



Harvest crops — not the co-op's poles — while in the fields this fall

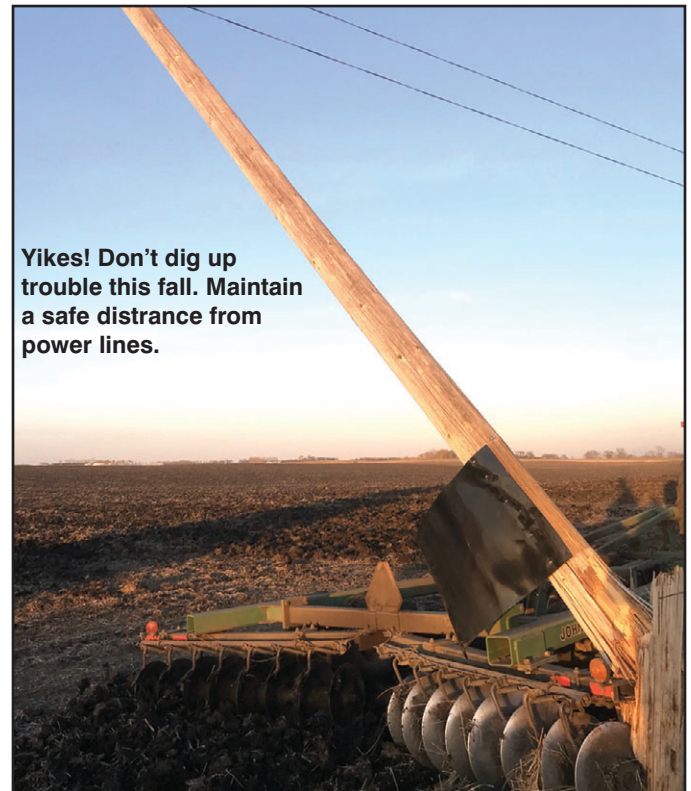
One sunny morning Farmer Fred set out to his fields with his trusty tractor and digger. He was eager to finish working ground before winter. As the day progressed, Farmer Fred noticed a row of electric poles along the edge of his field. However, his focus was so fixed on getting home before dark that he didn't pay much attention to them.

As the sun started to set and the shadows grew longer, Farmer Fred worked to complete his end rows. He began maneuvering his equipment dangerously close to one of the poles. At the last moment he realized the danger he was in and narrowly dodged the electric pole.

Startled and realizing the dangerous mistake he almost made, Farmer Fred took a moment to catch his breath. Fortunately, he escaped unharmed this time, but the situation could have been much worse. As he sat there, he thought about what had just happened and how he could prevent such incidents in the future.

Farmer Fred shared his experience with his fellow farmers. He emphasized the importance of being aware of electric poles, power lines and green underground cabinets, while working in the fields, especially during harvest season. He urges everyone to take these precautions:

- 1. Stay aware:** always be conscious of the location of electric poles and power lines in your field. Take note of their position and keep a safe distance.
- 2. Plan your routes:** before starting any work, plan your routes and maneuvers to avoid getting too close to electric poles. Create a mental map of the field and potential hazards.
- 3. Use a spotter:** if possible, have a trusted friend or family member act as a spotter to guide you and ensure you maintain a safe distance from power lines.
- 4. Maintain safe clearance:** keep a safe distance of at least 10 feet from power lines horizontally to prevent accidental contact and avoid any contact vertically as well.



Yikes! Don't dig up trouble this fall. Maintain a safe distance from power lines.

5. Always stay alert: electric poles are not just a danger in the field. Electric equipment can be a danger in yards, as well. Watch out for underground transformers. If moving augers, make sure they are completely lowered to avoid contacting any power lines around the farm.

Farmer Fred's story serves as a reminder to all the farmers in the community about the potential dangers of working around electric poles and power lines. Make it a safe harvest season! 🙏

At A Glance



Charge up your EV knowledge

Home charging is growing in popularity as more BCREA members add electric vehicles to their home fleets. Learn more about home EV charging basics and safety on Page 5. 🙏



Get smart about home lighting

Gone are the days when a simple flip of the switch was the only choice for illuminating our homes. While we still have this tried-and-true option, we've entered a new era of innovative and intelligent technologies, which includes smart lighting.

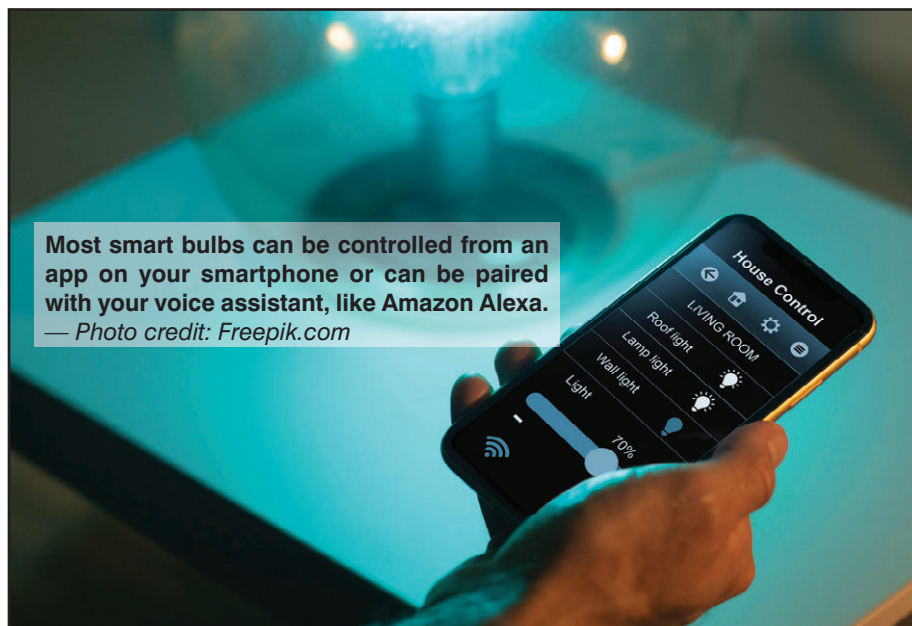
Smart lighting connects to Wi-Fi and offers an array of cutting-edge functionality and convenience. Let's look at the main benefits of smart lighting options.

Smart lighting is energy efficient. Most smart bulbs use LED technology, which is much more efficient than traditional incandescent lighting. Additionally, smart lighting gives you more control over how and when you light your home, ultimately resulting in less energy used for lighting.

Smart lighting provides convenience and control. Most smart bulbs can be controlled from an app on your smartphone or can be paired with your voice assistant, like Amazon Alexa. You can conveniently control lighting settings from anywhere in your home or when you're away. Whether you want to set a schedule for lighting or adjust brightness levels, these smart options offer effortless control from the comfort of anywhere!

Smart options empower you to personalize home lighting. Bright, warm, purple, green — whatever mood you want to create, smart lighting can help. For a more traditional look try dimmable white bulbs. If you want to create the perfect ambiance for movie night, look for bulbs that can be adjusted for a variety of vibrant colors. The possibilities are endless.

While smart lighting offers convenience




and control, keep in mind your wall light switch will need to stay "on" for you to control the smart bulb from your phone or by voice command. To use a smart bulb the wall switch it's connected to must be "on" so the bulb receives power, which enables it to connect to a Wi-Fi network.

If you need additional options to operate the lights, consider a smart light switch. Today's smart switches tend to play nicely with smart bulbs. If you want to control your smart bulbs with a physical switch (in addition to using your phone and voice commands), look for smart switches that include a built-in feature that allows both. Many smart light switches include motion detectors as well.

If you're looking to take the plunge and integrate multiple smart bulbs to your home lighting system, your best bet may be a kit, like the Philips Hue

Starter Kit. Most kits include several bulbs and any additional tools you'll need to get started.

If you're new to smart home tech and looking to start small, try a smart bulb in a high-traffic area of your home. It's worth noting that smart plugs are a great starter option and allow convenient control of lamps or other lighting fixtures plugged into a wall outlet. Smart plugs are inexpensive and simply plug in to your existing outlet. Electrical items that are connected to the smart plug can be controlled from a smart phone app, just like smart bulbs.

Whether you're looking for more convenience, colorful options or better ways to manage energy use, smart lighting can provide multiple benefits. Determine which smart lighting features are most important for your needs, then start shopping! 

Electric Spin Scrubber makes cleaning easy

No one likes to clean the bathroom, but the Electric Spin Scrubber at least makes the job easier. Say goodbye to standard cleaning brushes.


The Electric Spin Scrubber has three lengths: 12, 43 and 54 inches. This enables cleaning everywhere without having to bend over or kneel down. This makes the Electric Spin Scrubber easy on joints.

The Electric Spin Scrubber is waterproof. You can easily clean shower bathrooms, bathtubs, stone tile floors, grout, and grooves without damaging the device.

The Electric Spin Scrubber has two speeds: 250 and 350 revolutions per minute. The dual-speed design allows you to choose the cleaning method that works for you.

The Electric Spin Scrubber comes with numerous accessories: eight replaceable brush heads, as well as chargers and hooks. The eight replaceable brush heads are suitable for multiple scenarios or can be removed separately for cleaning. The brushes work for bathrooms, kitchens, bathtubs, wood and tile floors, glass, tires and cars. The bristles are soft and will not scratch tiles, glass and cars.

The battery takes four hours to fully charge and will work for up to 90 minutes.

The Electric Spin Scrubber costs \$55; find it on Amazon or Walmart.com. 



Scrub-a-dub-dub becomes more fun and less work with this Electric Spin Scrubber! Eight brush heads make tackling any cleaning job simple!


Safety

Use caution when burning road ditches

Burning ditches around electric poles is a common practice for vegetation management. However, it's crucial to conduct such activities with care and awareness of the potential hazards. Every year your electric co-op replaces poles damaged by ditch fires. Follow these tips.

- Assess the area around the electric poles to identify potential hazards, such as overhead power lines, equipment, or structures.
- Check weather conditions and avoid burning on windy days to prevent flames from spreading uncontrollably.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including fire-resistant clothing, gloves, safety glasses and sturdy footwear.
- Consider wearing a dust mask to avoid inhaling smoke and particulate matter.
- Maintain a safe distance (at least 10 feet) from electric poles, power lines and other utility equipment, while conducting burning activities.



- Ensure that the flames, smoke and sparks are not reaching the electric poles or overhead wires.
- Remove dry leaves, debris and flammable materials from the area before starting the burn.
- Create a firebreak by clearing a strip of land around the ditch to prevent the fire from spreading beyond the intended area.
- Assign a responsible person to supervise the burning process at all times.
- Have firefighting tools, like shovels and rakes, readily available to control and extinguish any unintended fires.
- Once the burning is complete, ensure that all flames are completely extinguished.
- Douse the burned area with water and use tools to smother any remaining embers.
- If any fire spreads beyond the intended area or poses a risk to electric poles or power lines, contact emergency services and utility companies immediately. Members are billed for damaged pole replacement. 

Brown County Briefs

Energy-efficiency tips

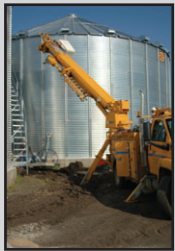


Cooler temps will be here soon! No matter what type of heating system you have, you can save money and increase comfort by properly maintaining equipment. Seal air ducts and change the filter regularly too.

Member Advisory Council

The next meeting of the current Member Advisory Council will be September 18 beginning with a light meal at 6 p.m.

Adding load this fall or an EV?



Are you planning to install, modify or replace electric equipment this fall at your home, business or farm? Purchasing an electric vehicle and adding a charger?

If so, please contact BCREA with the details of your project as soon as possible. By contacting the cooperative, we can ensure:

- Our equipment is sufficiently sized to handle your new project.
- You and your neighbors will not experience power quality issues as a result of the additional load.
- The work to be completed is efficiently scheduled to eliminate delays.
- Your project costs are kept to a minimum.

By working together we can help your project go as smoothly and quickly as possible.

If you have questions regarding your electrical installation or modification, please call the Brown County REA office at 794-3331 or 800-658-2368. ☎

Prepare to stay cozy this winter

As temperatures start to drop outside, it's a good time to make sure your heating system is ready to keep your home toasty warm this winter.

If you have a heat pump or electric heat and participate in the BCREA's dual fuel or off-peak heat program, make sure your back-up systems are operating correctly. When your electric heat is controlled you will need to have an automatic, non-electric or storage back-up heat source to keep your home comfortable until the electric heat is restored. Take time now to perform routine maintenance and make sure you have plenty of fuel for your back-up heat source.

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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 are available to all members. While the electricity that is delivered through Brown County REA to your home or business includes increasing amounts of renewable energy all the time, the Wellspring program allows members the option to further support expanded renewable development.

Here's how it works:

- Members can purchase Wellspring energy in 100 kWh blocks.
 - 8 to 10 blocks are equivalent to an average home's monthly electricity use.
 - Cost for one 100 kWh wind block is \$.30. 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.
 - Use the form below to sign up. ☎

Sign me up for Wellspring!

Name on electric bill _____

Address _____

City/state/zip _____

Phone _____ Cell phone _____

Select one (solar):

_____ 100 kWh (\$2) _____ 200 kWh (\$4) _____ 300 kWh (\$6)

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

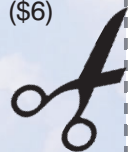
Select one (wind):

_____ 100 kWh (30¢) _____ 200 kWh (60¢) _____ 300 kWh (90¢)

_____ 400 kWh (\$1.20) _____ 500 kWh (\$1.50)

Signature _____

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



Charge your EV safely

Charging is a crucial concern among new electric vehicle (EV) owners, whether plug-in hybrid or full electric. The fear of inconvenience is one of the biggest barriers to widespread adoption of electric vehicles. You might be concerned that there aren't enough public charging stations in the area and even if there are public charging stations nearby, do you really want to rely on them any time you need to refuel?



Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind when charging your EV at home:

- Select charging equipment that is certified to meet safety standards. Plug Level 1 EV chargers directly into an outlet designed to handle the amperage of the charging device. Never use a multi-plug adapter or extension cord and be aware of the cable's location to prevent a tripping hazard. Purchase a Level 2 charging device that is certified

by a nationally-recognized testing laboratory.


- Check with Brown County REA and a licensed electrician before modifying your electrical system or installing a charging station. An electrician will need to make sure your home's wiring complies with local, state and national codes, plus may need to obtain a permit before installation.

- Place all charging components out of reach of children when not in use.

- Maintain the components of your charging station according to the manufacturer's maintenance guidelines.

- Cover the EV charging station outlet to prevent water exposure. Check the manufacturer's guidelines to make sure it is safe to charge your EV in wet conditions.

- Most charging stations are equipped with safety devices such as GFCIs, which will identify electrical shorts and stop power to the charger to minimize risks. There is a low risk of electric shock, but safeguards are automatically built into the equipment.

Check out the Electric Vehicles and Chargers section at Great River Energy's EnergyWise MN Store at www.energywisemn.com/evs to explore the different models of electric vehicles available in 2023, compare costs between gas-powered and electric vehicles, look at charging options. Contact BCREA before installation to learn about additional information on EV programs, rebates and rates. 

A home EV charging station can solve this challenge of inconvenience. Yet, are EV charging systems at home safe? Absolutely — as long as they're installed correctly.

The first thing EV owners should consider is how they will charge their vehicles. A licensed electrician can evaluate your home's EV charging situation, as well as:

- The vehicle's charging capabilities and requirements, which vary depending on the make, model and type.

- The potential location of the panel and vehicle, including the distance from the panel to the garage, the degree of difficulty and whether the garage is attached or detached.

- The capacity and overall condition of your home's electrical system to identify any concerns or additional work.

There are two common types of home charging options. Level 1 charging is a straightforward plug-in of the EV into any standard 120-volt electrical outlet. This requires no electrical modification and may take up to 24 hours to fully charge the EV. This type of charging may not always match a driver's daily travel needs.

Level 2 charging units provide charging through a 240-volt plug and require installation by a licensed electrician. Many Level 2 charging units are hardwired; others may plug into an added 240V outlet. Charge time can be four to eight hours, making them an ideal choice for Brown County REA's off-peak charging program.

Your change benefits many through Operation Round Up




The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board distributed a total of \$2,750 to five organizations and two individuals/families in the BCREA service area August 16.

Funds were awarded to Sleepy Eye Community Theater, Tea for Cancer Foundation, SWWC Foundation for Innovation in Education, Pro Kinship for Kids and PAWS in Springfield.

Donations are made possible through the generosity of REA members whose electric bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar each month. For example, if your bill is \$95.52, you pay \$96. The 48-cent difference is placed in

the Round Up Trust account and distributed quarterly to worthy causes throughout the cooperative's service area. For less than \$12 per year, you can help make a difference in the local area. Your contributions are tax deductible.

The Trust Board will meet again November 21. Organizations interested in applying for funding can request an application from trust board members Pat Roiger, Ann Parker, Kim Hensch, Betsy Holm, Lynnae Pelzel, Brian Hacker, Lisa Schmitz, Jessie Beranek or Mike Rein. Applications are also available on the REA website (www.browncountyrea.coop). Click *Operation Round Up* under the *Programs & Services* tab or call 800-658-2368 or 794-3331. 

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not stop winter disconnects; know the process

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects.

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between October 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL of the following apply:

1. Your household income is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by your electric cooperative or by the local energy-assistance provider.

2. You enter into and make reasonable timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.

3. You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from your electric co-op.

Winter disconnects may occur

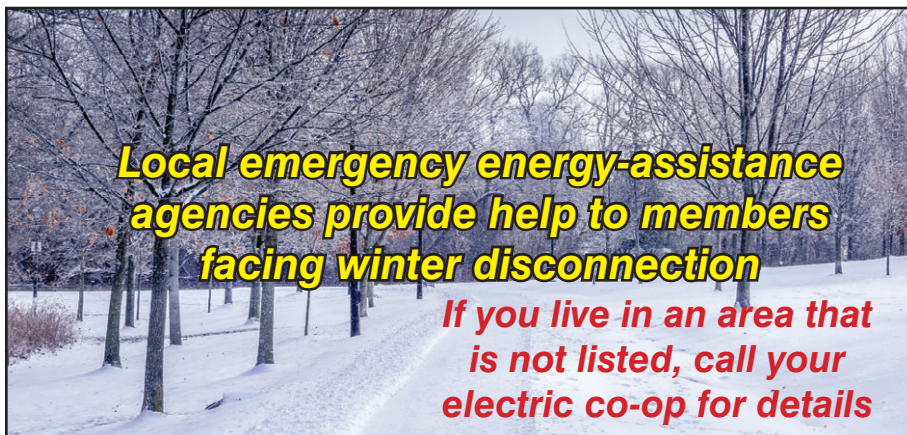
Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between October 1 and April 30,

Your electric cooperative must provide:

1. A 30-day notice of disconnection;
2. A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
3. A list of local energy-assistance providers;
4. Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
5. A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50 percent of the state median income to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2024.



Des Moines Valley Human Services (Jackson & Cottonwood)	847-4000
Martin County Human Services	238-4757
MN Dept. of Commerce (Ask for fuel assistance)	1-800-657-3710
Minnesota Valley Action Council	1-800-767-7139
Blue Earth County	345-6822
Brown County	508-4041
Martin County	238-1663
Nicollet County	934-5224
Sibley County	237-2981
Watonwan County	375-5748
Nobles County Community Services.....	888-807-8099
Renville County	320-523-1842
Salvation Army's Heat Share (Jackson, Martin & Brown Co.)	1-800-842-7279
Sibley County Human Services	237-4000
SW Health & Human Services (Redwood Co.)	1-888-234-1292
SW MN Opportunity Council, Inc. (Nobles Co.)	376-4195
United Community Action Partnership (Jackson, Cottonwood & Redwood Counties)	1-800-658-2448

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website: <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance> for more details.
- Contact your county's energy assistance provider for additional information and assistance.

Your electric cooperative exists because of you; we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either

of these programs, please contact the cooperative to set up a payment plan. ☎

2024 Minnesota Income Eligibility

Household size	Annual income limit
1 person	\$32,667
2 people	\$42,719
3 people	\$52,770
4 people	\$62,822

Care for some new carrot recipes? Share your favorites with us

It's nearly time to dig up some carrots from the garden! Dig up some carrot recipes to share. Share your favorite carrot recipe, whether it's for cake, bars, salads, side dishes or even juice. Share your carrot recipes with us. Mail your favorite recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by September 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Active military bill payment options exist



Minnesota law offers active military personnel additional payment options for their electric bills. The law covers disconnection, payment arrangements, appeal and an annual notice to co-op members. Similar to the state's Cold Weather Rule, an application must be completed and income guidelines exist. It's available for military personnel with active duty, deployed or a permanent duty station change.

Call or e-mail us for details about the active duty military payment options and a form to sign up. 📧



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*with three year monitoring agreement

2023 Farmfest booth winners announced



Drum roll please... here's the winners for the battery-powered yard tools from the 2023 Farmfest booth: 1. Leaf blower: Wayne Johnson, Meeker Electric Cooperative. 2. 21" lawn mower: Gary Kranz, Redwood Electric. 3. 15" string trimmer: Carolyn Huhnerkoch, Redwood Electric. 4. 16" chain saw: Dean Wenzel, Federated Rural Electric. 5. Misting fan: Corner Grove Farms, BENCO Electric. Nearly 600 co-op members registered representing 12 Minnesota Touchstone Energy cooperatives. Thanks for stopping by our booth and visiting with us August 1-3. 📧

Just make the 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 and tiling.

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

Staff Notes



Brandon Havemeier
Operations Manager

Stay safe this fall

Fall and harvest will soon be upon us. Now is a good time to check for potential issues to assure safety for you and those around you.

Walk around the farm and examine the wiring for electrical panels, lighting, equipment, disconnects and outlets. Repair or replace wires that have been chewed off by rodents. Make sure all electrical equipment is grounded before running it. Extension cords should be equipped with ground connections and plugged into three-pronged grounded outlets.

Once the combines, grain carts, augers and tillage equipment start rolling, remember to look up. Know the location of power lines and poles and stay at least 10 feet away. Beware of overhead power line dangers when moving tall and extended equipment. If you do come in contact with a power line:

- Call 911 as soon as possible and keep the area clear until help arrives.
- If you can do so without risking your machinery or damaging utility infrastructure, drive at least 40 feet away.
- If the vehicle is on fire or you must exit for other safety reasons, jump clear so that no part of your body touches the equipment and ground at the same time; land with your feet together. Move away from the vehicle using the shuffle technique making sure your feet do not lift off the ground and are always touching each other.

Other tips for operating farm equipment around power lines include:

- Physical contact with a power line is extremely hazardous and may cause a lethal shock. Equipment should not be operated under a power line in a manner that would cause contact or near-contact with the wires.
- Do not lift, elevate, build or pass under a power line any object, tool or vehicle that may make contact or near-contact with the wires.
- To help prevent arc flashing, the equipment, antennas and people should stay at least 10-feet away from any energized power line wire.
- Equipment that can be extended, such as a stack mower or grain elevator, requires the utmost care when near a power line.

We wish everyone a safe harvest and fall! ☺

Prep your heating system before snow arrives

— Continued from Page 4

- Make sure your system is sized to keep your entire home comfortable during control periods.
- Check your LP or fuel oil supply now, and fill up while prices are lower.
- Regularly clean or replace your furnace filters.
- Test the system to make sure the back-up source starts automatically when electric heat is controlled. ☺

BROWN COUNTY
REA

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

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

Thomas Hayes, President — 228-8954
William Berg, Vice President — 766-1497
James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 829-6756
Brad Sprenger — 317-5576
David Wendinger — 276-3166
Greg Mages — 794-3540
Joel Christensen — 828-4550
James Mickelson — 794-6298
Landon Sletta — 439-6559
The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.

Board meeting highlights

The BCREA Board of Directors held its July board meeting on July 27, 2023. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the July 5, 2023 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
- Reviewed the June 2023 payroll and June 2023 financial statements.
- Reviewed results of the 2023 pole inspections and informed that rejected poles will be replaced.
- BCREA 2023 Youth Tour delegate Grace Mages attended the meeting and shared highlights of her June trip to Washington, D.C.
- Updated on construction projects, including the Highway 14, Schilling substation and overhead project in Eden Township.
- Reviewed recent employee safety training.
- Reviewed staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

The next meeting is set for August 31, 2023 at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ☺