

# Connections

July 2022

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 26, Issue 7



## Know what's below. Call before you dig.

From planting trees to installing new clothesline posts, many outdoor projects require digging. Before you reach for the shovel, reach for the phone.

Call Gopher State One Call (GSOC) at 811 to prevent accidents and injuries around underground utility lines. A locator will be sent to the address of your digging project and mark underground utility lines with flags and spray paint at no cost. Make sure you call 48 hours in advance before you start digging. Simply follow these steps:

### Be prepared

When you contact GSOC, a series of questions will be asked. You will need to know the address of where you plan to dig, including the county and nearest cross street, as well as the type of project you're completing and the exact area on the property where you're planning to dig.

### Make the call

You can call GSOC by dialing 811 or 1-800-252-1166. You can also contact them online at [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org).

### Get your underground facilities marked

Once you make the call, a "ticket" is created, which is sent to utilities that have underground facilities in the area of excavation. Those utilities will send a locator to your site.

### Private facilities

Private underground facilities are facilities installed behind or after your meter. If overhead distribution lines serve your property and the power is then distributed by underground wires, those wires may be considered private. If the homeowner's electric meter is located on the property line, then the underground line from the meter to the house is also considered private facilities and will not be located.

Although the meter set is often found on/at the home or main building, in some areas it is set on a pole in a yard. Red marks or flags leading up to a pole, but not going on to other buildings, is an indicator that there are private facilities in the area.

Other types of private facilities include heating systems for pools, electricity for outbuildings, invisible fences, fiber optic lines, septic systems and satellite dishes. If you think you have private facilities, you must contact a private utility locator to identify and locate them. Visit GSOC Industry Directory for a list of private locators in your area. Remember that these locators will locate the lines for a fee. For additional locators consult a search engine, like Google, or the Yellow Pages under "Utilities Underground - Locating."

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## Coffee with the co-op



Members are invited to the Brown County REA auditorium July 20 from 7 a.m.-9 a.m. for Coffee with the Co-op. Enjoy coffee and a treat and visit with BCREA staff at this come-and-go event. Information and assistance with setting up the new mobile app will be available. Hope to see you there! ☺

### At A Glance



**Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association**

### 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picnic

Thank you to all who came and enjoyed the Brown County Rural Electrical Association's 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary picnic. Congratulations to the prize winners! See photos and a winners' list on page 5. ☺



# Solve the mystery of high bills

Brown County REA receives calls occasionally from members wondering about high bills. Here are some factors to consider in such cases:

- Don't compare your bill with neighbors. Too many variables are involved: size of house, number of people, type of HVAC system, outbuildings, hot tubs, livestock, etc.

- If it is winter, some people forget to turn their heating system down when they aren't home or asleep. A programmable thermostat can help. Others use electric heat in places with poor insulation. Others might use two different sources of electric heat and remember to turn one off, but leave the other running. This causes the second source to work harder. Space heaters can also raise electric bills.

- Consider outbuildings. Do you have block heaters on tractors, well pumps or heat lamps running? How about your home itself? Did you get a new hot tub or other item?

- Sump pumps can get stuck on if their water drain pipe freezes up. Do you have a well pump? Do you have a second refrigerator or freezer that is only half-full? These run more to maintain their temperature, especially ones in garages during heatwaves.

- How many hot showers or baths does your family take in a day? Do you wash laundry in hot or cold water?

- Are you drying more laundry?

- Weather has a big impact on your heating/cooling costs. Was it hotter or cooler than normal? During the hottest months of the summer and the coldest months of the winter, members increase their energy use.

- Consider recent purchases or



upgrades that may be drawing additional power. Electronics and other gadgets are making us more 'plugged' in each year.

- When the kids are out of school during the summer, they may operate the TV longer during the day, or when the whole family is at home for the holidays, your energy use may increase.

- The efficiency of household appliances like air conditioners, washers and dryers has dramatically increased over the last few years. Old appliances may be losing efficiency or need repair. Just a small leak in your water heater can make your water heater work overtime, as it refills and continuously reheats. That old refrigerator in your garage may be worth turning off if it's not being put to good use. If it's time to shop for new household appliances, choose those that have earned the government's Energy Star® rating. Your electric co-op also offers rebates on refrigerators and freezers with recycling of the old unit, along with dehumidifiers and clothes dryers.

- Members often ask if a meter can malfunction. Meter malfunction is rarely the reason for high electric bills. In fact, your meter is your greatest tool in narrowing down causes of the problem. Modern meters allow your co-op's energy expert to examine daily use and figure out when you are using the most energy. (0.0)

## 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
- \*Broad tip markers
- \*12-pk. colored pencils
- \*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
- \*Composition notebooks
- \*Disinfecting wipes

Please drop off donations before July 28th.

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

# Get rid of that pain in your neck

Do you often feel neck pain, stiffness and fatigue? A smart neck massager will help relieve these problems and promote blood circulation, especially for people who often sit for long hours at work or studying.

This smart neck massager has six modes and 15 levels of intensity. It's equipped with 107.6°F constant temperature and warm compress technique. It will automatically turn off within 15 minutes to avoid overheating.

This neck massager uses low-



frequency electric pulse therapy. You can use it anytime and anywhere with no wires running from the remote controller to the pads. It weighs only 4.93 ounces. A built-in battery allows you to enjoy about ten 15-minute massages per one hour of charge time.

The massager's "U" shape design allows it to better fit many neck sizes. It is made of breathable silicone with durable stainless steel pads to avoid discomfort when wearing.

It costs about \$40. 

## Safety

# Look up during crop spraying

Brown County REA wants to remind everyone to look up and look out for power lines, especially as farmers spray crops. Great River Energy, our wholesale power provider, also wants you to look up for their power lines.

"We've had two incidents already this year where farm equipment came into contact with our power lines," said Kevin Hodgson, Great River Energy's leader of transmission construction and maintenance. "We urge farmers with sprayers to take extra precaution. Since the sprayer booms can fold up, they're at their highest — right where there could be a power line."

It's important to remember where your equipment is in relation to the power lines overhead. Before using your equipment, plan a route that will avoid overhead power lines or adjust your equipment before reaching power lines, if you cannot avoid these areas.

"We know everyone is busy in the fields this time of year with spraying their crops," said Brown County REA CEO Mike Heidemann. "But we want you to be aware of your surroundings and remember to look up. Those power lines are energized and bringing electricity to your farm, family and local businesses. Call 911 right away if you do come in contact with a power line."

Below are some tips for operating farm equipment around power lines:

- Do not lift, elevate, build or pass under a power line anything that may make contact or come close to contact with the power line.
- Equipment, antennas and people should stay at least 15 feet away from any energized power line to help prevent arc flashing.


**Boom sprayers can easily reach power lines or clip poles. Use extra care when crop spraying this summer.**



- Equipment that can be extended requires the utmost care when near a power line.
- 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.

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 and land with feet together. Hop to safety in small steps to avoid electric shock by breaking the current's path.

Have more questions about safety around power lines? Visit [greatriverenergy.com](http://greatriverenergy.com). 

# Brown County Briefs

## Round Up meeting August 16

The next meeting of the Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board, aka Operation Round Up, is set for August 16. Organizations interested in seeking funding may submit an application before that date. Application forms are available on the BCREA website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop).


### ASHP myth busted!

Heat pumps from past decades frequently had two problems that caused cold air to blow, leading to lots of comfort complaints. Every time they came on, the fan would run full blast, delivering cold air from the basement or attic as the heating coil slowly warmed up. Combined with the seriously reduced heating capacity of older models in cold weather, the air temperature at the supply registers would often feel cool or even cold. Modern cold climate systems have variable speed fans, improved controls and higher heating output — all working together to maintain cozy, warm temperatures.

### Electrify your yard work


Looking to buy a battery-powered electric leaf blower, chainsaw, trimmer/weed whip or lawn mower? New models are great for keeping your yard looking great!

During June, July and August, Brown County REA is offering rebates of \$25 for a minimum \$100 pre-tax priced leaf blower, chainsaw, edger, trimmer/weed whip and \$50 on a \$399 or higher-priced pre-tax priced electric push lawn mower. Provide a copy of your invoice with the purchase price and model number.

Rebate will be paid as a credit on your electric bill. Limit one rebate per member. 

## Sign up for a chance to win bill credit\$

Pay your electric bill each month without giving it a thought through recurring Auto Pay from your checking or savings account. Enroll before August 29 and you'll be entered in a drawing. Members already enrolled in the program are automatically entered in the drawing for one \$100, two \$50 or 12 \$25 bill credits.


Your monthly bill payment is automatically deducted from your bank account on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. You still receive a statement, but no longer have to write a check, look for a stamp or make a trip to the mailbox or our drop box. Sign up today by calling the office or using the ACH Authorization Form under the Forms tab on our website [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop). 

## Update your contact information and subscribe to notifications

Have you have changed your cell phone number or eliminated your land line? Do you have an e-mail address you'd like to share with Brown County REA? Having your up-to-date contact information will help us and help you by:

- Allowing us to contact you quickly and easily in case of a planned outage
- Help us keep you updated about work being done in your area, which may affect your electric service
- Keep the lines of communication open between you and your Co-op in case there's an account issue

Please check your billing statement and if the phone number listed is no longer valid, or you'd like to add a cell phone to your contact information, please complete and return the form below, call the office at 800-658-2368 or 507-794-3331, or update using the online payment portal on our website [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop).

Also, Brown County REA is adding a new feature to the customer service portal which allows members to sign up to receive notifications from the co-op via e-mail or text message. If interested, you can subscribe to messages letting you know your bill is ready, when payment is received, load control notification and more. Subscribe through the Member Account Access portal from the website or using the mobile app. 

### Update my BCREA contact information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Delete ph # \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Location number or account number if known: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Ph? Yes or no

Secondary/cell phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Ph? Yes or no

E-mail address (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I consent to receive autodialed or prerecorded calls and/or text messages on my cell phone.

E-mail notification options (check those you prefer to receive)

Bill notification  Payment received

Bill due soon  Due now

Credit card expiring

Mail to BCREA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085-0529 or return with your next bill payment. Thank you for helping us serve you better.



# BCREA 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picnic a success



BCREA members, employees past and present, and directors gathered at the REA headquarters to enjoy a meal, music and fellowship at the cooperative's 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary picnic June 14. Special thanks to Griller Chris Silber, left in top left photo, Southern MN Account Manager for Rural Electric Supply Company (RESCO), which provided the grill, and his assistant BCREA Operations & Engineering Manager Brandon Havemeier.

Thank you to all the members and families who attended the 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picnic June 14. We hope you enjoyed the food and fellowship with BCREA employees, directors and fellow members.

Congratulations to Lenora Zitzman, winner of the drawing for an \$85 electric bill credit. Rick Bode and Thomas U'Ren each won a \$50 bill credit and Lynnae Pelzel, Jody Anderson, Rich B. Baumann and Eric Pagel all won a \$25 bill credit.

Winners of the 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary wine glass set: David Luepke, Loren Brekke, Jeff Peterson, Ronald & Bernetta Helget, Lyla Klee, Linda Neigebauer, Denise Alms, Richard & Susan Evers, Gary Nelson, Mike Tremel, Leon Matties, Robert Guggisberg, Bryanne Freitag, Leo Guggisberg, Dorothy Helget, LaRay Kral, Alice Manderfeld, Anna Kral, Norb Wenisch, Ervan Moldan, Russ McCabe, Howard Lokensgard, Susan Brandel, Dennis & Kathy Helget, and Christine Fluegge.

Three-piece Rada knife set winners are: Carol Boelter, Karen Johnson, Andrew Seifert, Bernadette Hoffmann, David Riebel, Leon Tremel, Randy Larsen, Carol Windschittl, Jim Gieseke, Amos Vogel, LaNaye Kral, John & Phyllis Griebel, Ron Domeier, Carol Helget, Jerome Moldan, Charles Nelson, Loren Renberg, Artie Helget, Brian Hacker, Diane Lax, and Dan Havemeier.

If you have not done so already, winners are asked to please pick up prizes at the REA headquarters. ☺

## Download updated mobile app

BCREA's existing mobile app expired June 30. Get the new app today from your app store! 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, plus sign up for notifications, view outage map and see our contact information. Follow these steps to sign up:

1. Delete existing BCREA app on your phone.
2. Download the new app on your phone (Brown County REA).
3. Register or sign in. Already an online user? Enter your existing username and password. New online user? Click **Register New User** and complete the set-up process. ☺

MINNESOTA  
**FARMFEST**<sup>®</sup>

August 2-4, Redwood Falls

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 2022  
Drawing at the Touchstone Energy  
Cooperatives Booth #2301**



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/state/zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

*Clip this coupon & put it in your wallet now!*

## Locator training held at BCREA headquarters



BCREA lineworkers received classroom and field training on working with underground locating equipment from one of its vendors. Gary Grimms, right, from Locators and Supply, Inc. assisted Foreman Nick Horman with features of the locator.

# Call Gopher State One Call

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### Check for Positive Response

A good practice before digging is to check GSOC's *Positive Response* site to see if each utility has visited your dig site. Facility Operators are required to provide Positive Response by marking the ground or providing a Positive Response message to CSOC.


To login to the Positive Response site at [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org), you need to know your organization's Facility Operator ID number.

### Start digging



You must wait 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) after you've submitted your dig information to begin your digging project.

If you accidentally come in contact with an underground utility while digging, do not bury the problem. Your first priority should be evacuating the area for safety and then notifying your utility provider. Do not attempt to fix the problem yourself.

For more information about 811 and electrical safety, visit [call811.com](http://call811.com) and [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org). 

## Tomato time! Share with us recipes using garden-fresh tomatoes

Tomatoes are orbs of summer sunshine! Share with us your tomato recipes, whether it's for stewed, canned, salsa, hotdish, salads, pasta sauce and more. Mail your tomato recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by July 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 🍅

## Watch for Youth Tour story



Logan Kreilkamp, New Ulm, joined other young people who represented other Minnesota electric cooperatives and traveled to Washington, D. C. for the Rural Electric Youth Tour. A story and more photos will be featured in the August Connections. 📷

## BCREA summer help



Sleepy Eye Public High School graduate Taylor Lambrecht assisted BCREA line crews as a summer helper from mid-May to the end of June. He started classes in early July to work toward a degree in Powerline Technology at Minnesota West Community & Technical College in Jackson. 📷

# CONSIDERING AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE?

## EV Ride & Drive

**WEDNESDAY – AUGUST 10**  
**5 PM – 8 PM**

Windom Community Center  
1750 Cottonwood Lake Dr, Windom, MN 56101



FOOD  
VENDORS

ELECTRIC  
VEHICLES



## WHAT TO EXPECT

**RIDE AND DRIVE: 5 pm – 7 pm**

**PANEL: 7 pm – 8 pm**

Receive a free bag of Steve's All American Kettle Corn while supplies last

Lingen Dairy Food Truck – serving burgers, fries, cheese curds and ice cream

brought to you by  **GREAT RIVER ENERGY** and these participating cooperatives





## 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: 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.



**Marcia Solie**  
Member Services  
Manager

# Staff Notes

## Money-saving programs help maintain a healthy electric grid

BCREA, our wholesale power provider, Great River Energy, and members like you have helped to use the electric grid efficiently and economically for decades by reducing demand during periods of stress on the electric grid and shifting energy consumption to off-peak times.

This strategy — known as *demand response* — plays a role in keeping wholesale rates affordable;

electricity reliably flowing to homes, businesses and farms; and also saves members money on their bills in the short- and long-term.

Members can participate in several demand-response programs offered by BCREA that “control” or “cycle” electric devices in their homes such as air conditioners, water heaters and heat pumps on high-demand days when electricity is most expensive. In exchange, members may receive a reduced electric rate and often upfront rebates for enrolling.

Both the cooperative and our members receive benefits through this strategy. These programs offer a direct link to avoided wholesale costs to the co-op, while our members benefit from lower rates associated with controlled loads.

When it comes time for appliances to be used for demand response — usually on very warm or very cold days — Great River Energy “flips the switch” to alleviate demand. In addition to reducing sometimes hundreds of megawatts of electricity demand, this helps the cooperative to avoid making expensive purchases from the regional energy market, which saves members money.

Great River Energy and its 28 member-owner cooperatives have built the largest demand response program for a utility of its size in the country, according to data collected by the Energy Information Administration. More than 370,000 appliances, along with larger commercial loads, are enrolled in a demand response program offered by the cooperatives.

Brown County REA members help shed electric load during times of peak usage with nearly 3,300 controlled electric water heaters either on peak shave or the storage program, more than 830 electric heat and heat pump loads, and 700-plus controlled cooling loads. Commercial members take part in interruptible programs, with and without backup generators, to contribute, on average, 1,550 kilowatts of load shed when dispatched. In addition, load from 45 irrigation systems can be curtailed.

Because of these activities, Brown County REA saw a reduction of nearly \$153,000 in demand charges on 2021 power bills and received more than \$443,000 in energy credits. Discounted rates to members participating in some of the programs and rebates paid reduce these amounts some, but the load control programs are valuable to GRE, the co-op and you, our members. Thank you for contributing to their success! ☺

# Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting June 30, 2022, following the Strategic Planning Session at the Cooperative Response Center (CRC) in Austin, MN.

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

- Reviewed the cooperative’s 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary picnic held June 14.
- Discussed recent CTV channel issues, troubleshooting, repairs and need to communicate with member subscribers. Informed that GRE will hire a fiber consultant and visit sites to inspect the fiber.
- Reviewed the BCREA Strategic Planning Session facilitated by Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) staff and held June 29-30 at CRC in Austin, MN.
- Reviewed and approved the cooperative’s 2021 IRS Form 990.
- Informed of upcoming Auto Pay promotion and drawing for bill credits.
- Updated on progress with the Highway 14 expansion and other construction activities.
- Informed that Southwood 2000 will begin testing poles in Courtland, Lafayette, Cornish and Alfsborg townships in July.

The next meeting is set for July 28, 2022. ☺