

Connections

May 2024



Volume 28, Issue 5

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric

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

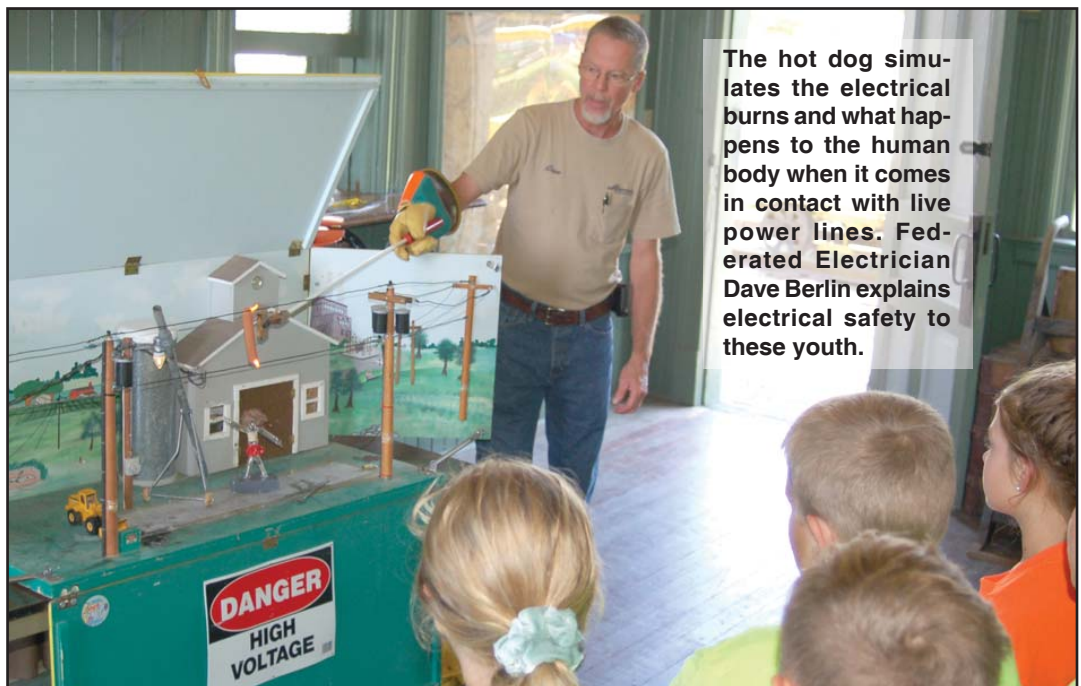
Safety first! Our line crews practice this in their daily operations.

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

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

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

"Since the COVID pandemic, we have not done any safety demonstrations for local organizations or schools," stated George Madden, Federated Rural Electric's operations manager.



The hot dog simulates the electrical burns and what happens to the human body when it comes in contact with live power lines. Federated Electrician Dave Berlin explains electrical safety to these youth.

"We are more than willing to share the safety message to youth and adults. We just need an invite!"

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

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

Call Federated 507-847-3520 or 1-800-321-3520; press extension 2224 for Andrea. Otherwise, e-mail (info@federatedrea.coop) two to four weeks in advance. This gives the co-op time to coordinate with an employee's schedule, especially if it's during an evening or weekend. The co-op has done safety demonstrations in the past at school safety days, for 4-H club meetings and other civic groups' events. ☎️

At A Glance



Take on summer heat with co-op's heat pump rebates

Don't sweat it this summer. Upgrade your ancient central air conditioner to a heat pump for year-round energy savings on your cooling and heating bills. Visit our website to learn more about our heat pump rebates, whether for air source, ground source or ductless heat pumps. ☎️



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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


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

Suck up messes minus the electric cord

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

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

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

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



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

Safety

Climb ladder with electric safety knowledge

Ladders going up?

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

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

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

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




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

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

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

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

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

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

— Information courtesy of Electrical Safety Foundation

Federated Focus

Water heater woes?

If your prehistoric water heater has a leak or could burst at any minute, call Federated to install your next water heater for \$589, plus tax (\$40.49). This includes the member's discounted price and installation too by Federated's licensed plumber and electrician. If you want the co-op to remove the old water heater, that's an extra \$75. Gas changeout replacements are an extra \$25 for the wiring/breaker. Call Federated to schedule your install today.


Budget billing: 'averages' out electric bill payment amounts



Sign up for Federated's budget billing if under the residential rate class. Federated takes your 13-month billing history, divides by 12 and you have a nice even pay amount each month. Twice a year (in May and October), Federated reviews your budget amount to see if it needs to be increased, decreased or kept the same, based on your recent electricity use. You need one-year of on time billing payment history with Federated and must sign up for Auto Pay. Members who become past due are removed from the program.

Rebates galore to explore!

Visit www.federatedrea.coop or call the office to request these rebate forms to save money on your energy-efficiency upgrades:

- \$75 for Energy Star refrigerator or freezer with recycling of old one;
- \$25 for Energy dehumidifier or Smart Thermostat; and
- Air source heat pump \$1,000 to \$1,500, depending on the unit's efficiency 



Scott Reimer

Manager's Message

Strategic planning update

I believe I mentioned earlier that the Federated Board and management team conducted a strategic planning session, which was offsite so all efforts could be put into that session. We've had several over the years; however, this was our first with the broadband division in full swing. We have the final report back from the facilitators and are now reviewing it with the intent to present it to the Board at the May meeting. Federated's Board of Directors, myself and senior staff participated in an in-person strategic planning session at the CoBank's Minneapolis Office January 24-25.

As a component of the kickoff presentation the group reviewed and affirmed the agenda, which outlined discussion topics blended from Top-Rated Survey Topics, plus strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) results.

The desired outcome of the meeting was to provide guidance and feedback on the highest priorities for Federated to do/focus on (objectives) going forward; this plan enables the co-op to provide value to members in the near to intermediate future (two-five years).

To center the strategy conversations Federated' mission statement was discussed. We agreed the mission statement was appropriate: "Federated Rural Electric Association is committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable energy and other essential services to our member-owners, while enhancing the lives of those we serve." Overall, Board and management feel confident the SWOT analysis remained focused on primary business of providing electric service combined with the enhanced services broadband delivers to membership. The discussion topics drawn from the summary results of the pre-session survey were affirmed as a good range of topics and in line with expectations.

Topics chosen for further discussion included:

- Broadband
- Electric
- Electric/Broadband business relationship
- Engage and reach ALL members
- Recruit/retain talent, succession planning

Strategic planning is a good tool to determine if the co-op is reaching expectations of members and allows for discussion planning and goal setting to either set or maintain a needed direction.


Jackson County Border-to-Border fiber installs will start in May

We are getting closer to the start of the Jackson County fiber project. Permitting and the environmental reviews are wrapping up; we expect things to get rolling around the end of May. We will be announcing a groundbreaking event where our friends from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's (DEED) Office of Broadband Development will be in attendance to memorialize the event. This is the first Border-to-Border grant Federated received and it will make the project possible with the funds dedicated by DEED. Stay tuned for the announcement.

Reapplying for Martin County fiber grant

We will soon be submitting our application for Border-to-Border round 10, which will be for areas in the rural Ceylon and the rural Truman area. Several other areas are being planned, as we speak, which is the city of Dunnell, where some work has already begun. Just to reiterate, the Goal of Federated is to provide fiber to the home to every member in our service area that currently does not have access to it.

Hired architect to help guide Jackson office for additional employees

We are in a growth spurt, as you can imagine. We will be working with OLESON+HOBBIE ARCHITECTS from Mankato to help us resize our spaces and make room for this growth. That should be happening over the next month; it is kicked off with a staff survey to determine deficiencies. 

Federated invests \$1.4 million in planned line construction in 2024; contractor hired to do work

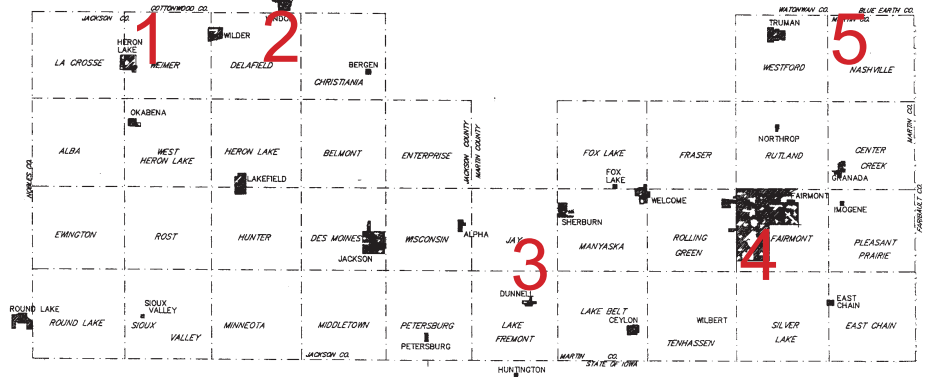
About 16 miles of line will be upgraded in 2024 during the cooperative's construction season. This totals \$1.4 million in power line upgrades in five locations.

1 Single-phase overhead line along 390th Avenue will be upgraded to single-phase underground from Highway 60 to County Road 86.

2 Three-phase overhead line along 910th Street will be upgraded to three-phase underground from Highway 86 east four miles and then south along County Road 17 one mile.

3 One mile will be upgraded from 40-year old three-phase to new three-phase underground from Dunnell north along State Highway 4.

4 About 3½ miles of three-phase overhead along County Road 20 will be upgraded to three-phase underground from County Road 39 to 225th Avenue.



The numbers indicate the work that will be done in the co-op's service area under the 2024 construction work plan to provide reliable electricity to members.

5 Five miles of single-phase overhead lines will be upgraded in Nashville Township along County Road 44 from 230th Avenue to the eastern township line. It will be replaced with three-phase underground.

Federated hired Loosbrock Digging Service, Lismore, as the underground contractor to do these five projects

soon. The contractor will start south of Fairmont and then north of Dunnell. This allows line crews to do new service installs and upgrades, along with required maintenance.

The co-op also budgeted \$166,000 to replace about 200 poles identified from annual line patrol as damaged or old. (E)

Nominating Committee announces candidates for 89th Annual Meeting

Federated's Nominating Committee announces the slate of candidates for members to cast their ballots in July.

District Three Director David A. Hansen is retiring when his term expires in December.

District Three Director candidates:

- Tyler Ayers, Alpha
- Sandra Phillips, Jackson

District Four Director candidates:

- Harold Knutson, Jackson
- Scott Thiesse, Welcome

District One Nominating Committee candidates:

- Blake H. Rossow, Lakefield
- Marlys Runge, Lakefield

District Two Nominating Committee candidate:

- Thomas Cunningham, Round Lake

In addition, two Trust Board Directors were nominated for a second four-year term:

- Lea Heinrichs, Jackson, for District Three
- Dawn Skow, Jackson, for District Four

Ballots will be mailed to the membership by July 1 and must be received back in Federated's office by July 31. The voting results will be announced at the Annual Meeting August 1, on Facebook and in the September *Connections* newsletter. The terms for these candidates start December 31, 2023. (E)



New co-op apprentice lineman Andrew Lawrence based with the Welcome warehouse crews

Federated welcomes its newest lineman to the Welcome warehouse crews. Andrew Lawrence, Trimont, started at Federated April 29 as an apprentice lineman.

Lawrence has two years with Highline Construction working mainly in Iowa for the contractor changing out poles and hotline work.

Previously, he worked at South Central Electric, St. James, as summer help assisting crews, mainly with underground.

Lawrence is a graduate of Minnesota West Community & Technical College in the powerline program. He is a Trimont native who graduated from Martin County West High School.

He is the son of Joe Lawrence and Laura Bloomgren. In his free time Andrew enjoys hunting, fishing and golfing.

"I'm excited to work for the electric cooperative where I grew up," he stated. "Now I can also learn the why behind what we are doing for line work." (E)



SIGNS OF AN

ENERGY SCAM

High-Pressure Tactics

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

Sketchy Payment Methods

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

Dodgy Communication

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



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



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

Co-op technology is working for you



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Amish Macaroni Salad by Doreen Schmitt, New Ulm

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

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

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

Fruit salad: ½ small pineapple (cut into chunks) or 4 oz. can pineapple chunks
1 large orange or 11 oz. can mandarin oranges

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

Divide and arrange fruits and cucumber slices between lettuce cups.

Poppy seed dressing: ¾ c. sugar

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| 1/3 c. cider vinegar | |
| 1 tsp. dry mustard | 1 tsp. salt |
| 1½ tsp. onion juice | |
| 1 c. vegetable oil | |
| 1½ T. poppy seeds | |

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



We are closed
Memorial Day,
May 27

Crews are on call in
case of outages

Have a safe holiday!

**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. ☺

Get warned about water

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



A subsidiary of your local electric co-op


888.264.6380 • heartlandss.com






Cultivate success by switching to Federated Broadband for your internet service needs. Work, learn and play the fast, reliable and local way.

Trust your local electric cooperative to provide internet and streaming TV service. Harvest savings up front, as the FREE basic installations continue through May (\$150 value)! Call our office today to discuss service options available for your home or business.

Broadband submitted an application in May for the Border-to-Border Round 10 Grant in hopes to bring fiber internet to portions of rural Martin County. 

Attention Jackson County Residents:

Remember to submit Construction Consent forms for the Jackson County Border-to-Border Project, if you live within the fiber grant area. See our website to fill out the online form and learn more. 



info@federatedbroadband.coop • www.federatedbroadband.coop

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



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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: 507-847-3520 or 1-800-321-3520

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

Scott Reimer, General Manager

David A. Hansen, President — 507-841-1176

David Meschke, Vice President — 507-236-4896

Darvin Voss, Secretary/Treasurer — 507-370-3201

Bruce Brockmann — 507-399-3487

Glenn Dicks — 507-840-1075

Jon Saxen — 507-236-7027

Scott Thiesse — 507-399-6427

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.



New broadband technician/installer Cade Lindner hired

The Broadband Department added its second technician to serve subscribers even better. Cade Lindner started April 22 as a technician/installer.

Lindner is a Worthington native who graduated in 2023 from Mitchell Technical College with a degree in Wi-Fi and Broadband Technologies, plus from Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls with a degree in Network Administration.

He previously worked at Southwest Broadband in Lakefield, Vantage Point and Golden West.

"I'm excited to work for a good company and work more in this area," Lindner stated. "I will install, repair and troubleshoot for the Broadband subscribers."

This Lakefield resident enjoys fishing, sports, exercise and pickleball in his free time. Welcome to Federated Cade! 