

Connections

January 2024

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 28, Issue 1

Bright tips for hiring local electrician so your electrical project proceeds smoothly

Know when to hire an electrician. If it's beyond your comfort level, play it safe and call a licensed, electrician for your next job. Cousin Billy Bob may think he knows what he's doing with wiring, but is it safe and does it follow the electrical code?

Whether it's a lighting upgrade, house renovation or new electric service or expansion for the bins or a heated shop, keep these tips in mind.

1. Hire a licensed qualified electrician — Look for a master electrician to manage the project. Master electricians have the most experience and will often oversee the work of a journey-level electrician or apprentice.

2. Make sure the electrician is insured — A seasoned electrician knows the importance of following proper safety procedures and protecting themselves.

3. Get referrals or reviews — Hire an electrician that has positive reviews from a neighbor or friend. Otherwise, look at websites for reviews, like Nextdoor, Yelp and HomeAdvisor.

4. Determine your budget — Get two quotes if possible. Know your budget upfront.

5. Talk timeline — Electricians are busy and must juggle multiple projects. If your job is time-sensitive, convey that early on and discuss a realistic timeline with the electrician.

"If you will be working with an electrician for a new or expanded service, be sure that one of you also talks to your local electric cooperative," stated George Madden, Federated's operations manager. "Make sure to include your cooperative in the plans as we also need to coordinate the schedule with our line crews and make sure we have the adequate materials on hand. Ideally, give us a three to six month heads up of your plans and updates on the timeline too."

Keep in mind that your cooperative services the lines up to the electric meter. "From the meter to your house



Need an electrician? Check out these tips when hiring an electrician to do your next electrical project.

and outbuildings requires the work of an electrician," said Brandon Havemeier, Brown County REA's operations and engineering manager. "This also applies to the underground locates. The cooperative will do underground locates up to the meter. If it's beyond the meter, you will need to work with your local electrician to do that locate. Factor in time before the work starts for the locates to be completed."

Underground locates up to the meter require the member to call Gopher State One Call (1-800-252-1166 or 811) 48 hours in advance (that's business days so allow more time if it's a weekend). This allows the responding utilities time to do their locates for electricity, phone, natural gas, fiber and rural water. ☎

At A Glance



Basin scholarship
deadline January
26 — 2 for \$1,000

High school seniors or college students with a year of undergraduate classes left next fall are eligible; must be sons/daughters of Federated members for electric service. Find the application on our website (www.federatedrea.coop) or see the local high school counselors. ☎



Be winter weather wiser to save energy; Help your heating system work well

Colder weather can increase energy use and bills since heating accounts for the highest wintertime energy consumption in most homes. The amount of energy used to heat your home depends on your equipment, how you use it and the efficiency of your home's shell — the building components that separate the indoors from the outdoors.

Know how your home is heated so you can make informed decisions on your energy use. It also helps you prepare for upcoming bills and avoid surprises that impact your budget. A forced-air furnace is the most common type of heating system and is fueled by natural gas, propane, oil or electricity. Heat pumps are growing in popularity so check out your cooperative's rebates on their website. A heat pump can step up your home's heating efficiency for forced-air systems. If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty. Ductless heat pumps (mini-splits), boilers, radiant heat, baseboard heaters and electric resistance heaters are other common heating systems.

If you don't know what type of system you have, find the model number of your equipment and look it up online. You'll find information about the kind of system, how efficiently it operates and recommendations for servicing it, which can improve system efficiency.

Energy makes our homes comfortable. The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your



Seal air leaks at plumbing penetrations to eliminate winter drafts.

comfort will allow. The closer your home's temperature is to the outdoor temperature, the less energy is used.

The U.S. Department of Energy recommends a thermostat setting of 68 degrees in the winter while awake and lower when you are asleep or away from home. Setting the temperature too low can cause pipes to freeze or moisture issues in some geographic locations. Upgrade to a Wi-Fi Smart thermostat to easily change your home's temperatures using your cell phone; take advantage of the cooperative's \$25 Smart Thermostat rebate too! Adding an additional layer of clothing or slippers can keep you comfortable in a cooler home too.

Do you use electric resistance space heaters to heat a room or small section of your home? If so, you may see an increase on your electric bill. For example, let's say you use a 1,500-watt electric space heater to warm your living room while you watch TV or read a book. Operating that space heater

for two hours a day at the Minnesota average electricity rate of 13.5 cents per kilowatt-hour will cost you about \$12 a month. Operating that same space heater for 12 hours a day will cost you about \$73 a month.

If you choose to use space heaters, use them safely. Keep them three feet away from anything flammable; do not leave them unattended and plug them directly into the outlet — not an extension cord or power strip.

Just as we put on a windbreaker to keep cold winds from blowing through a sweater, your home also benefits from blocking air movement. Air sealing makes a big improvement in the comfort of your home and energy savings. A common air-sealing practice is applying weatherstripping to exterior doors and windows. Seal around plumbing penetrations to help eliminate drafts. A gap often exists between the drywall or wood and the plumbing pipes and drains. Filling gaps with expanding foam reduces drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.

Cold, windy winter days are the perfect time to find opportunities for air sealing. Rattling doors or moving curtains can indicate air leakage. Air leakage can occur where two different materials come together, like drywall and trim work. Cracked plaster and gaps in drywall can also cause drafts. Sealing the gaps saves energy and improves comfort.

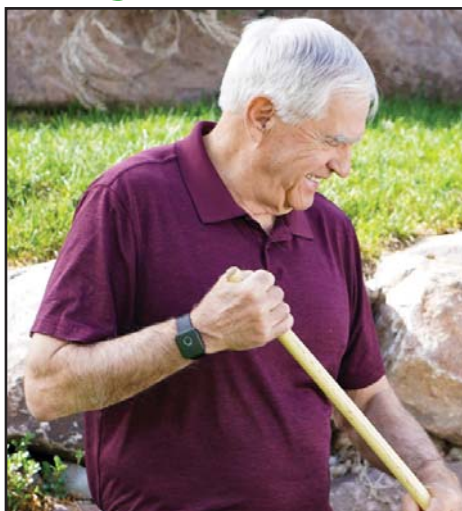
As outdoor temperatures plunge, a few proactive steps help maintain your home's comfort and keep the energy bill in check. ☺

Medical alert goes with you, where you go! Heartland Security's Belle offers new style

Medical alert systems can now keep up with a busy lifestyle and still provide peace-of-mind for your loved one.


Go hiking, biking or gardening? Running an errand in town? Belle W is the latest style expanding the medical alert system beyond your home. The Belle W is a small watch-style medical alert, but it could also be worn around the neck.

Belle W uses powerful microphones and high-def voice technology so users speak with a response operator when help is needed. These operators use Wi-Fi and cellular location services to send help your way. Belle W works anywhere in the U.S. where 4G LTE cellular coverage exists. It is certified on the AT&T and Verizon networks.



The “W” with Belle W medical alert “watch” could stand for “Wow, it works where I go!”

Handy features for Belle W include being water resistant and providing fall detection. Just press the call button to get connected. The speaker provides communication between the wearer and operator. A status light lets the person see a call is in progress and when it needs to be recharged. It typically needs to be recharged every few days.

Heartland Security, a subsidiary of your electric cooperative, will mail the Belle W and provide phone support for \$99. If you prefer an in-person set up (where available), the cost becomes \$199. The monthly monitoring costs \$49.95. Call Heartland Security at 888-264-6380 or go to www.heartlandss.com. 

Safety

Just in case, stay safe with electric space heater

Space heaters are popular for their ability to quickly heat small areas, making them ideal for bedrooms, offices or chilly corners of a home. There are two main types of space heaters: convection heaters and radiant heaters. Convection heaters warm the air, while radiant heaters emit heat directly to nearby objects. Regardless of the type, it pays to keep these safety tips in mind.

- Before each use, inspect your space heater for damage or frayed cords. Space heaters are often moved around and plugged in and out, resulting in wear and tear on the cord. If you notice any issues, do not use the heater.

- Select a space heater that is sized for the room you intend to heat. Overloading a small heater may force it to work harder, leading to overheating and electrical problems.

- Maintain a minimum clearance of at least three feet around the space heater. This includes furniture, curtains, bedding and any other combustible materials. Never place the heater on uneven surfaces or near water sources.



Stay toasty and safe when operating your space heater.


- Always plug your space heater directly into a grounded outlet. Avoid using extension cords or power strips, as these may not be able to handle the power requirements of the heater.

- Turn off your space heater when you leave the room or go to bed. Unattended heaters are a significant fire risk. Modern space heaters often come with timers or automatic shut-off switches, which can provide an extra layer of protection.

- Do not overload electrical circuits by plugging too many devices into the same outlet used by a space heater.

- The surface of the space heater can become extremely hot and may cause burns if touched. Be sure to keep children and pets away.

- Clean away the dust and debris that accumulate on the heating elements. In addition, follow the manufacturer's guidelines for maintenance to ensure optimal performance and safety.

Stay warm and stay safe! 

Federated Focus

Nondiscrimination notice



If you wish to file a Civil Rights complaint of dis-

crimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, at any USDA office or call 866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed form or letter by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Center for Civil Rights Enforcement, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax 202-690-7742 or e-mail program.intake@usda.gov.

Operation Round Up deadline February 1



The spring Operation Round Up deadline draws near!

Spring into action! Apply by February 1, 2024. Find the application on our website: federatedrea.coop, stop or call to request it.

Encourage local organizations to apply for funding for education/youth projects, community service, environmental, emergency-energy assistance and disaster relief. Mention it to your local fire/ambulance volunteers for equipment, 4-H clubs for community pride projects and schools for educational equipment. The funding recipients will be announced in April. ☺



Scott Reimer

Manager's Message

Working on innovations for evolving energy future

As we reflect upon the successes and accomplishments of the past year, there are significant topics that we feel necessitate your awareness and understanding. We highly value the trust you have placed in us to manage our cooperative's operations for the betterment of our area. We believe it is crucial to keep you informed about important developments that may affect

our community.

One significant challenge that lies ahead is the potential risk of rolling blackouts. With the departure of dispatchable generation sources, such as coal, our region faces the need for alternative approaches to ensure a reliable and consistent supply of electricity. We want to assure you that we are actively working on innovative solutions to navigate this changing landscape with our wholesale power partners.

This has necessitated an urgent demand for more robust transmission line additions throughout the Midwest to maximize capabilities needed for these additional resources. These improvements are vital to accommodate the increasing electric loads mostly with a more electrified economy and the transmission of renewable energy to load centers across the United States. By expanding our transmission infrastructure, we can foster the continued growth of renewable energy sources and provide a more sustainable and reliable energy supply to our community.

While these challenges are significant, we are confident in our ability to overcome them with your continued support and our ongoing dedication to your cooperative. We are actively collaborating with and through regional stakeholders, investing in research and development, and leveraging cutting-edge technologies to address these issues head-on. Together, along with our energy partners, we can ensure a bright and prosperous future for our cooperative and our community.

As members of Federated Rural Electric and Broadband, your perspective and involvement are essential. We encourage you to stay informed and engage in the discussions; offer us your insights and suggestions. Your active participation will help us make informed decisions that align with our shared values and goals.

We want to express our sincerest appreciation for your unwavering trust and commitment. Your cooperation and understanding, as we navigate these challenges, are of utmost importance; we are grateful to have you by our side.

As we step into the new year, we stand firm in our determination to provide you with reliable and sustainable energy solutions. Our commitment to serving our members and enhancing our wonderful rural lifestyle remains unwavering.

Thank you for your continued support and belief in the cooperative business model. We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and remain confident that together, we will overcome any obstacles that come our way. ☺

Coming to your yards with line patrol & radio control upgrades

Crews are starting line patrol and will be coming onto yards and property throughout the service area. The cooperative patrols its lines each year in the winter months checking the cooperative's overhead and underground lines and equipment. Linemen will be looking for maintenance issues that need attention, such as loose or missing guy wires and guards, damaged wires and proper line clearance. They will perform maintenance on overhead and underground lines.

In addition, Arp Electric continues assisting Federated with upgrading the gray radio control box on the outside of the houses that controls water heaters, Dual Heat and Cycled Air. The next areas where they will be working are Ewington and Heron Lake Townships in Jackson County. ☺

Directors approve 4 percent rate increase March 1 due to increasing operating costs

Rate increase coming on March 1, 2024; members will see change on April 4th bills

Rate	Description	Old			New			% Change
		Service Charge	Old Energy	Old Demand	Service Charge	New Energy	New Demand	
A	Residential	\$ 25.00	\$ 0.0860	n/a	\$ 28.50	\$ 0.0880	n/a	4.72%
B	General Service	\$ 50.00	\$ 0.0836	\$ 4.00	\$ 55.00	\$ 0.0840	\$ 4.50	3.89%
C	Small Power	\$ 75.00	\$ 0.0810	\$ 7.00	\$ 80.00	\$ 0.0820	\$ 7.50	3.35%
D	Large Power	\$ 85.00	\$ 0.0800	\$ 7.75	\$ 90.00	\$ 0.0810	\$ 8.25	3.83%
I	Interruptible	\$ 110.00	\$ 0.0650	\$ 6.00	\$ 115.00	\$ 0.0660	\$ 6.50	3.45%

Your electric cooperative strives to provide the lowest rates possible, along with safe and reliable power. Yet, increasing operating costs require that Federated adjusts its electric rates, effective March 1, 2024.

"Federated is proud of being the lowest cost electric cooperative in the state of Minnesota for residential electric rates," stated General Manager Scott Reimer. "However, without the rate increase we would have about a \$1 million operating loss."

The Board of Directors approved the rate increase at their December 27 meeting. With this rate adjustment starting March 1, members will see the change on their electric bills April 4.

Most rate classes have their monthly service charge increase by \$5, while residential increased by \$3.50/month. Demand is increasing by 50 cents per kilowatt (kW), while energy is changing only slightly.

To prevent a rate increase Federated needed growth around four percent. For comparison Federated's electric sales were flat from 2022 to 2023 with commercial sales down 1.62 percent last year. It is due in part to milder weather, the economy and low growth.

Meanwhile, operating costs by Federated's main material supplier increased about 9.7 percent. Health benefits increased 4.5 percent.

"The cost of wholesale power increased one percent," Reimer said. "However, transmission costs increased 12 percent by our main transmission provider to accommodate the building

of new transmission lines. The new transmission lines are to accommodate renewable energy sources and the departure of coal-generated electricity.

"Our strategy is to do more frequent and smaller rate increases, instead of double-digit increases less often, to avoid rate shock," he added. "Unfortunately, our financial forecast shows these smaller rate increases will be needed possibly yearly. We will still strive to remain the lowest cost residential electric rate in Minnesota."

Keep in mind that the average Minnesota residential electricity rate

for 2021 was 13.5 cents, while the national average is 13.7 cents in 2021.

Be sure to add energy efficiency into your home using Federated's rebates for heat pumps, Smart Thermostats, Energy Star appliances and commercial rebates. Find details on Federated's website www.federatedrea.coop.

As a member-owner, help us operate efficiently. Sign up for paperless bills by calling the office to help us reduce monthly billing costs. Residential accounts can sign up for budget billing in May. Sign up for Auto Pay to save on postage and late fees. ☎

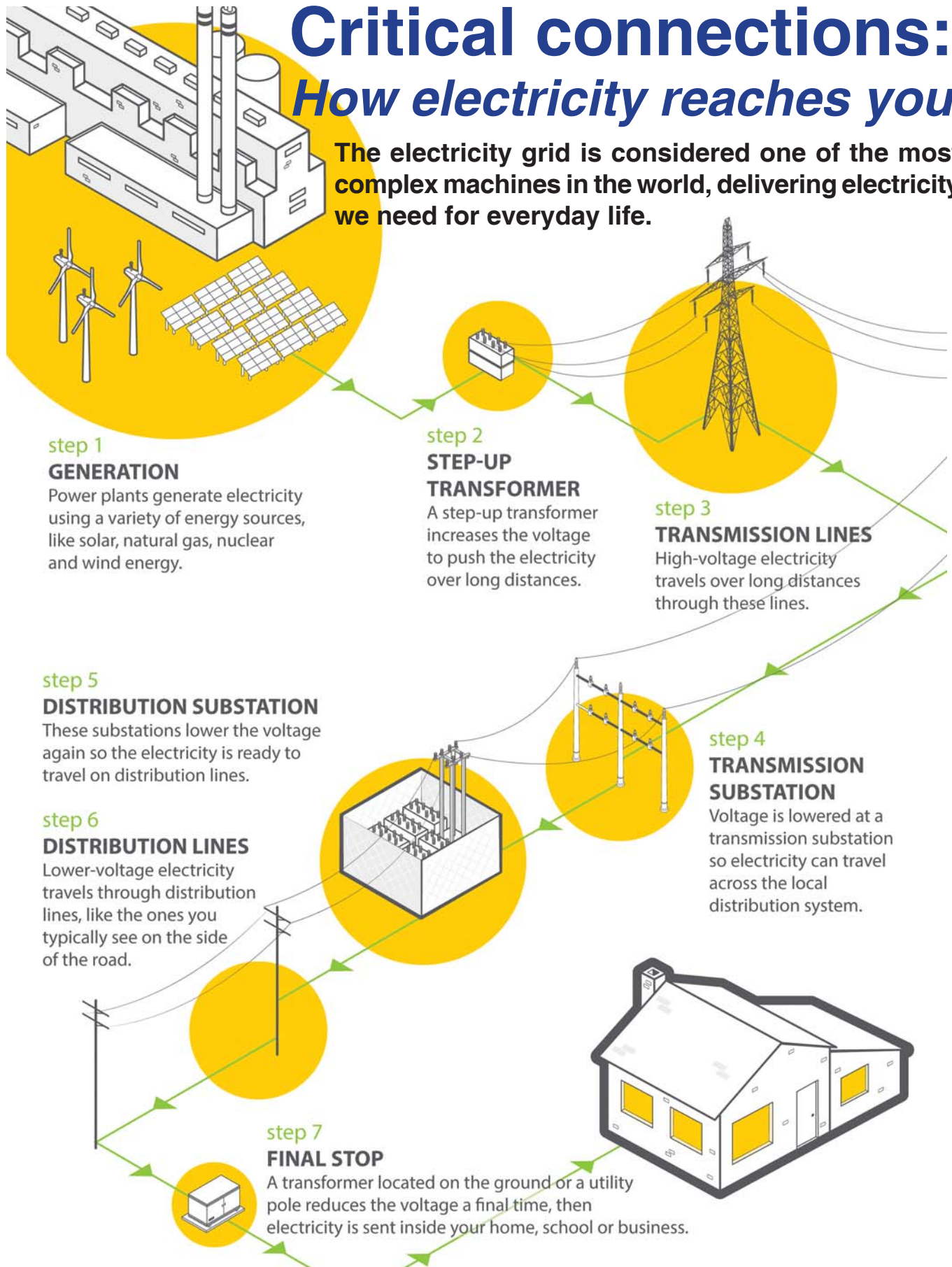


See U.S. history come to life! High school students: enter Federated's Youth Tour Contest. Complete the application and 300-word energy-related essay. See details on Federated's website or see the school counselor. Five finalists do 15 minute interviews March 12. First place is the D.C. trip June 18-23. Second place is \$150 and third place is \$100. The first 15 to apply receive \$20 Amazon gift cards. Encourage your child, relative or neighborhood teen to enter today! See monuments, museums and memorials! Make new friends too! It's a trip of a lifetime! ☎

Critical connections:

How electricity reaches you

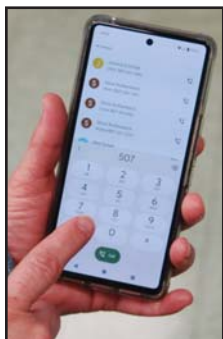
The electricity grid is considered one of the most complex machines in the world, delivering electricity we need for everyday life.



Sliced, diced or chopped? Pull out the stops to share celery recipes

Pull out the celery recipes from your gallery. Do you add celery to soups, salads, stuffing, chow mein or other veggie-side dishes? Send your favorite celery recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by January 29. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📞

507 area code changes: Use the 507 area code when dialing local calls starting January 30



The Minnesota Public Utilities added another area code (924) to the 507 area code area. This will require you to dial differently this year.

1. Effective January 30, 2024, dial the area code (507) plus the seven-digit telephone number when dialing. If you do not dial the 507, the call will still go through.

2. Effective July 30, 2024, dial the area code (507) and the seven-digit telephone number within the 507 area. If you do not do this, your phone call will not be completed. You will get a recording telling you to dial again using the area code.

3. Effective August 30, 2024, the new area code of 924 will also be used for the 507 area code area.

When calling your electric cooperative, start using the 507 area code now. Make sure it's added into your cell phone too so you are ready for this change. Your cooperative will still offer its toll-free phone number. Taking a few minutes now, ensures you can reach us if an outage occurs and you're in the dark. 📞

Cowboy Stew

by Terrie Hlavac, Jackson

Brown 1 lb. hamburger in a skillet. Drain off any grease.

Add 1 can of tomato soup and 1 can (20 or 28 oz.) Bush's Baked Beans. Mix and simmer 15-20 minutes. 📞

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

This month get:
**\$100 OFF
A NEW
SECURITY
SYSTEM**

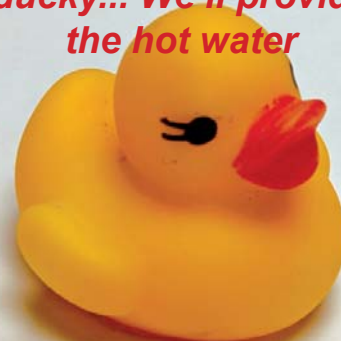
with three year monitoring agreement.

**Heartland
Security**



A subsidiary of your local electric co-op

You provide the rubber ducky... We'll provide the hot water



Call your local electric co-op for your next water heater



***This year go down
the super highway
with faster internet***

Make your New Year's Resolution to finally improve your internet service. Sign up with Federated Broadband for local internet service, great pricing and it comes with your electric bill too. This January Federated Broadband offers a special deal for new customers. Sign up in January and receive a **FREE install (\$150 value)!** Don't miss this opportunity to save money and enjoy the best internet service in rural areas. Streaming TV packages available too so you can drop the dish! Switch now for a smoother, easier transition when Broadband's fiber service reaches your area.



info@federatedbroadband.coop • www.federatedbroadband.coop

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



Jackson County Residents:
If you received this postcard, go to the broadband website to sign up for fiber or call us for a paper application. Fill out the map of your farm or home with underground facilities. Help us be prepared to install the fiber in the ground starting this spring!

WE MAKE YOUR INTERNET SERVICE SIMPLE

Fiber internet is here!



Rural Electric

Official monthly newsletter published
77100 US Hwy 71, PO Box 69

Jackson, MN 56143-0069

E-mail: info@federatedrea.coop

Website: http://www.federatedrea.coop

Facebook.com/Federated

Phone: 847-3520 or 1-800-321-3520

Office hours: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday

Scott Reimer, General Manager

David A. Hansen, President — 841-1176

David Meschke, Vice President — 236-4896

Darvin Voss, Secretary/Treasurer — 370-3201

Bruce Brockmann — 399-3487

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

TV package starts at \$70/month for 100 channels.

All you need is a Roku Ultra or Roku Ultra LT.

Call the office, e-mail or see our website for details.