

Connections

September 2024

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric




Volume 28, Issue 9

Electric co-ops cooperate for Farmfest displays on safety & energy-efficiency

One of the co-op principles is education. Farmfest, near Redwood Falls August 6-8, is a great location to meet and educate our rural members.

Your electric co-op has partnered with more than 12 southern and central Minnesota electric cooperatives to share a Farmfest booth in one of the large tents. This year's booth featured electric yard tools demonstrating ways to work "smarter" with new electrical battery technology.


Plus, this year cooperatives partnered to expand electrical safety education. "The idea behind the event was to talk about farm safety around electricity and to spread the word about safety when using large machinery or farming," stated Anthony Lenz, Director of Safety Services, from the Minnesota Rural Electric Association. "Our booth was designed to spread awareness of high-voltage exposure to people and machinery in various situations: equipment around overhead powerlines, powerlines contacting a vehicle or equipment, digging around underground powerlines and many other scenarios. We hope to move it to a much heavier-traveled section of the event next year and increase foot traffic and awareness for electrical hazards." 



Zap! Electric co-op line crews demonstrated different electrical safety scenarios at an outdoor Farmfest booth with full-sized equipment. While Great River Energy donated the booth, several vendors and electric co-ops donated the line crews, signage, safety trailer and handouts.




Congratulations to the 2024 Farmfest booth prize winners:

1. Ice Auger — Andy Peterson, Lamberton, Redwood Electric Cooperative
2. Backpack Blower — Ron Post, Willmar, Kandiyohi Power Cooperative
3. Shop Vac — Ron Mortensen, Hector, McLeod Co-op Power
4. Pole Saw — Wayne Wels, New Ulm, Brown County REA
5. Chain Saw — Randy Ascheman, Appleton, Agralite Co-op 

At A Glance



**Survey says?
Please complete
End-use survey**

About 800 Federated residential members will receive the End-use Survey from Basin Electric Cooperative in late September or early October. Every four years this survey tracks and predicts energy use to plan for a reliable power supply for our members. Please complete and mail it back. 



Energy Wise

Smart-home technology captures energy efficiency to move to the head of the class

Smart-home technologies are transforming how we live, making our homes more comfortable, convenient and energy efficient than ever before.

Smart-home technologies are devices that communicate with each other to automate everyday tasks and functions around the home, like heating and cooling, lighting and security. Besides convenience, smart technologies enable consumers to manage and monitor their energy consumption through device scheduling and control.

With just a tap on your phone or a voice command to your virtual assistant (like Alexa or Siri), you can conveniently control many aspects of your home environment. If you're new to the smart tech world, several cost-effective devices allow you to make your home smarter.

One of the best and most inexpensive places to start is with a smart bulb or plug. Smart LED bulbs allow you to control home lighting remotely through a smartphone app or voice commands. You can set schedules to automatically turn lights off or on, which can help you save energy and boost home security.

Smart plugs are another inexpensive way to give electronics and small appliances the smart-home treatment. Smart plugs allow you to set schedules and remotely control power to lamps, small appliances and electronics, minimizing standby energy consumption and maximizing convenience. For example, you can sync the timing of your bedside lamp, alarm, speakers and coffee maker to turn on at the same time each morning.

If Alexa or Siri is already part of your home, you can build on your existing "tech ecosystem" by adding a smart hub, like Amazon Echo or Apple HomePod. Voice assistants that are synced to smart devices, like bulbs and plugs, provide additional options for device management and allow family members to interact with the various devices through voice control, rather than individual apps.

Home heating and cooling account for a significant portion of energy use, so one of the best investments you can make in smart tech is a smart thermostat. While traditional programmable thermostats can be set to your schedule and preferences, a smart thermostat takes this one step further




A Smart thermostat allows you to use your wall thermostat (above) or cell phone (right) to turn your home's temperature up or down when you are away. That way it's the perfect temp when you return home. Otherwise, set it up on a schedule or even adjust the temp from the comfort of your bed. Save more with the co-op's rebate too!

by learning and adjusting to your routine and building a schedule with it. Your electric co-op offers a \$25 Energy Star Smart thermostat rebate. Find the form on the co-op's website.

Smart security systems are popular options for homeowners looking for advanced security solutions that incorporate cameras, sensors and cloud-based video recordings. As with other smart technologies, smart security systems provide convenient, flexible ways to monitor homes (and businesses), giving you peace of mind even when you're away. Heartland Security, a subsidiary of your electric cooperative, can help you get started. See their ad on Page 7 for contact information or visit www.heartlandss.com.

If you're considering smart tech for your home, start by defining your goals. Is saving energy your top priority or are you aiming to improve home security? Smart home technologies provide great convenience, but remember, they are internet-connected devices. You'll need a stable Wi-Fi connection to ensure devices are working properly, and you'll need strong passwords for your router and individual devices.

Whether you're looking to automate every aspect of your home or simply want to try a device or two, smart technologies have the power to transform your living space into a home where comfort and convenience reign supreme. 

You'll be a fan of this rechargeable, portable fan/light

Be cool on the go! Whether you are headed to a steamy baseball game, camping, picnic or working outside, bring a gentle breeze with you to keep the bugs away or stay cool!

The eight-inch swivel fan (pointed up, down or in between) can be used for eight to 36 hours on a single charge. An indicator light shows the battery's status. The USB cord charges it in five to six hours, while being used. A high-performance brushless motor adds to the efficiency of the variable-fan speed. Use the fold-up hook on the bottom to hang it from the tent pole or tree branch.

You'll be "blown" away by other features too! It doubles as a three-level LED light. Adding to its functionality, use the fan's battery to recharge your cell phone. The durable anti-drop plastic can handle being portable (about 9 inches wide and 10 inches tall).

Other uses could include while working outside when making repairs, while husking sweet corn, on the deck or it's even small enough to sit by your computer.

Find different brands on Amazon for \$20-\$35. Of course, if you have power tools using rechargeable batteries, check



"Chillaxing" takes on a whole process with a rechargeable fan! It's also features a hook under the base to hang it and LED light on top too! Perfect for camping, work or hot ball games! Recharge it with a USB cord for eight to 36 hours of a "fan"tastic breeze.

out that product's lineup for a portable, but probably larger and more expensive fan.

Keep your cool wherever you go! ☺

Harvest safety tips for safe fall fieldwork

Drive your farm equipment with a safety first focus. Reduce the risk of an electrical contact accident. We want you to go home to your family safe and sound each night.

1. Look up before entering the field and going under power lines. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers and other tall equipment.
2. When doing fall tillage around the edge of the field by the power lines, look out for guy wires, poles and green padmount cabinets too. Drive slowly near this equipment!
3. Use a spotter to safely navigate around power lines and other electrical equipment.
4. Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
5. Regularly inspect all equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
6. Keep first aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.
7. If you become tangled with power lines or other equipment, stay inside. Call the cooperative. Stepping outside onto the platform could mean stepping onto energized metal and risks electrocution.
8. If you must exit the equipment due to fire, jump as far away as you can with your feet together to avoid shock. ☺



Federated Focus

Fall Round Up deadline nears



The next Operation Round Up deadline is September

27. Find the application at www.federatedrea.coop; otherwise, call the office to have it e-mailed or mailed to you. Encourage your fire department, ambulance squad, schools or local nonprofit groups to apply for funding. Eligibility is explained on the website or application letter.

Congrats George Madden!



Congrats George Madden, Federated's Operations Manager. He completed the National Rural Electric

Cooperative Association's six-week Management Internship Program this spring on-line and in-person at Madison, Wisconsin. The program topics ranged from operations to finance, co-op principles, communications, leadership, today's utility industry and more. It involved a group project, individual project and public speaking too. George has been a Federated employee since 2003, plus has served as the operations manager since 2020.

"We appreciate George's desire to better himself and help Federated succeed," commented Scott Reimer, Federated's general manager. "The MIP program helps employees prepare for more challenges in the workplace."



Scott Reimer

Manager's Message

2025 electric rates see wholesale power increases

I am going to start with rate expectations for 2025. Power supply costs for Federated will be going up. Our largest provider Basin Electric Cooperative, who provides of 70 percent of our power, announced a rate adjustment to go into effect either January 1 or June 1, depending on how approvals go at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Either way,

we will do our financial forecast with the January 1st start date just to be safe. Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) announced an increase for 2025 and 2026 so those increases will be accounted for as well. Our other two have not formally announced, but I find it hard to believe they won't increase as well. Regardless, Federated hopes to avoid a rate increase, which is misleading, because the power cost adjustment (PCA) varies. I think you've become accustomed to seeing that so it's likely no surprise to you. Wholesale power supply costs vary each month due to the seasons.

We also watch what is called load factor. Load factor is the actual number of kilowatt-hours (kWh) delivered on a system in a designated period of time, as opposed to the total possible kWh that could be delivered on a system in a designated period of time. A high load factor is good, while a low load factor indicates inefficient electricity use. This is why we control demand for both peak kilowatts (kW) and transmission. Both of these billing units have risen in cost the fastest over the past five years. The staggering amount of money being put into the transmission and generation nationwide is the main driver. When we look at our rates' forecast, it's made up of wholesale power, labor, goods and services, as well as reliability and resiliency. Safety of our employees and the public is paramount; we want to keep people safe. Electricity is still a bargain and as people practice good conservation habits, it's somewhat cost controllable.

Broadband summer construction was delayed by June flooding

Our broadband team, as well as some of our directors, attended both fairs promoting Federated Broadband. We see a lot of interest out there. We just received another tower site near the East Chain area so ahead of the fiber build, we will be taking on new fixed wireless accounts. Once in the system, it makes it a lot easier for us to justify the fiber build outs. "Take rate" is how we measure success of a project with 100 percent of our members taking service being the goal, but we are realistically in the 70-75 percent range. If you didn't know it, Federated offers internet service, as well as streaming TV service and now VoIP landline phone service. This means you can keep your landline phone number. Call our office to inquire about what we can do for you; see Page 8. With the bylaws change we will be allocating broadband patronage, just like we do for your electric account. Capital credits will be available for Federated broadband subscribers as the business matures.

As we enter into the last few months of our construction season, we are making up for lost time due to the June flooding. Midwest Utilities, our fiber contractor that is working in Jackson County and a couple spots in Martin County, is in full swing. They have about 65 miles in the ground and are now doing install drops to the homes. Huts are set and electronics added. The goal will be to start testing and light up members soon.

Electrical construction was delayed by flooding too

Our electric contractor, Loosbrock Construction, hasn't even made it onto our system yet this year. Apparently, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) work in Iowa took precedent. We have about 17 miles of power to install so let's hope that the weather holds and we have a long-semi dry fall. Our crews have been busy the entire season completing dozens of work orders that maintain and enhance our system.

89th Annual Meeting's election results & prize winners announced August 1; congrats to all!

Federated conducted its 89th Annual Meeting August 1 virtually.

"We had 1,049 members vote by mail to create a quorum," said Scott Reimer, Federated's general manager. "Due to declining Annual Meeting attendance and increasing costs, we conducted a remote Annual Meeting using Zoom."

Election results

Members elected Tyler Ayers, Alpha, with 981 votes for District Three director. Members re-elected Scott Thiesse, Welcome, for District Four director versus Harold Knutson, Jackson, with 592 votes to 430 votes. On the Nominating Committee Marlys Runge, Lakefield, was elected for District One over Blake Rossow, Lakefield, with 553 votes versus 460 votes. Thomas Cunningham, Round Lake, ran unopposed and was elected for District Two.

Board President David Hansen retires December 31

After 24 years of service Federated Board President David A. Hansen is retiring from his District Three director position, effective December 31, 2024. He also served 14 years as Federated's Board president. "President Hansen has served Federated members for many years," stated Scott Reimer, Federated's general manager. "Dave's dedication to the members, concern for employees and board leadership are greatly appreciated. Federated changes during these years include the addition of smart meters, building the Welcome wind turbine, addition of the three ethanol plants and soybean processing plants, plus the Alliant Energy customer acquisition of 1,700 new electric members from five towns. He's also witnessed the addition of Federated Broadband and delivering fiber internet services to our two counties — what a lot of change and growth during this era!"

In addition, Federated members approved amendments to the Federated Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. The vote was 902 in favor and 57 opposed. The approved changes formalized allocating Federated Broadband capital credits to those electric members who also receive Broadband services, operating it as a cooperative and not as a subsidiary.

Members also approved the 2023 Annual Meeting minutes and the 2024 Nominating Committee Meeting minutes.

Prize winners

Members returning cast ballots were entered into a drawing for \$1,000 worth of electric bill credits; these credits were applied to the August 5th electric bills. Congrats to these prize winners:

- \$300 bill credit winner: John Benck, Granada;
- \$250 bill credit winner: Larry J. Oelke, Heron Lake; and
- \$150 bill credit winner: John Veenker, Windom.

The six \$50 bill credit recipients are:



Tyler Ayers was elected as new District Three director. Scott Thiesse was re-elected for District Four director. David A. Hansen will retire from the Board as District Four director and Board president effective December 31, 2024.

- Judy Stumpf, Worthington;
- Larry Henning, Brewster;
- Chris Eisenmenger, Sherburn;
- Charles Rosen, Welcome;
- Larry Bell, Ceylon; and
- Geoffrey Johnson, Windom.

In addition, Federated subsidiary, Heartland Security, donated four insulated stainless steel wine tumblers with lids. Members can stop to pick up these prizes from Federated's Jackson office. The four winners are:

- Timothy Hamp, Fairmont;
- Raymond Brotsma, Sherburn;
- American Legion, Okabena; and
- Jacob Braulick, Jackson. 🍷

Co-op posts interconnection process for wind and solar

In compliance with Federated's adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, Federated is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers, whom satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. Federated is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Federated Board.

Interested members should contact Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069, e-mail info@federatedrea.coop or call 507-847-3520 or 1-800-321-3520; ask for Jon Beckman. The application process is outlined at www.federatedrea.coop. 📄

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

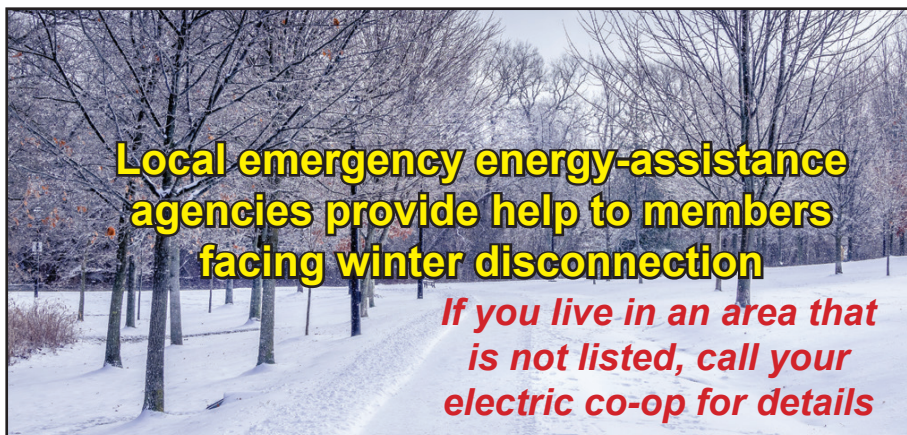
Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between October 1 and April 30,

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, 2025.



Des Moines Valley Human Services (Jackson & Cottonwood).....	507-847-4000
Martin County Human Services.....	507-238-4757
MN Dept. of Commerce (Ask for fuel assistance)	1-800-657-3710
Minnesota Valley Action Council.....	1-800-767-7139
Blue Earth County	507-345-6822
Brown County	507-508-4041
Martin County.....	507-238-1663
Nicollet County.....	507-934-5224
Sibley County.....	507-237-2981
Watwan County	507-375-5748
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	507-237-4000
SW Health & Human Services (Redwood Co.)	1-888-234-1292
SW MN Opportunity Council, Inc. (Nobles Co.).....	507-376-4195
United Community Action Partnership (Jackson, Cottonwood & Redwood Counties)	1-800-992-1710

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. ☎

2025 Minnesota Income Eligibility

Household size	1 month maximum guidelines
1 person	\$2,983
2 people	\$3,901
3 people	\$4,819
4 people	\$5,737

Dump some pumpkin recipes on us! Share your family favorites

How do you pumpkin spice your fall recipes? Share your favorite pumpkin recipes with us, whether for muffins, pie, dessert, bread and more. Send your favorite pumpkin recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by September 26. 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. ☺

Slow Cooker Root Beer BBQ Ribs by Jean Beckendorf, Welcome

- 2 lb. pork ribs
- 1 c. root beer
- 1 c. BBQ sauce
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- salt & pepper

Season the ribs with the garlic and onion powder, along with salt and pepper. Place the seasoned ribs in a slow cooker.

In a bowl mix the root beer and BBQ sauce together; pour over the ribs. Cover and cook six to eight hours on low or three to four hours on high until fully cooked and tender. ☺

Green Tomato Salsa by Barb Sellner, Sleepy Eye

- 10 c. chopped green tomatoes
- 4 c. chopped onion
- 2 c. chopped green or red peppers
- 2 T. hot pepper flakes
- 6 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 c. cilantro
- 1 c. lime juice
- ½ c. vinegar
- 1 T. canning salt
- ½ T. cumin
- 1 T. oregano
- 2 T. sugar

Mix all together. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Process in boiling water for 15 minutes in pint jars. Makes nine or more pints of salsa. ☺

September special:
\$100 OFF ONE CAMERA
 with three-year monitoring agreement

1-888-264-6380  **www.HeartlandSS.com**
 Subsidiary of your local electric co-op



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 or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. ☺

Fair booth prize winners...



Our Broadband team enjoyed seeing and interacting with customers — new and old — during the Jackson and Martin County Fairs. Congratulations go to our raffle basket winners from both fairs! The Jackson County Fair winner was the Carson Forsberg and family, Sherburn (left), and the Martin County Fair winner was Kristen Schoen and family, Sherburn (right). 📺



City of Dunnell home fiber installations have begun! If you have not scheduled an installation appointment, please call our office. The Jackson County Border-to-Border project has made leaps and bounds over the past month thanks to our construction crew, Midwest Utilities. Despite the very wet first half of summer, they have worked hard to stay on schedule with the buildout. We are hopeful to begin home installations for the southern portion of that project this fall. 📺



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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:

Fixed Wireless

- 6 MB down/2 MB up: \$50 per month
- 15 MB down/3 MB up: \$70 per month
- 25 MB down/3 MB up: \$80 per month
- 40 MB down/5 MB up: \$90 per month

Fiber

- 100 MB symmetrical: \$70 per month
- 250 MB symmetrical: \$85 per month
- 1 GIG symmetrical: \$100 per month

Event Wi-Fi

Did you know Federated Broadband offers event Wi-Fi? Whether it is for seed-plot field days, wedding, family reunion or community event, let us help connect your event with our mobile Wi-Fi event trailer! We can get you connected anywhere we have a line-of-site to one of our towers.

Outage text notifications

Sign up for the Broadband text notices when there is a tower outage or to text us for technical support. Call us during business hours or e-mail us your cell phone number (info@federatedbroadband.coop)!

In addition, follow Federated Broadband on Facebook for updates and happenings. 📺



info@federatedbroadband.coop • www.federatedbroadband.coop

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

