

Connections

November 2023

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 27, Issue 11

Add electricity to your Thanksgiving blessings

During this month of Thanksgiving, we count our blessings for our family, friends, food and good health. Let's take a moment to add one more blessing — affordable, reliable electricity — as we sit down to enjoy the traditional Thanksgiving meal.

While the United States and much of Europe lives with nearly 100 percent reliable electricity, many third world countries do not have this luxury. In fact, the World Bank lists reliability for several countries less than 50 percent in 2021:

- Tanzania 43 percent
- Uganda 45 percent
- Rwanda 49 percent.

The World Bank also has statistics for the total cost of electricity billed in U.S. dollars using 2014 dollars. In these same countries mentioned above the average cost is:

- Tanzania 19 cents
- Uganda 19 cents
- Rwanda over 40 cents.

Keep in mind that the 2021 U.S. average residential cost of electricity was 13.7 cents/kWh. Minnesota's average kWh cost was 13.5 cents in 2021.

Your electric cooperative's average residential rate for 2022 was 12.59 cents/kWh, which includes the energy charge, monthly service charge and power cost adjustment.

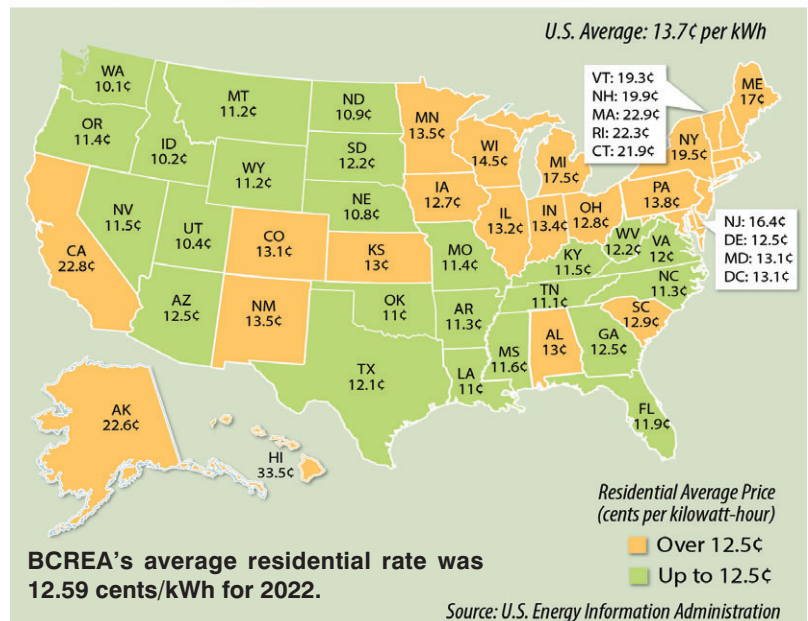
Plus, compare this to the European Union. Their average electricity cost is about two times that of the United States.

Now factor in the economic impact electric cooperatives have nationwide. These numbers come from a recent study on the economic impact of electric cooperatives between 2018-2022.

- Electric cooperatives employed about 69,442 workers a year, plus created 98,429 jobs for direct contractors through spending on capital projects, totaling 167,874 direct jobs.
- Electric cooperatives nationwide spent about \$409 billion in the U.S. economy between 2018-2022. It's broken down to \$303 billion spent on operations, \$75 billion on capital

Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2021 figures, in cents per kWh



improvement projects, \$24 billion on maintenance and \$7 billion was returned to cooperative member-owners in the form of capital credits.

• Electric cooperatives power 56 percent of the U.S. land mass. 832 distribution cooperatives distribute this electricity and other services to you, our member-owners. Meanwhile, 63 generation and transmission cooperatives provide wholesale power to these local distribution co-ops through their own electric generation facilities or by purchasing power.

• Electric co-ops serve 42 million people powering over 21.5 million businesses, homes, schools and farms in 48 states. So here's a tip of the hard hat this Thanksgiving! The electricity provided by your local co-op employees to you, our member-owners, is a relative bargain when compared nationally and internationally. (e)

At A Glance



Tis the season for cooking!

Learn more about electrical safety in the kitchen (see Page 3) and efficiencies of the various kitchen cooktop options (see Page 5). Incentives may exist for switching from a gas to an electric stove through the Inflation Reduction Act. (e)



Well, well, well, how does your well add to your monthly electricity bill?

The energy a residential well system uses depends on the equipment and water use. The homeowner is responsible for maintaining the well, ensuring drinking water is safe and paying for the electricity needed to run the well pump. Improve and maintain your residential well to use less electricity.

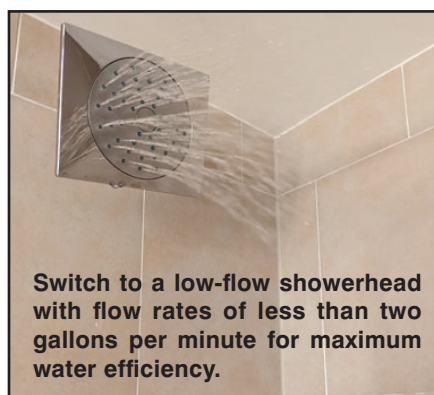
Inspect your well system

If you're concerned about how much you pay to pump water from your well, start with an inspection. Similar to heating and cooling systems, well pumps work daily; parts will wear over time. Regular maintenance can improve efficiency and increase the lifespan of the system.

The proper system design and sizing can save energy. Oversizing equipment wastes energy. Ask a well professional if your well equipment is properly sized for your needs. In some cases adding a variable-speed drive can save energy. Keep in mind, well systems don't last forever. Consider design and sizing before the existing system fails.

Things can go wrong with your well that are hard to spot. The water system may even act normally with good water pressure and flow, while using more energy and causing higher bills.

One of the most common causes of increased energy use is underground water line leakage between the pump and the home. Water lines can freeze and break or be damaged by digging or a vehicle driving over underground lines. Other issues can include waterlogged pressure tanks



Switch to a low-flow showerhead with flow rates of less than two gallons per minute for maximum water efficiency.

and malfunctioning equipment. Even if your well is in good working order, there are practices you can implement to save on your electric bill.

Lower water use to save money

The less water you use, the less energy you use. Take advantage of these water-related energy-saving tips.

1. Toilets. Check your toilet for leaks by putting a few drops of food coloring in the tank. If the color appears in the bowl without flushing, your toilet has a leak. This is likely caused by a worn flapper, which is an inexpensive and easy do-it-yourself fix.

If your toilets were installed before 1994, they are likely using more than 4 gallons per flush, which is well above new energy standards of 1.6 gallons. The average family can save nearly 13,000 gallons per year by replacing old, inefficient toilets with WaterSense-labeled models.

Another option is the tried-and-true plastic bottle method. Place sand or pebbles into a one- or two-liter bottle; place it in your toilet tank or buy toilet tank bags. This results in less water

filling the tank and less water being flushed.


2. Dishwasher — If you wash dishes by hand, start using your dishwasher instead. Did you know new Energy Star-certified dishwashers use less than half the energy it takes to wash dishes by hand? According to the Department of Energy, this simple change in habit can save more than 8,000 gallons of water each year.

3. Washing machine — Run your machine only with full loads to save water and energy. You may also consider upgrading to an Energy Star washing machine, which uses about 20 percent less energy and about 30 percent less water than regular washers.

3. Showerheads and faucets — Fix leaky showerheads and faucets. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, a leaky faucet that drips at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water per year.

Faucet and shower aerators are inexpensive devices that reduce the amount of water flow. For maximum water efficiency look for faucet aerators with no more than one gallon per minute (GPM) flow rates and low-flow showerhead flow rates of less than two GPM.

Of course, if you have a leaky water heater, call your electric co-op for your next replacement model.

Understanding proper well system design, maintenance and water conservation will help you save.  — Courtesy Efficiency Services Group

Elevate your home-made cuisine to higher level with an electric dumpling machine

Dumplings can be so tasty, but so time consuming! Elevate your dumpling making electrically!

An electric dumpling machine offers two modes: first, manual mode: put the dumpling skin and filling on the machine and then press the button to create a dumpling. Automatic mode: After you put the dumpling skin and filling on it, press the button on the right to select the gear, which is to work once in six seconds or once in nine seconds. After pressing the button the dumpling will be created.


If the edges are not tight enough because the consistency of the flour used for each one is different, try to wet the edges of the dumplings a little. Sprinkle some flour on the mold in case it sticks.

The device uses the USB power cable to charge it up. It can make about 1,500 dumplings on one charge.

This dumpling making machine consists of high-quality food grade material so it's easy to clean and durable. Enjoy perfect dumplings and family time with your kids. What a great holiday gift too.



No more fumbling with dumplings thanks to an electric dumpling maker. Use the manual or automatic mode to make dumplings fast and furiously just in time for the holidays.

Find this dumpling machine on Walmart.com or Amazon.com for about \$25. 

Safety

Electrical safety key ingredient to kitchen recipes

The kitchen is the heart of every home for delicious meals and delectable treats. However, the kitchen is also a place where electrical appliances are frequently used so prioritize electrical safety when cooking and baking.

Inspect/maintain your appliances

On your culinary journey it's essential to inspect and maintain your electrical appliances regularly. Check for any frayed cords, exposed wires or damaged plugs. If you notice any issues, repair or replace the faulty components immediately. Ensuring that your appliances are in good working condition reduces the risk of electrical accidents.

Use GFCI outlets

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets are a kitchen's best friend. They're designed to quickly shut off power when they detect an electrical fault, preventing electrical shocks and fires. Install GFCI outlets where electrical appliances are frequently used, such as near the sink and countertops. If you don't already have them in your kitchen, consider hiring an electrician.

Avoid overloading circuits

While preparing a meal, it's easy to plug in several appliances into one outlet or power strip. However, overloading



circuits is a recipe for disaster. Avoid connecting too many appliances to a single outlet, as this can lead to overheating and potentially cause a fire. Distribute your appliances across different outlets; use power strips with surge protection.


Keep water and electricity separate

Water and electricity are a dangerous combination. Never operate electrical appliances with wet hands or near water sources. Ensure that your countertops and workspaces are dry before using any electrical device.

Unplug when not in use

When you're finished using an electrical appliance, always unplug it. Leaving appliances plugged in when not in use increases the risk of electrical accidents and it also saves energy. Unplug toasters, blenders and coffee makers for both safety and energy efficiency.

Be mindful of appliance placement

Pay attention to where you place your electrical appliances. Keep cords and wires away from stove tops, sinks or flammable materials. Ensure adequate ventilation around appliances, like microwaves and toasters to prevent overheating. 

Brown County Briefs

Energy-efficiency tips

The holiday season is upon us, and that means we'll be using more energy in the kitchen! When possible, cook with smaller countertop appliances instead of the stovetop or oven. Smaller appliances like slow cookers, air fryers and Instant Pots consume less energy. When using the oven or stovetop, match the size of the pot to the heating element and place a lid over the pot while cooking. The food will cook faster and you'll use less energy.

2024 calendars available

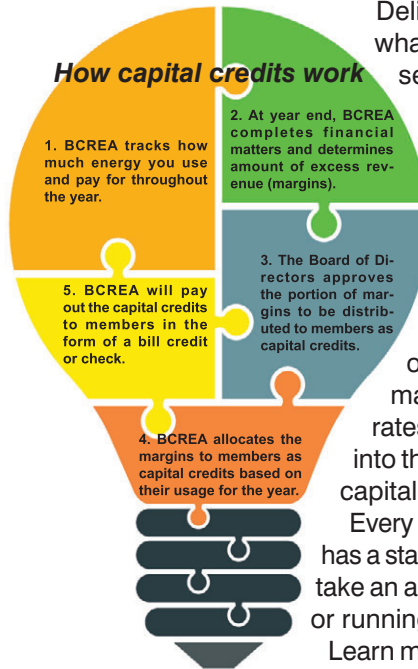
Members can stop by the REA office during business hours to pick up a 2024 large, farm pocket calendar, one per member please. A small number of pocket-size calendars are also available.

Operation Round Up

The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board will meet for its final 2023 meeting November 21. Organizations wishing to be considered for funding at this meeting should submit an application found on the REA website (www.browncountyrea.coop), under *Operation Round Up* in the *Programs & Services* section, before that date. ☎



Powering your best interests



How capital credits work

1. BCREA tracks how much energy you use and pay for throughout the year.

2. At year end, BCREA completes financial matters and determines amount of excess revenue (margins).

3. The Board of Directors approves the portion of margins to be distributed to members as capital credits.

4. BCREA allocates the margins to members as capital credits based on their usage for the year.

5. BCREA will pay out the capital credits to members in the form of a bill credit or check.

Delivering reliable, cost-effective energy may be what Brown County REA is known for, but what sets us apart from for-profit companies is our dedication to the well-being of the communities where we serve, live and work.

Electric co-ops provide an essential product. By providing electricity, businesses can expand, farms can operate more efficiently and homes can be heated and cooled. We are motivated by service, not profit.

Being a cooperative means reinvesting into our community. Any margins Brown County REA makes are returned to members through stable rates, infrastructure improvements and even back into the pockets of our members through patronage capital returns.

Every member of Brown County REA is an owner and has a stake in the company. Members are encouraged to take an active role in the company by voting in elections or running for one of our board seats.

Learn more about your electric cooperative, including the latest news, programs and rebates by visiting our website at www.browncountyrea.coop. ☎

Electric heat sales tax exemption

Do you use electric heat as your home's primary heat source? Are you receiving the sales tax exemption during the heating season?

Electricity sold to metered customers for their primary source of residential heat is not taxable during the billing months of November through April. When more than one type of heat is used, electricity is not taxable if it is the primary heat source. Primary source of heat is the source that supplies more heat than any other source for the largest period of time during the heating season. See the Minnesota Department of Revenue Sales Tax Fact Sheet FS157 at www.revenue.state.mn.us for more detailed information.

If you have made changes and now use electric heat as your primary residential heat and you have not completed and returned an exemption form, please fill out the Residential Heat Exemption Form. It is found under the Forms tab on our website www.browncountyrea.coop and return to our office. You may complete and return via e-mail to bcrea@bcrea.coop. BCREA must have a signed form on file in order for you to receive the sales tax exemption. Plus, please notify us if you no longer heat your home with electricity. ☎

Recycle your old holiday lights

Upgrading your holiday lighting to LED? Remember to recycle the old lights. BCREA is again working with the Sleepy Eye YES! Team to collect strands of old holiday lights to be recycled. Drop off your old lights in the box in the office entry during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The collection begins mid-November and runs through mid-January. Please do not place cord adapters, battery packs, plastic rope lights or CFL bulbs in the collection box. ☎

Consumer guide to stovetops

Most people who enjoy cooking have pretty strong opinions about their preferred fuel choice: gas or electric. Induction is a newer option for home stovetops, which is growing in popularity.

According to a study completed by Electric Power Research Institute, 74 percent of the energy from an electric range is transferred to food, versus 40 percent on a gas range. Induction cooktops are the most efficient option at 90 percent energy transferred to food. Regardless of your stovetop choice, right-sizing pots and pans to the burner is important to avoid wasting energy.

Electric cooktops are a tried-and-true option for many homes; they are typically the most affordable option. Glass top models offer a cleaner look than the traditional coil elements and are easier to clean, but tend to be a bit more expensive. The most common complaint about electric cooking is that the heating controls are not as fast or precise.

Many home chefs prefer gas stovetops because you can easily see the size of the flame, a visual clue that helps you control the cooking temperature. Temperature adjustments are also faster and more precise than on electric stovetops. However, there are some concerns with safety and indoor air quality associated with gas stoves because gas emissions can be harmful to your health. To help reduce indoor air pollution always use your exhaust fan when using your gas stovetop. Ideally, your exhaust fan should be vented to the outside.

An induction stovetop can offer a higher-end cooking experience than a standard electric stovetop; some people prefer it to cooking on gas.

Induction stovetops use electromagnetic energy to heat the pan, reducing energy waste. Instead of heating the stove's surface, they heat the pans themselves. Because the pans heat directly, you don't have to wait for the heat to transfer like you do with gas and electric stovetops, resulting in




faster cooking times. They also allow for more precise temperature control, which can deliver better results.

Cool burners offer additional safety benefits. You don't have the indoor air quality issues associated with gas; they won't ignite items, like dishrags or paper, left on the stovetop.

Induction cooktops are typically more expensive than similar gas or electric models. They also require you to use specific cookware. Stainless steel and cast-iron cookware are both compatible with induction cooktops. If you want to test your pots and pans to see if they are induction compatible, do the magnet test. If a magnet sticks to the bottom of the pan, it will work on an induction stove.

Cooking on an induction stovetop takes a little time to get used to, but many people have made the switch and enjoy the experience.

If you are remodeling and have a gas range, consider running electrical to support an induction cooktop if you change your mind in the future. Setting up the power supply during a remodel can offer significant savings.

If you are considering making the switch, be sure to keep an eye on any incentives for your state or region. A rebate for replacing your gas stove with an electric one may be available under The Inflation Reduction Act. 



Brown County REA is again collecting donations of unwrapped toys, books, hats and mittens to be used as part of the Santa's Closet project which provides gifts to area children who may not otherwise receive gifts this Christmas.

Please drop off donations before December 1st at the REA headquarters, 24386 State Hwy. 4, Sleepy Eye, M-F 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Monetary donations can be mailed to: Sertoma Club- Santa's Closet PO Box 692, New Ulm, MN 56073.

Thank you for your generosity to those less fortunate!

CTV offers 60 channels for only \$8 a month, which requires UHF antenna

Looking for low cost TV? Want to ditch the satellite dish? Try out CTV, which is owned by four local electric cooperatives, including yours.


What you need is a UHF antenna. Buy one from Walmart or online and install it yourself. Otherwise, reach out to a local TV antenna installer so they can climb the roof and add a booster, splitter and run the cable; find a list of installers at www.ctv.coop.

CTV operates three towers at Godahl, Jackson and Frost. The Godahl tower has about a 45-mile radius coverage area due to the tower height. Meanwhile, the Jackson and Frost towers have about a 30-mile radius coverage. A UHF antenna needs to be pointed toward the tower. Line-of-sight can be an issue, along with the summer heat and humidity, affecting CTV reception.

"If you are looking for a low-cost TV viewing option, consider CTV," stated Dave Sunderman, CTV general manager. "As an electric co-op member, you can add \$8 as a line on your electric bill for CTV. Just call or e-mail your co-op to do so. Your \$8 a month helps pay for the tower operations, the maintenance technician and licensing."

CTV viewers on the Jackson tower can now receive additional channels by doing a rescan with each TV. Additional channels were added for the channel 2s and 9s in late September.

For the latest channel updates or when a channel is down refer to channel 16.1.

Thank you for supporting this low-cost, local TV option. 



CTV channel Listing — Clip & set by your TV remote

2.1 TPT - Twin Cities PBS	16.1 CTV local access channel
2.2 TPT MN	16.2 LAFF
2.3 TPT Life	16.3 NASA
2.4 TPT Kids	16.4 To be determined
2.5 TPT NOW	16.5 CowGirl Channel
2.6 TPT MN	19.1 Laff (Godahl Tower)
4.1 WCCO 4 - Minneapolis CBS (not on Godahl tower)	23.1 WUCW 23 - The CW Twin Cities
4.2 Start TV	23.2 Comet
4.3 abl	23.3 Charge Network (not on Godahl)
4.4 FaveTV	23.4 TBD Network
5.1 KSTP - Minneapolis ABC	23.5 Rewind
5.2 Channel 45	23.5 GRIT (Godahl tower)
5.3 MeTV - Television Classics	23.6 Antenna TV
5.4 GetTV - Television Classics	24.1 (Not finalized)
5.5 Defy TV	25.1 Telemundo - Spanish Channel
5.6 ThisTV - MGM Movies	25.2 SonLife Christian TV Channel
5.7 H&I	25.3 COZI TV
9.1 & 9.9 FOX 9 - Minneapolis FOX	25.4 LX Lifestyle & Entertainment
9.2 FOX9+ - Minneapolis	25.5 Bein Sports
9.3 Movies TV - Classic movies	25.6 GetTV Classic Movies and TV
9.4 Buzzer - Old game shows	41.1 ION TV - TV shows and movies
9.5 The Grio	41.2 BOUNCE
9.6 Catchy Comedy	41.3 GRIT
9.7 Fox Weather	41.4 Mystery
9.8 Stories	41.5 Laff
9.10 9+ (repeat not at Godahl)	41.6 Scripps
9.9 Fox 9	41.7 Jewelry
11.1 KARE - Twin Cities NBC	41.8 QVC (shopping) (not on Godahl)
11.2 Court TV	45.1 Trinity Broadcasting - religious (Godahl Tower)
11.3 True Crime Network	45.2 TBN Inspire (Godahl Tower)
11.4 Quest	45.3 Smile (Godahl Tower)
11.5 Circle	45.4 Positiv (Godahl Tower)
11.7 Twist	45.5 Enlace TV - Spanish (Godahl Tower)
11.8 Home Shopping Network	

___ Yes, add the CTV \$8 a month payment to my electric bill. I want to pay my fair share.

___ Yes, I want to pay my fair share, but this is a cabin so please bill me \$48 (for six months).

___ Yes, I want to pay my fair share, but bill me once a year \$96.

Name _____ Address _____

City/state/zip _____ Account number _____

Return this coupon with your next electric bill payment, call or e-mail this information to your electric cooperative.

Aah shucks! Shuck out some oyster recipes to share for holidays

Get shucking! Dig up some oyster recipes; share your favorite oyster recipes whether it's as an appetizer, on the half shell, oyster stew and yes, we will even take oyster cracker snack recipes too. Send your favorite oyster recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by November 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Energy assistance for 2023-24: apply now using this QR code



Income-eligible assistance exists for homeowners and renters who pay heating/electricity costs. Assistance is also available for disconnection notices, shut-offs and no fuel emergencies. This link takes you to the Minnesota Public Utilities application. Otherwise, call the cooperative's phone number to request a hard copy or phone number to call for the local agencies, depending on where you live. 📧

Graham Cracker Bars

by Elizabeth Shimon, Granada

- 1 c. butter
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 c. chopped pecans

Line an ungreased cookie sheet with graham crackers. Bring butter and sugar to a gentle boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add pecans. Pour the mix over the crackers and spread evenly.

Bake at 350° for 10 minutes — watch it closely. Let cool, break up and enjoy! 📧

Remember: check our website for the outage map & scope



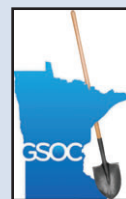
Happy Thanksgiving

The co-op is closed for Thanksgiving November 23 & 24. Crews are on call in case of outages.



Just make the call before digging:

1-800-252-1166



Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for

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

Staff Notes



Jennifer Rose
CFO

Brown County REA retires more than \$542,000 to you, members-owners

It's time for you to get the credit — capital credits, that is — for helping build, sustain and grow your local electric cooperative.

Earning capital credits is unique to the cooperative business model and represents your ownership in Brown County REA. When you signed up to receive electric service from Brown County REA you became a member-owner of the electric utility. Unlike investor-owned utilities, which maximize profits to pay dividends to shareholders, your not-for-profit electric co-op provides its members

with “at-cost” electric service. At the end of each year after all operational expenses have been covered, we return a portion of any excess funds back to you, the member-owners, in the form of capital credits. The amount you receive is based on how much electricity you purchased during a year.

Not all capital credits are refunded immediately. Because the electric utility business requires large amounts of capital to operate, electric cooperatives reinvest capital credits toward improving and expanding the electric systems. Capital credits also reduce the co-op's need to borrow money, which helps keep rates lower.

If you were a Brown County REA member in 2004, 2005 and 2022, you will receive capital credit payments reflecting your contribution of capital to, and ownership of, the cooperative during those years. Some of those years may seem like a long time ago; however, the funds helped us maintain lower rates, reduced the amount of money we needed to borrow from outside lenders to build, maintain, and expand a reliable electric distribution system, and covered emergency expenses.

At its October 31 meeting Brown County REA's Board of Directors approved the payment of \$542,177 in patronage dividends to its members. This amount is broken down as 20 percent of 2022, the balance of 2004 and a portion of the 2005 capital credits. Brown County REA will also pass along to the membership, retired Great River Energy remaining capital credits from 2001-2004 and a portion of 2005. Cooperative Finance Corporation remaining capital credits from 2006 are also being paid out.

With this retirement BCREA has returned a cumulative total since 1958 of more than \$15,206,000. Through 2022, the percentage of patronage capital retired to co-op members stood at 46.90 percent, which ranks your cooperative 6th in the state of Minnesota and 51st out of 700 cooperatives nationwide.

Look for your share of the capital credits retirement in your mailbox in mid-November. If your capital credit amount is less than \$250, you will receive a bill credit instead of a check. These amounts will be credited to the November electric bill of current members. For former members capital credit checks will be issued.

Capital credits to members represent one of the cooperative principles – members' economic participation. Best of all, the benefits of this economic participation return to our local communities.



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 September 28 at the REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action was taken on the following items:

- Reviewed and approved the August 2023 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
- Reviewed and approved the write-off of \$2,670.23 in uncollectible electric bill balances.
- Conducted the annual review and approved the co-op's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plan.
- Approved the 2022 payment of retired capital credits to members. Plus, approved increasing the minimum check amount to \$250.
- Discussed and approved with amended terms Great River Energy's Dodge County Wind Energy Purchase through NextEra Energy Resources.
- Updated on operations' activities, including pole replacements and the Highway 14 expansion project.

The next meeting is set for October 31 at the REA headquarters.