

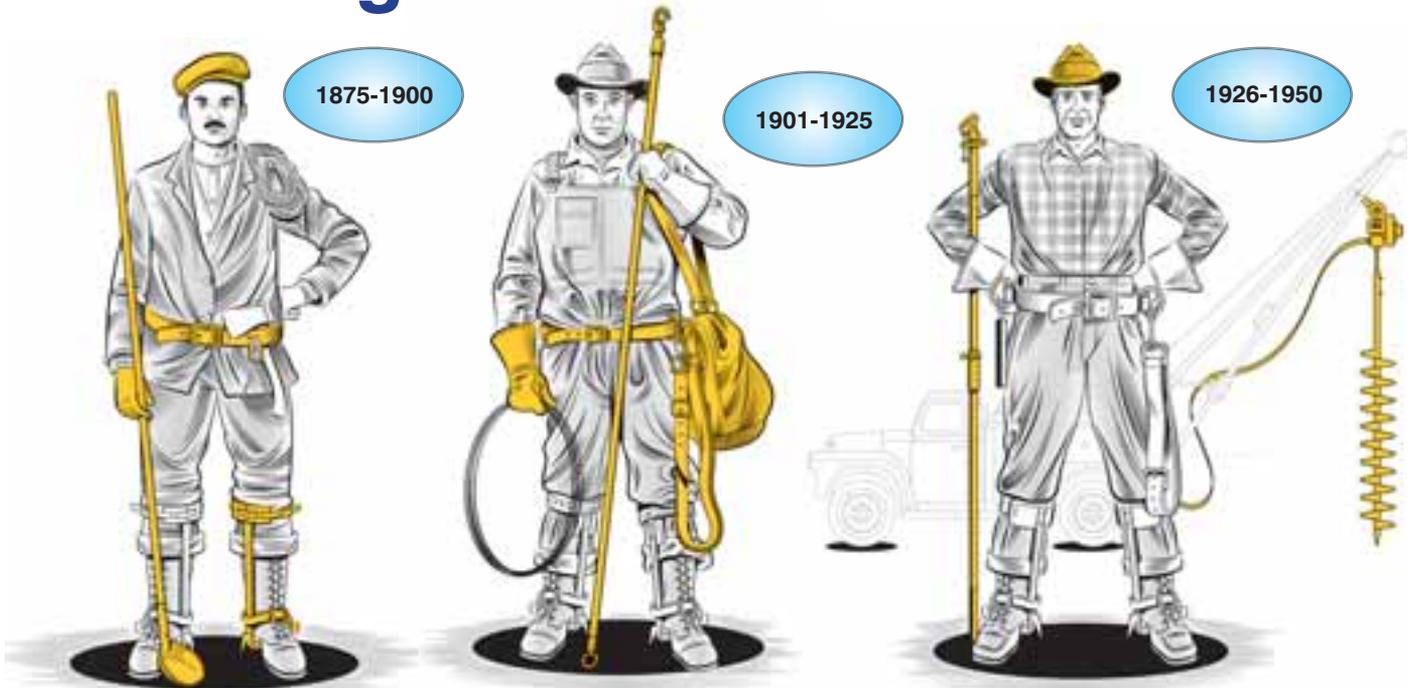
Connections

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 23, Issue 4

Linemen gear evolves over the eras



1875-1900

1901-1925

1926-1950

Lineman Appreciation Day is April 8. Let's journey back in time and see how lineman gear evolved over the decades.

In the early years (above) linemen learned basic principles and hazards on the job. Safety standards are nonexistent and most line equipment is handmade.

- Linemen fashion belts to wrap around waist and pole — or they climb freestyle.
- It's not uncommon for linemen to wear hats made of felt or leather for protection.
- Workers dig holes by hand with digging bars, spoons and shovels.
- Linemen rarely wear gloves for protection, opting for bare hands.
- Homemade climbers lack pads and have only upper and lower straps.

Next, safety rules and training become available, but they're limited. Linemen de-energize lines to restore power. As demand grows, live-line work becomes more common.

- Linemen make their own hot sticks and slather them with varnish to keep moisture out.
- Canvas bags store and carry climbing and work tools.
- Safer rubber gloves are introduced around 1915, along with other rubberized equipment, such as line hoses and blankets.
- Linemen belts and safety straps are more standardized, adjustable, and attach to D-rings.

The electric industry develops more formalized safety rules and procedures to protect lineworkers. In the late 1930s apprentice programs with stricter standards also begin.

- The transition to hard hats comes later in this period. Until then, most linemen elect to wear soft, Stetson-style hats.
 - A-frame digger trucks evolve into hydraulic digger derrick trucks with an auger, resulting in safer, more efficient work.
 - The first shotgun sticks come into use and allow linemen to perform more tasks from the pole.
- Continued on Page 6

At A Glance



Brown County Rural Electrical Association



Members reap GRE's financial success

For the first time in its history Great River Energy has retired patronage capital through cash payments to its member-owner cooperatives. See the story on Page 5. 



Cold climate heat pumps push heat pump technology to new heights...and low temps

Heat pumps are amazing heating/cooling systems that operate with great efficiency for your energy use. While air source heat pumps get a good work out in the summer, serving as air conditioning up to 400 percent efficiency, they don't get used a much in the winter.

In the winter air source heat pumps work by pulling heat from the outside air to warm your home. The problem for a traditional heat pump occurs when the temperature drops below 30 degrees, the heat pump cannot draw enough heat from the outdoor air to provide all the heating needed to keep the home comfortable. When that happens, you need a backup heating source, such as propane, natural gas or electric baseboard.

However, new technology is pushing air source heat pumps to new levels. Cold climate heat pumps are now available. Cold climate heat pumps are designed for people in the northern states, like Minnesota, where the air temperature can drop significantly below the 20 degree threshold.

How low can they go?

Cold climate heat pumps are designed to provide powerful heating even at -22 degrees F. They can be installed on virtually any home with standard installation. Operating at that temperature, cold climate heat pumps can provide virtually all of your heating in the winter.

What about their cost to operate?

Not only do cold climate heat pumps operate at low temperatures, they also operate at low cost. When compared to traditional heating systems, a cold climate heat pump can cut your energy consumption by up to 40 percent. That number can go up to 56 percent in some cases. Greater savings exist if a homeowner switches from an old LP furnace to a cold climate heat pump.

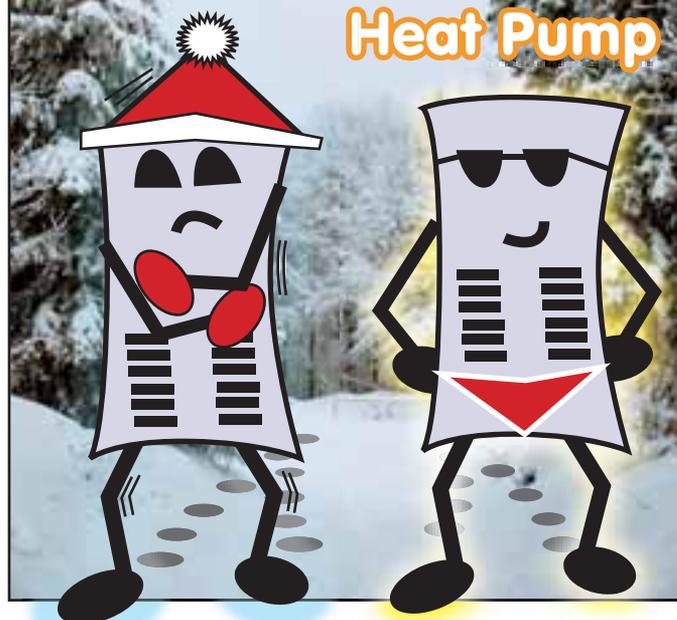
Another benefit of cold climate heat pumps is how they impact your home's humidity in the winter. Other systems can dry out the air, which can lead to health irritations. Cold climate heat pumps can operate without significantly reducing the humidity of your home. The reason for this is they work by transferring heat, rather than by combustion.

Cold climate heat pumps work just as good as standard air source heat pumps in the summer. They draw heat from your home and cool your house up to 400 percent efficiency.

Incentives

A federal tax incentive can be worth \$300. Be sure to ask

Heat Pump Cold Climate Heat Pump



Regular air source heat pumps can have a hard time when the temperature drops below 20 degrees. Cold climate heat pumps continue to work at even below-zero temperatures.

your electric cooperative about possible rebates on cold climate heat pumps. See inside pages for details.

If you are thinking about installing a new heating/cooling system, check out cold climate heat pumps. They may provide the year-round flexibility, efficiency and dependability you are looking for in your home. Visit with the cooperative's energy expert if you have any questions. (E)

Energy Tips

How does an air-source heat pump work?

Heat pumps use a refrigerant system involving a compressor, condenser and evaporator to absorb heat at one place and release it in another. In the summer the heat pump absorbs heat from inside your home and releases it outside. In the winter the heat pump absorbs heat in the air by refrigerant in an outdoor coil. It goes into the compressor and is released into the house. (E)

Heartland water sensors alert you for flooding

Heartland Security, a subsidiary of your electric cooperative, provides state-of-art security systems that can protect your farm, home and business from break-ins, fire and more. Did you know they can also protect you from flooding in case you are away and your sump pump fails?

If spring leaves you with a sinking feeling because you know your sump pump will start running, even when you aren't around, a water sensor from Heartland Security could help you. As part of a security system, water sensors are designed to alert you to potential water issues, such as a failing sump pump, drain back-up, or sewer back-up, before costly damage occurs.

Water sensors have two or four metal pins that trigger an alarm when water is detected across 2 of the pins. With a monitored security system, a 24/7 response center is notified of the alarm and immediately begins calling people on the owner's contact list.



A flood sensor from Heartland Security gives you the ability to receive a phone call if your sump pump fails and your basement is flooding.

Water sensors are often used with sump pumps or floor drains, but can also be used with dishwashers and washing machines to help detect any water issues. Heartland recommends setting your appliance in a plastic pan or shallow container of some kind in order to help your water sensor detect the presence of accumulating water.

False alarms can occur when a water sensor is placed directly on a cement floor or other surface that gives off moisture. One way to avoid this is to raise the sensor slightly off the floor or

mount the sensor sideways.

As a part of your security system, water sensors provide peace-of-mind for those who worry about water issues. Plus, a security system qualifies you for an insurance discount. For more information about water sensors or to schedule a free, no-obligation analysis, contact Heartland Security at 888-264-6380 or visit www.heartlandss.com. 

Safety

Ready to get outside? Watch for power lines!

Spring is here and people are going outdoors again. Farmers will start planting. Kids will play outside. Do-it-yourself projects begin. Through it all, make sure you stay safe around electricity.

- Contact your electric co-op immediately to report downed power lines outside your home.
- Look up before raising a ladder or pole to make sure that it will not come within 10 feet of any power lines. Use wooden or fiberglass ladders outdoors. Metal ladders conduct electricity.
- Never touch a person who is in contact with a downed power line. Call 911 immediately.
- Downed power lines can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or even death. Electricity wants to move from a high-voltage zone to a low-voltage zone — it could do that through your body.
- If you see a downed power line, move away from it and anything touching it. The ground around power lines — up to 35 feet away — may be energized.
- You cannot tell whether or not a power line is energized just by looking at it. You should assume that all downed power lines are live.
- Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything else in contact with it by using an object such



as a broom or stick. Even non-conductive materials, like wood or cloth, can conduct electricity even if slightly wet.

- Be careful not to touch or step in water near where a downed power line is located.
- Do not drive over downed power lines.
- If your car or farm equipment comes in contact with a downed power line while you are inside, stay in the vehicle. Summon help, but direct others to stay away from your car.
- If you must leave your vehicle because it is on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and avoid contact with both the car and the ground at the same time. Shuffle away from the vehicle. 

— *Information courtesy of esfi.org*

Brown County Briefs

Member Advisory Council

The first meeting of the new Member Advisory Council will be April 22, beginning with a light meal at 6 p.m. and a 6:30 p.m. meeting start. We will meet in the auditorium of the Brown County REA headquarters. Park in the south lot and enter through the auditorium doors.

Twins Play Ball! Clinic again coming to Sleepy Eye; area youth invited June 14



Brown County REA and Sleepy Eye Community Education are teaming up with the Minnesota Twins to offer a free Twins Play Ball! youth clinic Friday, June 14 at Prairieville Field (behind the public school) in Sleepy Eye.

Youth ages 6-9 are scheduled from 2 to 3:30 p.m. and ages 10-13 should come from 3:30 to 5 p.m. No cost. The program is presented in partnership with Great River Energy, which is made up of Brown County REA and 27 other rural electric cooperatives in Minnesota.

Created to promote baseball and softball throughout the region, the clinic provides hands-on instruction for boys and girls ages 6-13. Youth can register under *Youth Clinics*, then find the Sleepy Eye location at www.playballmn.com. The Twins will provide safe, youth-friendly equipment and participants are asked to bring their own gloves. The format focuses on throwing, hitting and fielding. (6)

Ben Nachreiner selected to represent BCREA on Washington, D.C. Youth Tour



Comfrey High School sophomore Ben Nachreiner will join 1,900 students from around the nation as Brown County REA's representative on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, June 15-20. In 2019 the Youth Tour celebrates its 55th anniversary.

Ben will travel with about 40 other Minnesota high school students representing rural electric cooperatives statewide, plus adult chaperones. While in our nation's capitol they will participate in leadership training, engage in one-on-one conversation with electric officials, jump start their national peer

network and tour Washington, D.C.

The Youth Tour opportunity is fully sponsored by Brown County REA. Ben is the son of Brad and Jessica Nachreiner.

Lillian Lewandowski, rural New Ulm, was awarded the \$150 second prize in this year's Youth Tour contest. There was a tie for third place between Lauren Mages, rural New Ulm, and Jakob Leshovsky, rural Hanska. (6)

Co-op employees help spruce up homeless shelter as part of Touchstone Community Day



CEO Mike Heidemann (far right, next to his wife, Amy) and Crew Foreman Larry Soukup and wife, Mary Jo, joined forces with other volunteers from across the country as part of the 11th annual Touchstone Energy Community Service Project.

BCREA CEO Mike Heidemann and Crew Foreman Larry Soukup were among 100 volunteers from Touchstone Energy co-ops across the country who joined together to support the 11th annual Touchstone Energy Community Service Project.

In conjunction with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) annual meeting in March, Touchstone Energy partnered with *Rebuilding Together Orlando* to make worksite improvements at the Covenant House.

Volunteers spent the day working on landscaping, painting and carpentry projects at the facility, which helps homeless and at-risk youth get back on track and excel in their futures. (6)

Great River Energy shares financial success with its membership

When Brown County REA experiences financial success, it returns cash to members. When Great River Energy's financial position is strong, it issues payments to Brown County REA.

Brown County REA is one of 28 electric cooperatives which own and receive wholesale electric service from Great River Energy (GRE).

For the first time in its history, Great River Energy has retired patronage capital through cash payments to its member-owner cooperatives. On March 28, Brown County REA received \$179,399.92 from Great River Energy.

"Our member-owner cooperatives decided long ago to invest in the financial strength of Great River Energy by gradually increasing equity over time, with the goal of returning patronage capital to members in 2020," said Great River Energy Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Michelle Strobel. "With our members' support, we achieved that goal in 2018, and we will provide cash back to members two years earlier than planned."

Co-ops are not-for-profit businesses that, when appropriate, return margins to members by retiring patronage capital.

"The retirement of capital credits is one of the most important things we do as cooperatives," said Brown County REA CEO Mike Heidemann, adding that the GRE funds go to Brown County REA's equity to be distributed back to the



BCREA President Jim Mickelson (left) accepts the first GRE patronage capital payment from Reuben Kokesch, BCREA Director who represents the cooperative on the Great River Energy board.

membership. "Retiring patronage capital is proof that the cooperatives of Minnesota are financially strong."

Why do co-ops allocate capital credits?

Federal law provides cooperatives with certain preferences and exemptions, such as federal tax-exempt status. Many state laws provide additional benefits. To retain this tax exemption, co-ops are required to operate on an at-cost basis. Returning patronage capital facilitates operating at cost. (6)

SOME CALL THIS OFFER COOL. OTHERS CALL IT HOT. WE SAY, IT'S BOTH.

Install an energy-saving air source heat pump. Cool and heat your home AND receive a HOT promotional rebate!

ASHP	Regular Rebate	Promo Rebate
15 SEER	\$680	\$1360
16+ SEER	\$730	\$1460

Promotion dates
April 1 - June 30

Contact Brown County REA to learn more
800-658-2368 or bcrea@bcrea.coop

Air source heat pumps provide **home cooling and supplemental heating**, using **72% less electricity** than conventional air conditioners and furnaces. Bonus rebates on residential ductless heat pumps also available during the promotion April 1- June 30, 2019.

A TrueSource Energy Company

Linemen gear continues to move into future

— Continued from Page 1



1951-1970



1971-1990



1991 to Present

During the years pictured above, fiberglass sticks evolve to “rubber gloving,” with more formalized rules and training. The advent of the bucket truck, utility underground cable, and improved communications are major steps forward in this era.

- Insulated buckets on trucks provide fall protection and come into widespread use.
- New applications of radio technologies improve communications between the office and work site during emergencies and storm restoration.
- Linemen wear two pairs of gloves — leather on top of rubber — for more protection. A typical pair now costs about \$208.

During this era, President Richard Nixon signs the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) law. Underground line installation gains widespread use. Material-handling bucket trucks with hydraulics and mechanical compression tools also improve work conditions.

- New rubber sleeves extend to the shoulders for extra protection.
- Head protection is made from thermoplastics.
- Made of fiberglass, the extendo stick lets workers perform tasks like opening and closing switches or removing tree limbs, while staying on or near the ground. Today an extendo stick costs about \$149.

OSHA begins requiring utilities to provide lineworker clothing to protect from arc flashes and “fall protection” devices like body harnesses and fall-arrest lanyards.

- Arc-rated clothing is required by OSHA as Personal Protective Equipment. This type of clothing won’t “melt” onto the worker’s skin during a potential arc flash or electrocution. It costs about \$960, from jeans to shirts, to coat with this type of arc-flash protection.
- Mobile devices help lineworkers troubleshoot problems using meter data instead of climbing a pole or going up in a bucket.
- Linemen don’t climb as much due to bucket trucks. Body harnesses and lanyards are backup support. A body harness costs about \$285.
- Lightweight mechanical crimpers mean no more squeezing connectors with hand tools.
- Linemen now wear hard hats insulated with a special polyethylene that protects against blows to the head and electrical contact. A typical hard hat costs about \$24.

While this safety gear is spendy, it’s priceless to keep co-op’s line crews safe as they provide reliable electric service to members. Ⓜ



When thunder rolls, we do too!
**Lineworker
 Appreciation Day
 April 8
 #ThankALineworker**

Post with all of us your most favorite French toast recipes

Let's get toasted (make that French toasted)! Share your favorite French toast recipes with us, whether it's a French toast overnight dish, crockpot, breakfast or brunch delight. Send to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by April 25. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

Peach Muffins by Brenda Clobes, Brainerd

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| ½ c. butter, softened | 1½ c. flour |
| ¾ c. sugar (I use ½ c.) | 1½ tsp. baking powder |
| 1 egg | ½ tsp. cinnamon |
| ½ c. sour cream | 1 c. canned peaches, drained & chopped |
| 1 tsp. vanilla | ¾ c. chopped pecans (I use ¼ c.) |

Cream the butter and sugar. Add the egg, sour cream and vanilla; mix well. Combine the flour, baking powder and cinnamon. Stir into creamed mixture just until moistened. Fold in the peaches and pecans. Fill paper-lined muffin cups three-fourths full (makes 12 muffins). Bake at 400° 18-20 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes on wire rack. ☺

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. ☺

Binge-watching a season of your favorite show

10¢

Electricity continues to be a great value courtesy of your electric cooperative

Keep your most precious valuables safe

Our smart home security systems protect your loved ones and home from intruders, carbon monoxide, fire & other threats.

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heartlandss.com

Heartland Security

A subsidiary of your local electric co-op

In 'hot water' for having no hot water?



Call your electric co-op for your energy-efficient water heater!



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.

Board meeting highlights

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

- Reviewed and approved the February 2019 board meeting minutes, new member applications and member cancellations.
 - Reviewed and approved February 2019 payroll and January 2019 financial statements.
 - Reviewed the 2018 Cogeneration Report and other related Distributed Energy Resources documents.
 - Approved appointments to the 2019 Member Advisory Council.
 - Reviewed and approved the cooperative's 2018 financial audit as presented by Aaron Clayton of Eide Bailly, LLP.
 - Updated on final plans for the 82nd Annual Meeting set for April 11 at the Sleepy Eye Event Center.
 - Reviewed and approved a Great River Energy Wind Energy Purchase Agreement.
- The Board will meet again April 25 at the Brown County REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. ☎



Darla Ruschen
Office Manager

Staff notes

BCREA financials

By this time you have already received detailed financials in your Annual Report book; however, I will recap a few highlights.

- Brown County REA's 2018 audit was conducted by Eide Bailly LLP. Your cooperative had a clean audit and another good year.

- Total Utility Plant increased from \$38.5 million in 2017 to \$39.5 million in 2018. The cooperative's

patronage capital is just over \$14 million and will be retired back to the membership with board approval at a later date.

- BCREA's equity level is 43.7 percent. This number represents the total percent of assets owned by the membership. The current ratio meets all of the co-op's loan covenants for lending.

- The total revenue of nearly \$14.8 million is up slightly from 2017 to 2018. BCREA sold just over 136 million kilowatt-hours in 2018 as compared to 129 million kilowatt-hours in 2017.

- The total expenses for the co-op also decreased over the prior year. The largest expense to the cooperative is purchased power. BCREA purchased just over 140 million kilowatt-hours in 2018. Purchased power costs make up about 65 percent of total expenses to the co-op.

- The net margins for 2018 are \$1,584,597. These margins will be allocated back to the membership as your capital credits in the very near future.

We appreciate your membership, and are grateful for another successful year. ☎

Remember to 'Slam the Scam!'

Reports occurred recently of neighboring electric cooperative members receiving phone calls from scammers claiming to be the utility and threatening to disconnect electric service if not paid immediately. These instances warrant a reminder that if you think you are being targeted by a scammer, hang up and call Brown County REA 800-658-2368 or 507-794-3331. You should also report the incident to local law enforcement.

- Never give out any personal information, credit card numbers or wire money as a result of an unexpected or unsolicited call or email if you can't validate authenticity.

- BCREA provides options for payment arrangements; be suspicious if the caller insists on the use of a pre-paid debit card or immediate payment.

- Be aware that your co-op will contact you first by mail about past due bills — not over the phone. You will be sent a written reminder notice when your account is past due and then a disconnect notice, if necessary. At least one courtesy phone call will be made before your service is turned off.

- If it just doesn't feel right, end the conversation — "slam the scam" and contact Brown County REA. ☎