

Connections

February 2023

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 27, Issue 2

BCREA 2023 rebate program

Energy Star Certified Appliances:

• Fridge/freezer w/ recycling old:	\$75
• Dehumidifier:	\$25
• Clothes dryer:	\$25

Compact-sized appliances and appliances not rated as Energy Star do not qualify. Minimum refrigerator or freezer size is 7.75 cu. ft.

Submit a copy of receipt, Energy Guide with Energy Star label, proof of recycling where applicable and Residential Energy Star Appliance application found at www.browncountyrea.coop. Rebates for amounts less than \$100 will be paid as a bill credit. One appliance rebate per member per year.

Air Source Heat Pump - minimum 15 SEER/HSPF or corresponding HSPF2:

• 8.5 - 9.5 HSPF (Dual Fuel-controlled):	\$1,000
• 9.5 - 10.5 HSPF (Dual Fuel-controlled):	\$1,500
• 10.5+ HSPF (Dual Fuel-controlled):	\$2,000
• 8.5 - 9.5 HSPF:	\$400
• 9.5 - 10.5 HSPF:	\$500
• 10.5+ HSPF:	\$600
• Geothermal Heat Pump:	\$2,000
• Replacement Geothermal:	\$1,000

Energy Star ductless mini-split heat pumps:

• Electric primary heat source:	\$500
• Delivered fuel primary heat:	\$300
• Energy Star smart thermostat:	\$25
• ECM motor on furnace:	\$25

Additional Rebates Offered:

• \$500 rebate toward installation of a Level 2 Electric Vehicle (EV) charger and metering equipment for Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV). Members must enroll in Electric Vehicle rate to qualify.

• Commercial rebates for retrofit lighting projects, electric forklifts, robotic milking & other livestock equipment, heating and cooling, indoor air quality equipment and commercial kitchen equipment. (b)(6)

Official Notice of Brown County REA 86th Annual Meeting



All Brown County REA members are invited and encouraged to attend the 86th Annual Meeting

When: April 13
Location: Sleepy Eye Event Center
 110 12th Avenue N.E.
 Sleepy Eye, MN
Register: 4:30 p.m.
Meal: 5:30 p.m.
 Meeting to follow

Agenda includes 2022 review, financial report and election of directors in Districts 2, 3 & 8

— James Hanson, Secretary

Please deposit capital credits

Members are reminded to please cash or deposit any remaining 2021 capital credit checks. The checks, for amounts of \$100 or more, were issued and mailed in mid-November 2022. Current members whose capital credit amount was less than \$100 received a credit on their November electric bills. (b)(6)

At A Glance



Last call
for director
candidates...

Brown County REA members who are residents of Districts 2, 3 or 8 interested in being a candidate for your districts seat on the board of directors, please file before February 17. Details can be found on Page 4. (b)(6)

New tax credits exist for energy-efficiency

Tax time is around the corner for 2022. Take advantage of these incentives. Plus, 2023 offers new tax incentives thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

Who is eligible for tax credits?

Homeowners, including renters for certain expenditures, who purchase energy and other efficient appliances and products.

How do you get the credit(s)?

Fill out Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 5695, following IRS instructions; include it when filing your tax return. Include any relevant product receipts.

Are there limits to what consumers can claim?

Consumers can claim the same or varying credits year after year with new products purchased, but some credits have an annual limit. The overall total limit for an efficiency tax credit in one year is \$3,200. This breaks down to a total limit of \$1,200 for any combination of home envelope improvements (windows/doors/skylights, insulation, electrical) plus furnaces, boilers and central air conditioners. Any combination of heat pumps, heat pump water heaters and biomass stoves/boilers are subject to an annual total limit of \$2,000.

Find qualified energy auditors?

Visit https://www.energystar.gov/about/federal_tax_credits/air_source_heat_pumps/energysave/professional-home-energy-assessments.

Your local electric cooperative is not licensed for energy audits as the state of Minnesota requires expertise in electrical and gas systems.

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Equipment Type	2022 Tax Credit	2023-2032 Tax Credit
Home clean electricity products		
Solar for generating electricity	30% of cost	
Fuel cells		
Wind turbine		
Battery storage	N/A	30% of cost
Heating, cooling and water heating		
Heat pumps	\$300	30% of cost, up to \$2,000/year
Heat pump water heaters		
Geothermal heat pumps	30% of cost	
Solar (water heating)		
Efficient air conditioners*	\$300	30% of cost, up to \$600
Efficient heating equip* (boilers)		
Efficient water heating equipment*	\$300	30% of cost, up to \$600
Other energy-efficiency upgrades		
Electric panel or circuit upgrades for new electric equipment*	N/A	30% of cost, up to \$600
Insulation materials*	10% of cost	30% of cost
Windows, including skylights*	10% of cost	30% of cost, up to \$600
Exterior doors*	10% of cost	30% of cost, up to \$500 for doors (up to \$250 each)
Home-energy audits*	N/A	30% of cost, up to \$150
Induction or electric stove, electric cooktop or electric oven	N/A	up to \$840
Heat pump dryers	N/A	up to \$840
New electric vehicle	up to \$7,500	up to \$7,500
Used electric vehicle (based on income level)		up to \$4,000
*Annual cap limits exist for different categories.		

This table itemizes energy-efficient tax credits for 2022 and new ones for 2023. Keep these incentives in mind as you plan your energy-efficiency upgrades. Be sure to investigate before buying as income eligibility levels exist too.

Electric auger is cool choice for ice fishermen

Winter doesn't make things easier, including starting gas-powered ice augers. Now electric models are available that start augering with the touch of a button. The StrikeMaster Ice Auger is built for reliable, consistent cutting to drill through the ice quickly.

The StrikeMaster Ice Auger features ergonomically-designed handles that are placed opposite the power switch. The planetary gear system ensures consistent and powerful performance, while maintaining a lighter overall weight.


The StrikeMaster battery recharges the battery in only two hours. Tests have shown it capable of drilling 100 holes through 16 inches of ice on a single charge.

Other features include:

- Electric DC brushless motor
- Durable, quiet and easy to transport



- Built-in LED light for a wide range of view
- Power button with deadman safety switch
- Twin serrated stainless steel blades
- Forward and reverse controls to quickly clear the ice hole
- Weight: up to 27 pounds
- Battery: 40-volt, 5-amp hour lithium-ion

The StrikeMaster Ice Auger is available at outdoor stores like Scheels and Cabela's. It can also be found online. The electric ice auger costs approximately \$500. 

Simplify your fishing life. The StrikeMaster Ice Auger is an electric auger that eliminates the need for gas and oil. Just take it out on the ice, press a button and start drilling through the ice with the power of a 40-volt lithium battery.

Safety

Know where to blow snow safely

What a winter! Where do we put all of this snow?

Keep electrical safety in mind when clearing snow around your driveway, farm yard and business. Be aware of where the electrical power equipment is located. Make sure it is clear and accessible for electric co-op crews. Keep in mind the location of the green pad-mounted transformers, guy wires, cabinets, poles and overhead wires when moving snow.

Snow piled on electrical equipment not only impacts your safety, but also the potential to impact the electric service of homes and farms in your neighborhood. Please keep at least 10 feet in front of power equipment and 3 feet on the sides and back for line workers in case they need access during an outage.

Look up too for power lines! If you are using a large tractor mounted




An underground cabinet was pushed off the pedestal while moving snow. Be safe. Don't cause an outage. Maintain 10 feet of clearance in front and 3 feet to the side of electrical equipment.

snowblower, be aware of the direction the chute blows the snow; avoid blowing a large stream of snow at overhead lines. Snow could damage the pole or knock out high voltage fuses causing an outage. Rocks in the stream of snow can hit, chip and break porcelain insulators.

Avoid making snow piles under overhead power lines too so kids don't potentially come in contact with power lines or the tractor's loader doesn't make contact either. When backing up with the snow blower, don't run into the snow covered green transformer box.

If removing snow from the roof, look out for any overhead lines coming to the house so you don't risk electrocution.

Snowmobilers, watch for the guy wires and snow covered electrical equipment. Be safe in the snow! 

Brown County Briefs

Operation Round Up

The first quarterly Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board meeting for 2023 is scheduled for February 21. Organizations wishing to be considered for funding can submit the application, found on the REA website www.browncountyrea.coop, before that date.

Energy-efficiency tip

Do you have a home office? Set equipment, like printers and scanners, to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life. Another way to save in the home office is to use energy-efficient lamps for task lighting. Small lamps use less energy than whole-room lighting.

New look on electric bills

When you open your statement from Brown County REA this month, you'll notice a few changes in the format

All the information is presented similar to past statements, but there is added color, improved alignment and a change to the usage summary graph.

Payments continue to be due by the 20th of each month

2023 calendars available

A few 2023 large, farm pocket calendars are still available to pick up at the office, while supplies last.

Annual line patrol is underway

BCREA crews have begun patrolling lines and will enter yards and property throughout the service area. Each year during the winter months, line crews check the cooperative's overhead and underground lines and equipment looking for maintenance issues that need attention. ☺

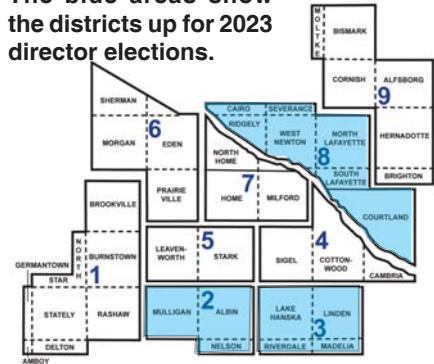
Director candidates sought for BCREA Districts 2, 3 & 8

Interested or know of someone who may be interested in running for a position as Director for your electric cooperative? Nominations are being accepted through February 17, 2023 for candidates to run for election in BCREA's Districts 2, 3, and 8.

District 2 consists of Mulligan and Albin townships in Brown County and part of Nelson Township in Watonwan County. District 3 is made up of Lake Hanska and Linden townships and the City of Hanska in Brown County, plus parts of Riverdale and Madelia townships in Watonwan County. District 8 includes Ridgely, West Newton, North and South Lafayette Brown County townships, portions of Cairo and Severance, plus part of Courtland townships in Nicollet County.

Members who reside in District 2, 3 or 8 and interested in being a director

The blue areas show the districts up for 2023 director elections.



candidate, are asked to complete and return the Director Candidate Application found on the cooperative website www.browncountyrea.coop before February 17, 2023.

Directors will be elected at the 86th Annual Meeting set for the evening of April 13, 2023 at the Sleepy Eye Event Center. ☺

Trip to Washington, D.C. available for one lucky high school student



Brown County REA is looking for one exceptional student to represent the cooperative on an all-expense paid trip Washington, D.C. June 13-18, 2023. Youth Tour is much more than a sightseeing trip.

While in D.C. participants have a chance to meet with their elected officials and discuss issues that

are important back home. Students return home with a deeper understanding and skillset of what it takes to be a leader and can put those skills to use in their local community. They also learn about the cooperative business model, visit numerous museums and memorials, plus gain a new appreciation of our nation's history. In the process many new friendships are created as they spend the week with young people from electric cooperatives throughout Minnesota.

The application and selection procedures are available from high school counselors and social studies teachers and on the REA website www.browncountyrea.coop. Apply by March 3, 2023. ☺

Paying subscribers make CTV possible for area viewers



Broadcasting 40 UHF television channels from three towers is an expensive undertaking, which is why Cooperative Television Association (CTV) relies on your contributions.

Since 1992, CTV, owned by BCREA and three other electric cooperatives, has been providing over-the-air television service to the rural areas for a minimal charge. Contributions from viewers help keep it going.

CTV operates three UHF towers located at Godahl, Jackson and Frost to re-broadcast more than 40 channels and has technicians and engineers working on its behalf. While the \$8 per month charge is voluntary, it is greatly appreciated.

If you watch CTV and are currently not being billed the \$8, please contact us to have the amount added to your monthly electric bill. Non-members can be billed \$96 per year or \$48 seasonally. ☎️

Operation Round Up scholarships!



Brown County REA, through its Operation Round Up program, is offering six \$250 scholarships to high school seniors planning to attend college after graduation and to non-traditional students in 2023.

Scholarships will be awarded to graduating seniors whose parents/guardians are members and live in Brown County REA's service area or adult REA members pursuing a degree. Scholarship guidelines and applications are available from area high school counselors and on the REA website at www.browncountyrea.coop.

The deadline for submission is April 10, 2023. The winners will be announced at the Brown County REA Annual Meeting April 13. A copy of the student's high school transcript and one letter of recommendation are required. Non-traditional students will need to provide a transcript and recommendation letter. Scholarship funds will be awarded after successful completion of the first semester of college. ☎️



5 Ways to Save During Winter

Winter weather typically means increased energy use at home. Keep your bills in check with these tips to save energy—and money!

Mind the thermostat. If you have a traditional heating and cooling system, set the thermostat to 68 degrees or lower. Consider a smart or programmable thermostat for additional savings.

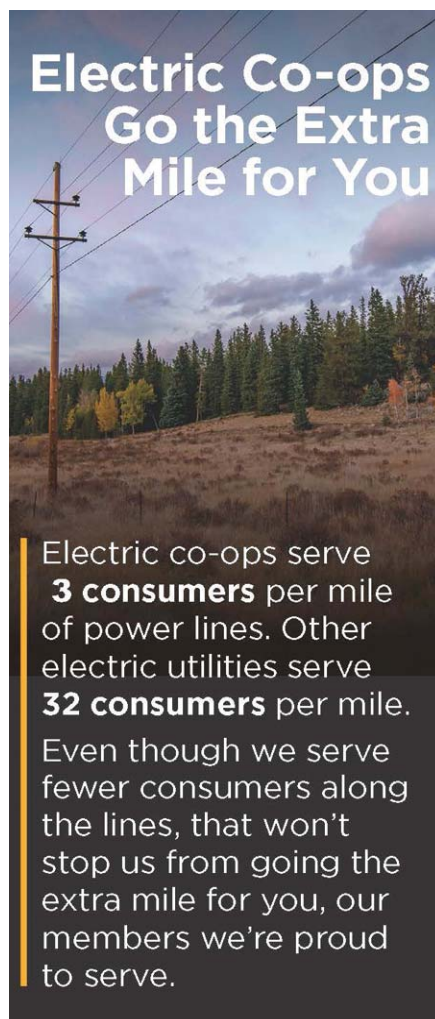
Get cozy. Add layers of clothing for additional warmth, and snuggle up under your favorite heavyweight blanket.

Don't block the heat. If your air vents or heating elements (like radiators) are blocked by furniture or rugs, your home isn't being adequately heated.

Take advantage of sunlight. Open window coverings during the day to let natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to block the chilly night air.

Block air leaks. Seal windows and exterior doors with caulk and weather stripping to improve indoor comfort and decrease the amount of energy used to heat your home.

Electric Co-ops Go the Extra Mile for You



Electric co-ops serve **3 consumers** per mile of power lines. Other electric utilities serve **32 consumers** per mile.

Even though we serve fewer consumers along the lines, that won't stop us from going the extra mile for you, our members we're proud to serve.

Homeowners can take advantage of tax credits

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Products eligible for tax credits?

- Solar panels
- Home back-up power battery storage with capacity of three kilowatts or greater.
- Heat pumps; heat pump water heaters; central air conditioners; natural gas or propane or oil furnaces or hot water boilers that meet or exceed the specific efficiency tiers established by the Consortium for Energy Efficiency. Eligible products found here: <https://cee1.org/node/729>.

Your electric cooperative offers rebates for ground source, air source and ductless air source heat pumps. Find these rebate forms on the co-op's website or talk to the co-op's energy expert with any questions.

Electric water heaters purchased through your electric cooperative are not eligible for tax credits. However, your cooperative's pricing already features more than \$800 in savings from the retail price.

Keep in mind that heat pump water heaters blow cold air into the room, which may not be ideal during a Minnesota winter. It uses the heat from the space they are located (requires 1,000 cubic feet of air), plus dehumidifies too. Plus, heat pump water heaters could require service from a heating-cooling contractor for the heat pump part and a plumber for the water heater part.

- Solar water-heating products that are certified for performance by the Solar Rating Certification Corporation or comparable entity endorsed by the state government where the product is installed. See: <https://solar-rating.org>.

- Oil furnaces or hot water boilers if they meet or exceed 2021 Energy Star efficiency criteria and are rated by the manufacturer for use with fuel blends at least 20 percent of the volume that consists of an eligible fuel. See: <https://www.energystar.gov/products>.

- Upgrade your home's electrical panel to a 200-amp service or higher. This includes panelboards,

sub-panelboards, wiring or feeders that are installed according to National Electrical Code. Be sure to check out the income guidelines to qualify on the limit for each year and that it must be paired with an energy-efficiency upgrade. www.energystar.gov and search for electric panel upgrade tax credits.

- Insulation materials and systems that meet International Energy Conservation Code standards. See: [/eere/buildings/building-energy-codes-program](https://eere/buildings/building-energy-codes-program).


- Exterior windows that meet Energy Star's most efficient requirements. See: https://www.energystar.gov/products/most_efficient.

- Electric cooking rebates exist for induction or electric stoves; this includes electric cooktops, ranges and ovens. Induction stoves are very fast at heating pots and pans, plus are better for the environment than gas stoves. Keep in mind that induction stoves require metal or steel pans though. Use a magnet to check that your pans are metal and will work with induction cooking.

- Heat pump dryers work as a closed system heating the air to dehumidify/remove moisture from the clothes. It then reuses the heated air once the moisture is removed. While it does not require outside ventilation, it does require a drain hose or tank for this moisture. According to Energy Star, a heat pump dryer uses 28 percent less energy than a standard dryer. Using heat pump drying mode means a longer run time.

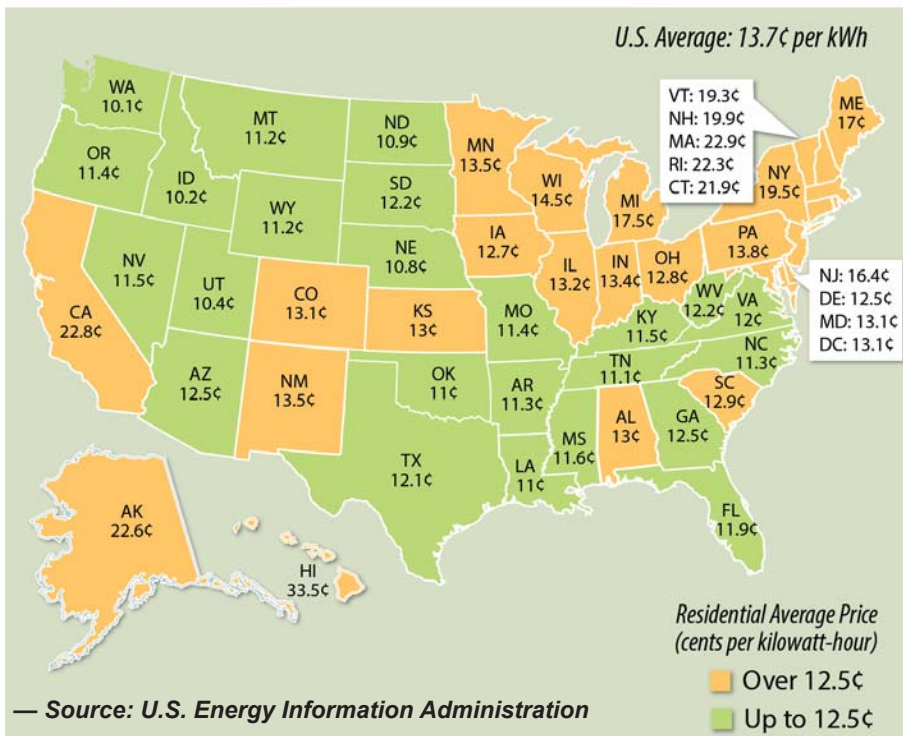
- Be sure to research the electric vehicle credit before buying one new or used. The tax incentives come with certain criteria for the battery source, where the vehicle is manufactured and income levels.

Research any item/upgrade before purchasing by going to: https://www.energystar.gov/about/federal_tax_credits/non_business_energy_property_tax_credits.

These tax incentives will help you save energy and on your taxes too! 

Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2021 figures, in cents per kWh



Freezer meal recipes make hot meals a breeze when time is tight

Meal prep when you have the time to enjoy a hot meal when time is tight. Share your recipe for a crock pot meal, hot dish or marinated meat, then you just thaw in the fridge and cook for a hearty, hot meal. Mail your favorite freezer meal recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by February 24. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Bath time is no fun with cold water!

Turn to your
electric
cooperative
for your
next water
heater

Give us a call
today!



- Made in the USA
- Lifetime warranty against leaks for the original owner
- Water heaters in stock!

Chocolate Chip Cheesecake

by Roxanne Zimanski, Courtland

2 pkgs. brick cream cheese, softened
 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. sugar $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla
 2 eggs $\frac{3}{4}$ c. mini semi-sweet
 choc chips, divided ($\frac{1}{2}$ c. and $\frac{1}{4}$ c.)
 1 honey graham pie crust (6 oz.)

Preheat oven to 350°. Beat the cream cheese, sugar and vanilla in large bowl with mixer on medium speed until well blended. Add the eggs and mix just until blended. Stir in the $\frac{1}{2}$ c. of chips. Pour into crust and sprinkle the $\frac{1}{4}$ c. of choc. chips on top. Bake 40 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool. Refrigerate three hours or overnight. Store in refrigerator. 📧

Chocolate Marble Cheesepie

by Andrea Christoffer, Round Lake

Chocolate crumb crust: $\frac{1}{4}$ c. cocoa

$\frac{1}{4}$ c. graham cracker crumbs
 $\frac{1}{4}$ c. sugar 6 T. butter, melted

In medium bowl mix above ingredients. Blend in 6 T. melted butter. Press mixture firmly on bottom and up sides of 9" pie plate; refrigerate crust two hours before filling.

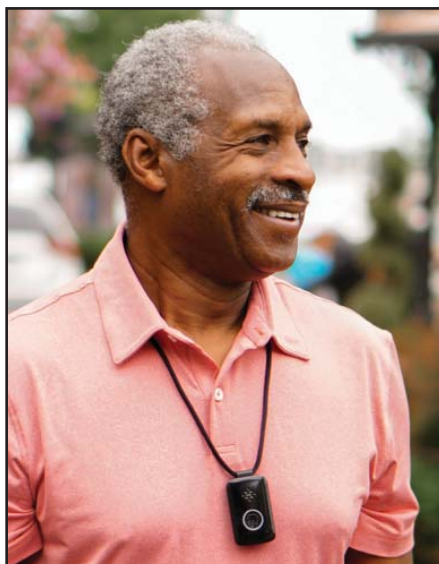
$\frac{1}{4}$ c. cocoa

1 can sweetened condensed milk,
divided

3 tsp. vanilla extract, divided

4 (3 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
 2 T. lemon juice

In small saucepan stir together cocoa and $\frac{2}{3}$ c. sweetened condensed milk. Cook over low heat stirring constantly until mixture is smooth and very thick. Remove from heat; stir in 1 tsp. vanilla. Cool thoroughly. In a large mixing bowl beat remaining 2 pkgs. cream cheese until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in remaining sweetened condensed milk, lemon juice and remaining vanilla. Alternately spoon vanilla and chocolate mixtures into crust. Gently swirl with knife for marbled effect. Chill til firm. 📧



Go with confidence

With our mobile medical alert system,
you can live life independently, safely,
and worry free.

Enjoy the freedom to explore and the
confidence to do what you love.



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888-264-6380
heartlandss.com



Marcia Solie
Member Services
Manager

Staff Notes

Heat pumps prove efficient, effective in cold weather

If you are looking for ways to cut your heating and cooling costs, consider installing an energy-efficient air-source heat pump.

Heat pumps function as both an air conditioner and heater and use 72 percent less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces by collecting and moving heat instead of generating it.

During the cooling season, heat pumps cool the air by pulling heat from the inside the conditioned space and pumping it outside. Alternatively, during the heating season, heat pumps pull heat from outside air — even when it's cold out — and pump it inside.

Since heat pumps transfer heat rather than generate it, they are one of the most efficient means of cooling and heating your home.

While heat pumps are common in warmer climates, many people think they will not work in our part of the country where temperatures drop below freezing — but that is no longer true. When properly installed, many of today's cold-climate air-source heat pumps (ccASHPs) can keep your home warm even during the coldest months of the year and use far less energy than other types of heating systems.

The key feature in a ccASHP is a variable speed compressor, enabling a single heat pump to work efficiently and effectively. In addition, the variable-speed system holds a steadier temperature than a traditional single-speed heating or air-conditioning system.


There are both central-ducted systems and ductless systems of ccASHPs available. Central-ducted systems are designed and installed to meet the heating and cooling needs of the entire home. Ductless systems deliver heat to a specific area of a home through single or multiple interior heads with no ductwork.

In cold-climate application, ccASHPs typically require a backup system to provide heat when cold outdoor air temperatures limit the heat pump capacity. Ducted systems typically use a propane/natural gas furnace as a backup. These backups take over the load of the system at an outdoor air temperature where the capacity of the heat pump is no longer sufficient. Homes with ductless systems typically rely on electric-resistance boards for backup heating.

Visit energywisemn.com/air-heat-pumps to learn more and watch an animated video about heat pumps.

Brown County REA offers rebates of up to \$2,000 on qualifying air source heat pumps (see Page 1).

A federal tax credit of up to 30% of the cost for purchase and installation of a heat pump, up to \$2,000 is also available for 2023.

Visit energystar.gov for eligible products and credit details. 



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 board meeting January 19, 2022.

Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the December 2022 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.

- Approved the co-op's 2023 Cogeneration and Small Power Production Schedule of rates paid for excess energy produced by member-owned, less than 40 KW Distributed Energy Resources. Rates effective January 1.

- Reviewed and approved the 2023 Energy Conservation & Optimization Act (ECO) and Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) rates for former Alliant Energy territory members.

- Reviewed and approved the 2022 OSHA Form 300 Summary of Work-Related Injuries.

- Received 2022 summary of system outages. Average minutes of interruption per member for the year was 69.9, including transmission, prearranged and equipment failure/fault incidents.

- Reviewed and approved the cooperative's 2023 operating budget.

The next meeting is set for February 23, 2023, at the BCREA office in Sleepy Eye. 