

Connections

October 2025

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 29, Issue 10

October is Co-op Month! Cooperatives build a better world, as demonstrated by BCREA

“Cooperatives Build a Better World” proclaims the theme for 2025 during cooperative month! In addition, the United Nations also proclaimed 2025 as the “Year of Cooperatives” recognizing the people-centered businesses at the heart of our local communities and economies.

First, Brown County REA demonstrates daily how rural electrification 88 years ago still makes a difference to the rural areas of Brown County and the surrounding area. BCREA powers the farms-based economy and rural towns with 4,000 member-owners.



Besides electricity, BCREA is one of four local cooperatives who operate Cooperative Television of Southern

Minnesota (CTV). Three UHF towers at Jackson, Frost and Godahl rebroadcast more than 50 UHF TV channels from the Twins Cities to our service area for only \$8 a month added onto your electric bill.



BCREA partnered with 12 other electric cooperatives to create Heartland Security Services, which offers home, farm and business security systems, camera systems and medical alert systems to southern and central Minnesota and northern Iowa too. Visit www.heartlandss.com or call 888-264-6380 to explore all of the offerings and learn about the Federated member discount of 10 percent.



Locally, BCREA members have made a enormous difference by participating in Operation Round Up. This program celebrated returning \$253,000 back since 1995 to local fire departments, schools, nonprofits and scholarships for area high school seniors. The next deadline for Operation Round Up funding is November 11. Go to www.browncountyrea.coop for the application and eligible organizations.

In addition, BCREA's employees provide great local service on the job and in the communities through their volunteer work. We have employees who are high school and college level sports referees, school board members, youth sports coaches, church musicians and lectors, church board members, and entrepreneurs or part owners of area businesses.

Building a better world starts locally with your electric cooperative. ☺

At A Glance



Submit your local photos to BCREA

Help showcase our cooperative by submitting a photo of our service territory. Visit the story on Page 5 for submission details. Get ready and start snapping away! ☺

Energy Wise

Heat your home efficiently, cost-effectively this winter with a heat pump, plus even gain summer cooling too

As the cooler air returns for another fall and winter, members may ponder how to efficiently and cost-effectively heat their home through another long Minnesota winter.

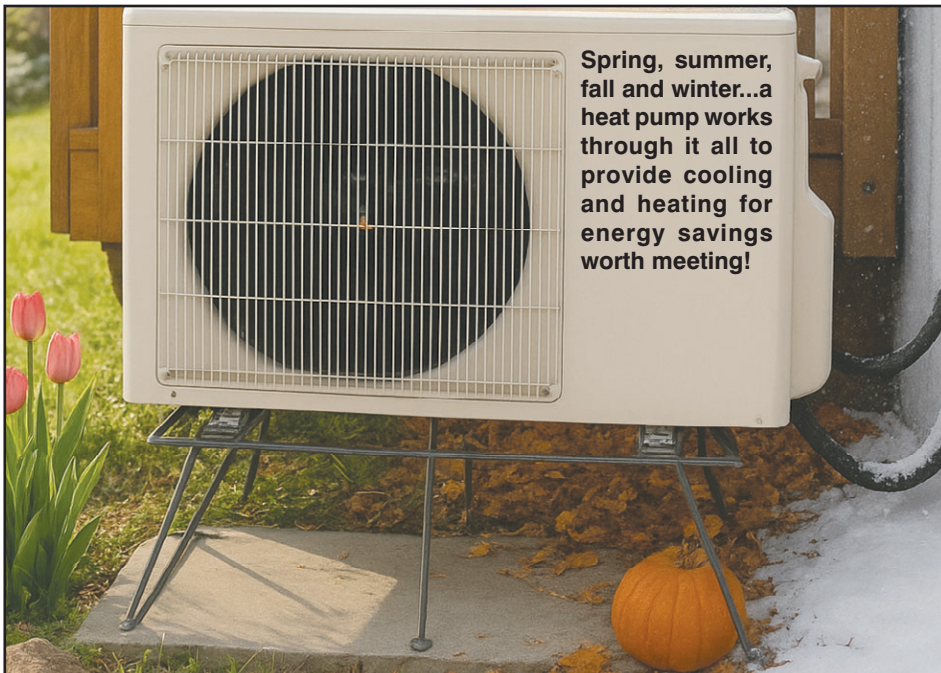
Advances in electric heating technology, particularly air source heat pumps (ASHP), are helping make electricity the go-to choice. The ASHP performs well in cold climates and have quickly become cost competitive with conventional furnaces — even beating them in upfront cost when coupled with federal and local cooperative incentives.

ASHPs are three to five times more efficient than most traditional heating systems because it takes less energy to move heat around than to produce it. With a natural gas furnace heat must first be created by burning gas and then additional energy distributes it throughout your home.

With an ASHP the heat energy itself is taken from the air outside (even when temperatures drop well below freezing), meaning energy is only needed to transport and distribute that heat indoors. As a result, ASHPs are often far less expensive to run than other heating systems, translating to hundreds of dollars in annual savings for an average household.

While the annual expected cost of heating a home with a natural gas furnace can be slightly cheaper in some areas, ASHPs are far more affordable than propane. Members could expect to save \$600 annually to deliver the same amount of heat by switching from a propane furnace or boiler to an ASHP. You'll also no longer be subjected to the price volatility of oil, propane and gas.

Factor in savings available from the



federal tax credits (30 percent, up to \$2,000 when installed before December 31, 2025) and rebates from your local electric cooperative. Plus, ASHPs offer the dual benefit of providing a home's cooling needs in the summer becoming an even more appealing investment. Now that's investing your energy dollar wisely because ASHPs operate through spring, summer, winter and fall, providing heating and cooling.

Visit your local electric cooperative's website to learn how much you can save on an ASHP energy-efficiency rebates offered to members; fill out the form from the website or call the office to request it. In addition, remember to check out the cooperative's Smart Thermostat \$25 rebate; this form is also found on the cooperative's website.

Upgrade to a heat pump today! ⚡

Can I get by this winter with electric space heaters?

Even though ASHPs and portable space heaters both run on electricity, their efficiency and overall cost to operate are vastly different. While it may be tempting to plug in a few space heaters throughout your home as an alternative, this short-term solution can lead to long-term costs.

A single space heater running for 8 hours a day at \$0.14 per kilowatt-hour would cost upwards of \$50 per day — and that's just for one room. Multiply that by several rooms or longer hours and it can quickly rival or exceed the cost of using a whole-home ASHP system. ⚡

Add a power station to your outage toolbox

Batteries, flashlights and bottled water are all traditional items kept in an emergency kit for potential outages, but adding a portable power station can help keep you connected until electricity is restored.

More convenient and affordable than a generator, rechargeable power stations serve as a handy backup during short-term power outages. They also require minimal maintenance and are safe to use both indoors and outdoors.

Depending on the model and capacity, you'd be able to power several types of devices simultaneously — such as laptops, smartphones and tablets — to stay updated on outage information from your co-op. Some sizes power small appliances, like portable heaters and fans, allowing you to stay comfortable during an outage or while tenting or tailgating. Larger portable power



A portable power station adds power to your picnics, tailgates, tenting or during a short power outage!


stations may keep a refrigerator running for hours, ensuring that your groceries stay fresh while waiting for the lights to come back on after a storm outage.

Charging these types of power stations is easy: The simplest way is to

plug them into any 120-volt wall outlet. This works the same as charging a laptop or phone and is relatively fast, usually taking four to eight hours for a full recharge depending on its capacity.

The portable nature of these power stations also makes them a great tool for off-grid outdoor adventures such as camping and road trips. Many of them can also be recharged by plugging into a 12-volt car, truck or RV charger, letting you top up the charge as you drive.

Before the power goes out, use these shopping tips for portable power:

- Make a list of which devices and/or appliances you would want to power during an outage.
- Determine the total wattage needed by adding up the wattage of the devices.
- Consider the capacity of the portable power station to determine how long it can run these devices. 

Safety

Keep electrical safety a part of fall harvest toolbox

Harvest is in full swing!

Just make sure you don't "swing" around with the combine and hit the cooperative's electric pole, guy wire or green transformer box or cabinet.

Your electric co-op reminds you to keep electrical safety as part of your fall harvest toolbox.

- Before entering the field, look up. Does adequate clearance exist to safely pass underneath? Did the lines sag since last year? Keep a 10-foot distance for safety's sake!


- Before making that first pass with the combine or tillage equipment around the field, look out for the guy wire or green transformer box or cabinet. You don't want to "harvest" the co-op's electrical equipment as that's a spendy bill; you would have to pay for the replacement of a pole, cabinet, guy wire and the line crew's labor.

- Don't cut corners at harvest time. Take the extra time to lower the auger or remove the corn head to provide the



"Eye" spy electrical equipment! This fall safety-vision mindset will keep your harvest on track. Look up and look out for electric poles, guy wires and green transformer boxes and cabinets. The best harvest is coming home safely to your family each and every night!

needed clearance around power lines.

- If your equipment tangles with power line equipment, stay inside the cab, as long as it's not on fire. Call the cooperative right away. 

Brown County Briefs

Efficiency tip

As winter nears, inspect your home for air leaks around windows. Leaks reduce indoor comfort and lead to higher heating costs. If you can see daylight around the edges of a window frame or if a window rattles slightly when touched, air is likely leaking. Caulking and weatherstripping are simple, effective methods for sealing windows. Materials are available in a variety of compounds and forms for different types of surfaces. Choose the right product to reduce heat loss, improve comfort and lower energy bills.

Round Up meeting Nov. 11

The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board will consider applications for funding through Operation Round Up on November 11. Charitable organizations wishing to seek funding through the trust should apply by then. The application form is found on the Operation Round Up page on the co-op website (browncountyrea.coop) under the Programs & Services tab.

Update life-support listing

Do you or someone living in your house require life-support equipment, such as an oxygen concentrator, respirator or home dialysis? Do you have battery back-up or a generator due to a power outage? BCREA maintains a list of members with life-support equipment, which is updated regularly. Find an enrollment form at browncountyrea.coop under the Forms tab or can be requested by calling the office. The form must be completed by a physician. If the person with the medical condition moved from the co-op's system, no longer needs life support or has passed away, please inform your co-op so our list stays current. (C)

Ready for winter load control season?



Members with a Dual Fuel Heating System (electric heat or a heat pump with non-electric backup) are reminded to make sure your back-up heating system is prepared and that you have adequate fuel supply.

• Dual Fuel Heating Systems are usually controlled during periods of high demand, but other factors, such as high market cost can lead to load control as well. Dual Fuel and Heat Pump Program participants should anticipate 20 days or 108 hours of control this winter season – October 1, 2025-April 30, 2026.

• Schedules for water heaters and space heat on the Storage program shed load from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. from October 1 through April 20.

• Interruptible or Peak Shave Water Heating Program participants can expect 20 days or 160 hours of control this winter season.

• Load control can happen any time of the day, but typically occurs late afternoon/early evening through 9 or 10 p.m. Early morning control may be necessary at times.

• Control schedules at individual receivers will be randomly staggered by up to 30 minutes.

• Winter control for members' Electric Vehicle chargers on the off-peak program will be from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

• Control on Interruptible Commercial & Industrial Program participants, with and without generators, is estimated for 5 days or 30 hours this winter season. (C)

Member Advisory Council met Sept. 15



The Brown County REA 2025-2026 Member Advisory Council met September 15 for their second meeting. The group of council members met to share a meal, visit a substation and hear from the Operations, Finance, and Member Services managers of BCREA. During this meeting, they gained valuable insights into the wide variety of hard work involved with keeping the lights on for the members of the BCREA service territory. (C)





Showcase our co-op and submit your amazing rural life photos for calendar!

We're looking for stunning snapshots that celebrate the beauty of our service territory and we need your help! Brown County REA is now accepting photo submissions for use in our 2025 Annual Report and a potential BCREA 2027 calendar project.

Whether it's a sunrise over a family farm, a sunset behind a power line, animals in the pasture, fields in bloom or a quiet moment near a substation, we want to see your view of rural life and the energy that connects us all.

Photos should be taken within our service area and can highlight local landscapes, agriculture, cooperative infrastructure or everyday moments that reflect our community spirit.

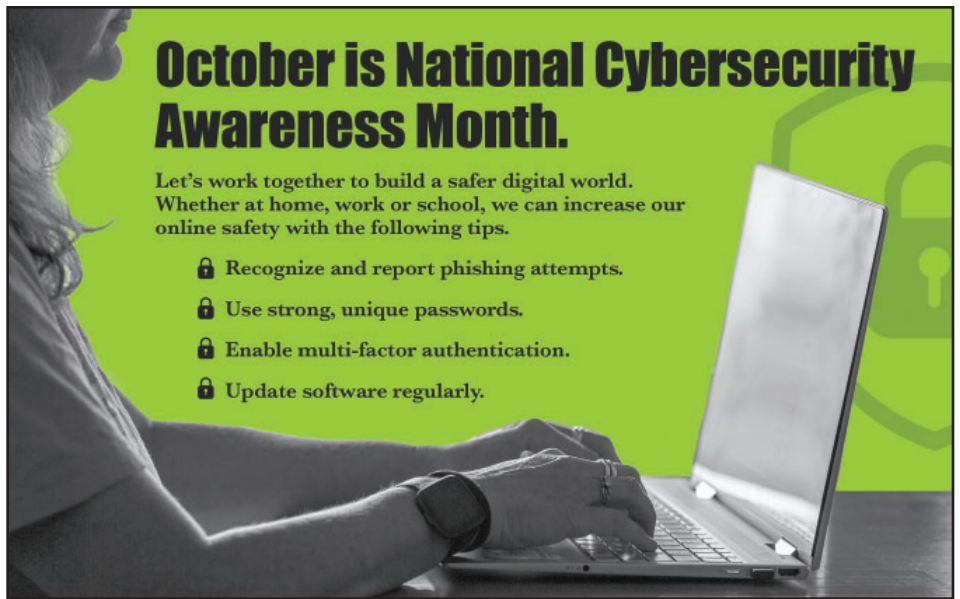
Submission deadline: January 1, 2026

Send your high-resolution photos along with your name, contact information and a brief description of each image, to bcra@bcra.coop.

We can't wait to see your perspective on the place we call home! 📷



A little preparation goes a long way in ensuring a safe and enjoyable evening. Have fun and Happy Halloween!



October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month.

Let's work together to build a safer digital world. Whether at home, work or school, we can increase our online safety with the following tips.

- 🔒 Recognize and report phishing attempts.
- 🔒 Use strong, unique passwords.
- 🔒 Enable multi-factor authentication.
- 🔒 Update software regularly.

Save paper & postage costs

Stay in the know with electronic statement, newsletter & messages



Interested in receiving your monthly statement and *Connections* newsletter in your Inbox rather than your mailbox? How about getting general notifications and outage information sent to your cell phone via text message?

Brown County REA is encouraging members to help us reduce paper usage. With paperless billing you receive an e-mail each month when your statement is available. Log in to the Member Account Access on

the cooperative's website www.browncountyrea.coop where you can view your monthly statement. If you have not already done so, you will need to set up an account name and password in the website portal to access.

To view the *Connections* newsletter electronically, share a valid e-mail address where you'll receive notice that the newsletter is available monthly. Click on the link to view the newsletter. A link to the newsletter is also posted monthly on the co-op's Facebook page and you can access the most recent 12 months of *Connections* issues on the website by clicking on Newsletters under the Resources tab.

Members can also sign up to receive text messages regarding outages, load control and general information to a phone number you provide. Use the form below to sign up. You can also use the Update My Information form on our website www.browncountyrea.coop. 📱

Stay safe this Halloween; watch out for the monsters & maidens

Halloween is a fun time for children and families, but safety should always come first when heading out for trick-or-treating. Here are a few simple tips to help keep everyone safe:

- Be seen: Choose costumes with bright colors or add reflective tape. Carry a flashlight or glow stick.
- Stay together: Children should walk in groups and have an adult along in unfamiliar areas.
- Use safe paths: Stick to sidewalks when possible and cross streets only at crosswalks.
- Check treats: An adult should inspect candy and snacks before they are eaten.
- Drive carefully; slow down and watch for excited trick-or-treaters. 🚗

A tall wooden utility pole stands in a field of tall, dry corn. Several power lines are strung across the pole, and three orange poles are leaning against it. A dirt road runs alongside the field.

The guy wire provides tension to the power poles. You often find the guy wire(s) on the last pole or corner pole adding stability as a brace. A three-phase pole has three guy wires; a single guy wire goes with single phase.

“The steel guy wire may be hard to see if weeds or grass grows around it,” said Brown County REA Operations and Engineering Manager Brandon Havenmier. “The cooperative installs a plastic sleeve to increase visibility of the guy wire when farming, kids are running around or during snow removal. If you see a guy wire without the orange plastic sleeve, call us so we can replace it.”

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Your electric cooperative is proud to partner with Minnesota's Touchstone Energy cooperatives in launching the Cooperative Heroes Award. Minnesota is served by 44 distribution cooperatives, covering 85 percent of Minnesota and reaching every county. This award provides an opportunity for anyone served by an electric cooperative to nominate an individual who has made meaningful, positive impact in their community.

Each winner will receive funding to support a local nonprofit or cause of their choice: First place is \$1,000; second and third place wins \$500 each. Nominations are open from October 1 through November 15; a short application process is found at <https://www.mrea.org/programs/touchstone-energy>. Start thinking now about who you will nominate October 1! Together, let's shine a light on the community heroes whose dedication has touched lives and inspired change.

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Roll with it! Share your favorite holiday roll recipes with us!

Homemade rolls for the holidays — they top off every holiday meal. Share your family's favorite roll recipes with us, whether it's for crescent rolls, dinner rolls, cinnamon rolls or other yeast rolls. Send your favorite rolls recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by October 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Sweet and Spicy Nuts by Elizabeth Shimon, Granada

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 2 T. maple syrup | ¼ tsp. cinnamon |
| 1 T. extra virgin olive oil | 2 c. pecan halves |
| ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper | 1¼ c. pumpkin seeds |
| ½ tsp. salt | |

Preheat the oven to 350°F and set an oven rack in the middle position. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or silicone mat.

In a medium bowl whisk together the maple syrup, olive oil, salt, cayenne pepper and ground cinnamon. Add nuts and stir until evenly coated.

Transfer the nuts to the prepared baking sheet and arrange in a single layer. Bake for 10-12 minutes, until caramelized. The nuts around the edges will darken first so you can turn the baking sheet around or stir halfway through the baking time.

Once baked, remove from the parchment or silicone mat, breaking apart any clusters if necessary; store in an airtight container for up to two weeks. Experiment with different nuts! Enjoy! 📧

Cinnamon Rice Pudding by Barb Sellner, Sleepy Eye

- 2 c. cooked rice
- ½ c. maple syrup
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 pinch nutmeg (optional)
- 2 c. half & half, warmed
- 2 eggs
- 1 c. pecans, toasted
- cinnamon and sugar for dusting

Cook the rice. In a medium bowl mix the rice and all other ingredients, except pecans.

Place in a greased 1½-quart casserole. Sprinkle with pecans and cinnamon and sugar. Bake one hour at 350° oven or until set. You can serve warm or chilled. Drizzle with additional maple syrup before serving. 📧



Is your old, ghostly water heater playing tricks or providing treats?

Turn to your electric cooperative for your next water heater. Call today so you don't have a ghoulish shower!

A HSS smoke detector tied to our security system calls the fire department!



Buy one smoke detector, get one free!

Offer expires
October 31, 2025



A subsidiary of your
local electric co-op

888.264.6380 | heartlandss.com

***This fall remember
always call first
before digging:
1-800-252-1166***



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

Register at www.gopherstate-onecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧



Mike Heidemann
Chief Executive
Officer

Manager's Message

Co-ops power communities with purpose

Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Some are based on geographical proximity, some are based on shared interests or hobbies and some communities can even be found in virtual spaces, like social media groups. Regardless of where or how they are formed, communities bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

Brown County REA is deeply committed to our member-owners; we're glad you are part of the electric cooperative community.

This October Brown County REA joins more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. in celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all the aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses, but more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

Electric co-ops are not-for-profit utilities built by the communities they serve. For Brown County REA our mission has always been to provide you with reliable power. We care about your quality of life and because we are local, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond the business of electricity, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because we live here too. That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects, youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives and additional programs that make our community a better place to call home.

All co-ops, including Brown County REA, are guided by seven cooperative principles that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These seven principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities, while remaining true to our purpose:

1. Open and voluntary membership: Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.
2. Democratic member control: Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Because co-ops are created by the members, for the members.
3. Members' economic participation: Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. At Brown County REA, this happens through paying your energy bills.
4. Autonomy and independence: Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.
5. Education, training and information: Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.
6. Cooperation among cooperatives: Co-ops share and learn from other co-ops. We help each other out in times of need, as we want others to thrive.
7. Concern for community: All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.

As we mark Co-op Month, recognize what sets electric co-ops apart. Our mission is reliable power. Our purpose is local people we're proud to serve. ☺



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Sleepy Eye MN 56085

E-mail address: bcrea@bcrea.coop

Website: www.browncountyrea.coop

Phone: 507-794-3331 or 800-658-2368

Payment Line (PSN): 833-250-4481

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

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William Berg, Vice President — 507-766-1497

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Greg Mages — 507-276-0325

Joel Christensen — 507-828-4550

Keith Hoffmann — 507-227-8006

Landon Sletta — 507-276-1899

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 on September 18, 2025. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the August 2025 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
- Reviewed and approved August 2025 payroll and August financial statement.
- Reviewed and approved capital credits retirement calculation and updated the minimum check requirement.
- Reviewed and approved Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) contract No. 25-UGPR-46.
- Reviewed and approved 2024 draft 990 and 990-T 1120 form.
- Reviewed and approved IBEW Local Union 949 Labor Contract
- Reviewed and approved 2026 employee salaries.
- Reviewed staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

The next meeting is set for October 30, 2025, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ☺