

# Connections

July 2021

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 25, Issue 7

## Electricity: cleaner and greener!

The electricity that charges your phone, heats your family's dinner in the crockpot and powers your TV is becoming cleaner as more renewable energy resources are added to the grid. This makes electricity the smart choice when looking to purchase appliances, tools and cars. By virtue of being plugged into the grid, they become greener over time.

This concept is known in the utility industry as "beneficial electrification" — a tongue-twisting term that boils down to greener energy, cost savings and an increase in quality of life.

As Great River Energy, Brown County REA's wholesale power provider, transforms its power supply portfolio to include more renewable resources, the electricity you use will get cleaner and cleaner. Since 2005, the carbon dioxide emissions from producing electricity have decreased by 28 percent on average. Great River Energy projects its carbon dioxide emissions will decline by 95 percent, relative to 2005 levels, while its power supply product becomes even more cost-effective to its membership.

Because large appliances have a typical lifespan around 10 years, you can benefit from the flexibility of the grid in addition to the increased efficiency of the particular appliance. In other words, the high efficiency electric oven you have today could soon be powered by renewable sources. This would not be the case with gas appliances where you are essentially locked into the technology of that gas appliance for the 10-year lifespan.

It can also translate into a better quality of life. For example, when you can trade the loud rumble of a gas-powered mower for the quiet efficiency of electric versions, you eliminate the exhaust emissions, loud noise and gas can. And by using electric induction stoves, which cook food without any flame, you'll reduce indoor air pollution, while also bringing water to a boil about twice as fast as a gas stove.

Cost savings for your household might look like the average \$800 saved in annual maintenance when you switch to an electric vehicle, which you can fully charge for the equivalent of \$1.20 per gallon of gasoline — potentially even lower if you subscribe to an off-peak rate. Otherwise, replace your air conditioner with an electric heat pump, saving you each year

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MINNESOTA  
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Visit the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives' booth. Bring this coupon. Enter the grand prize drawing for battery-powered electric yard tools. Visit with electric co-op employees too.



**Brown County REA Farmfest 2021  
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Cooperatives Booth #2301**

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

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### At A Glance



Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association

### Construction season in full swing.

It's construction season for the BCREA line crews. See one of the projects being worked on and some of the new faces helping them out on Page 6.



# Venture on electric road trip

Road trips are a time-honored tradition. Every summer thousands and thousands of families pack into the car and take off across the country to see the sites. The challenges can be many: hungry stomachs, bored kids and bathroom breaks.

Cars have become more comfortable over the years. They now have air conditioning and power seats that can recline so people can easily relax. Some cars even have a TV in them so kids can distract themselves by watching their favorite movies. Factor in the ever-present cellphones, which offer games, communicating with friends and streaming video, as well.

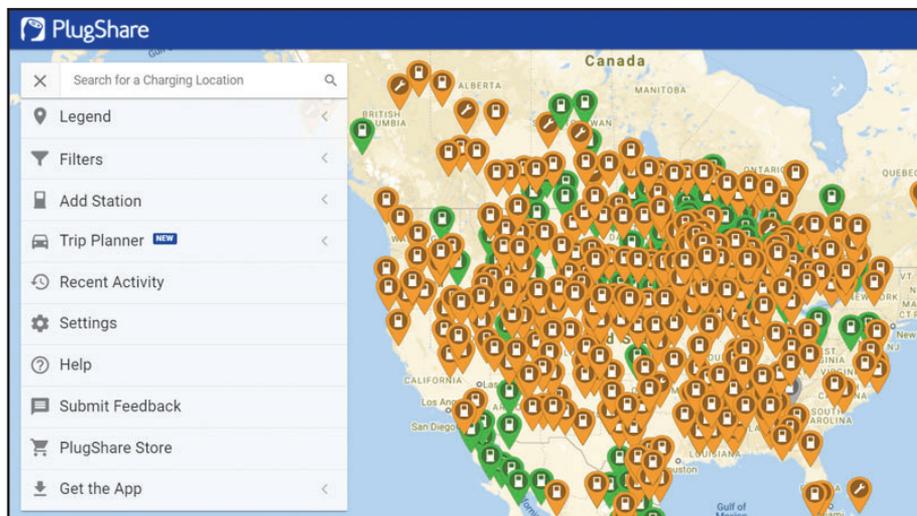
Road trips are morphing yet again. Now electric vehicles are becoming part of the tradition. Electric vehicles are similar, but different than combustion vehicles. Here are some tips and tricks to make a road trip in an electric vehicle go a little bit smoother.

## Before you leave

- Check out where the electric vehicle charging stations are along your route. It may be easier to find them in major cities, but they are available from coast to coast and often in convenient locations, such as near movie theaters, scenic areas and grocery stores. Visit [plugshare.com](http://plugshare.com) for a map of charging stations to help you plan your trip. You can also download the Plugshare app.

- See if your hotel (or wherever you're staying) has charging stations. This will make it easier to ensure you have access to a regular charging station. It also may make it simpler to decide where to stay.

- Know the range of your electric vehicle and plan ahead. Nothing's



**If you plan to take a road trip in an electric vehicle, locating charging stations along your route is one of the first steps. Fortunately, charging stations are located across the country. Each dot on the map represents a charging station. Visit [plugshare.com](http://plugshare.com) or download the Plugshare app and map.**

worse than being stuck on a back road with no charging stations. Keep tabs on your electric vehicle's range and try to plan your route in advance. Remember to leave time and mileage for stops (expected and unexpected).

- Get a maintenance check. Although electric vehicles require much less maintenance than cars, it never hurts to make sure the vehicle is in tiptop shape before hitting the road.

- Some electric vehicle charging stations come with a fee. You may have to pay to use them, but the price pales in comparison to what it costs to fill up a tank of gas.

- Electric vehicles are much quieter. Avoid turning up the radio or yelling to a passenger over the roar of the engine. This allows you to fully focus on time with family and friends, plus enjoy the sounds of your journey.

- How much would a 1,500-mile road trip in an electric vehicle cost versus a combustion vehicle? The answer depends on what kind of vehicles are involved. For this example, let's say the combustion vehicle is 2021 Honda Accord. The fuel cost would be about \$130. If you traveled in an electric 2021 Chevy Bolt, the electricity cost would be about \$50.

If you are interested in purchasing an electric vehicle, visit the Energywise MN store at [www.energywisemnstore.com](http://www.energywisemnstore.com). Discover a lot of helpful information and tips for choosing the electric vehicle that is right for you.

— Source: [energywisemn.com](http://energywisemn.com)

BCREA summer office hours  
through August 31  
Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## Polaris electric UTV offers horsepower and towing

Farmers enjoy using Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV) around the the farm to run between fields and carry equipment. Outdoor enthusiasts use UTVs for trail riding, exploring and hunting. Now farmers and outdoorsmen have an electric option when it comes to UTVs. The Polaris Ranger EV is an electric version that will be available December 2021.

The Ranger features a 48-volt, 30-horsepower engine, a box capacity of 500 pounds and towing capacity of 1,500 pounds. The Ranger has 10.5" of ground clearance and 9" of independent rear suspension to help users experience a smooth, comfortable ride over tough terrain.

The Ranger's motor is powered by eight lead-acid batteries located under the seats. The Ranger EV is much quieter than a gas-engine model, making it a good option for hunters who want to enter areas quietly.

Operators select between AWD, 2WD and 1WD with a dash switch. Three power modes are also available: high is for maximum speed; low is for maximum towing; and max is for range. The Ranger has an expected range of 35 to 45 miles on a single charge and can go up to 25 mph.



The all new Polaris Ranger EV brings an electric option to the world of Utility Terrain Vehicles. Farmers will enjoy its 1,500-pound towing ability, while hunters can appreciate how quietly it operates.

The Polaris Ranger will cost about \$12,300 and comes in a variety of packages and colors. 

## Safety

### Be aware of Electric Shock Drowning

Electric Shock Drowning (ESD) happens when electrical current seeps into water from a nearby electrical source, such as a boat or marina dock. As a person swims in or near water that is electrified, they can become a conductor for that electricity, become paralyzed and drown.

Outdated wiring and a lack of proper safety equipment on boats and docks can cause ESD to happen. Follow these tips to recognize and avoid ESD:

- Do not swim around docks with electrical service or boats that are plugged into shore-to-dock power.
- If you are swimming and feel tingling or shocks, swim away from the dock or any other electrical source, such as a security light. Yell to others to cut the power source.
- If you think you are swimming in water that could be electrified, try



to stay upright, tuck your legs up so that you are more compact and swim away from anything you think could be energizing the water.

- Do not jump in to try and save someone you suspect might be exposed to electricity in the water. Instead, throw them a float and turn off shore power by using a switch or

other mechanism (usually found on the meter base) or by unplugging the shore power cords.

- Call 911. Get the person to shore or on the dock by pulling them in with the float rope. If you cannot find a pulse, perform CPR until the local fire department or emergency responders arrive.

- If you own a boat that has an electrical system, make sure it is always in good working order and have it inspected annually by a qualified electrician.

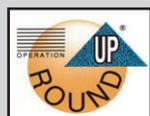
- All docks should have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) on the circuits that feed electricity to the docks.

- Faulty electrical materials in any water source could cause a problem. This includes hot tubs, pools and water parks. 

— Information courtesy of [safeelectricity.org](http://safeelectricity.org)

# Brown County Briefs

## Operation Round Up



The next meeting of the Round Up Trust Board is set for August 17.

Organizations interested in seeking funding should submit an application before that date. Application forms are available on the BCREA website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop) under the *Operation Round Up* tab in *Programs & Services*.

## Reminder to make arrangements if behind on bill payment



Brown County REA will resume disconnecting electric services for non-payment

August 2. If you have a past due account balance, please call the office now to make a payment arrangement to avoid service disconnection and potential fees. The co-op will also resume assessing penalties on past due account balances in August.

Members with delinquent accounts will first receive a Reminder notice when a balance is 30 days past due. A *Notice to Disconnect* will be sent prior to service disconnection.

Energy-assistance crisis benefits have been extended and applications are accepted through September 1. Contact Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC) at 800-767-8139. Brown County residents can call 507-508-4041 for more information, income qualifications or to apply.

## Contractor work is underway

Central Applicators, Inc. is working to control vegetation along the rights-of-way throughout the co-op's service area. (L)

## Thank you for participating in load control

The extreme heat in early June made it necessary for Brown County REA, through its wholesale power supplier Great River Energy (GRE), to dispatch full load control June 8-10.

BCREA appreciates all the members who participate in load management

programs – irrigation, interruptible commercial and interruptible with generators, water heater and cycled air conditioning – to help our power supplier avoid excess energy purchases when market prices reached higher levels.

Here is an explanation of the lights on the load control device.



Left red light is illuminated when your water heater, irrigator or interruptible commercial generator is under control. Right red light is not used by BCREA.

Upper middle yellow light is for electric heating or cycled air conditioning. When the yellow light is

on, the electric heat is off or the air conditioner is being cycled.

Lower yellow light is for additional electric heat. When the yellow light is on, that electric heat is off.

Green light indicates the receiver has power. It flashes when the receiver is "talking" to the radio tower. (L)

## Twins Play Ball! Youth Clinic July 23



Brown County REA and Sleepy Eye Community Education are teaming up with the Minnesota Twins to offer a free Minnesota Twins Play Ball! clinic Friday, July 23 at Prairieview Field (behind the public school) in Sleepy Eye. Youth ages 6-13 are invited to participate. In case of inclement weather the event will be moved into Sleepy Eye Public School. Youth ages 6-9 are scheduled from 2 to 3:30 p.m. and the clinic for ages 10-13 is from 3:30 to 5 p.m. No cost to participate. 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. Visit [www.mlb.com/twins/play-ball/programs/youth-clinics](http://www.mlb.com/twins/play-ball/programs/youth-clinics) and then click on the Sleepy Eye box to register. The Twins will provide safe, youth-friendly equipment; participants are asked to bring their own gloves. The format focuses on throwing, hitting and fielding. (L)

## BCREA 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](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or 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 e-mail at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). (L)

# Incumbents re-elected & bylaws passed at 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

Brown County REA held its reconvened 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and special member meeting on June 24 in the parking lot of its headquarters. 74 members registered for the meeting, most driving through to cast a ballot, pick up an attendance gift and depart.

Meeting attendees and co-op employees recited the Pledge of Allegiance gazing up to a giant flag billowing in the breeze from the bucket of the co-op's newest fleet addition.

During the brief business meeting, Board President Tom Hayes thanked members and employees for their ability to adapt to the circumstances of the past year. CEO Mike Heidemann reflected on the past year and reviewed the 2020 financial report. Necessary motions were made, seconded and approved by honking of horns.

Elected to a three-year term on the Board of Directors were Joel Christensen in District 6, and Tom Hayes, District 9. They were challenged by Mary Portner and Emilee Stehr, respectively. Incumbents Greg Mages, District 7 and Landon Sletta, District 3 ran unopposed and were elected by acclamation. Sletta is completing the remaining two years of a term left vacant when Allen Hanson moved from the REA service territory.

Also on the ballot was the adoption of the cooperative's revised bylaws, which was approved.

At the organizational meeting Tom Hayes was elected Board President. Bill Berg was chosen as Vice President and Jim Hanson was elected Secretary/Treasurer. Bill Berg was selected as the Brown County REA's representative on the Great River Energy Board. 🗳️



Seventy four members made a stop at the drive-through 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting June 24. Employees Robyn Walter, left, and Jennifer Rose helped some of them register and get their ballots.



The 2021 business meeting was again conducted outside on a trailer. Pictured are Mike Heidemann, CEO; Jim Hanson, Secretary; Tom Hayes, President and Jeremy Berg, Attorney.



## 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
- \*Ultra fine tip Sharpie markers
- \*Dry erase markers
- \*Wide-ruled notebooks
- \*Highlighters
- \*Kids scissors -pointed
- \*2-pocket folders
- \*Hand sanitizer
- \*Post-it notes
- \*Disinfecting wipes

Please drop off donations before July 22nd.

Collected donations will be distributed to children in Brown County. Thank you!

## Line crews practice poletop rescue

Foreman Mike Suess “rescues” an unconscious co-worker during the line workers annual Pole top and Bucket Rescue training presented by MREA. Employees also participated in a Mayday exercise. 



## Crews build new three-phase line



Line crews worked to string and then tighten wire for a new three-phase service, one of many projects on the docket this summer. 

## Welcome co-op summer helpers



Taylor Lambrecht, left, and Kyle Goblirsch are assisting BCREA line crews with construction and other activities this summer. Both are from Sleepy Eye. Taylor will be a senior at Sleepy Eye Public School. Kyle is a recent graduate of St. Mary’s High School and will attend Southwest Minnesota State University in the fall. 

## Welcome Connor to BCREA!



Connor Nelsen recently joined the BCREA line crew as an Apprentice Lineman. This Morgan native graduated from the Powerline Technology program at Minnesota West Community and Technical College in Jackson. Connor previously worked as an Apprentice Lineman for Nobles Cooperative Electric in Worthington. Welcome to BCREA! 

## Beneficial electrification

— Continued from Page 1  
on heating and cooling bills.

While each member’s reduction might be small, they can — together — lead to significant savings of money and emissions. And that means a brighter future for all of us. Learn more about Beneficial Electrification and register to win electric yard tools when you visit the Touchstone Energy booth at Farmfest August 3, 4 and 5 at the Gilfillan Estate. 

## Tah-may-toe or tah-mah-toe? Share your favorite tomato recipes!

Tomatoes are growing in the gardens once more. Soon they will be ready for picking, eating and canning. Send us your favorite tomato recipes for sauces, salads, salsas, sandwiches and more! Mail to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by July 25. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

### Correction: photo misidentified in June Connections

Alice Lewandowski was misidentified as April in the Round Up scholarship photo from the June Connections. We apologize for any confusion. 📧

## Is there a new electric vehicle driving into your future?



So you're considering the switch from gasoline to an electric vehicle (EV) or plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) either for cost savings, the convenience, environmental benefits — even all the above. Now what?

A few questions exist that you should ask yourself and your electric cooperative before you shop for or order your new set of wheels.

- How many miles do I actually drive? Only you know your daily, monthly, yearly mileage needs. Calculate and take them into consideration to narrow down your browsing of EV models. A lot of new models are coming out in the next few years, including the all-electric F-150 Lightning pickup and several sport utility vehicles. More and more EVs are designed to travel 300 miles on a charge, eliminating some “range anxiety.”

- What kind of EV is best suited for you? For those who only have one car or often drive long distances, a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) may be the best option, as it provides a worry-free transition from traditional vehicles with its backup internal combustion engine. If you have a shorter daily route, a fully electric car may be a good choice.

- Where can I purchase or lease an EV? Many EVs can be ordered through the manufacturer and delivered to a local dealer. There are also used EVs available as early adopters who purchased the first generation of models trade up to the newer ones.

- Where will I charge my EV? The most convenient place for you to “fuel” up

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## Protect your home, business & cabin 24/7



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## Pick up the phone before the shovel; 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](http://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](mailto:bcrea@bcrea.coop)  
Website: [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://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**

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 Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on June 24, 2021, in the REA headquarters auditorium.

Discussion and/or action was taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the May 2021 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
- Reviewed and approved May 2021 payroll and financial statement.
- Heard a report on load control performance during early June's extreme heat.
- Reviewed plans for 84<sup>th</sup> annual meeting and special member meeting June 24.
- Reviewed plans to resume disconnecting delinquent electric accounts and charging late fees in August.
- Reviewed and approved 2020 director hours to be submitted on the coop's IRS Form 990.
- Updated on construction activities, including projects on Brown County 13, 8, Hillcrest Lane and various three-phase service additions.
- Reviewed employee safety trainings.

The next meeting is set for July 29, 2021, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ☺



**Marcia Solie  
Member Services  
Manager**

# Staff Notes

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is through an at-home charger, where you can leave your EV plugged in overnight and wake up to a full tank.

Every EV comes with a Level 1 charging cord that plugs into a regular household outlet. If you drive less than 30 miles per day on average, Level 1 charging will meet your needs. If you exceed 30 miles per day, or prefer a faster charge, you will want to invest in a Level 2 charging station.

To alleviate the up-front cost associated with this equipment, Brown County REA currently offers members a rebate up to \$800 on EV chargers, which can be purchased easily through the EnergywiseMN online store ([energywisemnstore.com](http://energywisemnstore.com)).

After buying your EV and deciding to invest in a Level 2 charger, you need to pick which model of charger is right for you. To help with this decision, Great River Energy selected three Minnesota-made ZEF Energy chargers from which to choose:

- ZEFNET 40: Charges your EV five times faster than the cordset that came with it. This is a hardwired car charger that works indoors and outdoors with all EVs.
- ZEFNET 50: Charges your EV up to seven times faster than the cordset that came with it. This charger is also hardwired and works indoors and outdoors with all models of EVs.
- ZEFNET 60: The fastest EV charging station is high-quality and packed with features. It's built and tested to automaker standards to ensure a reliable charge every time. Its NEMA 4 outdoor-rated enclosure means it can be installed anywhere.

Prior to adding your choice of EV charger to your cart, you will need to create an account and provide additional information to ensure you meet the eligibility requirements for the rebate. Click on *Shop*, then *Electric Vehicles*, to see your options. The charger will be delivered to your home within four to six weeks of purchase. Please note the installation cost, which can vary from \$500 to \$800, is not included.

The EnergywiseMNstore is also a great place to research and learn more about EV ownership, efficient lighting, heating/cooling and water heating options. Members can also purchase energy-efficient products and register for free promotional items.

When you're exploring Minnesota in your EV, you can find locations to charge up by visiting [plugintomn.com](http://plugintomn.com). One of the website's features is a map showing available charging stations so you can easily plan ahead.

While those of us at the co-op are still learning about EVs and charging options, we'd be happy to answer questions and help you navigate the process. Then after all your questions have been answered comes the fun part: bringing home your new EV. ☺