



The sizzling hot dog shows electrical safety; Schedule your group's demonstration

Safety first! Our line crews practice this in their daily operations.

Your electric cooperative also likes sharing the "safety first" message with you, our member-owners. One of the best ways to learn about electrical safety is through our hotline safety demonstration.

The table-sized model allows the cooperative employee to demonstrate electrical hazards:

- Digging into an underground powerline
- Downed tree branches in an electrical line
- Augers, ladders and antenna not lowered and contacting overhead line
- Vehicle accident hitting a pole with live wires on top of the vehicle
- Person touching downed electrical line
- Why a bird can sit on a powerline and be ok.

"Since the COVID pandemic, we have not done any safety demonstrations for local organizations or schools," stated Marcia Solie, BCREA's member services manager. "We are more than willing to share the safety message to youth and adults. Just invite us!"



The hot dog simulates the electrical burns and what happens to the human body when it comes in contact with live power lines. In this case the hot dog touched the auger, which was touching overhead power lines, as demonstrated by Foreman Adam Fischer

ask for Marcia. Otherwise, e-mail (bcrea@bcrea.coop) four weeks in advance. This give the co-op time to coordinate with an employees' schedule, especially if it's during construction season. The co-op has done safety demonstrations in the past at school safety days, for 4-H club meetings and other civic groups' events. ☺

"A typical hotline demo can be about 30 minutes," Solie added. "We need an outlet to plug in our demo table. A sizzling hotdog and tree branches across the model's power lines really get the safety messages across."

The cooperative employee also explains the safety gear that crews use to stay safe, while doing their jobs.

Call Brown County REA 507-794-3331 or 800-658-2368 and



At A Glance

BROWN COUNTY REA

87th Annual Meeting photos & highlights on Page 5

BCREA drew a packed house at the Sleepy Eye Event Center for the 87th Annual Meeting. Members were treated to music, a delicious meal and multitude of information about the happenings of your electric cooperative. Plus, three lucky people won EGO yard tools as door prizes! See Page 5 ☺

Co-op's water heater program 'hottest' way to beat the grid's peaks & control power costs

More than 370,000 appliances owned by cooperative members like you are playing a role in managing the reliability of the regional electric grid and saving the entire membership money at the same time.

Your electric cooperative and the other 26 member-owner cooperatives that receive wholesale electric power from Great River Energy (GRE) offer voluntary programs that empower members to use the grid efficiently and economically; these programs reduce demand during periods of stress and shift energy consumption to off-peak times.

By choosing to enroll an electric appliance, such as a water heater, into one of your cooperative's "demand response" programs, you are helping keep electricity reliable and affordable.

Your electric co-op provides two ways for its members to make contributions toward helping manage the grid with water heaters:

- 1) off-peak water heaters can be off up to eight hours during a peak time and
- 2) storage water heaters are off during the day and heat water at night when electricity costs less during the five business days of the week.

Using the example of an electric water heater, a member who enrolls into an interruptible program gives permission for their cooperative to pause service to the water heater to eliminate all or part of its load from the system when wholesale energy market prices are high with the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO).

"Through a gray radio receiver mounted outside the home or shop the receiver tells the water heater when to be on and off," stated the co-op's energy expert. "Water heaters enrolled in this program are usually 100 gallons and feature sufficient storage capacity; it supplies hot water over the peak period, while service is paused so members aren't left in the cold."

This strategy is employed mostly to avoid high wholesale energy prices and to reduce the monthly billing peak for



Welcome a new, efficient water heater from the co-op to your home that features a lifetime warranty for the original owner against leaks.

your cooperative. Participants experienced 40 pauses to their water heater service in 2023 according to GRE data. Water heaters are also controlled for the former Alliant customers and for Basin peaks each month for Federated Rural Electric members.

If you are wondering whether your water heater is being controlled, take a look at the gray radio receiver outside. A red light indicates control. A green test light indicates it has power and is working. If the family has grown and you need to change your level of control, call your electric cooperative. If you have a newer receiver, it's as simple as the co-op updating the code for your radio control.

Your electric co-op sells the high-efficiency 100 gallon water heater that is "charged" overnight with less expensive electricity to supply your home's hot water needs. The larger water heater tank and two plus inches of tank insulation ensures hot water during a control period. Program participants can expect their water heaters to recharge for eight hours, typically between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. during the winter season and 10 p.m. to 9 a.m. in

summer. This strategy typically applies to weekdays, excluding weekends and holidays, unless billing peak control is needed.

"Participation in this program helps provide significant economic relief to the overall membership by shifting heating load to the overnight hours, resulting in more favorable rates," said the co-op's energy expert. "This also helps us defer wholesale energy purchases to off-peak hours that would otherwise cost more to purchase during the on-peak hours."


Contact your local electric cooperative for more information about this lifetime warranty tank for the original owner against leaks; visit our website or see Page 4 for water heater pricing. (E-3)

Suck up messes minus the electric cord

Face it...life can be messy! Clean up the messes minus the electric cord. Upgrade to a cordless shop vac.

Whether you are sucking up wet basement messes or vacuuming out a vehicle after washing it, smart users remember water and electricity don't mix. Stop using a corded shop vac; upgrade to a cordless one that runs on battery power and you skip the tripping danger too.

While many brands offer battery-powered wet/dry shop vacuums, match your size to your needs; it can be as small as a one gallon or a lot larger, depending on the brand. The one gallon Shop Vac features a four-foot hose, three attachment tools (round brush, gulper nozzle and crevice tool). It takes about 2-3 hours to charge for about 13 minutes of suction. Look at larger sizes for longer run time.

This one gallon model costs about \$80 from Amazon or your local hardware store. It comes with a mounting tool, stores easily on a garage wall and uses dust collection bags so you don't have to touch the filth. 



Suck up your messes with portable power! Use a battery-powered Shop-Vac, like this one gallon model. — Photo courtesy of Shop-Vac

Safety

Climb ladder with electric safety knowledge

Ladders going up?

Slow down and look around before erecting a ladder on your summer outdoors project. Climb up with caution to increase your ladder safety smarts.

- Before starting any project, always look up to make sure you're aware of any overhead power lines.

- Whether you're working on the roof, trimming trees or cleaning the gutters, make sure you're a safe distance from any power line. Plus, warn others of their proximity. Always stay at least 10-feet away from any overhead power line.

- Ladder safety includes carrying it properly! Carry long equipment, such as a ladder, horizontally to avoid bumping into an overhead power line.



Yikes! Too close! Keep a ladder 10 feet away from power lines, including the connection to your home.

- Using a ladder for tree trimming? Step back first. Survey the scene. Look to see if any power lines are running through the tree branches. If so, call

your electric cooperative so a professional, like the cooperative's tree trimmer, trims those trees or branches safely.

Never touch anything that's in contact with a power line, whether auger, vehicle accident or downed trees. If you ever see a downed power line, stay 50 feet away; call 911 or your electric cooperative.

If you are looking at buying a ladder, keep in mind that fiberglass ladders are nonconductive. They may be heavier than aluminum, but fiberglass is durable and weather-resistant.

Remember, look up first for power lines to stay safe because your life and limbs

depend upon it. 

— Information courtesy of Electrical Safety Foundation

Brown County Briefs

Water heater pricing details



A peak shave program water heater, any size, costs \$500. Storage water heater, must be 80-gallon and higher, costs \$250. The member pays for the

water heater installation costs. All water heaters purchased through the cooperative must be placed on a load control program.

Energy-efficiency tip

Looking for an easy way to manage home energy use? Smart plugs are inexpensive and offer convenient solutions for scheduling and controlling your favorite electronic devices. With smart plugs you can easily manage your coffee maker, lighting, home office equipment, video game consoles and more. Smart plugs can help you manage devices through a smart phone app, your home assistant or voice control. By conveniently powering off or scheduling devices, you can save energy and money. Source: energystar.gov.

Spring Round Up recipients



The Trust Board also distributed \$500 to five organizations at the Operation

Round Up meeting. Donations were made to Brown County Free Fair, Comfrey Floratennial Garden Club, Sleepy Eye Community Theater, plus the New Ulm Cathedral and Minnesota Valley Lutheran after prom events. The next meeting is set for August 20.

Be cool with heat pump rebates

If your central air dies, go with a heat pump. Find the rebates and details on our website. ☎

Members fund 7 \$250 scholarships through Operation Round Up

The BCREA Trust Board met April 9 to review applications for the seventh annual Brown County Rural Electric Trust scholarships.

Seven \$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 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.

Congrats to the 2024 scholarship winners:

- Katelyn Beranek, daughter of Christopher & Amanda Beranek, attends GFW High School.
- Easton Clark, New Ulm High School, is the son of Thomas & Jennifer Clark.
- Emma Fischer, Sleepy Eye St. Mary's High School, is the daughter of Darrel & Nikki Fischer.
- Jalivia Richert, daughter of Travis & Laura Richert, attends Springfield High School.
- Brandon Schmitz, Sleepy Eye St. Mary's High School, is the son of Tony & Lisa Schmitz.
- Jenica Schroepfer, daughter of Jason & Amber Schroepfer, attends Sleepy Eye St. Mary's High School
- Kyla Wuertz, Comfrey High School, is the daughter of Jen Englin. ☎



Katelyn Beranek



Easton Clark



Emma Fischer



Jalivia Richert



Brandon Schmitz



Jenica Schroepfer



Kyla Wuertz

Nearly 400 attend 87th Annual Meeting

Nearly 400 members and spouses, employees and guests of Brown County Rural Electrical Association (BCREA) gathered at the Sleepy Eye Event Center April 11th for the cooperative's 87th Annual Meeting. A total of 204 members registered at the meeting.

Following a catered meal, District 6 Director Joel Christensen shared the invocation. During the business meeting, Board President Tom Hayes reviewed the past year. He highlighted the wholesale power supply generation portfolio changes and how electric cooperatives are adapting for future carbon-free mandates. CEO Mike Heidemann reviewed the 2023 audited financial report and discussed the Cost-of-Services Study recently completed for BCREA by an engineering firm. Results from the study, increased equipment and material costs along with rising power costs have led to the need for a rate increase, which will be implemented in September.

Three incumbent directors ran unopposed and were re-elected to three-year terms. Joel Christensen was re-elected in District 6, Greg Mages in District 7 and Tom Hayes, District 9.

Grace Mages, a senior at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, who represented Brown County REA at the 2023 Rural Electric Youth Tour shared highlights and photos from the trip to Washington, D. C. last summer. Keith Olson who represented Mathiowetz Construction on the 2023 Member



Members enjoyed live music during Annual Meeting registration and meal. Thanks Dain's Dutchment for the entertainment!



Senior Grace Mages spoke about her Youth Tour experience in Washington, D.C.

Advisory Council reported on his opportunity to get a behind the scenes look at BCREA serving on the council. He also commended BCREA and related positive experiences he has had working with the cooperative on road construction projects.

Winners of the 2024 Operation Round Up scholarship, given to high school seniors whose parents/guardians are Brown County REA members, were announced. (See Page 4.)

EGO electric yard tool door prize winners were Cynthia Hansen, chain saw; David Hesse, trimmer and Chad Brown, leaf blower.

At the organizational meeting 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 BCREA on the Great River Energy board. ☺



Students at Comfrey Elementary School were treated to a presentation from the Bakken Museum of Minneapolis, courtesy of Brown County REA and its wholesale power supplier Great River Energy. During the "War of the Currents" program, students helped Bakken Museum staff Lilly Keefe-Powers, left, and Anika Taylor demonstrate the difference between direct current (DC) and alternating current (AC). The program also provided a light-hearted look at the battle between Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla to control the future of electricity with their inventions. ☺

SIGNS OF AN

ENERGY SCAM

High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.



Planning for a new/
expanded house,
shop, hog barn or
grain bins?



Call the co-op & speak
to operations to ensure
your new service is on our
crews' summer do list

Co-op technology is working for you



Electrical technology is evolving to serve you better. Let us count the ways. Sign up today if you are not taking advantage of some of these options.

1. Use the online bill payment feature on our website to pay your electric bills. Plus, download the app under the co-op's name from the app store to make payments from your phone.

2. Otherwise, sign up for monthly auto pay from your bank account (checking or savings) to save the hassle of finding an expensive stamp and worrying if the mail will deliver it on time.

3. Are you signed up for the co-op's outage text service? Go to our website for details on how it works.

Call/e-mail your cooperative's office with your cell phone numbers (husband and wife's cell phone numbers) to make sure they are recognized in our system.

4. Sign up for paperless bills. Your monthly electric bill is e-mailed to you, along with reminders to pay. Save paper, stamps and trees!

5. The cooperative's advanced metering not only reports your meter reading on a daily basis, but this information helps us troubleshoot high bills, voltage issues and blinks to serve you better. Plus, these meters report the outage to the cooperative's mapping system so we see if it's a large outage or a smaller outage. This way outages are reported to the cooperative even if you are not home. However, after normal business hours please still call the co-op; you may see the cause of the outage, like a downed branch or broken pole. ☎

Yes, cheese please! Share your easy & cheesy recipes with us all

Easy, cheesy & delicious! Share your favorite cheesy recipes with us, whether it's for egg bake, hot dish, sandwiches, dips, pizza and more. Send your favorite cheesy recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by May 28. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Amish Macaroni Salad by Doreen Schmitt, New Ulm

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 2 c. uncooked elbow macaroni (16 oz. box) | 2 c. salad dressing/mayo |
| 3 hard-cooked eggs, chopped | 3 T. prepared yellow mustard |
| 1 small onion, chopped | ¼ c. white sugar |
| 3 stalks celery, chopped | 2¼ tsp. white vinegar |
| 1 small red bell pepper, seeded and chopped | ¼ tsp. salt |
| 2 T. dill pickle relish | ¾ tsp. celery seed |

Bring a pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add the macaroni and cook for 8-10 minutes until tender. Drain and set aside to cool. In a large bowl stir together the eggs, onion, celery, red pepper and relish. In a small bowl stir together the salad dressing, mustard, white sugar, vinegar, salt and celery seed. Pour over the vegetables; stir in the macaroni until well blended. Cover and chill for at least one hour before serving. 📧

Spring Fruit Salad with Poppy Seed Dressing by Edith Beckius, Hanska

Fruit salad: ½ small pineapple (cut into chunks) or 4 oz. can pineapple chunks

1 large orange or 11 oz. can mandarin oranges

1 pint strawberries, cut into halves
¼ cucumber, sliced (gourmet type)

6 lettuce cups

Divide and arrange fruits and cucumber slices between lettuce cups.

Poppy seed dressing: ¾ c. sugar

1/3 c. cider vinegar

1 tsp. dry mustard 1 tsp. salt

1½ tsp. onion juice

1 c. vegetable oil

1½ T. poppy seeds

Blend the first five dressing ingredients together in a food processor or blender. Add the vegetable oil slowly, while blending. Add poppy seeds and stir to blend. Pour dressing over salad just before serving. 📧



We are closed
Memorial Day,
May 27

Crews are on call in
case of outages

Have a safe holiday!

Get warned about water

Adding monitored water sensors to your security system will alert you before a leak becomes a flood.



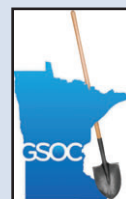
A subsidiary of your local electric co-op

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1-800-252-1166



Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees and tiling. Register at www.gopherstate-onecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧

Staff Notes



Jennifer Rose
CFO

BCREA sees favorable 2023 financials

BCREA's 2023 audit was conducted by Eide Bailly LLP. Your cooperative had a clean audit report.


Total Utility Plant increased from \$44.6 million in 2022 to \$46.7 million in 2023. The cooperative's patronage capital is \$21.8 million and will be retired back to the membership in upcoming years with Board approval, on an annual basis.

BCREA's equity level is 47.91 percent. This number represents the total percent of assets owned by the membership. The current ratio, along with other USDA Rural Utility Services (RUS) requirements, meets all the co-op's loan covenants

for lending. The total revenue of nearly \$16.5 million increased \$103,050 from 2022 to 2023. BCREA sold 138 million kilowatt hours in 2023 as compared to 144 million kilowatt hours in 2022. Decreased revenue and kilowatt hour sales can be attributed to a number of factors, including weather, member energy efficiency and conservation efforts, as well as self-generation by members.

Total operating expenses for the co-op decreased by \$197 thousand over the prior year. Purchased power is the largest expense to the cooperative. BCREA purchased just under 7.6 million less kilowatt hours in 2023 than the previous year purchases. Similar factors to the revenue side are attributed to the change on the expense side of the equation, including weather conditions and member self-generation. Purchased power costs make up about 65 percent of total expenses. Wholesale power is purchased through long-term contracts with Great River Energy and Western Area Power Administration. The portfolio includes coal, natural gas, renewables, hydropower and market purchases.

The cooperative's net margins for 2023 are \$2,388,377. These margins will be allocated back to the membership as your capital credits, payable over the next 17 to 20 years. A large portion of the 2023 margins result from the Generation and Transmission and Other Cooperative Capital Credit amount increase of more than \$311,000 over 2022. Nonoperating Margins make up approximately \$324,000 of the margins and increased by \$290,000 over 2022. This is due in large part to BCREA's more aggressive investment approach in 2023 and improved interest rates. If these factors were removed, the cooperative would've had a slight increase to the 2022 Operating Margin before Capital Credits and other non-operating items of approximately \$300,000.

A recently completed Class Cost-of-Services Study determined that the cost to bring service to a member's single-phase location is \$76. Three-phase service is nearly double that amount. The current monthly service charges are not keeping up with inflationary pressures affecting costs of cable, transformers, poles meters and other materials necessary to bring power to each service. For this reason the board approved a \$10 increase in monthly service charges and slight increase in energy charges, effective September 1, 2024. BCREA is also merging former Alliant Energy customers' energy rates to the co-op's legacy amounts. Watch for more info on these changes in upcoming *Connections*, via mail and other communications. 



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

- Reviewed and approved the February 2024 Board minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
 - Approved the cooperative's 2023 financial audit as presented by Kellen Garrison of Eide Bailly, LLP.
 - Reviewed and approved the 2023 Cogeneration Report on member-owned Distributed Energy Resources.
 - Reviewed updates and approved the Brown County REA Schedule of Charges, effective April 1, 2024.
 - Heard presentation on electric vehicles and BCREA's distribution system by Southwood 2000 Engineer Bryant Tauer.
 - Discussed plans for the April 11, 2024 Annual Meeting.
 - Approved appointments to Member Advisory Council, which will meet April 22.
 - Updated on operations activities: complete
- Next meeting is for April 25, 2024, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. 