

Connections

September 2026

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric & Broadband



Volume 30, Issue 9

5,000 first generation meters ordered; the changeouts begin later this fall



The majority of Federated meters will be changed out in the next year. Federated Metering Technician Jeremy Boogerd explains that the power will be off about a minute during meter changeouts.

Federated's first two-way digital meters installed in 2010 are starting to fail. The meters had a 15-year life expectancy so by the end of this year, the first meters will be changed out by Federated's line crews.

"A lineman will knock on the door before changing out the meter," stated Operations Manager Mort VanDeVere. "This gives anyone working from home a chance to save their work before the power is interrupted. The power will be off for approximately one minute, while the new meter is installed and programmed. If no one is home, the crew will leave a door hanger explaining the reason for the brief power interruption."

This process will start this fall, possibly in October or November, in the furthest counties from Jackson and work their way back. This project is estimated to take until the summer of 2027 to be completed.

"One new feature is that the new meters, along with our new billing system coming in 2027, will allow members to view their monthly demand information through SmartHub online portal," VanDeVere explained. "Members will be able to see when their highest 15-minute peak demand occurred each month by logging into the SmartHub online portal, which will be on our website." 

Tip of the hard hat! Journeyman linemen status recently reached!



Andrew Lawrence achieved his Journeyman status June 1.

He completed the Career Development for Linemen. This program involves on-the-job training and testing, ranging from safety to meters, along with transformers, power lines and substations. It involved 7,500 hours of training.

Lawrence started at Federated April 29, 2024; he works out of the Welcome warehouse. Congratulations! 

At A Glance



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Keep on chilling this fall
with Federated's Energy
Star cool refrigerator and
freezer rebates

Have you bought a new Energy Star refrigerator or freezer this year? Save more by filling out the Energy Star rebate form on our website. Otherwise, call to request the form. The rebates is applied as an electric bill credit. 

Days for one-stop shop water heater installs are numbered... schedule your new water heater now

After more than 40 years, the days of Federated selling and installing energy-wise water heaters will end later this year.

Dave Berlin, Federated's master electrician and licensed plumber, will be retiring at the end of the year. Minnesota no longer offers a restricted plumbing license so members will have to connect their own water heaters or hire a local plumber for the connections.

If you have a water heater that was installed in the 1980s or 1990s, it may be a good time to replace it yet this year, while you can make one call to Federated and get it scheduled.

Federated sells and installs primarily the 100-gallon Marathon electric water heater tanks that feature about 3 inches of foam insulation, making it energy-efficient.

The Marathon 100-gallon water heater may be larger than what you now have. Measure to make sure it will fit through your doorways and in the basement. This unit has a diameter of 30 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and a height of 70 $\frac{3}{4}$ " If this size is an issue, an 85 or 50-gallon water heater can be installed instead for the same price.

The water heater with installation costs \$750, plus tax. Removal and off-site



"Water" you waiting for? Schedule your new electric water heater installation before Federated's Dave Berlin retires at the end of the year. He is licensed for plumbing and electrical for a one-stop shop. Call and schedule your install today!

disposal of the old unit costs an extra \$75. Keep in mind that the retail price of this water heater is closer to \$2,000 and features a lifetime warranty against leaks for the original owner.

This water heater program features installation of a gray radio control box installed by Berlin if you do not already have one. The radio control talks to the water heater telling it when to control, typically the hottest summer afternoons and evenings, plus the coldest winter nights, but control occurs monthly. By pushing the water heater to heat your

water during off-peak hours, this is good for your retail electric rates and the co-op's wholesale power rates.

While Federated fine tunes the plan for 2027, rest assured, the cooperative will still sell the water heaters, plus the thermostats and elements, as parts.

Federated thanks Berlin, and his predecessor Harry Knutson, for the thousands of water heaters installed on Federated's system.

Call the cooperative to schedule your water heater installation at 507-847-3520; ask for Jon. ☎

Remote control lamp offers light at your fingertips

Just like magic! Change the settings on a lamp without getting up! Use the remote control for perfect lighting!

Swivel the light's single goose-neck head 360 degrees to focus the light where you need it — whether in a bedroom, puzzle table, sewing room, makeup table, workshop, reading chair and more. Use the remote to change the color of the light from warm yellow, to neutral to cool white, depending on your tasks at any given time.

Change the LED light's brightness using the remote control from 10 percent to 100 percent or use the built in dimmer switch. The remote works from up to 50-feet away. The remote uses two AAA batteries (not included). Plus, it works as a night light with a one



Shine light just right with a remote control. Choose from three color modes and different brightness options too.

hour timer button until it automatically shuts off so you don't have to get out of bed after reading a good book.

Adjust the pole's height to use the lamp at a desk, as a table lamp, floor lamp or as the room's main light. This lamp features a sturdy 9" wide base to be tip resistant.

This lamp runs off a 10-foot USB cord and 5-volt, two-amp adapter. Plug it into a USB wall plug, laptop or power bank.

Similar types of LED lamps feature different lamp shades if you prefer a more conventional look. Look for LED lamps at chain stores, home improvement stores or online. Pricing runs about \$30-\$50, depending on the features. 

Safety

The sun never sets on fall harvest safety

When the sun sets each day, most people call it another work day done, but not farmers. Just because the sun sets, a farmer's work continues, especially at harvest.

The same applies for electrical safety at harvest time. Just because the sun sets, fall harvest electrical safety goes on and now must amp up! The guy wires, poles, cabinets and even fiber pedestals are even harder to see at night. Whether making that first pass around the field with the combine or fall tillage tractor, look up, down and all around for electrical and broadband fiber equipment day or night. Remember to keep the 10-foot distance rule from this equipment. If you cause an outage, you will pay for the poles, guy wires, pedestals and the co-op crews' labor, along with the downtime with no electricity, possibly for your farm's grain bins.

If your farm equipment tangles with power line equipment, stay inside the cab, as long as it's not on fire. Call the cooperative right away. If you need to exit the equipment due to fire, jump as far away as you can with your feet together from the cab; the metal platform could be energized and stepping on it could risk electrocution.

In addition, look down before digging up that farm tile or tile outlet too. Underground power lines or fiber may be in that ditch or yard. Call Gopher State One Call first at 811 or 1-800-252-1166 48 hours in advance for an underground locate. 



When the sun goes down and the headlights turn on, safety measures should still shine on! Look out for guy wires, poles, cabinets and fiber pedestals too during fall harvest!

Federated Focus

Annual Meeting recap coming

This edition went to the printer before the Annual Meeting. Look for the election results, prize winners and other highlights in next month's *Connections*.

Fall Round Up deadline nears



The next Operation Round Up deadline is September 18. 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.

Iowa members: support RECare



RECare is a voluntary Iowa energy assistance program that provides

local community action agencies with funds to help low-income families weatherize and heat their homes. Your donation stays in our service area to help local families in need.



Federated RECare signup form

1. Donate with a one-time contribution payable to RECare, mailed to Federated with your bill payment.

2. Contribute \$____ per month to RECare. This can be added automatically to your monthly Federated bill.

Name _____

Address _____

City, IA, zip _____

Federated account # _____

Return this to Federated with your next bill payment to Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143. Thank you! (U)



Scott Reimer

Manager's Message

Looking ahead while staying grounded

Now that we are past the dog days of summer, we can start enjoying what we hope will be a beautiful fall season. I want to take a moment to share several important updates affecting our cooperative and the members we serve.

2026 capital credit retirement plans

One of the greatest advantages of being a cooperative is that members share in our success through capital credits. The Board evaluates capital credit decisions annually while maintaining the financial strength necessary to invest in our system. This year is one of unprecedented growth as we invest in our electric system, building headquarters, fiber network and core computer systems. As a result, the Board made the difficult decision not to retire capital credits in 2026 based on management's recommendation to maintain healthy equity and cash reserves. These important investments will provide our members with better reliability, improved service, and access to current technologies now and into the future. The Board will once again re-evaluate retirement decisions in 2027.

Building remodel progress on track for fall completion

Our facility remodel project continues to move forward and is beginning to take shape. (See the related story on Page 5.) The improvements are designed to create a more efficient, modern, and welcoming environment for members, visitors, and employees while enhancing our ability to serve the growing needs of our electric members and broadband consumers. While remodeling projects inevitably creates some temporary inconveniences, the finished facility will better position Federated to serve our membership well into the future. We are still expecting a November 2026 completion.

Busiest fiber construction year for us!

We appreciate everyone's patience during fiber construction. We are expecting a busy finish to the season and expect to have several hundred new or converted fiber accounts hooked up by the end of the year. We appreciate the cooperation of Mother Nature so we can finish installing 317 miles of fiber this year, passing over 1,855 addresses in Jackson, Martin and Cottonwood Counties. The fiber home installs are ongoing or soon to begin in all project areas, so be sure to check your e-mail if you signed up for a drop.

Power Cost Adjustment returned on August 5th electric bills

Unfortunately, we needed to reapply the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). Several factors outside of our direct control increased the cost of providing reliable electric service, including higher-than-anticipated power supply requirements and rising transmission expenses across the regional electric grid.

While no cooperative welcomes additional charges on members' bills, the PCA allows us to recover actual power supply costs and helps avoid larger rate adjustments in the future. Our management team and Board remain committed to controlling expenses, pursuing operational efficiencies and maintaining the value our members expect from Federated.

Wishing everyone a safe harvest season

Harvest season is one of the busiest and most important times of the year across our communities. We extend our sincere appreciation to the farmers, producers, agribusinesses, custom operators and everyone supporting this year's harvest.

Please remember to keep safety at the forefront. Be aware of overhead power lines when moving equipment, inspect machinery before use and give yourself the time needed to work safely during long days in the field. A few extra moments spent on safety can prevent accidents and protect lives.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and all of us at Federated Rural Electric & Broadband, thank you for your continued trust and support. We wish you a safe, successful and prosperous harvest season. (U)

Co-op headquarters renovation still on schedule with completion on track for the end of November



Federated's office renovation is progressing inside and out. August brought window installation and weatherization wrap on the outside. Inside the insulation, sheetrock and taping occurred. September brings the wall finishing, cabinets and ceiling installation.

Building for Federated's future often includes power line and fiber construction. Yet, the summer construction also is occurring at Federated's Jackson office.

The project began back in February when the employees moved out temporarily so the renovation could begin. This building project renovates the 1950 warehouse and the attached 1970 office building for added efficiency, housing more employees to work efficiently in serving you, our members-owners, now and in the decades to come.

The leaking roof, failed plumbing, inadequate insulation and insufficient outlets were gutted. "We are keeping the same footprint with employees added from the fiber internet side," stated Scott Reimer, Federated's general manager. "The

existing employee lunchroom was no longer large enough for an all-employee meeting or training so we added onto the south side of the building a new lunchroom/meeting room. This renovation enables Federated to serve our member-owners for the next fifty years.

"We are pleased to report that the project is on schedule, even with some early hurdles with the roof replacement," Reimer said. "New plumbing, HVAC system and new wiring are completed. August brought the installation of insulation, sheetrock and energy-efficient windows. September will bring painting, cabinet and ceiling tile installation. We hope that construction is completed this fall so the inside employees can move back into our modern facility in November." 



Window installation started August 17.



Insulation, vapor barrier, sheetrock and taping occurred in the new employee lunchroom/meeting room August 14.

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, 2027.

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

- Visit the Minnesota Department



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
Martin County.....	507-238-1663
Watsonwan County	507-375-5748
Nobles County Community Services	888-807-8099
Salvation Army's Heat Share	1-800-842-7279
(Jackson & Martin Co.)	507-238-9797
SW MN Opportunity Council, Inc. (Nobles Co.).....	507-376-4195
United Community Action Partnership (Jackson & Cottonwood Counties).....	1-800-992-1710

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 co-op exists because of you; we are dedicated to the people we serve. If you're having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please call Federated to set up a payment plan. ☎

2026-2027 Minnesota income eligibility for energy assistance

Household size	1 month maximum guidelines
1 person	\$3,205
2 people	\$4,191
3 people	\$5,117
4 people	\$6,164

Households can apply online for energy assistance with the Minnesota Department of Commerce. Refer to their website and details in this story.

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 and an application. ☎

Whether seeing lots of red or green, share your pepper recipes

Still picking red or green peppers from your garden? Share recipes that use red and green peppers, whether in egg bake, salad, main dishes or stuffed. Please send us your garden pepper recipes that your family enjoys. Send to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by September 24. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Chocolate Angel Food Cake by Cheri Drever, Granada

1½ c. egg whites (about a dozen eggs)	1 tsp. vanilla
1½ c. sugar	1 1/3 tsp. cream of tartar
¾ c. sifted flour	¼ tsp. salt
¼ c. cocoa	

Beat egg whites until frothy, then add cream of tartar and salt. Continue beating until stiff. Gradually add 1 c. of sugar and cocoa, which were sifted together three times. Gradually add vanilla. Add ½ c. of sugar and flour, which were sifted together three times. Bake in an ungreased tube pan about 1 hour at 325°. 📧

Angel Food Cake by Sandy Kalfs, Okabena

1 c. cake flour	1½ tsp. cream of tartar
¾ c. plus 2 T. sugar	¼ tsp. salt
1½ c. egg whites, room temp, (about a dozen)	1½ tsp. white vanilla
¾ c. sugar	1 tsp. almond extract

Preheat oven to 375°. Sift cake flour with ¾ c + 2 T. of sugar three times. Set aside. Beat egg whites, cream of tartar, salt, vanilla and almond flavoring with mixer until foamy throughout. Continue mixing while gradually adding the ¾ c. sugar. Beat until meringue is firm and holds a peak. Will take about five minutes. Use a wire whip and fold in the flour/sugar mixture, 2 heaping tablespoons at a time. Push into a non-greased angel food cake pan; be careful not to stir. Cut though batter four or five times, even the batter out and have it touch the sides of the pan. Bake at 375° for 33 to 35 minutes. Tester should come out clean. Remove from oven and tip upside down on a glass bottle or can. It is common for the cake to have deep cracks. (Ovens vary. I bake my cake only 26-27 minutes). 📧

Farmfest prize winners!



Thanks for visiting the Touchstone Energy booth at Farmfest August 4-7. 651 members from 11 electric co-ops registered. The battery-powered tool prize winners were: string trimmer: Scott Helget, Brown County REA; leaf blower: Jada Olson, Lyon-Lincoln Electric; wet/dry-vac: Dennis Tauer, Redwood Electric Cooperative; pressure washer: Brian Davis, McLeod Cooperative Power; and chain saw: Belle Harder, South Central Electric. 📧

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Call before
digging:

1-800-252-1166



Contact 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. 📧

2 Martin County projects, but 3 maps

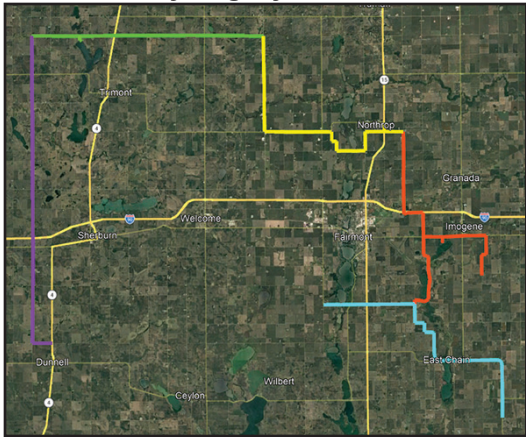
Martin County Border-to-Border home installs occur mid-September

The Border-to-Border project in Martin County is wrapping up! (See the maps on the right or on our website.) Mainline construction and drops to properties that submitted construction consent forms are complete. Splicing is wrapping up; we expect to have all drops to be ready for home installation by mid-September. Property owners will first be contacted by e-mail when their address is ready for installation, so if you are waiting make sure you check your spam folder in case it ends up there!

If you have a property in the grant area, but have not yet signed up to get a drop up to your home or business, there is still time! We encourage all property owners to submit a construction consent form even if you are unsure of using the service once available. During this grant period, there is no cost to homeowners for that installation. Next year when the grant has closed, any properties seeking to have a drop placed will be responsible for aid to construction minus the \$1,000 covered by Federated.

Fiber optic availability has been shown to increase the value of your property in the event of a sale without raising your property taxes! Having high-speed internet connections available makes it easier for families to move back to our rural areas and still have access to jobs with remote or hybrid work positions.

Martin County ring lays backbone for future fiber expansion



Construction has begun on an 80-mile ring throughout Martin County to lay the backbone for future fiber optic expansion projects in the coming years. We are hoping to complete this route this year and our construction crews will continue working until the ground freezes. All properties along the route should have received a letter in the mail introducing the project and included a construction

consent form to submit to have a drop placed up to the home or business, as we make our way by the property. (8)



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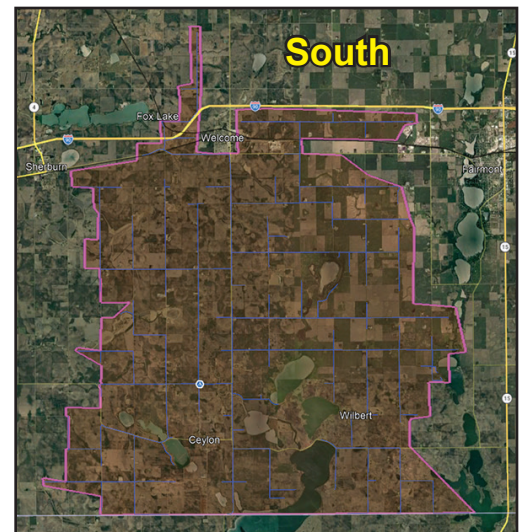
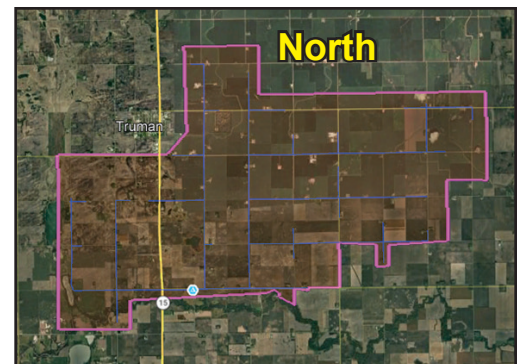
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The Board of Directors generally meets the first Thursday of the month virtually at 8 a.m. Regular board meetings are open to the membership. Members interested in discussing business items should contact the general manager or president three days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

Martin County fiber projects:



Go to the Broadband website to see these Border-to-Border maps in detail.