



## EV Ride & Drive Event amazes visitors on quiet ride & pricing



Electric cooperative members explored the features of six electric vehicles August 10.

What did you think of driving an electric vehicle?

“I was amazed by the ride and they are more affordable than I thought, with the number of models under \$35,000.”

That was the comment from one co-op member who did a test drive August 10 in Windom. Your electric cooperative partnered with three neighboring cooperatives, Great River Energy and the American Lung Association to sponsor the event. Six vehicles were on display, including:

- 2021 & 2022 Tesla S
- 2022 Chevy Bolt
- 2022 Rivian R1T
- 2020 Hyundai Kona
- 2018 Chrysler Pacifica

In addition, about 100 people signed a waiver and completed a survey to test drive/ride in three electric vehicles:

- F-150 Lightning pickup from Chuck Spaeth Ford
- Kia Niro PHEV
- Chevy Bolt

Slayton Tesla owner, Travis Pierson, was one of the panelists and brought his red Tesla S for display. “My wife drives our Tesla from Slayton to Marshall for work every day. We charge it at home at night, just like your phone. If we are going to the Cities, we charge it for five minutes at St. Peter to get to the Twin Cities. We have very little range anxiety after owning it for a year. The beauty of it is a ‘full tank’ every morning after charging.”

Your electric cooperative wants to be your energy information resource and this was one way of increasing awareness and education on electric vehicles. Visit your cooperative’s website for information ranging on EV charger rebates and a link to a listing of electric vehicles’ pricing/range.



BCREA member Tad Ulrich, rural New Ulm, explains the features on his 2022 Rivian pickup. Attendees were impressed with the pickup’s sporty look, towing ability and abundant storage.

### At A Glance



Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association

### Electric co-ops handle the summer heat

As a member of Brown County REA, you are served by Great River Energy’s diverse and flexible portfolio of resources to ensure you have the energy you need, all year round. See details in the guest column from Great River Energy’s David Saggau on Page 8.



# Tune up your furnace for maximum efficiency this coming heating season

In the average household about \$1,000 a year is spent on heating. It pays to keep your furnace working as efficiently as possible.

Dirt and neglect are the top causes of furnace inefficiency. Maintaining your furnace will keep your system operating at peak performance and prevent future problems and unwanted costs.

Here are some steps you can take to keep your furnace operating smoothly.

Hire a professional contractor to perform routine maintenance of your equipment. Contractors get busy once winter comes, so it's best to schedule a furnace checkup in the fall.

## A typical check-up includes:

Check thermostat settings to ensure the furnace keeps you comfortable when you are home and saves energy while you are away.

Tighten electrical connections and measure voltage and current on motors. Faulty electrical connections can cause unsafe operation of your furnace and reduce its life.

Lubricate moving parts. Parts that lack lubrication create friction in motors and cause inefficiency.

Inspect the condensate drain in your furnace. A plugged drain can cause water damage in the house and affect indoor humidity levels.

Check the starting cycle of the equipment to assure the furnace starts, operates and shuts off properly.

Inspect filters. A dirty air filter causes your furnace to work harder to distribute air throughout your home. This increases energy costs and damages your equipment, leading to



early failure. Therefore, it's important to check your air filter once a month. If it's dirty, take action!

## How to change your furnace filter:

1. Locate the current filter. It will be easily accessible and generally on the side or bottom of your unit, possibly behind a door or in a bracket.

2. Turn off your furnace and fan using your thermostat, your circuit breaker panel or switch.

3. Open the access cover or grill (if you have one) and pull out the old filter. Before you pull it all the way out, look for the arrow on the side, indicating which way to put the new filter in. Look for the arrow on the edge of the new filter. The arrows should point toward the furnace or blower unit.

4. Insert the new filter carefully. It should be a tight fit, so wiggle it a bit.

5. Close the access cover. If you don't have a cover and can see the edge of the filter, it's a good idea to grab some duct tape or a magnetic cover to seal that space.

## Smart thermostats

A smart thermostat automati-


cally adjusts heating and cooling temperature settings in your home for optimal performance. These devices offer the ability to monitor and adjust your home's temperature even when you are away. This allows you to set up schedules for the most efficient heating possible.

## Seal your ducts

In houses with forced-air heating systems air is distributed through the house's ducts. In a typical house about 20-30 percent of the air that moves through the duct system is lost due to leaks, holes and poorly connected ducts. The result is higher utility bills and difficulty keeping the house comfortable, no matter where the thermostat's temperature is set.

If you seal your own ducts, start by sealing air leaks using mastic sealant or metal tape and insulating all the ducts that you can access (such as those in attics, crawlspaces, unfinished basements and garages). Never use duct tape, as it is not long-lasting. Make sure that the connections at vents and registers are well-sealed where they meet the floors, walls and ceiling.

## Other considerations

If your furnace is more than 10 years old and you are noticing telltale signs of system failure, now may be the time to consider a replacement. Depending on where you live, replacing your old heating system with one that's earned the Energy Star logo can save you nearly \$140 annually. Talk to the co-op about installing a heat pump and our rebates to lower heating costs too. 

— *Courtesy of energystar.gov*

# Make scanning documents a snap!

If you have folders bursting in your file cabinet, packets of receipts filling your desk drawers and photos spilling out of albums, you can digitize those documents quickly and easily with the Fujitsu ScanSnap iX600.

The ScanSnap offers Wi-Fi compatibility to allow you to directly connect to smart devices or cloud services without a PC. This enables you to send the scanned documents to a variety of digital places for storage.

The ScanSnap is also great for businesses. One scanner will support up to four user licenses. The scanner also provides up to 30 customizable




**The Fujitsu SnapScan makes quick work of digitizing documents.**

profiles, which gives business owners different scanning options.

The ScanSnap features a 4.3-inch touchscreen for easy use that allows you to set up preferences.

Scanning two-sided documents is no problem with the ScanSnap. It has duplex capability. It also has speed. Up to 40 pages can be scanned per minute. The ScanSnap can scan photos in under a second with intelligent features, such as auto facial orientation and red-eye reduction.

The ScanSnap iX600 costs approximately \$450 and is available at a variety of retailers and online. 

## Safety

# Be safe around electricity at harvest

Before we know it, harvest arrives. Every year your electric co-op sees power line poles hit by farm equipment. Making contact with an overhead or underground power line is serious and potentially deadly. Follow these tips to avoid becoming “that guy.”

- Power lines can sag. Just because your equipment cleared it last year, it might not this year. Make sure to always keep 10-foot distance from any overhead power line. How can you tell? Use a spotter to watch the equipment being moved.

- Make it a habit to look around before beginning the day and notice where the power lines are located. Look for underground cabinets. Point out these items to other farm workers.

- Be extra cautious when moving equipment in windy conditions. It is always better to lower equipment before moving it. For example, always lower a grain auger when moving it from bin to bin.

- Build grain bins away from power lines to reduce the risk of grain



**Watch out for electric poles when working the ground. They are no match for today's powerful farm machinery.**

augers coming into contact with the lines. This action also eliminates the chance of a storm blowing a power line onto a metal building, which then becomes electrified.

- If you plan to move a building or bring a new one onto your site, call the

co-op to make sure the power lines can be safely moved and cleared.


- Report any lines that appear low or sagging.

- Always call 811 before doing any digging.

- Never assume a line or underground cabinet is safe to touch. You cannot tell if it is energized simply by looking at it.

- If your equipment gets in a power line, do not leave the equipment. Remain in the cab, as long as it is not on fire and call the co-op right away. If you must leave, know how to leave the cab safely.

- Don't let anyone approach the cab of any equipment that has come in contact with a power line. Keep them a safe distance away, which is usually at least 30 feet.

- Always have an emergency plan in place and teach all family members what to do. Don't touch or move anyone who is in contact with electricity. You could be shocked. When calling 911 or your local emergency number, report an electric-contact accident. 

# Brown County Briefs

## Energy-efficiency tip



Our faucets and appliances use a lot of hot water. You can lower your water heating costs by using less hot water in your home. Water heating accounts for a large portion of home energy bills. To save energy (and money) used for water heating, repair any leaky faucets, install low-flow fixtures and insulate accessible hot water lines. When it's time to purchase a new washing machine or dishwasher, look for models that are ENERGY STAR®-certified.

## Member Advisory meets



**Sept. 26**

The Member Advisory Council

will meet September 26 at the REA headquarters. Council members are invited to come early to check out and drive an all-electric Ford F-150 Lightning pickup. A light meal will be served at 6 p.m. and the meeting begins at 6:30 p.m.

## Pole testing continues

Brown County REA members in Courtland, Lafayette, Cornish and Alfsborg townships are reminded that Southwood 2000 is working in your area to inspect poles.

## Yard tool rebates due by 9/30



Members who purchased a battery-powered electric leaf blower, trimmer/weed whip, chainsaw or lawn mower in June, July or August should submit the receipt and model number by September 30 to be eligible for a rebate. One rebate per member. ☎

# Your change benefits many through Operation Round Up



The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board distributed a total of \$3,200 to five organizations and one individual in the BCREA service area at its August 16 meeting.

Funds were awarded to Junior Achievement North-New Ulm Area, South Central Minnesota Chapter of the Compassionate Friends, SWWC Foundation for Innovation in Education, Floratennial Garden Club and Courtland Fire Department.

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 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 15. Organizations interested in applying for funding through the Round Up Trust can request an application from trust board members Pat Roiger, Ann Parker, Kim Hensch, Kari Helget, Lynnae Pelzel, Brian Hacker, Lisa Schmitz, Jessie Beranek or Mike Rein. Applications are also available on the REA website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop), go to Operation Round Up under the Programs & Services tab, or by contacting the office at 800-658-2368 or 794-3331. ☎

# Easy ways to exercise civic duty



America's electric cooperatives, including Brown County REA, understand the value of building relationships with elected officials at all levels of government. Many important policy issues directly impact electric utilities and ultimately, you, the consumer-members we proudly serve. Strengthening our relationships with elected leaders, positions us to advocate for our local community.

While Brown County REA is a locally-owned cooperative, we're part of a larger network of electric co-ops. Through our non-partisan grassroots program known as "Co-ops Vote," we're working to enhance the political strength of electric co-ops and boost voter turnout. There's power in numbers and when we all show up at the polls, we can voice the issues that matter most to our community.

National Voter Registration Day is September 20, and midterm elections are right around the corner. If you're looking to get involved or simply make sure you're ready to vote, here are four easy ways you can exercise your civic duty.

1. Don't assume your voter registration status is up to date. Visit [www.vote.coop](http://www.vote.coop), then click "Election Resources" to verify your status.
2. Get informed. In addition to ensuring your registration is up to date, learning about local policy issues and candidates is one of the best ways you can prepare to vote.
3. Get active on social media. Follow @coopsvote on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and let others know you're a #coopvoter and #VoteReady.
4. Vote! It's the easiest — and most important — way you can exercise your civic duty.

Voting is a form of personal empowerment that gives you the opportunity to voice your opinion on the issues that matter most to you. ☎

# Thinking about going solar? Consider these factors before signing contract; talk with co-op

Member interest is rising lately regarding installing Distributed Energy Resources, particularly rooftop or ground-mount solar arrays.

It is good to first ask yourself, “What are my motivations for installing solar?” People are motivated by saving money, concern for the environment or both. Focusing first on energy efficiency addresses both motivations. Consider these factors first.

## Energy consumption

Solar systems are sized based on a home’s energy needs. The larger the system, the higher the cost. Before installing solar, make sure your home is as energy-efficient as possible. That means it will use less energy and allow you to install a smaller solar system, which will save money and reduce your home’s environmental impact.

Verify the efficiency of your lighting, heating/cooling systems and insulation. A fully insulated and air-sealed home uses less energy and those measures are less expensive than solar panels. Finish these energy-efficiency projects before installing solar.

## Affordability

Consider your overall out-of-pocket expenses. The expected lifespan of a heating and cooling system is 15 to 25 years. Check the age and condition of your heating/cooling equipment and consider the expenses of replacement. If something happens, will you be able to afford to fix or replace it?

## Roofing

Consider the age, orientation and shade of your roof. It is more difficult — and expensive — to reroof a home with solar panels. Will the roof need to be replaced before the solar panels need to be replaced?

The best orientation for solar panels is south facing to receive direct light throughout the day. A shaded roof keeps your home cool in the summertime, but reduces solar energy production.

## Maintenance



**Seeing solar on the horizon? Do your homework first, which includes visiting with your local electric cooperative.**

A solar system doesn’t last forever. Lifespans range from 25 to 30 years. As systems degrade over time, they produce less energy. Maintenance and repairs may be needed.

## Electric bills and storage

Solar is not “off the grid.” Unless you plan to disconnect from your electric co-op, you will still receive a monthly bill.

Solar panels only produce power when the sun is shining. If you want power to your home at other times, like after dark, you need to be connected to your electric co-op or invest in a battery storage system, which comes at an additional cost.


During power outages, don’t assume solar panels will supply you with power. Typical solar interconnection to the grid requires the panels to shut down during a power outage. This protects line crews from injury when making repairs.

## Contact your electric co-op

Solar contractors often work in several utility service territories and may not be familiar with your co-op’s offerings, rate structures and interconnection agreements. Before signing an agreement, check with your electric co-op for local info, rather than relying on what the contractor says.

As with any other system for your home, it is recommended to get bids from two or three contractors to compare equipment and pricing.

Understanding these considerations before installing solar will ensure you meet your money-saving and environmental goals.


Find more information on Distributed Energy Resources through our website ([www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop)). 

— Source NRECA Straight Talk

## Congrats go to these Auto Pay drawing winners



Congratulations to the winners of the random drawing for participants in the Automatic Payment from checking or savings account promotion! Winners will receive the following electric bill credits:

\$100 – Ronald Sutton  
\$50 – Brandon Kohn and Noel Phifer  
\$25 – Michael Bonack, Cheryl Mosenden, Dennis & Donna Berg, Lauraine Sowers, Brady Barnes, Wayne R. Johnson, Kathleen Von Rueden, George Beranek, Arlen Messerli, Gary Watson, David Forstner and Delbert Pingeon. 

# 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

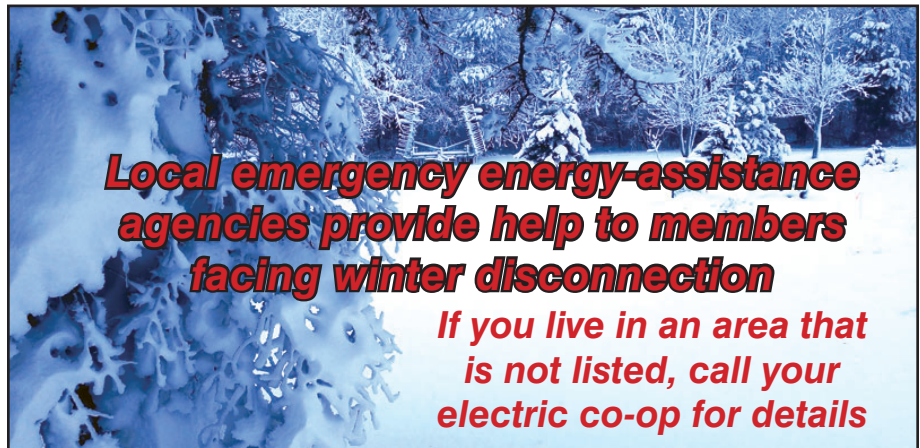
Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between October 1 and April 30,

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, 2023.



|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Blue Earth County.....  | 507-345-6822   |
| Des Moines Valley Human Services<br>(Jackson & Cottonwood) .....                      | 847-4000       |
| Martin County Human Services.....   | 238-4757       |
| MN Dept. of Energy Svcs. (Ask for fuel assistance).....                               | 1-800-657-3805 |
| Minnesota Valley Action Council .....   | 1-800-767-7139 |
| Brown County.....   | 508-4041       |
| Martin County .....   | 238-1663       |
| Nicollet County .....   | 934-5224       |
| Sibley County .....   | 237-2981       |
| Watonwan County .....   | 375-5748       |
| Nobles County Family Services Agency .....  | 372-2157       |
| Renville County.....  | 320-523-1842   |
| Salvation Army's Heat Share<br>(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<br>(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. ☎

### 2023 Minnesota Income Eligibility

| Household size | Annual income limit |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 1 person       | \$30,572            |
| 2 people       | \$39,979            |
| 3 people       | \$49,386            |
| 4 people       | \$58,793            |

## Have a ball for supper with new meatball recipes! Share yours now

On top of spaghetti? Is that how you serve your meatballs? Share with us your meatballs recipes, whether it's for spaghetti, appetizers, Swedish meatballs, sandwiches or something else. Mail your meatball 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. 📧

### Old Fashioned Cream of Tomato Soup by Laurie Sherman, Truman

Saute: 2 T. butter and 1 small onion, chopped.

Add: ¼ c. flour — cook and stir two minutes.

Add: 1 c. milk — whisk until thick.

Add: 1 quart peeled, chopped, fresh tomatoes — simmer 10 minutes.

Dump in blender and process until smooth

Return to pan and add: ½ tsp. thyme, basil, salt and pepper.

Add: ½ pint whipping cream and stir until warm.

Add: celery leaf if serving immediately. Reheats and freezes well. 📧

### Blueberry Sheet Pancake by Carol Waibel, New Ulm

1 stick butter, divided

2 c. buttermilk

2 large eggs

1 tsp. vanilla

2 c. flour

¼ c. sugar

2 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. kosher salt

1½ c. chopped fruit, nuts or chips

Heat oven to 400°. Line a rimmed 13x18" pan with parchment paper. Melt butter; use 1 T. of the butter to coat the parchment paper and sides of the pan.

Mix the milk, eggs, vanilla and 4 T. butter. Whisk until combined. Add the flour, sugar, baking powder, soda and salt. Fold in 1½ c. blueberries or other fruit. Bake until lightly golden and springs back when touched (about 12-15 minutes). Heat broiler, brush pancake with remaining butter and broil two to four minutes. Serve with syrup or powdered sugar. 📧



### 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. You can also register at [www.gopherstate-onecall.org](http://www.gopherstate-onecall.org) or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧

### Thanks for visiting co-ops' 2022 Farmfest booth



Drum roll...here's the winners for the battery-powered yard tools. 1. Snowblower: Kevin Root - Meeker Cooperative. 2. Leaf blower: Connie Mulder - Renville Sibley. 3. Electric mower: Pam Peterson - Meeker Cooperative. 4. String trimmer: Randy Huhnerkoch - Redwood Electric. 5. Chain saw: Arlyn Minkel - Renville Sibley 📧



**David Saggau**  
GRE CEO

# Staff Notes

## Cooperatives handle the heat

The electric system is designed to provide all the energy members need, even during the hottest times of the year.

As the summer began, you may have heard news about a shortage of electricity in the Midwest or concerns about the stability of the electric system. While it was true that there was less surplus energy than we typically have, the

Midwest electric system still had nearly 8 percent more electric generating capability than required to meet the expected demand.

In Minnesota the situation is even better. All utilities in our state, including Great River Energy (GRE), have more electric generating capacity than required. As expected, the electric system performed reliably through the summer, keeping members cool and comfortable even during heatwaves.

When service interruptions occur, they are typically due to weather events, resulting in physical problems with the system and not a lack of planning for adequate supply. As the electric industry continues to transition to more renewables and we face the impacts of more extreme weather events, GRE is focused more and more on resiliency.

In emergency situations, the region's grid operator calls on additional power supply resources, imports energy from other regions and performs voluntary load reductions to manage the electric system. Temporary controlled manual load sheds or periodic power outages are used as a last resort to keep the system in balance.

The reliability of the electric system is paramount to electric cooperatives. GRE and Brown County REA (BCREA) operate and maintain an electric system that is dependable today and carefully planned to be resilient as we continue to make and use electricity in new ways.

GRE is transitioning the way we generate electricity by reducing the use of fossil fuels and adding cost-effective renewable resources, such as wind energy. These resources require no fuel, which makes them environmentally responsible and economically advantageous. Because their production depends on the weather, however, we must have a dependable backup plan to reliably meet the needs of our members.

We plan power supply resources 15 years in advance to ensure we have what we need to serve members. Furthermore, every spring, the team at Great River Energy performs detailed maintenance on our fleet of natural gas and fuel oil powered "peaking" power plants in preparation for response to the peak needs of the system. These plants can produce electricity in a matter of minutes when needed.

In addition, GRE methodically designs, plans and operates a system of transmission lines that can handle high heat and elevated electricity demand. We also work with BCREA to reduce electricity use during strategic times to provide relief to the electric grid and save members money. (8)



**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.

# Board meeting highlights

The BCREA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting August 24 at the REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following items:

- Reviewed and approved the July 2022 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
- Reviewed and approved July 2022 financial statements and July 2022 payroll.
- Discussed the upcoming Member Advisory Council meeting set for September 26.
- Updated on new member-owned Distributed Energy Resource projects.
- Informed of work being done to process capital credit payments to inactive members.
- Discussed in depth the cooperative's position and vote in connection with the Great River Energy Special Member Meeting August 30.
- Reviewed the NRECA rates for employee benefits for 2023.
- Reviewed construction activities, including the Highway 14 expansion and Boundary Street projects.

The next meeting is set for September 29, 2022, at the REA headquarters. (8)