

Connections

July 2018

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 22, Issue 7

Is an electric vehicle in your future?

As electric vehicles (EVs) continue to gain popularity, most everyone leasing or purchasing one is doing so for the first time. So, how do you know if an EV will suit your lifestyle? What information do you need to know when heading to the dealership to find out which kind is best for you?

Two Types of EVs

There are two types of EVs that use electricity stored in batteries to power motors: all-electric and plug-in hybrid electric (PHEV). All-electric vehicles include the Nissan Leaf, Chevy Bolt, Ford Focus and Tesla models, while PHEVs such as the Chevy Volt work like an all-electric EV for the first 50 miles and then switch over to gasoline.

Range anxiety

One of the biggest roadblocks to overcome when considering a transition from gasoline to all electric is "range anxiety" or belief that the car's charge won't get you where you need to go for an entire day.

"The range on the electric cars you can buy today is sufficient to cover almost everyone's daily commute," said Brian Sloboda, a program and product manager at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. "For most people, even in rural areas, that number is under 40 miles a day." Most electric cars on the market today have between 120-200 mile range.

Charging your EV at home

Instead of stopping at a gas station



every time you need to fill up, the main fueling station for your EV could actually be in your garage and cost you less than you would pay at the pump. EV owners can charge their vehicle's battery at home by plugging into a standard 120-volt outlet that requires no extra equipment or installation. On average, a full charge this way takes

about eight hours, though it varies by models. Homeowners can also choose to have a Level 2 charger installed professionally at their home that would cut the charge time in half. Level 2 chargers can also be found at public charging stations.

Brown County REA offers EV/PHEV owners the opportunity to be on the ChargeWise program. This program allows members to charge their plug-in electric vehicle or plug-in hybrid electric vehicle in their garage using electricity from a specially installed 20-amp ChargeWise outlet. This outlet only provides energy during the off-peak hours of 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. Members plug in their vehicle in the evening and it is charged during these overnight hours at a reduced rate. In addition, Brown County REA will pay for up to

— **Continued on Page 7**

Visit our booth at Farmfest!

Visit us along with other
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, at Farmfest 2018 and
enter for chance to win one of six grill giveaways!

FARMFEST 2018 • AUGUST 7- AUGUST 9 • REDWOOD FALLS, MN

Bring this coupon to Booth #2301

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE # _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

You must be a member of one of the participating electric cooperatives to be eligible to win.



At A Glance



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

Farmfest is the place to be August 7-9!

Visit the Touchstone Energy Cooperative's booth at Farmfest to learn more about Brown County REA's programs and products. See the workings of heat pumps, electric water heaters and check out an electric vehicle firsthand. Plus, you can register to win one of six electric pellet grill/smokers to be given away. 



Looking to save money on appliances? A new refrigerator can be a good place to start

Thanks to recent improvements in insulation and compressors, today's refrigerators use a lot less energy than older models. With an Energy Star certified refrigerator you can maximize your energy and dollar savings without sacrificing the features you want.

Energy Star refrigerators

Energy Star refrigerators qualified for the label in 1996. Energy Star certified refrigerators are about 9 percent more energy efficient than models that meet the federal minimum energy efficiency standard.

Replace your old fridge for bigger savings.

An estimated 170 million refrigerators and refrigerator-freezers are currently in use in the United States. More than 60 million refrigerators are more than 10 years old, costing consumers \$4.4 billion a year in energy costs. By properly recycling your old refrigerator and replacing it with a new Energy Star certified refrigerator, you can save more than \$270 over the next five years.

Use the Energy Star Savings Calculator to find out exactly how much money you'll save by replacing your existing refrigerator (see image at right).

Protect the environment.

Energy Star certified refrigerators use less energy and help reduce impact on the environment. If all refrigerators sold in the United States were Energy Star certified, the energy cost savings would grow to nearly \$700 million each year and nine billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions would be prevented, equivalent to the emissions from more than 870,000 vehicles.



Go to <https://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=refrig.calculator>. Energy Star has a calculator to figure out your savings when buying a new refrigerator

Rebates from BCREA

Your electric co-op also encourages replacing old refrigerators with its rebate program. Purchase an Energy Star refrigerator and provide proof of recycling of your old unit and you can receive a \$75 rebate.

Refrigerator best practices

Follow these guidelines to reduce the amount of energy your refrigerator uses:

- Set the appropriate temperature. Keep your refrigerator at 35 to 38 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Place your fridge in a cool place.

- Position your refrigerator away from a heat source such as an oven, a dishwasher or direct sunlight.

- Leave a few inches between the wall and the refrigerator and keep the condenser coils clean if you have an older model. Read the user's manual to learn how to safely clean coils. Coil cleaning brushes can be purchased at most hardware stores.

- Make sure the refrigerator seals around the door are airtight. If not, replace them.

- Minimize the amount of time the refrigerator door is open. (E)

Improve the intelligence of your dumb appliances

How do you control even a dumb appliance or piece of electronics with your smartphone? You could try plugging the device into an Avatar Controls Mini Smart Plug.

The Avatar Controls allows you to do such things as open electric curtains, warm your morning coffee, turn off appliances when away or turn on various lights.

Simply plug the Avatar into an outlet, plug your device into the Avatar and download the app to give yourself a degree of hands-free control through your smartphone.

Avatar Controls features include:

- The Avatar works with Amazon Echo/Dot/Tap/Show & Google Home. Just pair it with Amazon Alexa or Google Assistant built-in devices and control your lights and appliances with your voice
- Remote control your household appliances from anywhere in the world on your smart phone.
- Download the free APP "Smart Life." Sign up for an account and connect to your existing home Wi-Fi network (only support 2.4G). Add the devices on APP, rename or group smart plugs and control ON/OFF/Timing as desired.
- You can share all the smart plugs with your family.



Remote control and schedule household devices anytime, anywhere!

The Avatar Controls Mini Smart Plug can give your dumb appliances a degree of intelligence and allow basic smartphone control.

A two-pack of the Amazon Controls Mini Smart Plug is available on Amazon.com for approximately \$17. 

Safety

Self-monitor safety when working on Do-It-Yourself projects

Many do-it-yourself projects involve the use of power tools. Working with power tools requires skilled instruction and training. They can be deadly if not properly used or maintained. The most common scenario for power tool-related electrocutions is when the equipment comes in contact with live electrical wires while it is being used.

Your electric co-op strongly recommends hiring a qualified, licensed electrician to perform any electrical work in your home. However, if you do decide to do-it-yourself, consider the following important safety tips:

- Make an effort to learn about your home electrical system so that you can safely navigate and maintain it.
- Never attempt a project that is beyond your skill level. Knowing when to call a professional may help prevent electrical fires, injuries and fatalities.
- Always turn off the power to the circuit that you plan to work on by switching off the circuit breaker.
- Be sure to unplug any lamp or appliance before working on it.
- Test the wires before you touch them to make sure that the power has been turned off.
- Never touch plumbing or gas pipes when performing a do-it-yourself electrical project.
- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) with every power tool to



protect against electric shocks.

- Do not use power tools with an extension cord that exceeds 100 feet in length.
 - Never use power tools near live electrical wires or water pipes.
 - Use extreme caution when cutting or drilling into walls where electrical wires or water pipes could be accidentally touched or penetrated.
 - If a power tool trips a safety device while in use, take the tool to a manufacturer-authorized repair center for service.
 - When working with electricity, use tools with insulated grips.
 - Appropriate personal protective gear should be worn.
 - Do not use power tools without the proper guards.
 - When using a wet-dry vacuum cleaner or a pressure washer, be sure to follow the instructions to avoid electric shock. 
- Information courtesy www.esfi.org

Brown County Briefs

Member Advisory Council

The second meeting of the Member Advisory Council will be held Monday, September 10, at 7 p.m. in the BCREA Auditorium.

Operation Round Up



The BCREA Trust Board will meet to review applications on Tuesday, August 21. Organizations wishing to be considered for funding should submit an application prior to that date. Applications are available under the *Programs & Services* tab, *Operation Round Up* page at www.browncountyrea.coop.

Nondiscrimination Statement

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all the of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Energy Tip:

Here's a cool tip for your fridge! Cover liquids and wrap foods stored in your refrigerator. Uncovered foods release moisture, causing the compressor to work harder. Source: energy.gov

Seats are 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 Energy Park generating plant and lignite mine near Bismarck, N.D., 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 Energy Park and Falkirk Mine, lunch on the tour day, two breakfasts at the hotel, entry to the North Dakota Heritage Museum and other cultural/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 3. 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 3. Call 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368 with questions.



Get your green on with Wellspring

The Wellspring renewable energy program offers Brown County REA members an opportunity to support wind and solar developments through the Wellspring Wind and Wellspring Solar programs.

Wellspring programs are voluntary and available to all members. While the electricity that is delivered through Brown County REA to your home or business includes at least 25 percent renewable energy in the mix, the Wellspring program allows members the option to support expanded renewable development.

- Members can purchase Wellspring energy in 100 kWh blocks.
- Wellspring Energy is purchased in 100 kWh blocks. 8 to 10 blocks is equivalent to an average home's monthly electricity use.
- Cost for one 100 kWh wind block is \$.40. One 100 kWh solar block is \$2. Participating members pay an additional amount on their electric bill each month.
- You must remain on the program for at least 12 months.
- You may sign up for both programs or just one. Both programs will be an addition to your regular electric charges. Return form below to Brown County REA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085. ☎

Let BCREA be part of your DG discussions



Thinking about adding Distributed Generation (ie: wind, solar) on your site? Please include Brown County REA in the process from the beginning.

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, explain other fees and charges 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. ☎

Sign me up for 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.



Help children in need succeed, donate school supplies

Brown County REA is a drop-off site for the United Way of the Brown County Area's Stuff the Backpacks school supply drive & we need your help.

Please consider donating any of the following items :



- *4 oz. Elmer's Glue *24 count crayons *Colored pencils
- *Broad tip & thin tip markers *Glue sticks *#2 Pencils
- *Large pink erasers *Pencil top erasers *Facial tissue
- *Pencil bags & boxes *Fine tip Sharpie markers
- *Dry erase markers *Wide-ruled notebooks *Highlighters
- *Kids scissors -pointed *2-pocket folders *Hand sanitizer

Please drop off donations before July 26th. Collected donations will be distributed to children in Brown County on August 8. Thank you!



Heartland Security can help you protect your home or business with a variety of options that range from alarms that automatically notify the police to surveillance cameras. Call us today at 888-264-6380 to learn more about our security systems for farms and more. ☎

Great River Energy sets 50 percent renewable energy goal for 2030

Great River Energy, Brown County REA's wholesale power supplier, recently announced a company goal to supply its member-owner cooperatives with energy that is 50 percent from renewable resources by 2030.

"Great River Energy has already met Minnesota's 25 percent renewable energy standard eight years ahead of requirements," said Great River Energy President and Chief Executive Officer David Saggau. "We continue to evolve our power supply portfolio, delivering even more renewable energy to our member-owner cooperatives to help them remain competitive in a changing market. We look forward to meeting this goal for the benefit of our members, while maintaining strong system reliability."

The announcement of the 50 percent renewable goal comes at a time when home and business-owners are increasingly interested in having more renewables in their energy supplies. Increasing renewables can present advantages to cooperatives for attracting and retaining business, as well as meeting the expectations of members who value renewable energy.

Mounting research suggests that electrifying certain parts of the economy — using electric technologies to replace the use of fossil fuels — is necessary to achieve ambitious carbon emissions reduction goals worldwide. This is often referred to as beneficial or efficient electrification within the utility industry.

GRE has spent more than a decade positioning its portfolio, lowering costs and reducing dependence on coal as a fuel source, while improving the overall flexibility of its generation portfolio. These measures have resulted in a 35 percent reduction in Great River Energy's carbon dioxide emissions since 2005.



Great River Energy (GRE), your wholesale power provider, continues to make great strides in using renewable energy. Solar panels, such as the one pictured above, wind energy, hydropower and even biomass are in GRE's renewable portfolio. This is one way GRE continues to support its customers and the environment.

Great River Energy has exited two contracts for coal-based electricity in recent years and, in 2017, retired a North Dakota power plant owned by the cooperative. Improvements at Great River Energy's Coal Creek Station power plant have reduced the plant's emissions of sulfur dioxide and mercury up to 40 percent, nitrogen oxides by 20 percent and carbon dioxide by 4 percent in recent years. Meanwhile, operational adjustments allow the plant to ramp down production when market conditions warrant.

Great River Energy's renewable portfolio currently includes 468 megawatts (MW) of wind energy, 200

MW of hydropower, 4 MW of solar and 30 MW of biomass. Great River Energy has announced plans for an additional 300 MW of favorably priced wind energy by 2020.

"Renewable energy, particularly wind, is currently our lowest-cost option for new generation resources," Saggau said.

In its 2017 integrated resource plan filing to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, Great River Energy projected wind energy as its sole new resource need over the next 15 years. Great River Energy will continue to maintain a diverse portfolio in order to best serve its member-owner cooperatives. 



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Make your voice count

Get out and vote in the August 14 primary elections.

CO-OPS VOTE
A PROGRAM OF MEMBER-OWNED COOPERATIVES

Enjoy creamy goodness by sharing sour cream recipes!

Cream us with a ton of sour cream recipes, whether as a dip, in salad, dessert or main dish. Share with us your cream recipes; send to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by June 25. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

Sale of electric vehicles expected to grow

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\$500 of the installation cost. Contact the cooperative to learn more.

Public fast chargers

Fast chargers can charge an EV in not much longer than the time it takes to fill your gas tank, grab a snack or beverage and use the restroom. The number of public charging stations across Minnesota is growing rapidly and they are available along transportation corridors and can be easily located using online tools like plugshare.com.

EV costs and savings

The U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects electric vehicle sales to grow from about one percent of the market today to 12 percent by 2050. Car makers are pushing those trends by announcing plans to launch a variety of new electric vehicles in

the next four to five years. Plus, the costs are coming down.

"As electric car research, development and production increases, costs will be coming down," Sloboda notes. "Tax breaks for electric cars at the federal level and in some states can reduce costs by several thousand dollars."

The savings don't end at the dealership. EVs require much less upkeep than gas-powered vehicles because the battery, motor and associated electronics require little-to-no regular maintenance; there are fewer fluids to change; and there are fewer moving parts, relative to a conventional gas engine. "You're powering it with electricity from your electric co-op and they have special rates available to make an electric vehicle even more attractive," Sloboda adds.

Environmental benefits

Besides helping your pocketbook, owning and driving an EV has a profound impact on the environment. EVs produce zero tailpipe emissions as do PHEVs when in all-electric mode. And by signing up for Brown County REA's Revolt program, your EV is charged off-peak with renewable wind energy.

Interested in learning more? Stop by the Touchstone Energy Cooperative's booth at Farmfest August 7-9 at the Gilfillan Farm in Redwood County and check out the electric vehicle. There are also many online resources, including the Department of Energy's Plug-in Electric Vehicle Handbook for Consumers at https://www.afdc.energy.gov/publication/pev_consumer_handbook.pdf. ☺

Benefits of today's electric grid



Resilient and flexible
Enables use of wind and solar resources, which generate power on and off.



Cleaner
Wind and solar energy help reduce emissions.

Great River Energy's voluntary goal of 50 percent renewable energy by 2030 will more than double its current supply. This is one way Great River Energy hopes to provide for its members in an economical and environmentally-friendly way. ☺

Call Gopher State
One Call before
digging!

1-800-252-1166



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 or call 811. 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.

Four factors that can affect your summer electric bill

You open your summer electric bill and are a bit surprised. You are sure your usage hasn't change — so it's understandable how a higher-than-normal bill may not make sense. Here are a few possible reasons your bill is higher:

1. Air Conditioning — it may seem obvious, but summer weather plays a big role in your electric bill. Air conditioning accounts for as much as 50 percent of the average household's electric bill. Maintenance and smart use of your cooling system, ie. keeping drapes closed on hot sunny days, will help keep your electric bill in check, while keeping your home at the right temperatures for you.

2. Dehumidifiers — typical dehumidifiers cost about 6 to 10 cents each hour they are in use. Monthly costs of \$15 to \$35 are common in the summer, but can exceed \$50 per month if the dehumidifier runs a lot. ENERGY STAR dehumidifiers save electricity by removing humidity more efficiently.

3. Fans — not hot enough to run the air conditioner, so you are using a fan or two instead? That uses electricity too. Fan can keep occupants acceptably comfortable up to 85 degrees. Ceiling fans are an economical choice and can be used in conjunction with your air conditioning system to improve air flow. Make sure it is running in summer mode — usually a counter clockwise direction.

4. Phantom loads — coffee makers, the cable or satellite TV receiver and many other appliances are always on, even if they are turned off. Though this occurs year-round, you may be using more or different appliances in the summer, especially if you have kids home or entertain more often. 

Board meeting highlights

The BCREA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting June 28 at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following items:

- Reviewed and approved the May 2018 board meeting minutes, new member applications, member cancellations, membership clean-up, disbursements and payments to estates.
- Reviewed and approved May 2018 payroll and April 2018 financial statements.
- Reviewed the Strategic Thinking session of the board and management team.
- Heard a recap of the work to replace 28 transmission poles downed by a May storm. BCREA assisted GRE and its contractor to complete work and restore power.
- Updated on construction activities and the linemen's assistance with a building move.
- Reviewed an 8-year comparison of workers compensation claims from provider Minnesota Rural Electric Trust (MRET).
- Reviewed recent safety meetings and training sessions attended by linemen, employees and management.

The next meeting will be July 23 at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. 

Double Down on Air Source Heat Pump Rebates

Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better!



Air Source Heat Pump

No You Can't!



Central Air Conditioner

Yes I Can!



Air Source Heat Pump

It's the best of both worlds. Air source heat pumps provide home cooling and supplemental heating with 72% less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces.



ASHP	Regular Rebate	Promo Rebate
14.5 SEER	\$580	\$1,160
15 SEER	\$680	\$1,360
16+ SEER	\$730	\$1,460

Double rebates available in May, June & July. Heat pump must be on load control to qualify.

ENERGY WIDE MN