

Connections

May 2022

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 26, Issue 5

Logic behind the lines: co-op's construction practices explained to provide you reliable, affordable power

How does your electric cooperative keep its distribution system economical and reliable? It takes careful planning and preventive maintenance.

As an overview, power distribution is simple. Transmission lines bring power into substations. Three-phase power lines leave the substations and branch out into multi-phase and single-phase power lines to serve individual member-owners. Transformers and secondary lines come into play until, finally, a switch is flipped and power is delivered to the member. Decisions are made to ensure that a distribution system is a balanced network of technology, redundancy and ruggedness to withstand the weather.

Oil Circuit Reclosers (OCRs) are strategically placed within the system to help limit outages. If a tree branch hits a line, the OCR will blink three times to give the fault a chance to clear itself. This prevents sustained outages, plus dispatching trucks and line crews to restore power.

Transformers are sized to prevent over and underloading. New software can compare transformer loads to meter data to ensure that transformers are efficiently-sized. In addition, transformers are on an inspection schedule so that potential problems can be eliminated with preventive action.

Members' load is also a factor in deciding whether or not to construct new three-phase lines. Three-phase lines may also be built to tie different parts of the system together. This enables your electric co-op to backfeed areas during outages. That means if power cannot reach a portion of the system from the usual direction, it can be re-routed to feed from another direction. This reduces outage times.

If an area is prone to outages, your electric co-op has a number of options to try to reduce the issues. If trees are a problem, your electric co-op uses tree-trimmers to provide more clearance. Special equipment is used to prevent animals from causing outages, as well. For example, pole wrap keeps animals from climbing poles and getting into areas that can cause outages.



Line crews are always working on the electric co-op's distribution system to ensure reliable service.

How does your electric cooperative choose between overhead and underground lines? Your electric cooperative tries to use underground as often as possible when it comes to reducing outages. Sometimes, underground is not the best option due to various circumstances or obstacles. In that case, overhead lines are built to more rigorous standards: bigger poles and wire and shorter spans.

Even during the winter, your electric co-op works to ensure that the distribution system is as robust as possible. Linemen perform line patrol and drive the system, marking down potential problems and taking notes on any equipment or poles that need replacement during the construction season.

This is just some of the logic behind the lines that your electric co-op uses to make sure its member-owners receive reliable, affordable power. ☺

At A Glance



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

BCREA Annual Meeting a big success!

More than 400 members and spouses, employees and guests attended BCREA's 85th Annual Meeting March 31. Thanks, everyone, for the great turnout after two years of COVID restrictions. Read more about the meeting on Page 5. ☺



What should you seek in a refrigerator, besides food? Energy-efficiency of course!

With an Energy Star refrigerator you can maximize your energy and dollar savings without sacrificing the features. Energy Star refrigerators are about 9 percent more energy-efficient than other models.

Energy Star refrigerators offer high performance features such as high-efficiency compressors that create less heat and use less energy, improved insulation that helps food stay cold, plus temperature and defrost mechanisms that help the refrigerator operate more efficiently.

By properly recycling your old refrigerator and replacing it with a new Energy Star refrigerator, you can save more than \$220 over the 12-year lifetime of the product.

Consider these features when purchasing a new refrigerator:

- Purchase an appropriately-sized refrigerator. The larger the refrigerator, the greater the energy consumption. The most energy-efficient models are typically 16-20 cubic feet.

- Consider purchasing a refrigerator with a top freezer. Models with the freezer on top tend to use the least energy (versus bottom freezers or side-by-sides).

- Consider buying a refrigerator with fewer doors. Fewer doors reduce the air leakage. To maximize savings minimize the number of doors and pay attention to cool air you can feel when you shut the doors. Make sure the seals around the doors are airtight. If they are not, replace them.

Refrigerators more than 15 years old could be costing you more than



What should you seek with new refrigerators? Look for the Energy Star logo, as it is about 9 percent more energy-efficient. Energy Star states that the average fridge lasts about 12 years. Keep reading for other cool fridge energy-saving tips.

\$80 per year to run. On average an old refrigerator uses about 35 percent more energy than a model that has earned the Energy Star.

- If you need a second refrigerator year-round, replace the oldest one with a new Energy Star model. Make sure you keep the fridge in an ambient temperature of 35 to 38 degrees Fahrenheit.

Recycle your old refrigerator. If you buy a new refrigerator, be sure to recycle your old one. Many appliance retailers will pick up and recycle your old refrigerator for a slight fee when you purchase a new one.

Refrigerator efficiency tips:

- Set the appropriate temperature.
- Position your refrigerator or cooler

away from a heat source such as an oven, a dishwasher or direct sunlight from a window.

- Allow air circulation behind the fridge.

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

Remember that your local electric cooperative offers rebates on Energy Star refrigerators (and freezers) with recycling of your old model. Find the rebate form and details on the co-op's website. Call us today if you have any questions! ☺

Compact Airmoto has inflated power!

Imagine an air compressor about the size of a TV remote. It exists in the form of the Airmoto Air Pump!

The Airmoto packs 120 PSI output and easily fits in your pocket, backpack or car at 1.2 lbs and six inches long. Be prepared for emergencies!

The Airmoto works with most tires. It includes one air hose, one needle connector, one bike connector and one general connector for cars, trucks, motorcycles, bicycles, ATVs, sports equipment, paddle boards and more.

The Airmoto has a digital display that makes it easy to see the pressure you are inflating things. You can dial in the pressure you want. The Airmoto will then stop automatically when it hits it.




Airmoto is a rechargeable air compressor that stores in your vehicle.

It also has a built-in LED flashlight to help with night emergencies.

The Airmoto is fully charged after two hours. A single charge provides 40 minutes of use. The battery will stay charged up to four months. The Airmoto uses a USB-C charging cable.

How long does it take the Airmoto to inflate things? Since it is smaller it takes longer than with a full-size air compressor. A car tire takes about eight minutes to inflate, six minutes for a golf cart tire, five minutes for a motorcycle tire, three minutes for a basketball, four minutes for a bike tire and two minutes for an inflatable pool toy.

The Airmoto costs about \$70. It is available in stores and online. 

Safety

MYTHS vs. FACTS for electrical safety

Myth or fact regarding electricity? The difference can mean life or death. When you know the facts about electricity, you know safety!

MYTH: To get a shock or burn I need to actually touch a powerline.

FACT: Just getting too close could cause a severe shock, burn or even death. Electricity can jump or “arc” through the air to you or any object that gets too close. Always stay at least 10 feet away from powerlines.

MYTH: If I'm wearing rubber boots or safety boots, I won't get a shock.

FACT: Even safety boots rated for electrical work may not provide 100 percent protection from shock. Always avoid contacting or coming too close to powerlines.

MYTH: I can use a wooden stick to prop up a powerline or knock down a toy that's tangled in a powerline.

FACT: Even wood can conduct electricity. Never touch or come close to a powerline. Contact your cooperative if you need help.

MYTH: A fallen powerline doesn't



Stay or get out if your vehicle is entangled with power lines due to a storm or accident? Call the co-op first!

have electricity flowing through it, so it's safe to be near it or move it out of the way.

FACT: Always assume a downed powerline still has electricity flowing through it, even if it isn't sparking or making noise. Stay back at least 33 feet, call 9-1-1 and your cooperative.

MYTH: If an overhead power line falls on my car, I should get out and run to safety right away.

FACT: The car and the ground


around it may be electrified and you could be killed if you get out of the vehicle. Stay inside until the utility workers tell you it's safe to get out. Tell everyone to stay back 33 feet — about the length of a school bus.

Only exit the vehicle if you must get out to stay safe, such as a fire:

- Remove any loose-fitting clothing so no part of your body or your clothing touches the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

- With the door open prepare to jump by tucking your elbows into your stomach and keeping your hands clasped close to your chest.

- Jump out and make sure you land with your feet together without touching the vehicle. Don't try to jump far.

- Move away from the vehicle, using the shuffle technique. Ensure your feet do not lift off the ground and are always touching each other. The inside of your heel should still touch the toe of the other foot when you move the other leg forward. 

Brown County Briefs

Energy-efficiency tip

Even in summer months, adding insulation to your attic can keep your home more comfortable and save energy. If your attic insulation is level with or below your floor joists (meaning you can easily see your joists), you should add more. If you can't see any of the floor joists because the insulation is well above them, you likely have enough insulation. Attic insulation should be evenly distributed with no low spots. Make sure areas along the eaves are adequately covered.

Heat pump rebates



Whether temps rise or fall, your energy bill stays cool with heat pump rebates!

Take advantage of our rebates when you install a qualifying, energy-saving air source heat pump (ASHP). ASHPs provide home cooling and supplemental heating, using 72 percent less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces.

2022 rebates based on Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) coupled with Seasonal Energy Efficiency Rating (SEER). Minimum SEER is 14.5. Load-controlled heat pumps with whole house non-electric backup and cycled cooling qualify for these rebates:

8.2 HSPF & up: \$1,000

9.0 HSPF & up: \$1,500

9.5 HSPF & up: \$2,000

Bonus ductless heat pump residential rebates available in June, July and August — up to \$750 with electric as primary heat source, \$450 with delivered fuels heat. Geothermal rebates also available. Contact the cooperative to learn more.

Trust Board awards scholarships



Morgan Engholm



Emily Guggisberg



Morgan Hoffmann



Renae Juni



Connor Scholten



Hope Winterfeldt

The Brown County Rural Electric Trust, through the Operation Round Up program, awarded six \$250 scholarships to area high school seniors whose parents/guardians are Brown County REA members. The winners will receive their funds, to be used for educational costs, after successfully completing one semester at an accredited university, college, vocational, community or technical college.

Funds for the scholarships come from members who choose to round up their electric bill to the nearest dollar each month. The difference is placed in a trust, which is administered by a nine-member board that meets four times each year to distribute funds to charitable causes, individuals and families in crisis and scholarships.

One of the criteria on the application was to demonstrate a commitment to community through involvement or volunteerism in organizations or programs that enhance the quality of life for others — again scholarship applicants demonstrated how they give back to their communities, schools and churches as volunteers, all while carrying a rigorous class schedule and maintaining impressive GPAs. A total of 14 applications were received. The exceptional list of applicants made the decision a difficult one for the Trust Board. The board thanks all of students who took the time to apply for scholarships.

Congratulations to the 2022 Operation Round Up Scholarships winners!

- Morgan Engholm, daughter of Lonny & Michele Engholm, is a senior at Cedar Mountain High School.
- Emily Guggisberg, senior at Cathedral High School in New Ulm, is the daughter of Tony & Marie Guggisberg.
- Morgan Hoffmann, daughter of Dan & Mary Hoffmann, is a senior at Sleepy Eye Public School.
- Renae Juni, daughter of Jeff & Ellen Juni, is a senior at New Ulm Public High School.
- Connor Scholten, Springfield Public School senior, is the son of Tim & Lisa Scholten.
- Hope Winterfeldt, daughter of Karl & Shawn Winterfeldt, is a senior at Comfrey High School.

Brown County REA holds 85th Annual Meeting



After a two-year absence, hundreds of Brown County REA members gathered at the Sleepy Eye Event Center for a meal, director elections and business meeting for the electric cooperative's 85th Annual Meeting (left). BCREA Operations and Engineering Manager Brandon Havemeier helped register members at the Annual Meeting (right).

After sparsely-attended Annual Meetings in the cooperative headquarters parking lot the past two years, Brown County REA members turned out to fill the Sleepy Eye Event Center March 31 for the cooperative's 85th Annual Meeting. More than 400 members and spouses, employees and guests attended, with a total of 253 members registered.

Following a catered meal, Anita Hoffmann of rural New Ulm, shared some inspiring words for the invocation. During the business meeting, Board President Tom Hayes recapped cooperative happenings from the past year. He highlighted Great River Energy's Coal Creek Station and its sale later this year as electric cooperatives adapt to the changing wholesale power supply. CEO Mike Heidemann reviewed the 2021 audited financial report and explained funds returned to members as bill credits in 2021.

Voters approved a proposed amendment to the cooperative by-laws. The amendment clarifies that individuals may qualify as members to serve on the Board of Directors through membership in Member Entities, as a partner, member, shareholder or principal owning no less than 10 percent in an entity, which is a cooperative member. Incumbent Directors Jim Hanson, District 1; Jim Mickelson, District 4; and Bill Berg, District 5; ran unopposed and were re-elected to three-year terms. Winners of the 2022 Operation Round Up scholarships were also announced.

At the organizational meeting that followed Tom Hayes was elected president of the Board; Bill Berg chosen as vice president; and Jim Hanson elected secretary-treasurer. Bill Berg will again represent Brown County REA on the Great River Energy board. (U)

Sign up for updated mobile app



1. Delete existing BCREA app on your phone.
2. Download the new app on your phone (Brown County REA).
3. Register or sign in.

New online user? Click *Register New User* and complete set-up process.

Already an online user? Enter your existing username and password.

Existing mobile app expiring on June 30th, 2022



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www.browncountyrea.coop



We are Here to Help
Questions? Give us a call (800) 658-2368

With our new mobile app you can: quickly and easily pull up account information, make a payment, see your statement history, payment history, usage history and notifications history, sign up for notifications, view outage map and see our contact information (U)

Members invited to Brown County REA's 85th Anniversary Picnic & Open House

Date: June 14

Time: 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Location: BCREA Headquarters
24386 State Hwy. 4
Sleepy Eye

Come enjoy brats, hot dogs, live music and tours of the building... and help your electric cooperative celebrate 85 years! All members & families welcome! (U)

Plant trees safely *Before planting a tree, call 811 to locate co-op's buried utility lines*

LOW TREE ZONE

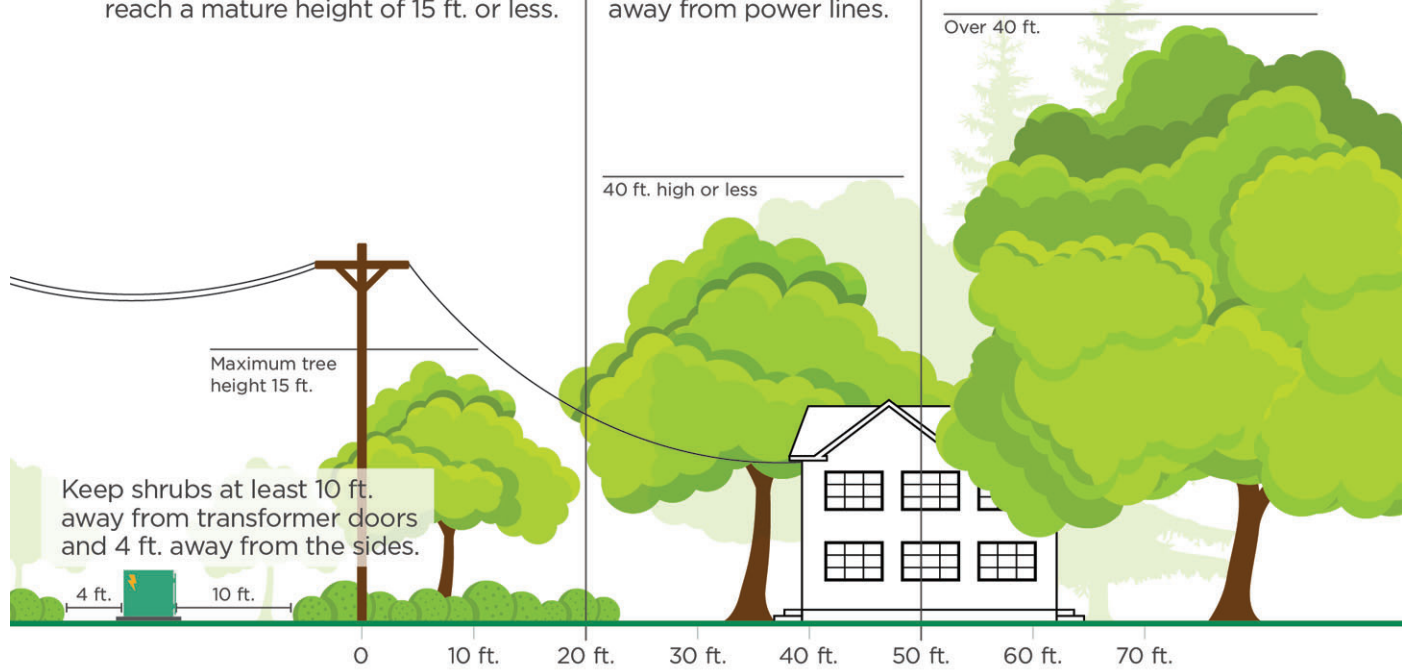
Avoid planting within 20 ft. of power lines. If planting is unavoidable, only plant shrubs and small trees that reach a mature height of 15 ft. or less.

MEDIUM TREE ZONE

Plant medium trees (under 40 ft. when mature) at least 25 ft. away from power lines.

LARGE TREE ZONE

Plant large trees (over 40 ft. when mature) at least 50 ft. away from power lines.



CTV launches new website

Check out Cooperative Television's (CTV) new website — www.CTV.coop.

CTV rebroadcasts 40 UHF channels from the Twin Cities to southern Minnesota from its three towers at Jackson, Frost and Godahl. The monthly fee is only \$8 a month. Your electric cooperative is one of the four owners of this subsidiary. This fee can be added as a line on your co-op electric bill or set it up for an annual (\$96) or seasonal service (\$48) billing.

The new CTV website features an updated channel listing and coverage map. Plus, local installers are listed if you want to have a UHF antenna installed or serviced.

Check out the troubleshooting page too so you know whether to call for a service technician or who to call with questions. ☎

Go surfing and check out CTV's new website (www.ctv.coop) so you can channel surf with CTV! If you watch these channels, become a paying subscriber so future enhancements, like this website and equipment, can continue.

'Blue-tiful' blueberry recipes beckon — please share few favorites

Share with us your berry special blueberry recipes, whether it's for coffee cake, pie, bars, pancakes, muffins or salads. Mail to your blueberry recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by May 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

One Hour Buttermilk Roll by Terese Gruber, New Ulm

- 2 pkgs. (¼ oz. each) active dry yeast
- ¼ c. very warm water
- 1½ c. buttermilk, room temperature
- ½ c. packed shortening
- 3 T. sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 4½ c. all-purpose flour

Preheat oven to 400° F. Butter three six-cup muffin pans. In the bowl stir yeast into warm water until dissolved. Stir in the remaining ingredients, except the flour.

The mixture will be lumpy. Stir in the flour, 1 c. at a time, until soft dough forms. Turn dough out onto lightly-floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic (about eight minutes). Let rest 10 minutes.

Divide the dough into 18 pieces. Then divide each piece into three pieces. Cover the dough that's not in use so it doesn't dry out. Roll each dough piece into a round ball. Place 3 balls in each muffin cup.

Cover: let rise in a warm place until double in bulk (around 30 minutes). Bake 15-18 minutes or until golden. Cool in pans on racks 10 minutes. Remove from pans; serve or cool completely on the wire rack. ☺

Cheese Garlic Bread

by Laurie Sherman, Truman

Mix all ingredients, but the eggs; stir gently and microwave for one minute on high:

1½ c. shredded/grated mozzarella cheese

¾ c. almond meal, coconut meal or coconut flour

2 T. cream cheese, full fat

1 T. garlic, crushed

1 T. parsley

1 tsp. baking powder

pinch of salt

Then add 1 egg and mix gently to make a cheesy dough. Place on baking tray and form into a "bread" shape.

Topping: 2 T. melted butter

1 tsp. parsley 1 tsp. garlic

Brush on top and sprinkle with more cheese. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes. ☺



**Power your shower
with your co-op's
water heater**

Call the co-op today!

Enjoy a limited lifetime-warranty for the original owner against leaks. No anode rod to change. Thick insulation retains the heat. Made in the USA and in stock now!

Call before digging!

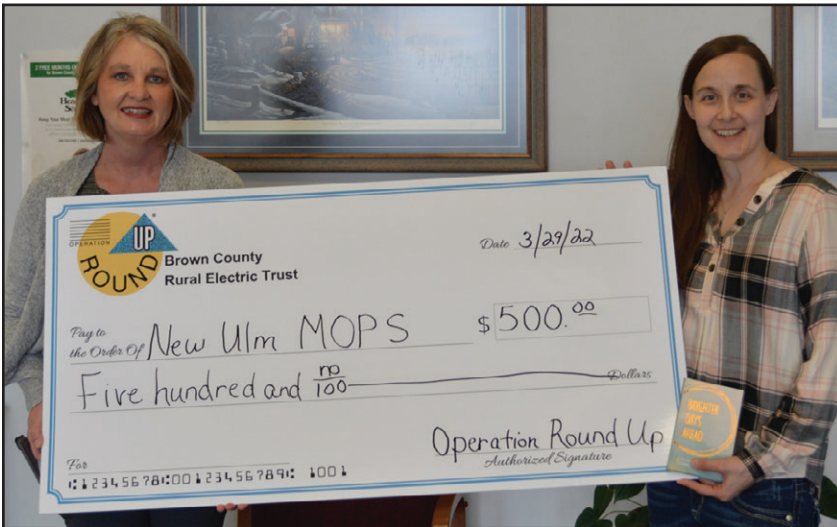
1-800-252-1166



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.gopherstate-onecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. Safety first this spring! ☺

New Ulm MOPS chemo care bags project receives \$500



Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board President Lynnae Pelzel (left) presented a \$500 check to Cheyenne Runck, representing the New Ulm Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) group. Funds will be used to help purchase Brighter Days Ahead devotionals to be part of the MOPS group's project to create and donate care bags given to chemotherapy patients at the Virginial Piper Cancer Institute in New Ulm.

Member Advisory Council tours BCREA



BCREA Board Members Greg Mages (left center) and Tom Hayes (center right) explain the workings of Oil Circuit Reclosures (OCRs) to Advisory Council member Allen Dauer (left) while touring the REA headquarters at the April 11 Member Advisory Council Meeting.



**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: 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 monthly meeting April 28. Discussion and/or action was taken on the following items:

- Reviewed and approved the March 2022 board meeting and March 31 Annual Meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
- Updated on plans for the 85th anniversary membership picnic set for April 14 from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the REA headquarters.
- Reviewed the 85th Annual Meeting, held March 31. 2023 Annual Meeting is set for April 13.
- Reviewed and approved the 2021 Capital Credit Allocation of \$1,981,790.
- Received an overview of the cooperative's scope of work and proposed timeline for the electric utility portion of the Highway 14 expansion project. Expected completion of electric utility work is the end of 2022.
- Updated on operations and maintenance activities, including completion of overhead and underground maintenance. Pole testing is set to begin in May.

The next meeting is set for May 26 at the BCREA office in Sleepy Eye.