never need to perform



One beautiful, early June morning, Brown County REA linemen and temporary lineworkers donned their fall-restraint equipment and took turns shimmying up a pole to rescue a cloth training dummy.

The pole top and bucket rescue exercise is part of an OSHA-mandated annual refresher training. Facilitated by a Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) instructor, the training evaluates each lineman on his ability to rescue an injured or stranded lineman. Lineworkers climb poles to work on

electrical lines and a contact accident or medical emergency can result in an unconscious lineworker trapped at the top of the pole.

Each lineman must balance his skills with safety, climb a pole and rescue the 180-pound training dummy, representing an injured co-worker. The lineman must then secure the dummy using ropes and safely deliver it back to the ground. It's a skill each lineman hopes he will never need to use, but

they train to be prepared just in case.

"Our crews rely on each other to do the job and more importantly to do it safely," said BCREA Operations Manager Brandon Havemeier. "And, if the unfortunate happens, they are also trained to safely rescue their fellow worker from a pole or bucket. Although we hope it never happens, we at least know our crews have the skills and confidence to help a co-worker get medical aid as soon as possible."

Minnesota
Farmfest

Gilfillan Estate

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Visit our Farmfest booth
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Tuesday, August 1

8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Wednesday, August 2

8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Thursday, August 3

8 a.m. - 4 p.m.



Visit us at Farmfest 2017 as we promote the future of energy, along with other Touchstone Energy Cooperatives from Minnesota.

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raise awareness of
your energy use.

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At A Glance



Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association

Road trip to
power plant
this summer!

Tour a lignite mine and coal-fired power plant this summer with us on the Coal Creek Tour August 22-24. Cost is \$135 per person. This includes the cost of the bus, hotel, meals, snacks and more. See Page 4 for more details.

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

Smart thermostats and security systems can help you save on your electric bill



Security systems nowadays monitor for more than just intrusion — they can also protect against carbon monoxide, fire and flooding, plus call for help during personal or medical emergencies. Security systems protect your home and family, but did you know they can also save you money?

Using your security system to automate certain features of your home lets you better manage your energy usage and save money on your electric bills. There's no downside to making your home more efficient.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, "heating and cooling accounts for more than half the energy use in a typical U.S. home." Using a smart thermostat can save you up to 15 percent on your electric bill. That means a \$150 monthly bill would drop to \$127.50, saving you \$270 annually.

Smart thermostats let you create a heating/cooling schedule around your routines. For example, if you go to work Monday-Friday at 7:30 a.m. and come home around 5:30 p.m., you can set your thermostat to increase to 78 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and then to decrease to 72 when you'll be home.

An automated thermostat can also easily adapt to changes away from your normal schedule. For example, if you're at the cabin every weekend in the summer, you can program your thermostat to adjust the temperature to 78 degrees on the weekends and then drop back down to 72 during the week. A smart thermostat can also adjust to real-time changes. If you get off work early, change the temperature using your smartphone when you leave work; your house will be just the way you want it when you get home.

Smart security systems save you money not only through automation, but on your insurance as well. You

may be eligible to save up to 20 percent on your homeowner's policy. Adding this discount to what you save from smart lighting and automated thermostats can save you up to hundreds of dollars a year. A security system with home automation is a smart investment for your family and your pocketbook.

With a smart security system you can access any of these home automation features from your smartphone, tablet or laptop. Combining smart features with the safety of a security system just makes sense. Contact Heartland Security, a subsidiary of your electric co-op, at 888-264-6380 or online at www.heartlandss.com to find out how you can save money with smart security for your smart home, managed on your smartphone. 

Heartland Security



Home security systems for homes, farms and businesses include:

- Surveillance cameras
- Smoke alarms
- Flood sensors
- Police/fire notification
- Smartphone control

And more!

1-888-264-6380

A subsidiary of your local electric co-op

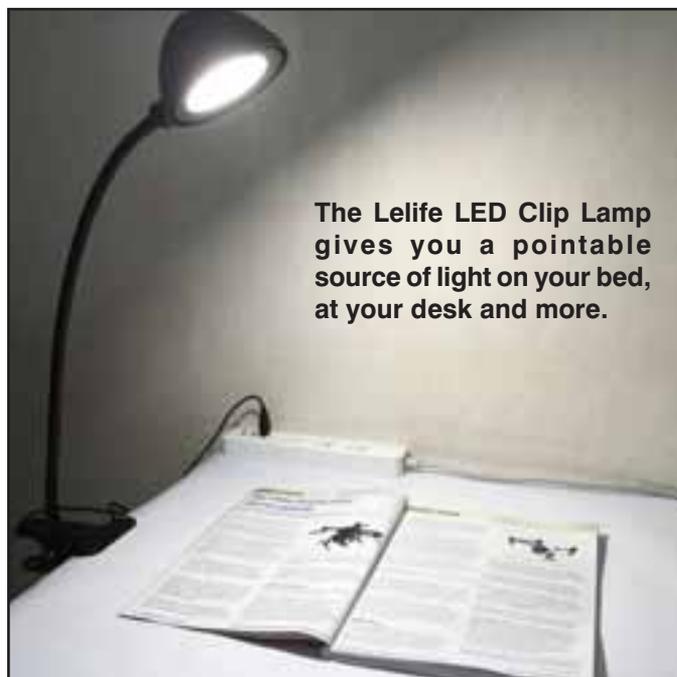
Bend this LED clip lamp to your lighting needs

Do you need a reading light on your bed? Are you organizing a shadowy space and need extra illumination while you work? Do you need extra light at your study desk or work bench? Try an LED clip lamp.

Features include:

- The Lelife LED Clip Lamp has two brightness levels. High level is good for working. Low level is good for reading.
- The lamp's LEDs provide 200 lumens and 5500K white light. It should last more than 50,000 hours.
- The light's clamp can be mounted to bedframes, headboards, tables, desks, furniture and more.
- The light's flexible neck allows you to point the light where you need it without disturbing others. It's great for college students who need small footprint lights for studying. The neck is also strong enough to not sag under the weight of the light.
- The power supply comes with a 55-inch USB power cord. An AC adapter is also provide so the light can be plugged into a standard outlet.

The Lelife LED Clip Lamp is available on Amazon.com for approximately \$25. 



The Lelife LED Clip Lamp gives you a pointable source of light on your bed, at your desk and more.

Safety

Practice backup generator safety

Generators are great for supplying backup power, but it's up to you to supply awareness to use them safely.

- Never operate a generator inside your home or in other enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces.
- A generator is a temporary power source and should never be used as a permanent solution.
- Never connect generators directly to household wiring without first installing a transfer switch. This prevents backfeeding, which could electrocute utility workers making repairs.
- Make sure your generator is properly grounded with a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI).
- Use only extension cords with a three-pronged plug and rated for the intended load.
- Your home generator should be installed by a qualified electrician and bear the mark of a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as UL.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors in the home.
- Do not overload the generator.



- The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends generators be positioned at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents to prevent carbon monoxide from entering the home.

- Storms account for many of the fatalities associated with generator use, with ice/snow storms accounting for 46 percent.

- 67 percent of the fatalities occurred when a generator was placed in the living area or basement of the home.

- 26 percent of the fatalities occurred when a generator was used inside an attached garage or shed.

- Between 1992 and 2012 nearly 80 percent of the 931 carbon monoxide deaths were associated with generators.

- 50 percent of generator-related deaths occurred during November through February.

- 30 percent occurred during March through April and September through October.

- 20 percent occurred during other months. 

— Information courtesy of www.esfi.com

Brown County Briefs

Local Democracy Legislation

During the 2017 legislative session, local democracy legislation was passed which impacts distributed generation and local decision making by rural electric cooperative boards. The Brown County REA Board will discuss adoption of the authority and the rules to implement this section of statute (Minnesota Statute 216B.164) at its July 31 meeting. Members with concerns or comments or who wish to attend the meeting are asked to call the office, 800-658-2368, to discuss or to be placed on the meeting agenda at 10 a.m.

Member Advisory Council

The second meeting of the current Member Advisory Council will be held Monday, September 18, at 7:30 p.m. in the BCREA Auditorium.

Operation Round Up



The BCREA Trust Board will meet to review applications Tuesday, August 8 at 7 p.m. Organizations wishing to be considered for funding should submit an application prior to that date. Applications are available at under the *Programs & Services* tab, Operation Round Up page at www.browncountyrea.coop.

Need a new water heater? Call us!



- Limited lifetime residential warranty against leaks for original owner
- Stainless steel tank
- Energy-efficient
- Heavy-duty insulation
- No anode rod!
- Made in the USA

Seats still available on Coal Creek Tour



Members are invited to join Brown County REA and BENCO on a coach bus tour to the Coal Creek Station generating plant and coal mine near Bismarck, ND, August 22-24. The generating plant, owned by Great River Energy, provides most of the electricity members use in our service area.

Members' cost for the tour is \$135 per person. It includes round-trip motor coach, lodging for two nights, tour of Coal Creek Station and Falkirk Mine, lunch on the tour day and two breakfasts at the hotel and entry to the North Dakota Heritage Museum, plus other cultural and historical stops on tour day.

If interested in participating in the Coal Creek Tour, please register by sending in the registration form below and your \$135 per person check payable to Brown County REA, or contact our office by August 1. If you have questions, call 794-3331 or 800-658-2368.

Registration for the Coal Creek Tour August 22-24

First & last name(s) _____

Address _____

City/zip _____

Phone # _____ Cell phone # _____

REA account # _____

How many are attending? _____

Enclosed is my check for \$135 per person

Room preference:

Nonsmoking double (2 beds) Smoking double (2 beds)

Send in check with your reservation to BCREA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085 before August 1. Call 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368 with questions.



Twins Play Ball! Clinic



More than 100 area youth received instruction on hitting, throwing and fielding as part of the Minnesota Twins Play Ball! Clinic in New Ulm, June 16. The event was sponsored by the Twins Community Fund and Great River Energy, Brown County REA's wholesale power supplier. 

Gulden achieves Journeyman status



Zach Gulden recently passed his final exam to become Brown County REA's newest Journeyman Lineman.

A New Ulm native, Zach completed the power lineworker training at MN West Technical College, Jackson, in 2012. He worked as a summer helper at BCREA in 2012 and joined the line crew as an apprentice lineman in 2013. Zach recently completed the Dennis Merchant Job Training and Safety Program four-year course of study and has logged 7,500 hours of work experience to successfully become a Journeyman Lineman.

Congratulations! 

Getting the most out of your ceiling fans

By turning on the fan, you can turn up the savings!

If you are like most Americans, you have at least one ceiling fan. Ceiling fans help our indoor life feel more comfortable. They are a decorative addition to our homes and, if used properly, can help lower energy costs.

Tips for making the most of your ceiling fans

1. Flip the switch — most ceiling fans have a switch near the blades. In warm months flip the switch so that the blades operate in a counter clockwise direction, effectively producing a “wind chill” effect. Fans make the air near them feel cooler than it actually is. In winter move the switch so the fan blades rotate clockwise, creating a gentle updraft. This pushes warm air down from the ceiling into occupied areas of the room. Regardless of the season, try operating the fan on its lowest setting.

2. Adjust your thermostat — in the summer when using a fan in conjunction with an air conditioner, or instead of it, you can turn your thermostat up three to five degrees without any reduction in comfort. This saves money since a fan is less costly to run than an air conditioner. In the winter lower your thermostat's set point by the same amount. Ceiling fans push the warm air from the ceiling back down toward the living space, which means the furnace won't turn on as frequently.

3. Choose the right size — make sure your ceiling fan is the right size for the room. A fan that is 36-44 inches in diameter will cool rooms up to 225 square feet. A fan that is 52 inches or more should be used for larger spaces.

4. Turn it off — when the room is unoccupied, turn the fan off. Fans are intended to cool people — not rooms. 

Wellspring — your opportunity to support wind & solar

The Wellspring program provides co-op members with an easy, affordable and meaningful way to support sustainable energy efforts in their communities. By empowering members to buy energy from renewable sources, this program enables you to offset your conventional energy use and take pride in helping promote and expand renewable energy development in the state of Minnesota.

What does participating in Wellspring mean?

Wellspring is a voluntary program offered to our members. While the electricity that is delivered to all homes and businesses includes some renewable energy in the mix, including wind and solar, participating in the Wellspring program is an added bonus. Additional turbines and solar panels are built specifically for those who subscribe to Wellspring.

How does the program work?

- You can purchase Wellspring Energy in 100 kWh blocks.
- Eight to ten blocks is equivalent to an average home's monthly electricity use.
- Participating members pay an additional amount on their electric bills.

How long do I have to stay on the program?

You must remain on the program for at least 12 months.

Where is Wellspring wind energy produced?

Wind energy is produced from large wind turbines located mainly in southern Minnesota, while the solar energy is produced by Great River Energy solar resources throughout the state of Minnesota. In 2015 wind resources accounted for 469 MW of total generation capacity. Fifteen MW of wind generation are dedicated to Wellspring's wind program. Currently, GRE solar resources account for nearly 2 MW of total generation capacity. Approximately 550 kW are dedicated to the Wellspring's solar program.

What exactly am I buying?

Those who participate in the Wellspring program are purchasing renewable energy credits (RECs). For

every 1,000 kWhs of clean, renewable electricity generation, a REC is created. A REC embodies all of the environmental attributes of the generation and can be tracked separately from the underlying electricity. We are providing Wellspring energy to you through our investments as a generation and transmission cooperative. This means you can support renewable energy and the development of more in our portfolio's future without having to build or buy anything.

Is the Wellspring energy supplied directly to my home or business?

No. The electricity generated by the wind turbines and solar panels is fed into the region's electric system called the grid. It is like pouring a pitcher of water into a pond. Once it is poured into the pond, you cannot get the water from the pitcher back out again. The same holds true for recapturing wind and solar-generated electricity from the grid. It is there and available to use, but to deliver the exact electrons generated by the wind turbine or the solar panel, is not possible. The wind and solar power

you purchase replaces electricity that would have been generated by conventional fossil fuels.

Will I still receive conventional power sources?

You will receive a mix of power sources. You won't be able to distinguish whether the electrons flowing into your home are generated by wind, solar or another resource. However, you can be assured the commitment to purchase Wellspring Wind and Solar Energy help lessen our reliance on fossil fuels.

Will power in my home or business be dependent on the wind blowing or the sun shining?

No. Your power will continue as usual because additional generation is built to ensure power is supplied when the wind is not blowing or the sun is not shining.

Who can participate?

To qualify for the program you must live in your local electric cooperative's service territory. Brown County REA members can use the coupon below to sign up for Wellspring! 

I want to be a part of Wellspring

Name on electric bill _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone # _____ Cell Phone # _____

REA Account # _____

Select one (solar):

___ 100 kWh (\$2) ___ 200 kWh (\$4) ___ 300 kWh (\$4)

___ 400 kWh (\$8) ___ 500 kWh (\$10)

Select one (wind):

___ 100 kWh (40¢) ___ 200 kWh (80¢) ___ 300 kWh (\$1.20)

___ 400 kWh (\$1.60) ___ 500 kWh (\$2)

Signature _____ 

Send to BCREA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085. Questions? Call 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368.

Bring out the robust flavor with garlic recipes! Share your best!

Time to bring more flavor to your favorite dishes with garlic. Share with us your family favorite recipes that include garlic for pizza, soup, roasts, hot dishes and more! Mail 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! ☺

Pork Chops Barb-B-Que

by Lois Lendt, Sleepy Eye

1 c. cooking oil

½ c. soy sauce

½ c. brown sugar

Boil this together. Pour over chops and marinate overnight in glass pan or ziplock bag. This recipe covers six chops. ☺

Sausage and Black Bean Soup by Nancy Katzer, Fairmont

1 lb. pork sausage

2 cans chicken broth (14 oz.)

1 can corn, drained (15 oz.)

1 can Mexican tomatoes (14 oz.)

1 can black beans, drained & rinsed (15 oz.)

2 c. frozen diced potatoes or hash browns, thawed

1 green pepper, diced

½ onion, diced

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tsp. dried oregano

1 tsp. chilli powder

2 polish sausages, sliced

Brown pork sausage and drain off fat. Place in crock pot. Add the rest of the ingredients to crock pot. Cook on low for six hours. ☺

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To file a program discrimination complaint complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

2. Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

3. E-mail: program.intake@usda.gov

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trees, tiling & more. You can also register at www.gopherstateonecall.org. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. ☺



Brown County Rural Electrical Association

Brown County Rural Electrical Assn.
24386 State Hwy 4, PO Box 529
Sleepy Eye MN 56085

E-mail address: bcrea@bcrea.coop
Website: www.browncountyrea.coop
Phone: 507-794-3331 or 800-658-2368
Office hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday

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.



Mike Heidemann
Chief Executive
Officer

Staff notes

BCREA Board to look at implementing Local Democracy Legislation

During the 2017 Legislative Session the Minnesota Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, a provision that reduces duplicative regulation on your electric cooperative. This local democracy legislation returns some balance to the regulatory process, ensuring decisions that impact member-owners of co-

operatives are made locally by your elected Board of Directors. While electric cooperatives are already locally regulated in most areas, this legislation made an important clarification, one that will allow for innovation in response to members' needs and wants for years to come.

The legislation impacts the distributed generation section of statute and brings it in line with the rest of Minnesota Statute as it applies to rates, fees and charges of electric cooperatives. Electric cooperatives still must follow the law as laid out by the legislature in this section. The provision that the legislature recently passed, and the Governor signed, allows for cooperatives to adopt the authority implementing this section of statute (Minnesota Statute 216B.164). To do so a cooperative has to pass a resolution adopting this authority and adopt rules implementing this section of statute.

With the passage of the provision, the legislature affirmed the value of local decision making for rural electric cooperatives across Minnesota. As your locally-owned cooperative, we know that local decision making can result in rates and services that reflect our member owners' needs while assisting in keeping administrative costs down. For more than 30 years the municipal utilities in Minnesota have had similar authority.

At the next meeting of your electric cooperative Board of Directors, the adoption of this authority will be addressed. Directors and staff will review the applicable law (MN 216B.164) and discuss a resolution and rules implementing the section of statute. The purpose of this change is to secure local decision-making, not to substantively change the way your cooperative interacts with distributed generation. Members who are interested in this change are asked to please contact us with your concerns. A member who wishes to attend the July 31 board meeting is asked to call the office to be added to the agenda. ☎

Board meeting highlights

The BCREA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting June 29 at the Brown County REA headquarters, Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed information from the Minnesota Rural Electric Association's meeting to discuss cooperatives' implementation of the Local Democracy Legislation, passed during the 2017 legislative session.
- Updated on construction projects including installation of single-phase underground at Boise Lake to eliminate tree issues, and continuing with three-phase underground out of the Cobden Substation.
- Reviewed and approved budget change for the office remodel project.
- Informed that 2016 capital credits were allocated and a portion of prior years' was retired from Rural Electric Supply Company (RESCO), from which the cooperative purchases much of its material.
- Reviewed recent safety meetings and trainings attended by linemen and operations staff.

The next meeting will be July 31 at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. ☎



Visit our website at www.browncountyrea.coop for more information on our programs, energy rebates and more!