

Connections

October 2024

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 28, Issue 10

Help us celebrate Cooperative Month by patronizing some of these co-ops

Celebrate Cooperative Month with us! But first, what is a cooperative? Cooperative (n): an enterprise or organization owned by and operated for the benefit of those using its services.

Your electric cooperative is proud to be among the 30,000 cooperatives in the United States. Let us give you some suggestions on how to celebrate Cooperative Month and cooperatives!

1. Most importantly, flip on the light switch and use some electricity from your local electric cooperative when you wake up. 900 electric cooperatives exist in the U.S. Plus, your local cooperative is served by a wholesale power supplier cooperative.

2. Next, flip on the TV as Cooperative Television Association of Southern Minnesota (CTV), is a subsidiary of your electric co-op. Four area co-ops offer 50 UHF TV channels from the three towers at Godahl, Jackson and Frost for only \$8 a month. See the co-op's website for details or visit www.ctv.coop.

3. Now the tough decision is do you want orange juice



Cheers to cooperative member-owners like you! Enjoy a breakfast brought to by cooperatives during October Co-op Month — from electricity to juice and dairy products.

or cranberry juice from a co-op for breakfast? Sunkist consists of 1,000 citrus growers in California and Arizona. Florida's Natural also consists of more than 1,000 grower members. Otherwise, enjoy Ocean Spray juice, which is a cooperative of 700 family-owned cranberry farms.

4. That toast or cereal you are having for breakfast consists of grain produced by farmers who use agricultural cooperatives to buy their seed, fertilizer and fuel, plus sell their crops that feed the world. In addition, you can fill up your gas tank at your local ag co-op convenience store.

5. Top off your toast with butter! A Minnesota favorite would be Land O'Lakes, which is a dairy cooperative consisting of 1,200 dairy farms. They are one of the largest producers of butter and cheese in the U.S.

Another local favorite would be Associated Milk Producers Inc. (AMPI), which has headquarters in New Ulm; they are owned and controlled by families who produce quality milk on Midwest dairy farms. It is the largest cheese cooperative based in the U.S.

— **Continued on Page 6**

At A Glance

BROWN COUNTY REA

Who's powering you?

With more than 950 megawatts of wind energy from eight large wind farms, natural gas-fired peaking plants and a large-scale battery storage project in the works, Great River Energy is powering Brown County REA's service area into the future. Read more on Page 5.



Energy Wise

Take your attic to greater heights for energy efficiency with insulation & insulated platform

What's lurking in your attic? Discover — not Halloween ghosts — but energy savings with proper insulation!

Using your attic for storage can be problematic when trying to maximize your home's energy efficiency. Let's explore how you can improve insulation levels and properly store items in your attic.

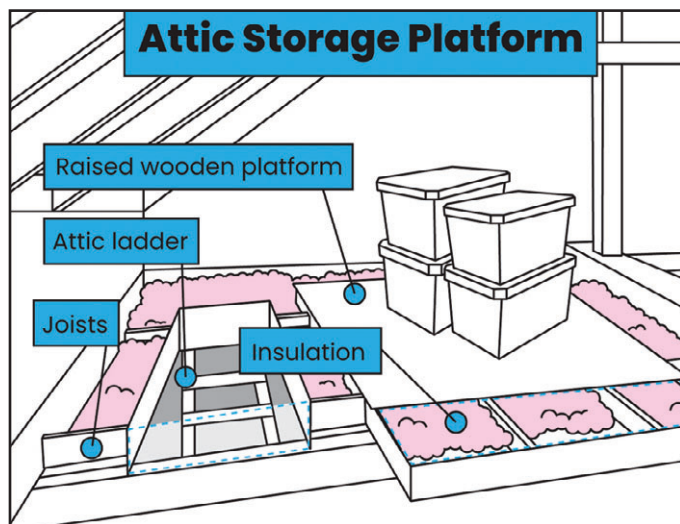
Attic insulation is one of the best low-cost ways to make your home efficient. People often associate insulation with keeping your home warmer in the winter, but it also provides benefits in the summer. Insulation reduces heat transfer from the attic to the house, which lowers energy bills for air conditioning and makes your home more comfortable.

Attic insulation is measured in R-value, which is a measurement of how well a material resists the flow of heat. For attic insulation, thicker is better. The recommended R-value is typically between R-38 and R-60, depending on your climate. Minnesota code dictates that new homes should have R-49. Measured in inches, that ranges from around 10 to 20 inches, depending on the type of insulation you have. (See chart below.) In most homes the ceiling joists are buried in insulation to achieve the recommended R-value.

The problem with attic storage is it typically doesn't offer enough space for the recommended R-value. Often, plywood or boards are placed directly on top of the ceiling joists, which isn't enough space for the insulation. Insulation can get compacted by people moving items in or out, reducing the effective R-value.

Ideally, the attic would not be used for storage so it can be properly insulated, but that's not feasible for everyone. Here are some strategies for maintaining attic storage and recommended insulation levels.

The best location for attic storage is over an unconditioned area of your home, such as the garage. You don't need




Building an attic storage platform offers extra storage space and helps maintain the energy-efficiency of the attic with insulation underneath it.

insulation in attic spaces over a garage or unconditioned area because you are not heating or cooling the space below. This makes it the perfect spot to tuck away items for storage.

If that isn't an option, consider minimizing the number of stored items or the storage area's footprint. A great way to do this is by building an attic storage platform. A raised platform allows the space underneath it to be fully insulated. These platforms are available in ready-to-install kits or you can buy materials and build them yourself.

Allow enough space underneath the platform to achieve the proper R-value. Use lumber to build a frame perpendicular to the existing joists and cover it with plywood or oriented-strand board. Once your storage area is set up, add insulation inside the platform to bring the R-value up to the proper level.

Your attic might also have trusses that allow you to build shelves and maximize space by storing items vertically.

Always wear a dust mask or respirator when working in the attic. Don't forget to weatherstrip the attic hatch to ensure a tight seal. Take a look around your attic to see if you can find any hidden opportunities for energy savings. 

Thickness of R-49 insulation depends on materials:

Open-cell spray foam	14.5 inches
Closed-cell spray foam	7 to 8 inches
Fiberglass batt	14 inches
Blown-in fiberglass	16.25 inches
Foam-board insulation	10 inches

Shine a light on outdoor steps with solar for safety!

Make your steps safer with outdoor solar lights. No electrical wiring is involved!

Niorsun Solar Step Lights enlighten your front or back door steps. Set the triangle solar light on the corner of the step. These waterproof lights feature 13 LEDs that emit a warm glow (3000 Kelvin) on the side so you can see where you will go! It needs full sun four to five hours to charge and provides eight to 10 hours of brightness at night. They are rated to withstand rain and snow with a sensor that turns on at dusk and off at sunrise. Hardware and instructions are provided for a quick installation.

The lights come in a variety of prepackaged quantities to fit your number of outdoor steps. Choose from a 4-pack up to 24-pack on Amazon. The price for a six pack is about \$34. Order now to have in time for the trick-or-treaters and the longer nights of winter. Imagine how much safer it would be walking down to the dock at night or the back deck too! Take this first step so your future steps are the safest. ☺

See the light at night with these outdoor solar step lights from Niorsun found on Amazon. No wiring required! “Step up” your safety to reduce the risk of trips and falls, plus add great curb appeal too!



Safety

Protect the poles during harvest & tillage season!

“Snap, crackle, pop!” These sounds are great with your breakfast cereal, but never during harvest. Nobody wants to see an electric pole snap, the electricity crackle or a fuse pop due to an electric pole versus farm-machinery accident.

Use caution when combining or tilling around the field at harvest time. Slow down. Allow plenty of space. Your life is precious — be safe. An outage at harvest time is also frustrating for the neighbors trying to unload or dry grain.

Two line crews replacing a three-phase pole like this after hours could be spendy — around \$2,500.

Follow these safety tips:

- Keep a 10-foot distance. Is the new farm equipment taller? Did the power line sag since last year? If so, call the co-op. Use a spotter when moving equipment.
- Before starting a field, look out for the poles, guy wires or green underground cable cabinets or transformer boxes.
- Lower the auger when moving from bin to bin. Be even more careful if it's windy.
- If equipment becomes tangled in power lines, do not leave the safety of the cab. Remain inside, as long as it is not on fire and call the co-op immediately.
- Don't let anyone approach the equipment if entangled with power lines or equipment; stay 30 feet away. ☺



Brown County Briefs

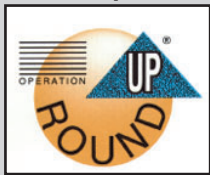
Efficiency tip

If you recently made or plan to make energy-efficiency improvements to your home, you may be eligible for federal tax credits. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 empowers homeowners to save money on energy-efficiency improvements and upgrades. Homeowners can save up to \$3,000 annually to lower the cost of efficiency upgrades by up to 30 percent. A few upgrades covered through the IRA include new exterior doors, windows, insulation, heating/cooling equipment and other major appliances. If you completed an upgrade this year or you are considering one, visit www.energystar.gov/federal-tax-credits to learn if you qualify for a tax credit. Source: energystar.gov.

Rate change

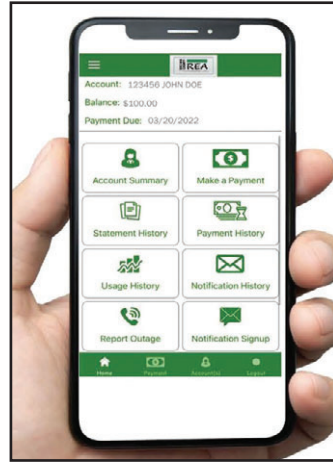
Members are reminded that the rate adjustments went into effect on September 1. The change is reflected on October bills for September usage. The bill is due by October 20th.

Round Up meeting November 19



The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board will meet to consider applications for funding through the Operation Round Up on November 19. Charitable organizations wishing to seek funding through the trust should submit an application prior to that date. The application form can be found on the co-op's website (www.browncountyrea.coop) under Operation Round Up on the Programs & Services tab.

Save paper & postage costs Stay in the know with co-op's electronic statement, newsletter and mobile app



Interested in receiving your monthly statement and *Connections* newsletter in your Inbox rather than your mailbox?

Brown County REA is encouraging members to help us reduce paper usage. With paperless billing you receive an e-mail each month when your statement is available. Log into the Member Account Access on the cooperative's website www.browncountyrea.coop where you can view your monthly statement. If you have not already done so, you will need to set up an account name and password in the website portal to access.

To view the *Connections* newsletter electronically, share a valid email address where you'll receive notice that the newsletter is available

each month. Click on the link to view the newsletter. A link to the newsletter is also posted monthly on the co-op's Facebook page and you can access the most recent 12 months of *Connections* issues on the website by clicking on Newsletters under the Resources tab

Get all of your account information at the touch of a finger with the Brown County REA Mobile App. Download from Google Play or Apple App Store.

Ready for winter load control season?



Check daily load control schedules by clicking the Load Management bar on the homepage of our website.

Members with a Dual Fuel Heating System (electric heat or a heat pump with non-electric backup) are reminded to make sure your back-up heating system is prepared and that you have adequate fuel supply.

- Dual Fuel Heating Systems are usually controlled during periods of high demand by a radio control on the outside of the house (pictured on the left), but other factors such as high market cost can lead to load control as well. Dual Fuel and Heat Pump Program participants should anticipate 20 days/108 hours of control this winter season: October 1, 2024-April 30, 2025.

- Schedules for water heaters and space heat on the Storage program have changed to shed load from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. from October 1 through April 20.

- Interruptible or Peak Shave Water Heating Program participants can expect 20 days/160 hours of control this winter season.

- Load control can happen any time of the day, but typically occurs late afternoon/early evening through 9 or 10 p.m. Early morning control may be necessary at times.


- Control schedules at individual receivers will be randomly staggered by up to 30 minutes.

- Winter control for members' Electric Vehicle chargers on the off-peak program will be from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

- Control on Interruptible Commercial & Industrial Program participants, with and without generators, is estimated for 5 days/30 hours this winter season.


Member Advisory Council learns about electricity — from transmission lines to substation and home

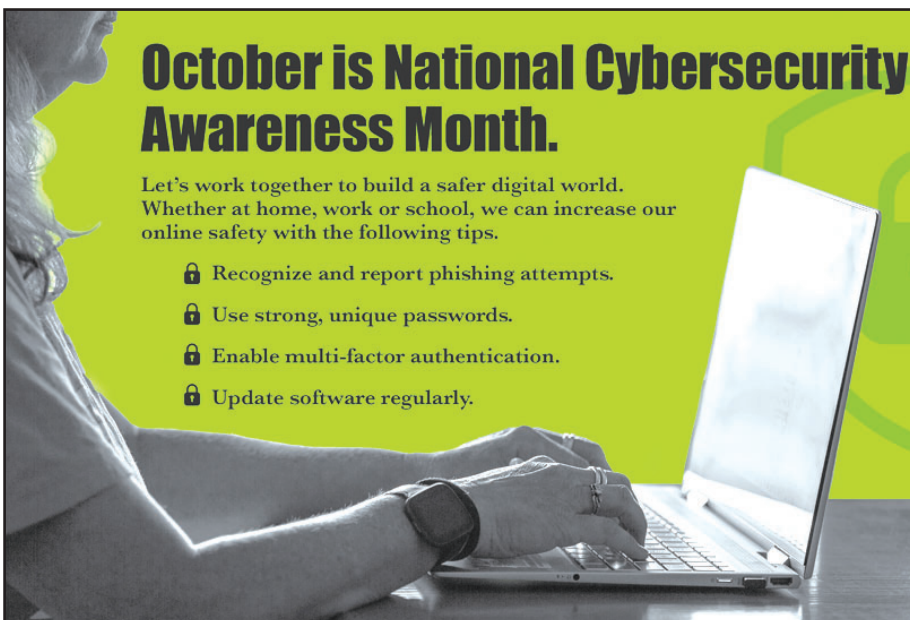


BCREA Operations & Engineering Manager Brandon Havemeier, facing crowd, provided insight about the equipment in the co-op's substations, distribution lines and their relation to nearby transmission lines. This was part of the September Member Advisory Council meeting. 

Update your life-support listing with the cooperative

Do you or someone living in your household require life-support equipment, such as an oxygen concentrator, respirator or home dialysis? Do you have battery back-up or a back-up generator in case of a power outage?

Brown County REA maintains a list of members with life-support equipment, which is updated regularly. An enrollment form is available on the website www.browncountyrea.coop under the Forms tab or can be requested by calling the office. A portion of the form must be completed by a physician. If the person with the medical condition moved from the co-op's system, no longer needs life support or has passed away, please inform your co-op so our list stays current. 



The power behind Brown County REA

Minnesota's carbon-free standard requires that 90 percent of electric utilities' retail sales be provided by carbon-free power by 2035.


Serving more than 700,000 members, Brown County REA's wholesale electricity provider, Great River Energy (GRE), has spent more than a decade reducing its carbon dioxide emissions to meet this standard.

GRE has more than 950 megawatts (MW) of wind energy from eight large wind farms. Wind's increasing efficiency and the strong wind conditions in our region make wind a competitive energy choice. GRE plans to double its wind capacity over the next few years.

To provide reliability for its members and the grid, GRE relies on natural gas-fired peaking plants designed to quickly ramp up electricity production when needed. Natural gas, although a fossil fuel, produces fewer emissions than coal and has been instrumental in GRE's ability to embrace renewables without sacrificing reliability and safety. GRE's largest peaking plants also have back-up fuel oil on site for year-round flexibility to operate in all conditions.

Fuel oil, coal and hydropower play smaller roles in power supply, but fulfill an important purpose for reliability.

While GRE moves toward more renewable energy, around-the-clock power supply resources remain important. GRE owns and operates Spiritwood Station, a flexible fuel plant in North Dakota that blends coal and natural gas to produce baseload power. GRE also contracts with Rainbow Energy in North Dakota for 550 MW of electricity to meet demand and energy needs. That amount will be stepped down until 2031 as more renewables come online.

Large scale energy storage is GRE's future by partnering with Form Energy for a long-duration, iron-air battery that can provide electricity up to 100 hours. This technology potentially allows GRE to store excess renewable energy generated during periods of high production and then discharge it during times of low generation. 

Cooperatives shape our world from newspapers, financially & agriculture

— Continued from Page 1

6. Need a new toaster for making breakfast? Visit Ace Hardware, a retailer-owned cooperative, with 5,600 stores. Another option would be True Value Hardware that is also a retailer-owned cooperative with 4,500 member-store owners.

7. As you digest breakfast, you might read a story in the newspaper written by the Associated Press; this is a nonprofit news cooperative owned by its member newspapers. It operates in more than 100 countries and 50 U.S. states.

8. In the newspaper you see an ad for a local credit union, reminding you that you wanted to stop there and do some banking today at one of the 4,500 credit unions. You may also be associated with other financial cooperatives, like a mutual insurance agency, health care insurance cooperative or Compeer, a farm credit cooperative serving 75,000 member-owners.

9. Another addition for the co-op “do-list” is to stop at the local food cooperative to buy groceries.

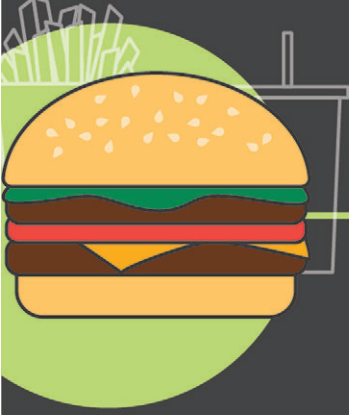
10. You just remembered you need a birthday gift. Consider buying something at REI Co-op (Recreational Equipment Inc.) with 132 stores selling outdoor gear. REI boasts 24 million lifetime co-op members.

11. Besides electricity, telephone and broadband cooperatives may also provide you services. The U.S. features about 260 telephone co-ops and 250 broadband cooperatives.

12. To top it off you could reach out to Heartland Security (HSS), while not a cooperative, it is owned by your local co-op and 12 other electric co-ops. Heartland Security can help you with medical alert, intrusion, fire, carbon monoxide and water-leak detection. Plus, HSS serves businesses with cameras, card access and security. See the HSS ad on Page 7 or go to www.Heartlandss.com.


Thanks for strolling down cooperative lane with us! 

THE VALUE OF ELECTRICITY



\$5.58

average cost of a Big Mac®



\$4.60

average daily cost of power

Electricity is expressed on a daily basis using EIA 2023 Average U.S. Monthly Residential Bill of \$138. Big Mac® is a registered trademark of McDonald's Corporation. McDonald's Corporation does not endorse or sponsor this material.

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Spice up your holidays with cinnamon recipes; share with us!

Sprinkle some cinnamon recipes into your holiday eats and treats! Share your favorite cinnamon recipes with us, whether for muffins, pie, rolls, dessert, bread, hot drinks and more. Send your favorite cinnamon recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by October 28. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

Pumpkin Ice Cream Pie by Terese Gruber, New Ulm

Makes 3 (9-inch pies) or 36 (3-inch) pies

For individual portions either buy or make three 9-inch graham cracker crumb crusts. The mini-pies are easily removed from their aluminum pans for a more attractive serving. If you have only sweetened pumpkin puree on hand (instead of unsweetened), omit the sugar and spices.

Half gallon vanilla ice cream	1/2 tsp. ground ginger
15-oz. can unsweetened pumpkin puree	1/4 tsp. nutmeg
1 c. packed brown sugar	3 (9-in) graham-cracker crumb crusts
1/2 tsp. salt	Whipped cream, for garnish
1/2 tsp. cinnamon	Cinnamon sticks & nutmeg, for garnish

Let ice cream soften. Meanwhile, in a large bowl thoroughly mix the pumpkin puree, brown sugar, salt, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg, removing and discarding any lumps of brown sugar. Add the softened ice cream and blend thoroughly.

Pour the ice cream into the prepared crusts, allowing some crust to show for a pretty presentation. Freeze until ready to use, covering with plastic wrap once the pie is frozen throughout. To serve garnish with whipped cream and cinnamon sticks and/or nutmeg. ☺

Pumpkin Pie Squares

by Barb Sellner, New Ulm

Crust: 1 yellow cake mix. Set aside 1 c. of the dry mix. Add to the rest of the cake mix 1/2 c. melted butter and 1 egg. Mix and press in a 9x13" pan.

Filling: 3 c. pumpkin (30 oz. can)

1 c. brown sugar

2 eggs

2/3 c. milk

1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice

Mix together. Pour over crust.

Topping: Combine 1 c. dry cake mix

1/4 c. sugar

1 tsp. cinnamon

1/4 c. melted butter

Make a crumble. Sprinkle over the filling. Bake 45-55 minutes at 350° until knife inserted comes out clean. Serve with whip cream or ice cream. ☺

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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. ☺



Mike Heidemann
Chief Executive Officer

Staff Notes

Co-ops Power Communities with Purpose

Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Some are based on geographical proximity, some are based on shared interests or hobbies, and some communities can even be found in virtual spaces, like social media groups. Regardless of where or how they are formed, communities can bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

Brown County REA is deeply committed to our member-owners; we're glad you are part of the electric cooperative community. This October, Brown County REA joins more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. in celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all the things that set co-ops apart from other types of businesses; plus, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit utilities built by the communities they serve. For Brown County REA, our mission has always been to provide you with reliable power. We care about your quality of life; since we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond the business of electricity, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because we live here too. That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects, youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives and other programs that make our community a better place to call home.

All co-ops, including Brown County REA, are guided by seven cooperative principles that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities while remaining true to our purpose:

1. Open and Voluntary Membership: Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.

2. Democratic Member Control: Members make decisions that shape the co-op. Why? Because co-ops are created by the members, for the members.

3. Members' Economic Participation: Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. At Brown County REA, this happens through paying your energy bills.

4. Autonomy and Independence: Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.

5. Education, Training and Information: Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.

6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives: Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other out in times of need because we want other co-ops to thrive.

7. Concern for Community: All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.

This October, as we celebrate the power of co-op membership, we hope you recognize the many aspects that set electric cooperatives apart. Our mission is reliable power. Our purpose is people — the local communities we serve. ☺



Brown County Rural Electrical Assn.
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Sleepy Eye MN 56085
E-mail address: bcreea@bcreea.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

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William Berg, Vice President — 507-766-1497
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Brad Sprenger — 507-317-5576
David Wendinger — 507-276-3166
Greg Mages — 507-794-3540
Joel Christensen — 507-828-4550
James Mickelson — 507-794-6298
Landon Sletta — 507-439-6559
The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.

Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly Board meeting on August 28, 2024. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the July 2024 Board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
- Approved July 2024 financials & payroll.
- Viewed video of electrical safety presentation at Farmfest. Four of the co-op's linemen worked at the safety booth during the event.
- Reviewed Coffee with the Co-op events.
- Approved the Electric Vehicle Off-Peak Charging and Time-of-Use rates to reflect the rate adjustment.
- Discussed the review completed by operations manager and consulting engineer of the 2023 and February 2024 work orders and approved draw down of funds totaling \$2,228,996.
- Reviewed and approved the cooperative's 2023 IRS Form 990.
- Updated on operations' employee safety training.

The next meeting is set for September 26, 2024, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ☺