

Connections

May 2025

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 29, Issue 5

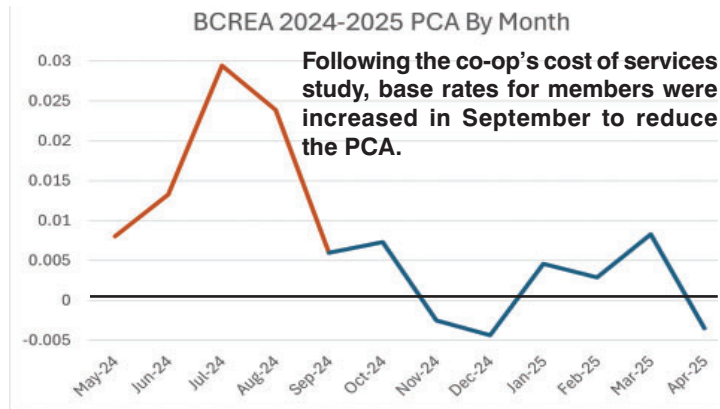
Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) on your electric bill varies monthly due to the wholesale power cost fluctuations

Like a roller coaster, your electric bill goes up and down. While the kilowatt-hours (kWh) used makes up a major portion of the monthly changes, another contributor is the power cost adjustment (PCA).

Brown County REA pays its power bill each month for the purchase of wholesale power used to provide electricity to you, our members. During months of extreme temperatures, the power supplied may cost more than the set wholesale power rate. To adjust for the fluctuating wholesale power costs, a PCA is applied to members' bills each month. The PCA reflects an adjustment for the actual cost of wholesale power during each billing period — above or below BCREA's base rate. This base rate includes the wholesale power generation and the transmission line costs to Brown County REA's substations. It's a way to pass along the true cost of your power.

Wholesale power is purchased from Great River Energy (GRE) and Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), along with Southern Minnesota Electric Cooperative (SMEC) under an existing contract to serve former Alliant Energy territory and distribute that power to our members.

The PCA is measured in mills (tenth of a cent) and can increase or decrease



your electric bill. The PCA may increase due to a cold snap, high usage from corn drying or a summer heat wave when members use greater amounts of electricity and power costs are higher on the open market. The PCA changes if our power suppliers experience higher prices on the wholesale market due to limited natural gas or spikes in natural gas pricing, power plant failure or other factors. The PCA passes along higher costs of wholesale power purchased on the open market. A negative PCA may exist during the spring when energy usage is lower or in the fall, except when a lot of corn drying is needed.

Because fuel prices change daily, wholesale power costs vary monthly. Brown County REA's base electric rate stays the same, while the PCA adjusts based on fluctuations in fuel cost. Think of it like fueling your car. The price of gasoline may change each time you fill up. That very same thing happens

to the price of fuel and other resources used to create your energy.

Wholesale power cost is BCREA's largest expense item and the PCA is a pass-through from the wholesale power bill to members' bill. While the terminology may vary, most energy suppliers have a monthly adjustment for fluctuating fuel costs related to power production. Some refer

to it as a "Wholesale Power Adjustment" or "Fuel Cost Adjustment," or other terms, but they are all about the same.

Members can calculate their own PCA each month by multiplying the PCA on the electric bill by the kWhs used for the billing period. This formula charges all Brown County REA members equally for the increase or decrease in the cost of generating electricity, based on fluctuating costs.

The best way to stabilize variances on your electric bill is to use your electricity wisely. Upgrade your heating/cooling system to a cold climate air source heat pump or ground source heat pump. Unplug an old energy guzzler refrigerator or freezer in the garage. Use LED light bulbs. Make sure your home or business is well insulated. Take advantage of the co-op's water heater program too, which pushes the heating of the water to off-peak hours. Energy conservation stretches your energy dollar. ☺

At A Glance



88th Annual Meeting highlights:

Members enjoyed good food, music and presentations on April 10 at the 88th Annual Meeting. Elections were held and a new board member was elected for District 5. Thank you to all the members who attended! See Page 5 for election results and photo highlights. ☺

Energy Wise

Spring into action now for the lower summer electric bills with these several easy actions

Spring is in the air. Before you know it, summer will be here. Jump start summer savings with these tips to prevent higher summertime electric bills and prevent energy waste.

Add your cooling equipment to the spring-cleaning checklist. An annual tune-up by a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) professional should include refrigerant charge, airflow adjustment, plus condenser and evaporator fan coil cleaning. This helps maximize your system's efficiency and the lifespan of your equipment, reducing wasted energy and costs.

Some HVAC companies offer discounts for cleaning equipment during the months when they are less busy. Once high temperatures hit, they are more likely to be swamped with calls to repair or replace broken equipment. Signing up for an annual maintenance plan, may provide additional savings.

A dirty furnace filter wastes energy by causing your system to work harder. Make sure you have a stack of replacement filters ready to go so you are more likely to replace them as needed. Filters tend to be less expensive if you buy them in bulk. The per-filter price was about half as much for a 12-pack, as it was for a two-pack.

Ductless heat pumps, also known as mini-splits, have a filter in the indoor unit or head, which should be cleaned. If you clean the indoor filter yourself, turn the unit off before removing the filter and let it dry completely before putting it back.

If you need to replace your old central air unit, explore the co-op's website for heat pump rebates. Upgrade to the highest efficiency unit now for lower



Beat the dog days of summer! Using a fan can make a warmer room more comfortable without adjusting the thermostat. Remember, fans cool people (and pets) — not rooms. Turn fans off in unoccupied rooms.

monthly operating costs each summer. Take advantage of the co-op's Smart Thermostat \$25 rebate too.

As we transition from cool to warm weather, keep an eye on your thermostat settings. The Department of Energy recommends setting cooling temperatures to 78 degrees when you are home and higher when you are away. Save as much as 10 percent a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day.

One way to feel cooler is using fans in the occupied room(s) during the day or when you're sleeping. Using a fan can make a warm room feel cooler without having to adjust the thermostat. Remember: fans cool people, not rooms. Turn fans off in unoccupied rooms.

If your ceiling fan has a reverse function, flip the switch so it blows air down into the living space. The reverse function is great at circulating warm air in the winter. Plus, save more with a fan by switching the flow of air seasonally.

Another consideration before summer hits is your home's impact on peak load — when demand for electricity is highest. This typically occurs in the morning when people are getting ready for work and school, plus in the evening when they return home. Your electric cooperative must manage the energy use of all its consumers, which can be a challenge. Consider starting the dishwasher before you go to sleep or starting a load of laundry outside of your utility's peak times.

If you have a photovoltaic solar system, run your dishwasher or do laundry when your system produces the most electricity, which is typically during the sunny mid-day.

Cooking outdoors in summer is a great way to save energy. Using the stove or oven heats your kitchen, which requires more energy for cooling. Clean the grill now so that you are ready to enjoy outdoor cooking.

Follow these tips to save energy and lower your bills.


New spin on light bulb/fan keeps you cool

Adding a fan's cooling breeze is now as simple as screwing in a light bulb to an existing light fixture.

Besides the LED light with a variety of LED colors from white to a yellow tint, enjoy the small fan in many possible locations. Add it to your garage, laundry room, bathroom, pantry, bedroom, walk-in closet or above the kitchen sink! Add the cool flexibility needed in an apartment. No tools, wiring or electrician are needed!

Some fans feature the blades inside a protective cover and other styles do not. Choose the cover style if you have kids or pets. Choose from white or black styles. Some brands even have a remote control to turn the fan on, select from three fan speeds and adjust the lighting color and brightness.

Keep your cool with the affordable pricing. Find it at your local Ace Hardware store, lumberyard or Amazon. Depending on the features, prices range from \$25-\$50 as several models and manufacturers exist.

Some fan lights are as small as 10 inches wide, while others are up to 18 inches in diameter. Some models feature extended sockets so it works with recessed light sockets. 

Installing a small ceiling fan is as simple as screwing in a LED light bulb with a built-in fan!



Safety

Observe May Electrical Safety Month every month!

Every May, Electrical Safety Month serves as a reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May, but year-round.

Reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected with five home safety tips.




from extension cords every year from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're using extension cords as permanent power, call an electrician to install more outlets.

2. Use surge protectors. Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances with surge protectors. These devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all

power strips include surge protection; read the product's label. Plus, surge protectors can lose effectiveness over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated as it has a 5 to 10-year lifespan.

3. Practice safe power strip use. Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers, should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with an "overburdened" power strip may lead to overheating and create a fire hazard; check the power strip's wattage before using it.

4. Water and electricity don't mix. Accidents involving water contact with electrical items still occur. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances — never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) where water and electricity are typically close, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.

5. Educate family members. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances; ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions during emergencies. 

Brown County Briefs

Efficiency tip

Routine maintenance is important to keep your refrigerator running efficiently. Lint and dirt should be cleaned from the refrigerator coils every six months to a year, and more often if there are pets in the home. When coils are coated with lint, dust or pet hair, your refrigerator works harder than it's designed to, which can prevent the appliance from cooling properly and efficiently. The additional work can increase the energy costs of the refrigerator by as much as 35 percent and shorten the life of the appliance. Source: energy.gov

Check it out — capital credits



Look for your 2024 patronage allocation amount on the May billing statement. Capital credits will be paid out in November.

Summer maintenance projects

Southwood 2000 will begin inspecting Brown County REA's poles in Morgan, Upper Eden and Sherman townships. In addition, this is a reminder that Central Applicators will be doing vegetation control at all of the cooperative's substations beginning in June.

Rebates electrify yard work

Looking to buy a battery-powered electric yard tool? Brown County REA offers a rebate of \$25 for a minimum \$150 pre-tax priced leaf blower, chainsaw, trimmer/weed whip, lawn edger or pole saw and \$50 on a \$399 or higher-priced pre-tax priced electric push lawn mower. You can receive a \$100 rebate on an electric riding lawnmower priced \$599 or higher.

Provide a copy of your dated receipt with the purchase price and model number. Approved rebate is paid as a credit on your electric bill. Limit one rebate per member. ☺

The Round Up Trust board awards eight \$250 scholarships to seniors



William Bastian



Grant Kuehn



Justin Messner



Joseph Nachreiner



Cadence Okerman



Rachel Portner



Elissa Ries



Shelby Seifert

The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board met to review applications for the eighth annual Brown County Rural Electric Trust scholarships at its April 8 meeting.

Eight \$250 scholarships were awarded to high school seniors whose parents/guardians are Brown County REA members. The winners will receive their funds, to be used for educational costs, after successfully completing one semester at an accredited university, college, vocational, community or technical college.

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

2025 scholarship winners are:

- William Bastian, son of Steve & Karen Bastian, and a senior at GFW High School.

- Grant Kuehn, Springfield High School senior, and son of Jeff & Courtney Kuehn.

- Justin Messner, son of David & Bethany Messner, and senior at GFW High School.

- Joseph Nachreiner, Comfrey High School senior and son of Brad & Jessica Nachreiner.

- Cadence Okerman, daughter of Ray & Renee Okerman and a senior at Sleepy Eye High School.

- Rachel Portner, Sleepy Eye St. Mary's senior and daughter of Mark & Lisa Porter.

- Elissa Ries, Cathedral High School senior is the daughter of Cindy Preisinger and the late Jason Ries. Her guardians are Glenn & Jackie Forst.

- Shelby Seifert, daughter of Jason & Sarah Seifert, and senior at New Ulm High School.

Congratulations and thank you to all of the applicants. ☺

Members gather for 88th Annual Meeting


More than 400 members and spouses, employees and guests of Brown County Rural Electrical Association (BCREA) gathered at the Sleepy Eye Event Center April 10th for the cooperative's 88th Annual Meeting. A total of 247 members registered at the meeting.

District 7 Director Greg Mages gave the Invocation before a catered meal. During the business meeting, Board President Tom Hayes recognized guests from other cooperatives and special guest, Sen. Gary Dahms. Hayes presented a plaque to District 5 Director Jim Mickelson who retired after serving on the board since 1998. CEO Mike Heidemann reviewed the 2024 audited financial report and discussed the cooperative wholesale power supply, emphasizing that nearly 99 percent is produced in the United States.

Keith Hoffmann won a seat on the Board of Directors in District 5 over challengers Dale Domeier, Justin Steffl and Brad Sellner. In District 4, Bill Berg was re-elected over challenger Christine Kral. Jim Hanson ran unopposed in District 1 and was elected by acclamation. All were elected to three-year terms.

Cindy Jensen, a senior at Comfrey High School, who represented Brown County REA at the 2024 Rural Electric Youth Tour shared highlights and photos from the trip to Washington, D. C. last summer. Matt Wendinger reported on his opportunity to take a behind-the-scenes look at the cooperative serving on the 2024 Member Advisory Council.

Winners of the 2025 Operation Round Up scholarship, given to high school seniors whose parents/guardians are Brown County REA members, were announced. William Bastian, Grant Kuehn, Justin Messner, Joseph Nachreiner, Cadence Okerman, Rachel Portner, Elissa Ries and Shelby Seifert were each awarded \$250.

At the organizational meeting which followed, Tom Hayes was elected President of the Board, Bill Berg chosen as Vice President, and Jim Hanson elected Secretary-Treasurer. Bill Berg will again represent Brown County REA on the Great River Energy Board. 



2025 Brown County REA Directors after the election. Pictured from the left: Bill Berg, Brad Sprenger, Jim Hanson, Keith Hoffmann, David Wendinger, Tom Hayes, Greg Mages, Landon Sletta, Joel Christensen.



Cindy Jensen, a senior at Comfrey High School, shared highlights from the 2024 Rural Electric Youth Tour with Washington, D. C. photos from last summer.



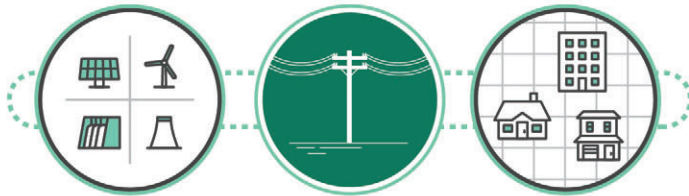
The Leon Olsen Show, New Ulm, performed for members during registration and the meal.



President Tom Hayes presented a plaque to District 5 Director Jim Mickelson who retired after serving on the board since 1998.

A Balancing Act: ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AND DEMAND

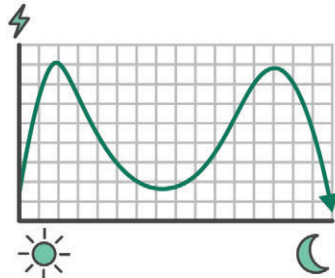
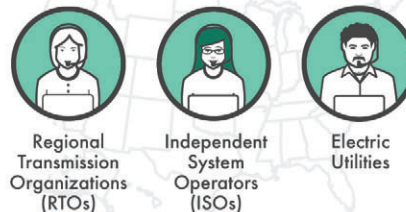
Behind the scenes, a network of people and facilities work together to ensure you have electricity when you flip the switch.



Electricity is generated at a power plant, then sent across the grid to homes, schools and businesses.

The *amount of electricity generated and how much is sent to where it's needed* are typically coordinated and monitored by regional grid operators that essentially act as energy traffic managers.

Regional Grid Operators



As electricity demand varies throughout the day, grid operators, power plant operators and electric utilities work to forecast, plan and purchase enough electricity for everyone.

Ensuring communities have the exact amount of electricity they need is a challenging task, but behind the scenes, a network of industry experts make it happen every day.



Factors that Impact Electricity Supply and Demand



- Demand Surges
- Extreme Temperatures
- Infrastructure Costs and Availability
- Supply Chain Challenges
- Fuel Costs
- Federal and State Regulations

Become berry merry sharing raspberry recipes with all of us

Raspberries are scrumptuous summer treats! Share your favorite raspberry recipes with us, whether it's for jam, lemonade, cheesecake, bars or as a special sauce. Send your favorite raspberry recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by May 24. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 🍷

Rhubarb Cream Delight by Barbara Sellner, Sleepy Eye

Crust: 1½ c. flour 3 T. sugar ¾ c. butter

Combine crust ingredients. Press into a 9x13" pan. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes. While it is baking, make the filling.

Cream filling: 2 c. sugar 4 egg yolks, beaten 2/3 c. cream
3 T. flour 4 c. rhubarb, chopped

Combine in a sauce pan and cook until thick. Pour on the crust. Top with the meringue.

Meringue: 4 egg whites ¼ c. sugar

Beat egg white with the sugar until thick and satiny. Bake at 325° for 15-20 minutes until golden brown. Refrigerate any leftovers. Serves 10 to 12. 🍷

Rhubarb Pie, by Barbara Sellner, Sleepy Eye

3. rhubarb 1 T. butter 1 c. sugar

Cook together on high until rhubarb becomes tender.

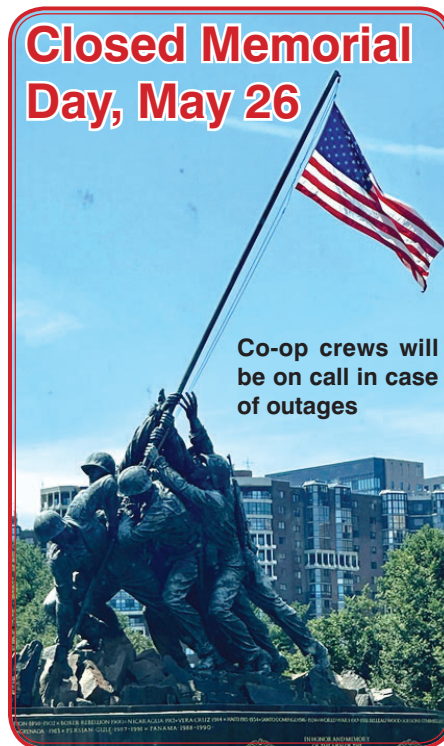
¼ c. cream 2 egg yolks (save the egg whites) 2 T. cornstarch ½ c. sugar

Mix together and then add to the rhubarb; boil on low until thick.

Pour the filling into a baked pie shell. Cover with the meringue:

2 reserved egg whites from pie ¼ c. sugar

Beat egg whites until stiff; add sugar slowly. Beat until glossy. Put on top of the pie. Bake at 400° for three to five minutes until golden brown. 🍷



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Contact Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees and tiling.

Register at www.gopherstate-onecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 🍷



Marcia Solie
Member Services
Manager

Many thanks as I move onto next chapter

In the summer of 2010, I embarked on a new employment adventure and became the Member Service Manager for your electric cooperative. On April 30 I turned the page to begin what hopefully is the best chapter yet — retirement.

I have truly enjoyed working with so many members of the co-op whether it was helping with water heater issues, checking on a generator, answering general questions or assisting with rebates. It has been a pleasure to gather quarterly to work with the volunteers on the Operation Round Up Trust Board doing good things in the service area. I've enjoyed visits with those who have served on the Member

Advisory Council during my tenure. I've had the privilege to meet potential future members through involvement with Youth Tour winner selection and I enjoyed chaperoning this trip to Washington, D.C. on two occasions.

I am grateful to Wade Hensel for hiring me for this opportunity and the directors during my employment with the co-op. I have been fortunate to spend my days with great co-workers, past and present, and gained friends through networking with many colleagues throughout the industry. Many thanks to all! I am looking forward to spending more time with our grandchildren (11 and one on the way), family in South Dakota and enjoying life at the lake. Please welcome Laura Fischer as she steps into this role to serve Brown County REA members. ☺



COMMUNITY FUND

YOUTH BASEBALL CLINIC!

| | | |
|--|---|---|
|  | <p><u>Sleepy Eye, MN</u> Sunday, June 1st</p> <p>9:30 - 11:30 AM</p> <p>Prairie View Park 7th Ave SW</p> <p>Hosted By: Sleepy Eye Baseball Association</p> | <p><u>Gibbon, MN</u> Sunday, June 1st</p> <p>1:30 - 3:30 PM</p> <p>McGowan Field at Lincoln Park</p> <p>Hosted By: Gibbon Reds Amateur Baseball Team</p> |
|--|---|---|



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BROWN COUNTY REA

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

Payment Line (PSN): 833-250-4481

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

Thomas Hayes, President — 507-228-8954

William Berg, Vice President — 507-766-1497

James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 507-829-6756

Brad Sprenger — 507-317-5576

David Wendinger — 507-276-3166

Greg Mages — 507-794-3540

Joel Christensen — 507-828-4550

Keith Hoffmann 507-227-8006

Landon Sletta — 507-276-1899

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 March 27, 2025. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the February 2025 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.

- Reviewed and approved February 2025 payroll and February financial statement.

- Reviewed the March 18th, 2025, special meeting of the Brown County REA Board of Directors to address a printing omission in the 2025 Annual Report. At that meeting, the Board moved to rescind mail balloting for the 2025 election.

- Reviewed and approved the 2024 financial audit, as presented by Brady Cross from Eide Bailly, LLP.

- Updated on operations activities including underground patrol and annual substation inspections.

- Reviewed staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

The next meeting is April 24, 2025, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ☺