

# Connections

October 2021

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 25, Issue 10

## October is Cooperative Month! You are a member-owner! Review 7 co-op principles



### 1. Concern for community

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities.

### 2. Autonomy & independence

Cooperatives are self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, they retain their democratic control.

### 3. Democratic-member control

Co-ops are controlled by their members, who set the policies and make decisions. Elected representatives are accountable to the members, who have equal voting rights.

### 4. Voluntary and open membership

Co-ops are open to all who are able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership.


### 5. Education, training and information

Co-ops provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute to the development of their co-ops. They inform the public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

### 6. Cooperation among cooperatives.

Cooperatives serve their members by working together locally, nationally, regionally and internationally.

### 7. Member-economic participation


Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. They allocate surpluses to develop the co-op and benefit in proportion to their transactions with the co-op. 

#### At A Glance



Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association

#### Save paper and postage costs electronically

BCREA members can help their co-op cut costs by opting to receive their member newsletter and bill statements electronically. Check out Page 4 for more details. Clip out the form and mail it to BCREA if interested in electronic statements and newsletters. 



# Bundle up your home for the heating season! Here's your fall homework

Home heating can make up 40 percent of your home's energy bill. That is why it is important to install an efficient system. The up-front cost might be more in the short-term, but the payback makes it worth it in the long run. These heating season energy-saving tips will help with your "home-work" number crunching!

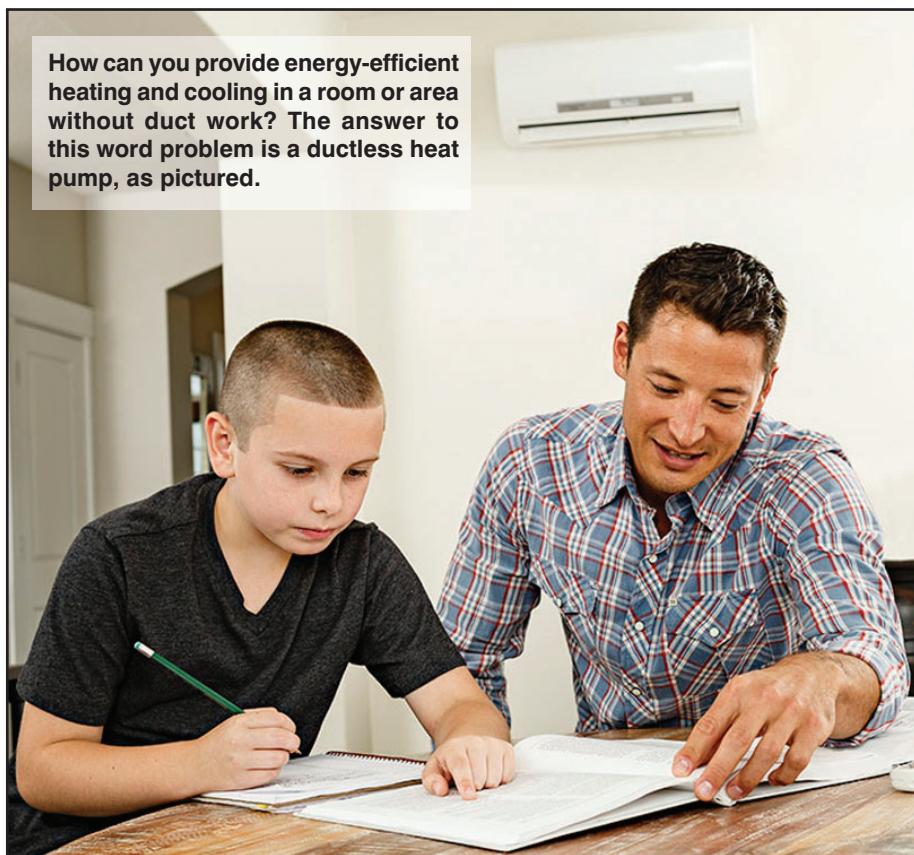
## 1. Pumped about heat pumps!

A heat pump provides multiple benefits in one heating and cooling system. It can provide cooling at twice the efficiency of common window unit air conditioners and can save between 30 percent and 55 percent on heating costs compared to other electric and propane heating types. This provides better energy savings, more comfort and lower carbon emissions.

Heat pumps pull heat from outside, either in the air or from the ground, and bring it into your home (they can also reverse the process in the summer to cool your home). Since they transfer heat, rather than create it with fuel, they are the most efficient heating systems. Air source heat pumps (about 200 percent efficiency) work best down to a certain air temperature and must be backed up by another source. Ground source heat pumps (400 percent efficient) do not need back up. Cold climate heat pumps (up to 300 percent efficient) are also becoming more common. Finally, ductless heat pumps do not require duct work. Visit with your electric co-op's energy expert on heat pumps and our co-op rebates.

An old furnace (65 to 95 percent efficient) may be costing you more than

How can you provide energy-efficient heating and cooling in a room or area without duct work? The answer to this word problem is a ductless heat pump, as pictured.



it is worth. If you have an old furnace, especially a fuel oil one, it is probably time to invest in a more modern, efficient heating system.

## 2. Don't pass on these filter facts

Regardless of what type of heating system you use, it's likely that the home heating system has some kind of filter. Failing to change these filters on time can cause your system to work harder, which increases your heating bill and slashes efficiency. Plus, a dirty filter can release nasty allergens and dust particles into the air. Change your filter

in the manufacturer-recommended time frame to avoid these issues.

## 3. Floored by other heat options

In-floor heating systems are an excellent way to keep your home, shop or garage warm. This type of heat has tubing or electric cables in the floor that provide radiant heat.

## 4. Stoking the stove for heat

Woodstoves are cozy and are good for zone heating. They become a bit less attractive if you don't have ductwork to move the heat throughout

— **Continued on Page 6**

## Save on elbow grease with Spin Scrubber

Most people don't like to clean. The easier and more efficiently that cleaning can be done is a winning game plan!

The Spin Scrubber takes some of the work out of housework, especially in the bathroom. Blast through soap scum and grime for a sparkly clean with the Spin Scrubber. The motorized scrub brush does the hard work for you, as it scrubs away soap scum, calcium deposits, water stains, built-up grime and more.

Eliminate tired arms. The Spin Scrub spins at 300 revolutions per minute to do the work for you. Plus, different jobs require different brushes. The Spin Scrubber includes three interchangeable brush heads.

**Power up your cleaning with the Spin Scrubber. It is cordless featuring three different heads with rechargeable power supply making cleaning a breeze.**




- Use the dome brush for your overall general cleaning, from scrubbing sinks to cleaning shower fixtures.

- A large flat brush can clean floors, walls and even outdoor yard furniture.

- The corner brush works great for buildup in places like shower door frames or on grout.

A 44-inch extension rod also eliminates the need to bend over, which prevents sore backs and knees.

Charge the Spin Scrubber for 20 hours after you remove it from the box. Subsequent charges will only take up to eight hours. A red indicator light lets you know the unit is charging. The light won't change color or turn off when charging is complete. It will clean for about 60 minutes.

The Spin Scrubber is about 20 inches long and weighs three pounds. Add it to Santa's holiday shopping list! The Spin Scrubber costs approximately \$40 and is available in stores or online. 

## Safety

# Harvest crops...not poles

"The sun was in my eyes..."

"I didn't see the pole's guy wire..."

"The hired hand wasn't paying attention..."

Your electric cooperative has heard all sorts of excuses. Yet, there's no excuse for not taking the time to be safe during harvest. We want our farmers to go home to their families each and every night.


- Go slower as you take that first pass around the field with larger equipment.

- Look up as you move larger field equipment around the yard or as you enter or exit a field.

- Use a spotter to help you watch out for a pole, guy wire or green transformer box, especially if you are backing up.

- Don't "race" against Mother Nature when safety should come first.

If you damage the cooperative's poles or equipment, you will be paying for the pole damage or replacement. Don't pay for it with your life, risking electrical shock injuries or death. A pole like this costs \$1,000 to \$2,000 for the line crews's labor, possibly overtime, and materials.

Harvest safely each and every day! 



# Brown County Briefs

## Energy-efficiency tip



Old, uninsulated and improperly installed exterior doors can waste energy and money. Shut the door on wasted energy by weather stripping and sealing all exterior doors. If you have an old exterior door, consider replacing it with a newer, energy-efficient model. Source: energy.gov

## Reminder to get back-up heat ready for season




Members with a Dual Fuel heating system (electric heat or a heat pump with non-electric backup) are reminded to be sure that their back-up heating system is prepared and that they have adequate fuel supply.

- Dual Fuel heating systems are usually controlled during periods of high demand (such as frigid winter evenings), but other factors such as high market cost can lead to load control as well.

- Participants should anticipate 20 days/108 hours of control this winter season: October 1, 2021 through April 30, 2022.

- Control can happen any time of the day, but it typically occurs late afternoon/early evening until 9:30 to 10 p.m. Morning control may also be necessary at times.

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



You're more than a customer —  
you're a co-op member-owner...


# Save paper and postage costs

## Sign up to receive statement and newsletter electronically

In a cost-saving effort Brown County REA is encouraging members to go paperless with their monthly billing statements and *Connections* newsletter.

For paperless billing you will receive an email each month when your statement is available. Login to the *Member Account Access* on BCREA's website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop) where you can view your monthly statement. You will need to set up an account name and password in the website portal to access it.

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 is also posted monthly on the co-op Facebook page and you can access the most recent 12 issues by clicking on *Newsletters* under the *Resources* tab.

Use the form below to sign up for paperless billing, newsletter or both. You can also email Brown County REA at [bcrea@bcrea.coop](mailto:bcrea@bcrea.coop) and tell us you would like to receive electronic statements and/or the newsletter. 

## Sign me up for electronic statements and newsletter

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Account: \_\_\_\_\_


I would like to receive monthly billing statements electronically: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive the newsletter electronically: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address to send notifications: \_\_\_\_\_ 

Return this form with your next electric bill or mail to Brown County Rural  
Electrical Assn., 24386 State Highway 4, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye MN 56085

## Need to add access to your account?

Data privacy measures at Brown County REA do just that — keep your account information and other data private. If you would like to allow access to your account information to a spouse, roommate, child or other relative not already listed on the account, please contact the office or fill out and return the form below. These changes do not change the membership on the account. 

## Account Access Addition Form

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person given access to account information:  
\_\_\_\_\_ 

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form with your next electric bill or mail to Brown County Rural  
Electrical Assn., 24386 State Highway 4, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye MN 56085

# BCA goes high tech



While the company has been around for more than 40 years, production at Brown County AG (BCA) Products, owned by Central Region Cooperative (CRC), is taking on a new look to achieve future growth with the addition of a robotic palletizing arm and other automation.

“There’s no way we can be in business any longer and employ people if we don’t start to automate,” said BCA Manager Al Macius. The automation replaces a more labor-intensive process where each worker used to handle three tons of product per shift.

The robotic arm stacks filled and sealed bags of BCA’s fertilizer and ice melt products at a rate of up to 18 bags per minute, depending on the size of the bag.

BCA Products, located off Highway 14 between Sleepy Eye and New Ulm, employs 11 people and is powered by electricity from Brown County REA. BCA produces a host of ice melt and fertilizer products, some under its own brands of *Rid Ice* and *Green Pro*, along with many proprietary products for its distributors. Because it purchases raw ingredients, BCA can create custom blends as needed.

“We are quietly supplying one million units of product in eight states through distributors in Minneapolis, Iowa and Illinois,” Macius said.

Brown County REA, through its Commercial and Industrial rebate program, recently presented BCA Products/CRC with a rebate check for the robotic arm purchase. An additional rebate is in the works for the energy savings achieved through the lighting retrofit to LED lighting.

Plus, BCA is currently working on an expansion and additional energy and efficiency upgrades, which includes a tower to help fully automate the production line, more electric motors, automated wrapping equipment, new electric forklifts and energy-efficient lighting.

“We hope to be fully operational by January 1,” Macius added. ☺

### PASSWORD DOS AND DON'TS

A strong password can make all the difference in protecting your personal information. Follow these tips for stronger passwords.

**DO:**

- Change the manufacturer’s Wi-Fi password on your router.
- Use two-factor authentication.
- Use unique phrases (like lyrics to your favorite song) to remember passwords.

**DON'T:**

- Don't use common words or numbers like “password” or “1234.”
- Don't use personal details like your date of birth in a password.
- Don't use the same password for multiple accounts.

**October is Cyber Security Awareness Month**

## 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 for residential use is not taxable for the billing months of November through April when sold to metered customers who use it as their primary source of residential heat. If more than one type of heat is used, electricity is not taxable if it is the primary source of heat. Primary source of residential 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 157 at [www.revenue.state.mn.us](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us) for more detailed information.

If you have made changes and now use electric heat as your primary residential heat, or if it has been 10 years or more since you completed the sales tax exemption form, please fill out the form below; return it to our office. BCREA must have a signed form on file in order for you to receive the sales tax exemption. ☺

Brown County Rural Electrical Association  
Sleepy Eye, MN 56085

✂

**Residential Heating Fuel  
Exemption Certificate**

I, hereby certify that electricity is the primary source (over 50% of the heating requirements) in my residence at Minnesota. I acknowledge that I am responsible for proving that I qualify for this tax exemption should I be audited. I also am responsible to notify Brown County REA if and when electric energy is no longer used as the primary source for residential heating.

DATED: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION OR ACCOUNT #: \_\_\_\_\_

## Test your energy-saving knowledge

— Continued from Page 2

your home. They are also messy. Pellet or corn stoves are also good, but the cost can add up for fuel.

### 5. Never pass on passive heating


Open curtains during the day to let in free, warm sunlight, which is known as passive solar heating. While this isn't viable for most climates as a sole source of heat, it works well to supplement other heating systems.

The right type of curtains help you make the most of the sunlight entering your home and retaining this heat. Let the sun in when it is shining through the window. Close the curtains when the sun is not. Throw open the curtains or blinds on south-facing windows during the cold days to let in the warm sun and keep other curtains shut to hold in the heat. In the summertime keep all of the curtains closed to keep your house cool.

### 6. Be smart with your thermostat

No matter what system, use a programmable thermostat. It will automatically set or adjust your temperature so you don't forget when you leave the house. It will cool the home down for sleeping and warm it up for waking. Lowering temperature from 72 to 68 will make a difference on your bill. Save with the your electric cooperative's \$25 Smart Thermostat rebate too. Find the form on our website or call to request it.

### 7. Get cracking on crack repairs

Plug cracks. If you home has air leaks, plug them up: weather-strip, caulk and foam. Proper insulation is also important. 



# Update your life-support member listing with us




For family members or friends with a medical condition electricity is a lifeline for their medical equipment.

Your local electric cooperative likes to know about any members who are on life-support equipment, such as:

- Oxygen concentrators
- Respirators
- Home dialysis or
- Other life-threatening conditions.

Plus, tell us if the medical equipment has battery backup or a generator backup.

Your electric cooperative maintains this list for two reasons. First, in case of a planned outage where crews will work on the lines, the co-op tries to inform these members before the outage. Secondly, during an unplanned outage, priority is given to restore power to these members with such medical equipment.

If you haven't notified your local electric cooperative, please complete this coupon and return it to us with your next bill payment. Otherwise, e-mail, fax or mail the information right away. In addition, if the person with the medical condition moved off the co-op's system, no longer needs life support or passed away, please inform your co-op so our list stays current. Mail us the coupon or send us an e-mail. 

## Place me on co-op's medical list

*Yes, I'm on life support equipment OR*

*Please remove \_\_\_\_\_ from the co-op's life support list*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/state/zip \_\_\_\_\_ 

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Your account number (found on electric bill) \_\_\_\_\_

Type of life support equipment or medical condition: \_\_\_\_\_

Battery backup?  Yes  No

If yes, how long do the batteries last? \_\_\_\_\_.

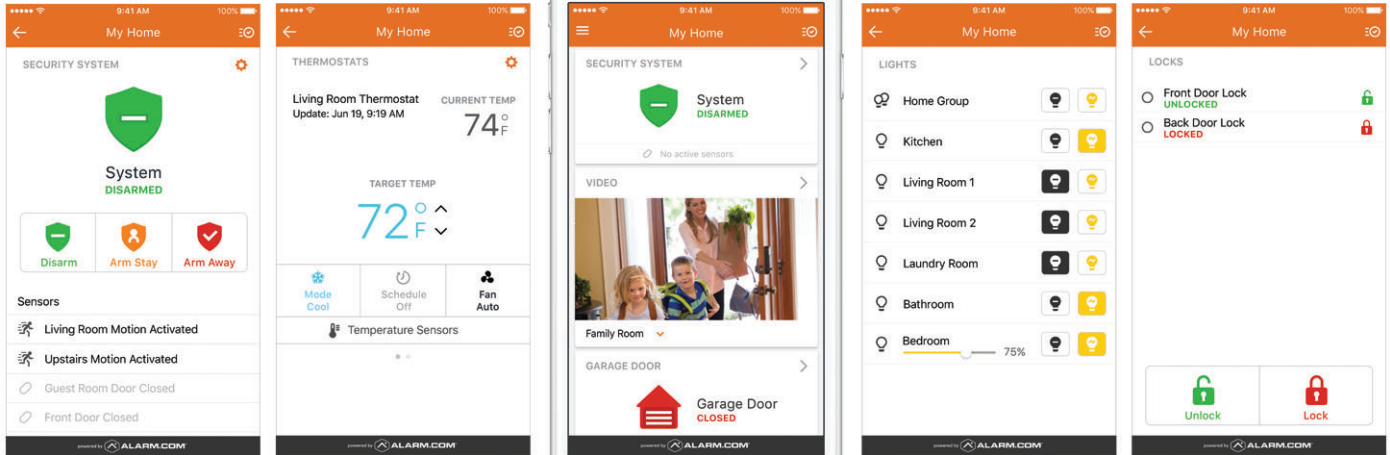
Is there a generator onsite for backup electricity?  Yes  No

**Return this coupon with your next bill payment. Otherwise, e-mail or fax! Thanks! (10/2021)**

## Let them eat cake! Share your favorite cake recipes with all of us

Patty cake, patty cake, bake me a cake as fast as you can! Share your favorite cake recipes with us, whether it's homemade, cake-mix based, cupcakes, shortcake or even coffee cake! Mail to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by October 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us!

## Heartland Security: simple control exists with your smart phone



1-888-264-6380 or visit [www.heartlandss.com](http://www.heartlandss.com)

Co-op members receive a discount!

## Annual Connections Post Office form posted

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Pick up the phone before the shovel; 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, tiling and more. You can also register at [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org) or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter.

The Post Office requires our Connections newsletter to annually post its circulation counts.



**Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association**

Brown County Rural Electrical Assn.  
24386 State Hwy 4, PO Box 529  
Sleepy Eye MN 56085

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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

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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.



**Mike Heidemann  
Chief Executive  
Officer**

# Staff Notes

**The cooperative difference**

ACE Hardware, State Farm, REI, Land O’Lakes and Brown County REA all share something in common — we’re all cooperatives.

We may be in different industries, but we all share a passion for serving our members and helping our area thrive. In fact, all cooperatives adhere to the same set of seven principles (see Page 1) that reflect our core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service

to the greater community good. October is National Co-op Month, so this is the perfect time to reflect on these principles that have stood the test of time and provide a framework for the future.

**Voluntary and open membership**

Just like all co-ops, BCREA was created out of necessity — to meet a need that would have been otherwise unmet in the rural area. In 1937 a group of neighbors banded together and organized our electric co-op so everyone in our community could benefit. Neighbors came together to tackle a problem that they all had but couldn’t solve alone. They worked together for the benefit of the entire area and the newly-established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in our community.

**Democratic member control**

Our co-op is well suited to meet the needs of our members because we are locally-governed. Each member gets a voice and a vote in how the co-op is run, plus each voice and vote are equal. Brown County REA’s Board of Directors, who help set long-term priorities for the co-op, live locally on co-op lines. We know our members have a valuable perspective. This is why we continually seek your input and encourage you to weigh in on important co-op issues and participate in co-op elections.

**Members’ economic participation**

As a utility, our mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to our members. But as a co-op, we are also motivated by service to the community, rather than profits. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of Brown County REA. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for co-op programs, initiatives, capital investments and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

Because we are guided by seven cooperative principles, it’s not just about dollars — it’s about opportunity for all and being fair when engaging with our members. The co-op way is a values-based business model.

Brown County REA is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. We view our role as a catalyst for good and making our corner of the world a better place. By the way, this sums up the seventh co-op principle, “concern for community,” which I’ll include with the rest of the cooperative principles in next month’s column. ☺

# Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on September 30, 2021, in the REA headquarters auditorium. Discussion and/or action was taken on the following agenda items:

- Updated on recent and pending member-owned solar project installations.
- Discussed and approved the 2021 capital credits payment to members. Amounts of \$100 or less will be credited on members’ November bills. Checks will be mailed in November.
- Conducted annual review and approved the cooperative’s Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan.
- Reviewed results of 2021 pole inspections conducted by Southwood 2000 in Linden, Courtland East, Cottonwood, Brighton and Bernadotte townships.
- Updated on progress of construction activities including three-phase and planning for the Highway 14 project.
- Reviewed and approved 2021-2022 compensation schedule.
- Reviewed recent employee safety trainings.

The next meeting is October 28, 2021, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ☺