

Connections

February 2018

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 22, Issue 2

Believe it or not: your electric bill can 'talk' to you with reminders



We are busy people. Who has time to keep track of billing details?

Your electric cooperative's billing system can keep in touch with you. The reminders will help you avoid late payment penalties too! Sign up once and pick whether you want one or up to five automatic notices.

Just go to your cooperative's website. Have your electric bill handy as you will need your account number or electric (meter) number. Federated members should click on "Online Pay" icon at www.federatedrea.coop. Brown County REA customers should click on "Online Bill Pay" at www.browncountyrea.coop. Call billing if you have any troubles signing up and we'll assist. Sometimes if you use a different e-mail than what we have saved on your account, you'll receive an error message.

Click on "alerts" tab after signing in with your name and password. Then click on which notifications you would like e-mailed to you.

1. Bill notification: notify the customer when the bill is available. Select from electronic (e-mail) or electronic and paper (both).
 2. Payment received: notify customer that payment was posted.
 3. Payment due soon notification: notify the customer three days before the due date.
 4. Payment due now: Notify the customer when the payment is due.
 5. Credit card expiring: Notify the customer when the card is about to expire.
- You can also pay through the cooperative's Online Pay website or sign up for automatic monthly payment by calling the cooperative's office.

Taking just a few minutes now, provides you timely, hassle-free reminders. ☎



Help us find these missing members

These members are lost in the "Where-Are-Ya" Triangle. It is a mysterious location marked by three points: members moving, leaving no forwarding address and now they have Capital Credits checks that need to be sent to them. (See Page 6).

Help us locate these missing members. Their capital credits check was returned — address unknown. If you know the current location for any of these members, call or e-mail the appropriate co-op with their new address and/or phone number. We can then mail their checks to them.

Unclaimed capital credits checks are donated to a tax-exempt organization. BCREA and Federated give unclaimed capital credits to their Operation Round Up program. Brown's Round Up Trust Board donates to programs that benefit their rural residents and local communities. Federated's Round Up Trust Board awards high school scholarships. ☎

At A Glance



Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association

Join us for BCREA's Annual Meeting!

Would you be interested in serving on the BCREA Board of Directors? Would you like to know when the BCREA Annual Meeting will be held? Would you like to sign up for a Health Fair? All of this can be found on Page 5!



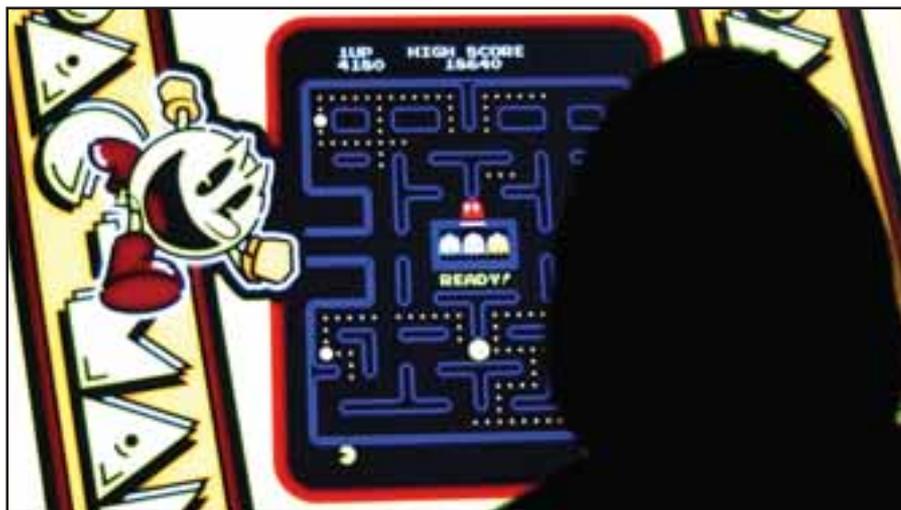
Game on! Configure game consoles to use less energy & win

The latest game consoles bring together many exciting new features, such as voice control, gesture recognition, connectivity, wireless controllers and the ability to stream live Internet content. However, many people may not realize that most of these new features draw power even when they are not using them. When all features are maximized, today's game consoles can consume as much energy as all of the homes in the city of Houston or the equivalent of the electricity delivered by four power plants.

Do you want to game on with the newest innovative and intuitive features without wasting energy? With just a few simple steps you can make the most of your system's energy-saving features without missing any of the action. Reduce your game console's energy use, save money, and help protect the environment.

Activate power-saving settings

Xbox One comes set-up to listen for the "Xbox On" command to turn on and allow other devices to access it via the network. By configuring the "Energy-saving" Power Mode, you can disable such features and drop the Xbox One's standby power use by 98 percent! The PlayStation 4 (PS4) with software updates enters a low power "Rest" mode after one hour of inactivity, which can be reduced to save even more. Users can also enable time limits for USB power charging when the PS4 is in "Rest" mode. The Wii U's power consumption is already optimized in all non-gaming modes, consuming less than half a watt when your console is standing by.



Pac-Man isn't the only one eating power pellets when you play video games. Game consoles use a lot of energy. Learn how to use them more efficiently.

Turn off the controllers

The PS4 includes a useful feature that allows the controllers to turn themselves off when not in use. You can choose to turn off your controllers automatically after 10, 30 or 60 minutes, depending on your gaming habits.

'Dis-Kinect' when not using it

Xbox's Kinect accessory can instantly recognize your body movements. This feature can use up to 14 watts when the game console is in use. So if you don't use Kinect often, consider disconnecting it.

Keep up on your updates

For example, with a previous Sony update, the PS4 powered down automatically and the USB ports enter a much lower power state once connected controllers are fully charged, dropping the power consumption by

over 65 percent.

For the best efficiency choice, plug your set-top box cable directly into the first HDMI port on your TV and connect the Xbox to a secondary HDMI port on your TV. Plugging your set-top box into your Xbox requires the Xbox to consume power even when you are not gaming — almost as much power as your TV.

Rethink your streaming source

Streaming through a game console uses up to 10 times more energy than streaming on a laptop or tablet. Consider using another kind of device to stream, like a Blu-ray player, set-top box or smart TV that has earned EPA's ENERGY STAR, which also uses comparatively less energy.

So let the games continue while you rack up energy-saving points! 
— Courtesy www.energystar.gov

Smart surge protectors save energy

Plug your computer or home entertainment center into the Smart Strip's 10 outlets. When you power down your computer or TV/sound system, the Smart Strip automatically shuts down the power to your computer and entertainment center's devices. This feature saves you money by defeating "vampire" electronics, which use power even when "off."

Unlike most power strips, the Smart Strip itself uses very little energy. It uses one watt of power when fully engaged and less than one-fourth of a watt when the automatically switched outlets are off.

A passive current sensor ensures an ultra-safe, ultra-clean switching off and on of your peripherals, giving you added peace-of-mind that your valuable electronics will remain safe.

The possible hazards of power surges are prevented with 4380-joule surge protection and 84,000-amp protection — both employ a three-way design to give you the ultimate protection for your valuable equipment.

The Smart Strip widely spaced outlets give you the space and ease to connect all necessary equipment. The four-way wall-mountable design, 90° space-saver plug, and heavy-duty four-foot power cord offer the versatility



The Smart Strip does more than protect electronics from surges. It saves energy by cutting power to electronics not in use.

to place the power strip wherever it is most convenient, so it never gets in the way of your footpath or your home décor. A lighted power switch keeps the strip visible, so you're never left fumbling in the dark.

The Smart Strip is backed by a two-year warranty. It is available for approximately \$40 on Amazon.com. 

Safety

Slippery roads, cars and poles dangerous combination

Winter wonderlands are beautiful, but they can be a driving nightmare. Snow, slush, ice and wind make it stressful and difficult to drive. These driving conditions also make it more likely that your car will skid off the road. Losing control of your car may seem like the worst-case scenario, but if you do not know what you are doing, the moments following an accident could potentially be more dangerous than the accident itself.

In an accident a car may slide off the road and into a power pole. The pole may fall down, lines may fall on your car or nearby; the area around your car may become charged with electricity. If you stepped out of the car in this scenario, your body would become the path to ground for the electricity and you could be electrocuted.

While downed lines can sometimes show they are live by arcing and sparking with electricity, this is not always the case. Power lines do not always show signs that they are live, but are just as lethal.

Stay in the car after an accident with a power pole.



Warn those who try to come near your car to help that they must stay far away. Call 911 for help and wait until a professional from the electric utility tells you it is safe to leave the car.

The exception to this rule is if your car is on fire. In that case, jump clear of the vehicle without touching it and the ground at the same time. Then hop away with feet together. This way there will not be a voltage difference between your two feet, which would give electricity the chance to flow through your body.

If you witness a car collision with a power pole, do not approach the accident. By trying to help, you put your own life at risk. The best thing to do is contact emergency responders and stay far away from the accident.

Power lines may be difficult to see if they are covered in snow or ice so be cautious if you must be out driving after a winter storm.

Snowmobilers: watch for guy wires and poles too! 
— Information courtesy of safeelectricity.org

Brown County Briefs

Round Up Trust meets Feb. 20

The Round Up Trust Board will meet to review applications on February 20. Organizations wishing to apply for funding should submit before then. Applications are available on the co-op website at www.browncountyrea.coop or by contacting the office or a trust board member.

Look for the Energy Star



Just a reminder that proof of Energy Star certification is needed for appliance and lighting rebates. Please submit a copy of your sales receipt, the Energy Star label and proof of appliance recycling. Reminder, members are eligible for one appliance rebate per year.

Wondering what is on CTV?

Some of the CTV channels are part of TVView listings published in the New Ulm Journal. You can find TVView in the B section of the Journal on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. ☎

Thanks for being surveyed!

We wish to thank all of the members who participated in the *Residential Survey* administered through Great River Energy. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

Congratulations to those who were chosen at random to receive a \$20 electric bill credit prize: Dustin Fleck, Rick Fluegge, Lee Forstner, David Hoffmann, Doug Koehler, Wayne Paulson, Mark Schaefer, John Trebesch, James & Jan Uhlenkamp and Brian Vote. ☎

Win a trip to our Nation's Capitol!



The trip of a lifetime awaits one lucky high school sophomore or junior whose parents or guardians are members of Brown County REA. Eligible youth can win an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. June 9-14.

To apply write a 300-word essay on any energy-related topic and submit it, along with the application form, to Brown County REA by the close of business Friday, March 2.

Brown County REA will select three finalists who will be interviewed; the co-op awards the trip to Washington, D.C. to one of the three. The second place winner will receive \$150 and serve as first alternate for the trip. \$100 will be awarded for third place. ☎

Let Brown County REA be part of your distributed generation discussions



If you're considering adding distributed generation (ie: wind, solar) on your site, please include Brown County REA at the start of the process.

Cooperative staff would like to help members make informed decisions, go over annual usage reports to help size the system to your electric load, explain any service upgrades and associated costs and provide you with the paperwork required to interconnect to our system. The process takes time and may involve multiple agencies.

Please contact BCREA at 800-658-2368 or 507-794-3331. Brown County REA has been providing safe, reliable electricity to you, our members for more than 80 years and plans to continue to do so well into the future. ☎

Help us find these former co-op members lost in the 'Where-Are-Ya' Triangle!

Former Federated

members: Call 847-3520, 728-8366 or 1-800-321-3520; ask for Angie or e-mail billing@federatedrea.coop.

Alexander, Jim	Jackson
Adams, Eric	Dunnell
Adams, Jacklyn	Fairmont
Adams, Tony	Lakefield
Babcock, Brenden	Winnebago
Barker, Merva	Fairmont
Batt, Kim	Welcome
Beckel, Thomas	Lakefield
Carlson, Rev. Bruce	Estero, FL
Carlson, Shawn	Fairmont
Cegelske, Juanita	Granada
Christensen, Ben	Welcome
Crane, Melvin	Mankato
EGge, Jim	Lakefield
Ehlers, Jennifer	Jackson
Fleming, Duane	Ceylon
Fowler, Charles	Surprise, AZ
Glenn, Mike	Lakefield
Herman, Robert	Wilder
Hill, Erin	Ankeny, IA
Holmes, Nathan	
% Brian Green	Worthington
King, Jay	Ames, IA
Kuberka, Lowell	Kailua Kona, HI
Lambert, Richard	Truman
Larson, Andy	Welcome
Looft, Steve	Granada
May, Ray & Pam	Maquon, IL
Meyer, Miranda L.	Heron Lake
Miller, Randy	Garvin
Missling, Jeff	Jeffers
Newton, Esther	Welcome
Noble, David B. & Gary	Windom
Peters, Mark	Brandon, SD
Pohlman, Orpha	Heron Lake
Ramsey, Don & Bonnie	Fairmont
Rosa, John	Fairmont
Ruby, Mike	Eagan
Stratton, Ronald	Rochester
Wolter, Vanita	Welcome
Worden, Raymond E.	Truman

Former Brown County

members: Call and ask for Dorine at 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368. Otherwise, e-mail bcrea@bcrea.coop.

Abbas, Phyllis M.	Mankato
Anderson, Jennifer	New Ulm
Bauer, Lois	Darwin
Betsch, Leigh T.	Estelline, SD
Black, Rick	Winthrop
Bonnes, William M.	Cedar Rapids, IA
Braam, Jerry L.	Fairfax
Cano, Juan R.	
%Oscar Surita	Crystal City, TX
Collum, Calvin C.	New Ulm
Cruz, Ruben	Laredo, TX
Cunningham, Bob	St. James
Delite Outdoor Inc.	St. Paul
Frederick, Thomas	Mankato
Gieseke, Carol	Montgomery
Gluth, Willard E.	New Ulm
Gonzales, Jesus	Hanska
Gonzalez, Janpalach	Elgin, TX
Green, Benhard A.	
%LeAnn Miller	Iona
Hall, Joshua	Forest Lake
Havemeier, Darwin & Wayne	New Ulm
Hazelton, Robert	Ogema
Huhn, Albert	New Ulm
Jensen, Judy	New Ulm
Jones, David Grant	Sleepy Eye
JTI, %Jason Tauer	Mankato
Kautzman, Rebecca	Hutchinson
Kenefick, Thomas L.	Lena, WI
Kiecker, Allan B.	New Ulm
Kruse, Wayne W.	Bigfork
Lamecker, Oleda	New Ulm
Lebens, Christine	Chaska
Lee, Martin & Candace	Webster
Lenzen, Dennis J.	New Ulm
Matthew, Mark R.	Omaha, NE
Means, Daniel L.	Baxter, IA
Meyer, Bryan J.	New Ulm
Meyer, Karyl A.	Mankato
Miller, Leland L.	New Ulm
Montanye, Harry R.	Chaska

Mosenden, Joan	Hanska
Nelson, Robert P.	Little Falls
Olson, Allen E.	New Ulm
Parsons, Lonnie D.	International Falls
Paschka, Joel & Tara	Alexandria
Ramirez, Herbert	Madelia
Ramirez, Viviana	Sleepy Eye
Rasmussen, Christine J.	New Ulm
Reim, Dan	North Mankato
Rodriguez, Jose L.	Sleepy Eye
Sadler, DeWayne	Winthrop
Sanchez, Orlando	Sleepy Eye
Schroeder, Duane R.	New Ulm
Sirovy, Thomas R.	Backus
Smith, Robert L.	Lakeville
Spicer, Debbie L.	New Ulm
Stolt, Gerald	Plymouth
Svoboda, Larry M.	Martin, ND
Thomas, James L. & Diane P.	New Ulm
TinaJero, Araceli Y.	New Ulm
Torres, Nancy	Sleepy Eye
Triax Midwest Ass., L.P.	Denver, CO
Twenty 1st Century Wireless	Edina
U S West Communications	Denver, CO
Warnke, Donald J.	Plainwell, MI
Wenzel, John	Lenexa, KS
Werner, Kenneth A.	Altamonte Springs, FL
Woodward, Laurie	Eugene, OR
Worden, Jerry L.	Linwood, NE ☺



Thanks for helping us locate these former members to reunite them with their unclaimed capital credits check!



Roll into some great roll recipes; sink your hands into this dough

A warm roll on a cold winter day warms the heart and tummy! Share with us recipes for rolls: cinnamon, crescent and dinner rolls, whether its grandma's recipe or for a bread machine. Share your favorite roll recipes and send to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by February 23. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

January freeze creates high bills that make you say 'Oh geez!'

Back in January we had 16 days of below zero temperatures. The average temperature was 10 degrees colder in 2018 than January 2017.

That kind of cold takes your breath away in two ways. First, when you walk outside and secondly when you open your electric bills a month later. During those kinds of cold snaps, it's a simple fact that we use more energy to stay warm and toasty. So don't be surprised if your electric bill is higher.

Did you run a space heater? Running one space heater for 10 hours adds \$1.50/day so over a month that's \$45.

Did you run an engine block heater? Running one for 12 hours adds \$1.20 a day. Over those 16 cold days that adds nearly \$20.

Do you have livestock tank heaters? Those range in wattage from 300-1,200 watts. Maybe you own a heated pet dish, although that features a lower wattage.

Did you have more family members home between Christmas and New Year's? That's more showers, meals and dishes, which add up too.

Insulation is a great tool to fight the cold. According to www.energystar.gov,



Space heaters add to higher electric bills during the deep freeze last month. gov, homeowners adding insulation can save an average of 18 percent in our region on heating and cooling costs by air sealing and adding insulation in attics, floors over crawl spaces and accessible basement rim joists. ☺



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***Pick up the phone
before the shovel;
call before digging!***

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Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees, tiling and 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.



Brandon Havemeier
Operations & Engineering Manager

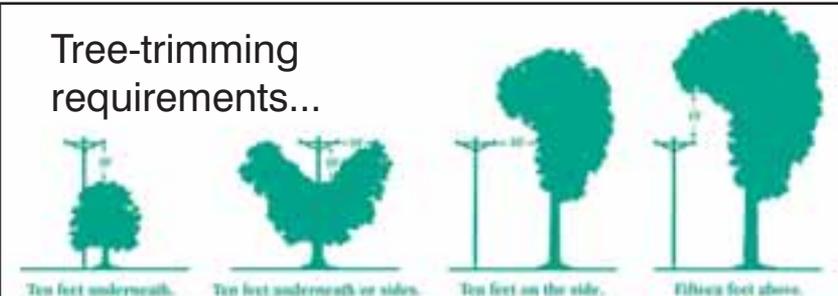
Staff notes

Winter maintenance in full swing

Our line crews are done with construction projects for the winter and are in maintenance mode over the next few months.

Line patrol started in the southwest portion of the system and will progress to the east, north and finish in the center of the service territory. During annual line patrol, the crews look for maintenance issues that could cause a power outage. This includes looking at poles to see if any need replacement, checking for loose guy

wires, damaged wires and proper line clearance. The crews perform maintenance on OCRs and overhead and underground lines. They are also reading a sampling of the meters to verify data with our automated meter reading system.



Brown County REA has again contracted with Carr's Tree Service who completed work in the southern tier of the system. Carr's will be working on tree trimming projects in Leavenworth, Stark, Sigel, Cottonwood and Cambria townships through March and again in July through September. Tree issues are addressed by cutting the tree down to eliminate the problem or trimming to allow the required clearance from the power line. This is a requirement of the Rural Utility Service (RUS), one of our lenders. We also want to be as efficient as possible with the tree trimming budget and trim for a four-year rotation. (U)

Operation Round Up Scholarships available



High school seniors whose parents/guardians are BCREA members and live in the service area are encouraged to apply for one of five \$200 Operation Round Up scholarships.

Applications are available from high school counselors and can be found at www.browncountyrea.coop. Application deadline is April 2. Winners will be announced at the April 5 Annual Meeting. (U)

Board meeting highlights

The BCREA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting January 19 at the BCREA office in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved December 2017 payroll and November 2017 financial statements.
- Reviewed and approved the Safety, Reliability and Service Quality report for 2017.
- Discussed the 2017 outage summary report. BCREA members' CADI number was 105 minutes for the year, and SADI was 29.8 minutes.
- Reviewed the OSHA 300 Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses.
- Updated on progress with the cooperative's 2017 financial audit, being conducted by Eide Bailey.
- Discussed plans for the 81st Annual Meeting to be held April 5 at the Sleepy Eye Event Center. Registration begins at 4:30, meal at 5:30 followed by the business meeting.

The next meeting will be February 22 at the BCREA office in Sleepy Eye. (U)