

# Connections

September 2023

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 27, Issue 9

## Harvest crops — not the co-op's poles — while in the fields this fall

One sunny morning Farmer Fred set out to his fields with his trusty tractor and digger. He was eager to finish working ground before winter. As the day progressed, Farmer Fred noticed a row of electric poles along the edge of his field. However, his focus was so fixed on getting home before dark that he didn't pay much attention to them.

As the sun started to set and the shadows grew longer, Farmer Fred worked to complete his end rows. He began maneuvering his equipment dangerously close to one of the poles. At the last moment he realized the danger he was in and narrowly dodged the electric pole.

Startled and realizing the dangerous mistake he almost made, Farmer Fred took a moment to catch his breath. Fortunately, he escaped unharmed this time, but the situation could have been much worse. As he sat there, he thought about what had just happened and how he could prevent such incidents in the future.

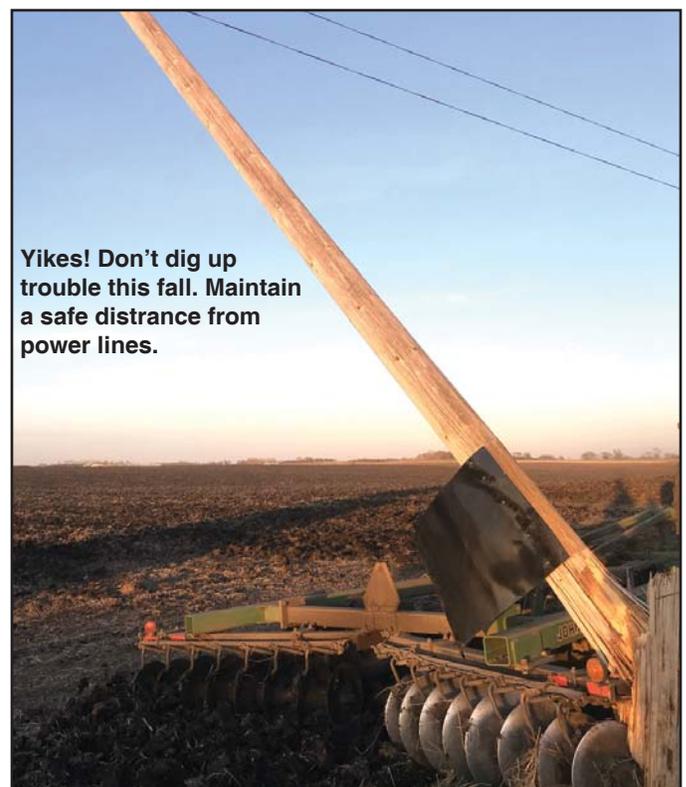
Farmer Fred shared his experience with his fellow farmers. He emphasized the importance of being aware of electric poles, power lines and green underground cabinets, while working in the fields, especially during harvest season. He urges everyone to take these precautions:

**1. Stay aware:** always be conscious of the location of electric poles and power lines in your field. Take note of their position and keep a safe distance.

**2. Plan your routes:** before starting any work, plan your routes and maneuvers to avoid getting too close to electric poles. Create a mental map of the field and potential hazards.

**3. Use a spotter:** if possible, have a trusted friend or family member act as a spotter to guide you and ensure you maintain a safe distance from power lines.

**4. Maintain safe clearance:** keep a safe distance of at least 10 feet from power lines horizontally to prevent accidental contact and avoid any contact vertically as well.



**Yikes! Don't dig up trouble this fall. Maintain a safe distance from power lines.**

**5. Always stay alert:** electric poles are not just a danger in the field. Electric equipment can be a danger in yards, as well. Watch out for underground transformers. If moving augers, make sure they are completely lowered to avoid contacting any power lines around the farm.

Farmer Fred's story serves as a reminder to all the farmers in the community about the potential dangers of working around electric poles and power lines. Make it a safe harvest season! ⚡

### At A Glance



Fall is calling & Operation Round Up deadline nears

Are you part of an organization, fire department or school group that could use funding assistance? Apply for Operation Round Up funding by September 22. Find the application on our website or call/e-mail us to request an application. Recipients will be announced in November. ⚡



# Get smart about home lighting

Gone are the days when a simple flip of the switch was the only choice for illuminating our homes. While we still have this tried-and-true option, we've entered a new era of innovative and intelligent technologies, which includes smart lighting.

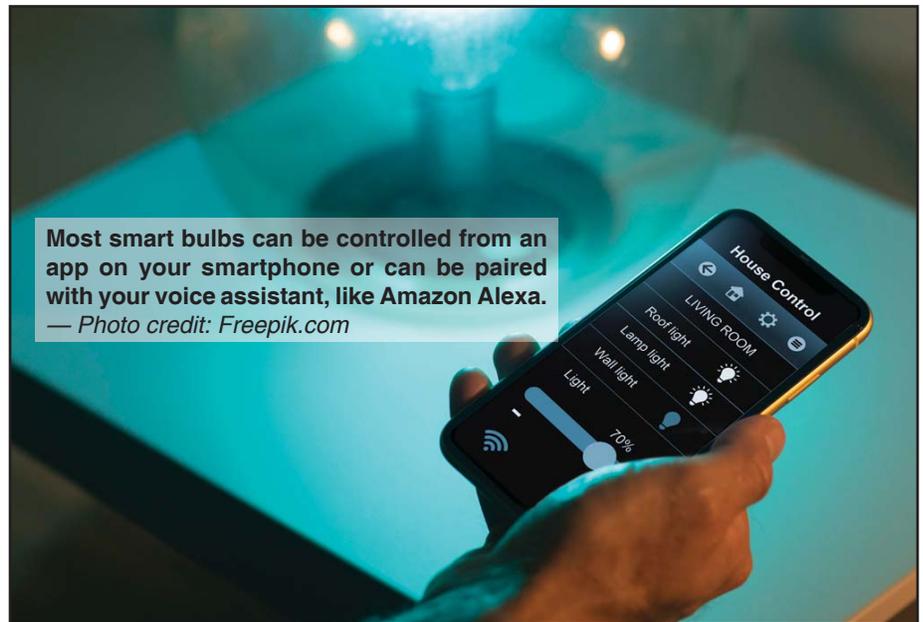
Smart lighting connects to Wi-Fi and offers an array of cutting-edge functionality and convenience. Let's look at the main benefits of smart lighting options.

Smart lighting is energy efficient. Most smart bulbs use LED technology, which is much more efficient than traditional incandescent lighting. Additionally, smart lighting gives you more control over how and when you light your home, ultimately resulting in less energy used for lighting.

Smart lighting provides convenience and control. Most smart bulbs can be controlled from an app on your smartphone or can be paired with your voice assistant, like Amazon Alexa. You can conveniently control lighting settings from anywhere in your home or when you're away. Whether you want to set a schedule for lighting or adjust brightness levels, these smart options offer effortless control from the comfort of anywhere!

Smart options empower you to personalize home lighting. Bright, warm, purple, green — whatever mood you want to create, smart lighting can help. For a more traditional look try dimmable white bulbs. If you want to create the perfect ambiance for movie night, look for bulbs that can be adjusted for a variety of vibrant colors. The possibilities are endless.

While smart lighting offers convenience



and control, keep in mind your wall light switch will need to stay "on" for you to control the smart bulb from your phone or by voice command. To use a smart bulb the wall switch it's connected to must be "on" so the bulb receives power, which enables it to connect to a Wi-Fi network.

If you need additional options to operate the lights, consider a smart light switch. Today's smart switches tend to play nicely with smart bulbs. If you want to control your smart bulbs with a physical switch (in addition to using your phone and voice commands), look for smart switches that include a built-in feature that allows both. Many smart light switches include motion detectors as well.

If you're looking to take the plunge and integrate multiple smart bulbs to your home lighting system, your best bet may be a kit, like the Philips Hue

Starter Kit. Most kits include several bulbs and any additional tools you'll need to get started.

If you're new to smart home tech and looking to start small, try a smart bulb in a high-traffic area of your home. It's worth noting that smart plugs are a great starter option and allow convenient control of lamps or other lighting fixtures plugged into a wall outlet. Smart plugs are inexpensive and simply plug in to your existing outlet. Electrical items that are connected to the smart plug can be controlled from a smart phone app, just like smart bulbs.

Whether you're looking for more convenience, colorful options or better ways to manage energy use, smart lighting can provide multiple benefits. Determine which smart lighting features are most important for your needs, then start shopping!

## Electric Spin Scrubber makes cleaning easy

No one likes to clean the bathroom, but the Electric Spin Scrubber at least makes the job easier. Say goodbye to standard cleaning brushes.

The Electric Spin Scrubber has three lengths: 12, 43 and 54 inches. This enables cleaning everywhere without having to bend over or kneel down. This makes the Electric Spin Scrubber easy on joints.

The Electric Spin Scrubber is waterproof. You can easily clean shower bathrooms, bathtubs, stone tile floors, grout, and grooves without damaging the device.

The Electric Spin Scrubber has two speeds: 250 and 350 revolutions per minute. The dual-speed design allows you to choose the cleaning method that works for you.

The Electric Spin Scrubber comes with numerous accessories: eight replaceable brush heads, as well as chargers and hooks. The eight replaceable brush heads are suitable for multiple scenarios or can be removed separately for cleaning. The brushes work for bathrooms, kitchens, bathtubs, wood and tile floors, glass, tires and cars. The bristles are soft and will not scratch tiles, glass and cars.

The battery takes four hours to fully charge and will work for up to 90 minutes.

The Electric Spin Scrubber costs \$55; find it on Amazon or Walmart.com. 



Scrub-a-dub-dub becomes more fun and less work with this Electric Spin Scrubber! Eight brush heads make tackling any cleaning job simple!

## Safety

### Use caution when burning road ditches

Burning ditches around electric poles is a common practice for vegetation management. However, it's crucial to conduct such activities with care and awareness of the potential hazards. Every year your electric co-op replaces poles damaged by ditch fires. Follow these tips.

- Assess the area around the electric poles to identify potential hazards, such as overhead power lines, equipment, or structures.

- Check weather conditions and avoid burning on windy days to prevent flames from spreading uncontrollably.

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including fire-resistant clothing, gloves, safety glasses and sturdy footwear.

- Consider wearing a dust mask to avoid inhaling smoke and particulate matter.

- Maintain a safe distance (at least 10 feet) from electric poles, power lines and other utility equipment, while conducting burning activities.



- Ensure that the flames, smoke and sparks are not reaching the electric poles or overhead wires.

- Remove dry leaves, debris and flammable materials from the area before starting the burn.

- Create a firebreak by clearing a strip of land around the ditch to prevent the fire from spreading beyond the intended area.

- Assign a responsible person to supervise the burning process at all times.

- Have firefighting tools, like shovels and rakes, readily available to control and extinguish any unintended fires.

- Once the burning is complete, ensure that all flames are completely extinguished.

- Douse the burned area with water and use tools to smother any remaining embers.

- If any fire spreads beyond the intended area or poses a risk to electric poles or power lines, contact emergency services and utility companies immediately. Members are billed for damaged pole replacement. 

# Federated Focus

## Annual Meeting winners

Electric bill credits were awarded to those who voted:

- \$300: Linda Craig, Welcome
- \$250: David Leiding, Ceylon
- \$150: Jeff Jensen, Estherville
- Six \$50 bill credit winners:

Anthony Ling, Windom  
Wanda Stoberl, Heron Lake  
Louise Rients, Lakefield  
Johnson Livestock, Windom  
Scott C. Jones, Sherburn  
Mark DeWall, Okabena

• Stage plants: David Anderson, Dunnell; and Earl Tusa, Alpha

## Win EGO electric snow blower

Update your electric account's contact information. Fill out this coupon by November 1. We will do a drawing for an EGO two-stage snowblower (value \$1,500) and a drawing for three \$50 bill credits. Electric account(s) # \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Yes, sign me up for outage text notices on cell phone numbers listed below.

\_\_\_\_ No I don't want outage text notices, but update my cell phone numbers on my account.

Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I still use my land line

\_\_\_\_ No, remove my land line

Land line \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Yes, sign me up for paperless (electronic) bills and/or \_\_\_\_\_ sign me up for bill e-mail notifications.

Return this coupon with your bill payment or drop off at our office or drop box. If you fill out this coupon, no need to fill out the October bill insert. Thanks for helping us serve you better.



Scott Reimer

# Manager's Message

## 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting is history!

We just wrapped up our 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. We thank those who ventured out on an extremely hot day to join us in Sherburn. It was fairly well attended and the Martin County Pork Producers and chops on a stick didn't disappoint. To the left of this column are the door prize winners. Congratulations! We are already starting to think about planning for next year and will be talking with the Board at the next meeting. One thing that we ask for at the end of every meeting is whether there are any questions from the members. We didn't have any that day, but if you have questions, call or stop by the office.

## Midcontinent Independent System Operator's (MISO) Max Gen event

We just came out of a MISO MAX GEN EVENT where MISO de-escalated the Max Gen EVENT to a Max Gen Warning August 24, 2023. What this means is that the electrical grid was stressed due to the sustained heat and some key generation units were offline. The actual demand was 122,192 megawatts, which is significantly higher than normal. The fuel mix needed to sustain it was natural gas providing 42 percent, coal providing 40 percent, nuclear at 10 percent with wind, solar and other sources picking up the final 8 percent. Days like this could easily turn into rolling blackouts, if just a couple of the baseload units would go down. Fortunately, our industry understands the need for "all tech on deck" in maintaining a reliable and resilient grid. Times like these, prices are volatile and costs go up exponentially. The cost per megawatt hour was several hundred dollars — compared to a normal \$45 dollars — nothing good will come from a shortage of dispatchable generation.

## Conduct fall harvest safely!

It won't be long before combines are moving about from field to field for the start of the fall harvest. One thing that we see annually is contacts with poles, guy wires and overhead conductors. As equipment gets taller and wider, the risk of contact becomes greater. We do not want anyone getting hurt nor damage to equipment; as you start to check out your fields and approaches, take a look around and up to see if anything looks out of place. Conductors can have extra sag due to several reasons and we would like the opportunity to correct that beforehand. Please give us a call if anything looks suspicious and we will be right out. The other thing I have noticed personally is that my depth perception isn't what it use to be. That comes into play for harvesters as your corn or bean head gets wider or that pole in the fence line just got closer unless you compensate for it. On average we end up with a dozen or more combine or farm equipment vs. pole collisions each year, causing thousands in damage not to mention putting people out of power until things are repaired. If it ever happens to you, please don't contact any downed lines. Be safe out there!

## Jackson County Fiber update

As you may know, Federated received grant funding for a fiber to the home for 480 sites in Jackson County. The map was in the August *Connections*. We signed the contract; our engineering team is putting the final touches on the route. Once completed, we can begin the environmental review where underground will be used. The electric and broadband operations managers worked to determine that a good percentage of the project can be built with overhead materials so that will be integrated into the plan. Staking sheets and contract documents come next. Selecting a contractor will be key as we have a completion date of December 31, 2025. Materials procurement will no doubt be a challenge, but we made good relationships. Our staff is working on a marketing plan to reach out to every account along the routes. Federated currently serves 208 of the 480 locations in the project; the 272 left will be our focus. Our current subscribers are already on the list for the upgrade, as soon as fiber is available for them. ☎

# Prizes & pork-on-a-stick top the 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting highlights with 3 director candidates on At-Large ballot



Let's play Bingo! Federated member Judy Klunder, Ceylon, picked up her scissors attendance gift and Bingo card from employees during meeting registration.



Sherburn Lions' Nate Klima staffed the Bingo prize patrol cart and Lions helped with serving the meal. This member picks out her prize for winning. Thank you Lions Club members!



Three children won Lego sets and two passes to Center Creek Orchard in their respective age groups (pictured): Ages 4-6: Micah Fox, Granada; Ages 7-8: Harold Thompson, Ceylon; and Ages 9-10: Lynnne McInerney, Sherburn. Congratulations!



Yummy! Members Carlee and Tom Miller, Sherburn, enjoyed the pork loin chops on a stick, grilled by the Martin County Pork Producers.



Members gathered around Federated's Rivan electric pickup to learn more from employee Jon Beckman.

## Director & Nominating Committee election results:

Jon Saxen, Sherburn, was re-elected as Director At-Large with 687 votes. Gordon Toupal, Fairmont, received 318 votes, while Douglas Landsteiner, Fairmont, received 249.

John T. Garbers, Welcome, was elected as District Five Nominating Committee member with Ron Fowler, Truman, elected for District Six Nominating Committee.

1,259 members cast votes by mail and 82 voted onsite. 

# Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not stop winter disconnects; know the process

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects.

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between October 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL of the following apply:

1. Your household income is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by your electric cooperative or by the local energy-assistance provider.
2. You enter into and make reasonable timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
3. You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from your electric co-op.

**Winter disconnects may occur**

Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between October 1 and April 30,

Your electric cooperative must provide:

1. A 30-day notice of disconnection;
2. A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
3. A list of local energy-assistance providers;
4. Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
5. A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

**Energy Assistance Program**

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50 percent of the state median income to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2024.



Des Moines Valley Human Services (Jackson & Cottonwood) .....	847-4000
Martin County Human Services .....	238-4757
MN Dept. of Commerce (Ask for fuel assistance) .....	1-800-657-3710
Minnesota Valley Action Council .....	1-800-767-7139
Blue Earth County .....	345-6822
Brown County .....	508-4041
Martin County .....	238-1663
Nicollet County .....	934-5224
Sibley County .....	237-2981
Watonwan County .....	375-5748
Nobles County Community Services .....	888-807-8099
Renville County .....	320-523-1842
Salvation Army's Heat Share (Jackson, Martin & Brown Co.) .....	1-800-842-7279
Sibley County Human Services .....	237-4000
SW Health & Human Services (Redwood Co.) .....	1-888-234-1292
SW MN Opportunity Council, Inc. (Nobles Co.) .....	376-4195
United Community Action Partnership (Jackson, Cottonwood & Redwood Counties) .....	1-800-658-2448

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website: <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance> for more details.
- Contact your county's energy assistance provider for additional information and assistance.

Your electric cooperative exists because of you; we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either

of these programs, please contact the cooperative to set up a payment plan. ☎

## 2024 Minnesota Income Eligibility

Household size	Annual income limit
1 person	\$32,667
2 people	\$42,719
3 people	\$52,770
4 people	\$62,822

## Care for some new carrot recipes? Share your favorites with us

It's nearly time to dig up some carrots from the garden! Dig up some carrot recipes to share. Share your favorite carrot recipe, whether it's for cake, bars, salads, side dishes or even juice. Share your carrot recipes with us. Mail your favorite recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by September 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

### Active military bill payment options exist



Minnesota law offers active military personnel additional payment options for their electric bills. The law covers disconnection, payment arrangements, appeal and an annual notice to co-op members. Similar to the state's Cold Weather Rule, an application must be completed and income guidelines exist. It's available for military personnel with active duty, deployed or a permanent duty station change.

Call or e-mail us for details about the active duty military payment options and a form to sign up. 📧

### 2023 Farmfest booth winners announced



Drum roll please... here's the winners for the battery-powered yard tools from the 2023 Farmfest booth: 1. Leaf blower: Wayne Johnson, Meeker Electric Cooperative. 2. 21" lawn mower: Gary Kranz, Redwood Electric. 3. 15" string trimmer: Carolyn Huhnerkoch, Redwood Electric. 4. 16" chain saw: Dean Wenzel, Federated Rural Electric. 5. Misting fan: Corner Grove Farms, BENCO Electric. Nearly 600 co-op members registered representing 12 Minnesota Touchstone Energy cooperatives. Thanks for stopping by our booth and visiting with us August 1-3. 📧



This month get:  
**\$100 off one camera\***



888.264.6380 | heartlandss.com

\*with three year monitoring agreement

### Just make the 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 and tiling. 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. 📧

# Local, fast internet!

I'm a Federated  
Broadband  
customer &  
Federated director



"We have barn cameras to watch our cows during calving season," stated Glenn Dicks, Lakefield, and Federated Director for District 1. "Federated Broadband made it possible to view the cows from the comfort of our recliner. Using satellite internet before, we were not able to get the cameras to work. We also have security cameras outside to play back and livestream what is happening, which is fast and available without interruptions now. Our TV streaming also comes to us uninterrupted. We're very happy with our internet. Service by the Federated team has been fantastic. We like the fact that when you are experiencing problems, you can reach out to someone locally. Our experience is that within a few minutes someone is looking into the issue and most problems are resolved shortly. We are also looking forward to having the fiber service in the future. We recommend Broadband over any satellite provider that we've had." (U)



info@federatedbroadband.coop • www.federatedbroadband.coop

507-847-1001 or 1-833-847-8001 

**Businesses: ask about our larger data plans**



## Rural Electric

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Glenn Dicks — 840-1075

Jon Saxen — 236-7027

Scott Thiesse — 399-6427

The Board of Directors generally meets the last business day of the month at 8 a.m. at the Jackson office. Regular board meetings are open to the membership. Members interested in discussing business items should contact the general manager or president three days before the meeting.

## Federated Broadband's Residential packages:

### 6MB down/2MB up

- \$50/month
- Perfect speed for e-mails, surfing & Facebook

### 15MB down/2MB up

- \$70/month
- Upgrade to streaming TV & drop satellite TV

### 25MB down/3MB up

- \$80/month
  - Works with larger households, downloads & gaming
- ### 40MB down/3MB up
- \$90/month
  - Gamers, work from home and all of the above!

**Basic installation fee \$150**

## Annual Meeting Broadband Winner

Congratulations goes to Jerald Clark, Lakefield. He registered at the Broadband booth during the meeting and received a free month of service in the booth drawing. He has been a subscriber since 2020. (U)