

# Connections

January 2025

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 29, Issue 1

## Understanding utility equipment ownership: for the utility & member's responsibilities

When it comes to electric service, understanding who owns which parts can help prevent confusion and clarify responsibilities for maintenance and repair. Let's review what the electric utility typically owns and what the member owns and maintains.

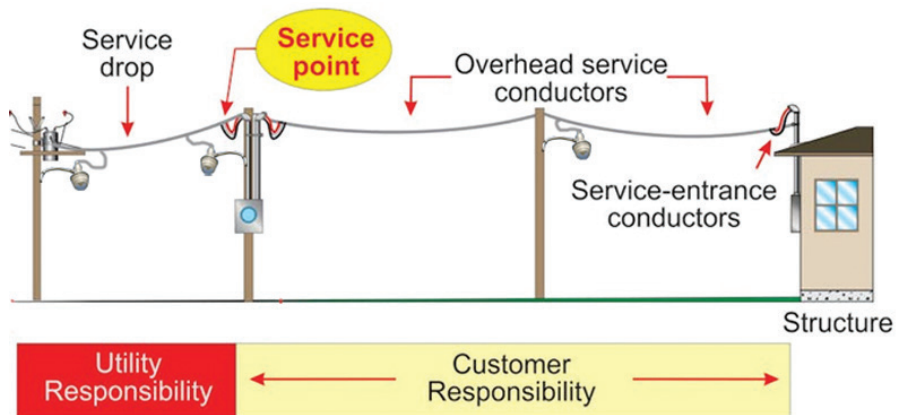
### What the electric utility owns

The cooperative owns the poles, wires and transformers that distribute electricity to neighborhoods and farms. These are often seen as the power lines along roads. The service drop, which includes the overhead or underground wires from the utility pole (or transformer) to the service point, is typically owned by the co-op. (See drawing.) The meter that records electricity usage is owned and maintained by the co-op.

Cooperative-owned security lights are hooked up ahead of the meter or service point so that the member does not pay for the electricity it uses. The member in turn pays a monthly fee and the cooperative owns and maintains the light.

### What the member owns

For overhead connections the member owns the service mast or riser, which involves the wires and conduit that support and protect the wires leading to the meter. If the service drop wire is to be attached to a house or other building, the member is responsible for supplying a point of attachment on the building for the wires. The mounting box that holds the co-op's meter is typically owned by the property owner, though the co-op retains ownership of the meter itself. The main breaker or disconnect, along with the circuit panel that distributes electricity throughout the home or building, is the responsibility of the property owner. All wiring, outlets, switches, lights and appliances beyond the service point are the member's responsibility,



The above drawing represents a typical overhead service. As shown, everything connected left of the service point is the cooperative's responsibility. Everything to the right of the service point is the member's responsibility.

including yard lights. For underground electric service the co-op typically owns the underground line up to the service point, such as the transformer. However, the member owns the wiring and equipment from this connection point to the house or buildings.

### Tree trimming near powerlines

The cooperative is generally responsible for maintaining vegetation around overhead lines they own. Call the utility to notify them of trees growing into these lines. However, members are responsible for trimming trees or vegetation on lines beyond the service point. Contact your local tree trimmer or Carr's Tree Service at 888-470-3355 for a quote.

### Locating underground utilities

When locating underground lines are required, the member is responsible for contacting Gopher State One Call to ensure all utilities with underground equipment are notified; call 811, 800-252-1166 or go to [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org). The cooperative will locate the underground wires up

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### At A Glance



Local high school students: win FREE D.C. trip

Tell your local student to enter Federated's Youth Tour Contest to win the co-op's FREE trip to Washington, D.C. June 16-21, 2025. Apply by February 3. Fill out a short application and write a 300-word essay on an energy-related topic. Five finalists will be interviewed March 17. See our website.

## Audit your home to uncover energy savings

A home energy audit may sound daunting, but it can be as easy as creating a checklist of improvements based on what you see around your home.

Find opportunities to save energy and money; tools needed: a flashlight, dust mask, tape measure, cooking thermometer and a notebook.

First, check the heating and cooling equipment. Determine the age and efficiency of the equipment by looking up the model number on the nameplate. The average lifespan of HVAC equipment is 10 to 30 years, depending on the type of equipment and how well it's maintained. If your equipment is older, it may be time to budget for an upgrade. If so, consider a heat pump for higher heating/cooling efficiency and take advantage of the co-op's heat pump rebates, as listed on the website. Check the furnace filter too and replace it if needed.

Now check the envelope of your home, which separates the heated or cooled areas from the exterior, for drafts and air leakage. Feel around windows and trim for any drafts. Pay special attention to spots where different building materials come together. Check under sinks for gaps around pipes. Seal with weatherstripping, caulk or expanding foam as needed.

Replace incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs with LEDs. LEDs use significantly less energy and last longer than traditional incandescent bulbs.

Check for leaking faucets and make sure aerators and showerheads are high-efficiency models in good condition. The gallons-per-minute (GPM) ratings should be etched onto them. To reduce wasted energy from using more hot water than needed, aerators should be 0.5 to 1.5 GPM, and showerheads should be no more than 2 GPM.

Next, look in the attic, while wearing a dust mask, to make sure it's insulated. You may see enough from the access area using a cellphone with the flash on to take pictures. Use the tape measure to check the depth of the insulation. It should be a minimum of 12 inches deep. This can vary depending on the type of insulation used and your geography.

Insulation can become compacted over time. It should be evenly distributed throughout the attic. Loose fill or blown-in insulation should be fluffy and evenly dispersed. Rolled batt insulation should fit tightly together without gaps.

Plus, exterior walls should be insulated. If your home is



**Yikes! This "naked" rim joist needs some insulation, whether spray foam or rigid foam. Take a look to see the status of your home and a potential for energy savings.**

older than the 1960s, the walls are probably not insulated. Homes from the 1960s or 1970s likely need more insulation. Sometimes you can see wall insulation by removing an outlet cover or switch plate and using a flashlight to look for insulation inside the wall cavity. Turn off the power at the electrical panel to avoid the risk of electric shock. Wall insulation can be blown in from the inside or the outside of the home. This is a job for a professional.

If you have a basement or crawlspace, head there next. Unfinished basements should have insulation on the rim joists, at minimum. This is the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the home's first-story floor. Use closed-cell spray foam or a combination of rigid foam and spray foam to insulate rim joists. Crawl spaces should have insulation on the underside of the floor between the floor joists. Insulation should be properly supported in contact with the floor with no air gaps. Water pipes and ductwork should also be insulated.

Lastly, check the temperature of your water by running it for three minutes at the faucet closest to your water heater. Then fill a cup and measure with a cooking thermometer. Hot water should be between 120 and 140 degrees. You can reduce the temperature on your water heater to reduce energy waste and prevent scalding. Your co-op recommends 120° for the setting.

Once your home energy audit is finished, review your findings and start prioritizing home energy-efficiency projects. For step-by-step instructions visit [www.energy.gov/save](http://www.energy.gov/save).

# Amp up car's ice removal with ice scraper


Scraping ice and frost off the car windshield is a "frost"-strating experience.

Amp up your snow clearing with the lebdua ice scraper that uses your existing 20-volt DeWalt rechargeable battery. The 1,300 revolutions per minute chomps down your ice removal time. The quicker you clear the ice, the sooner you can go inside away from frigid wind chills.

The ergonomic, sturdy and slip-resistant long handle helps you reach the center of the car's windshield. It weighs slightly more than 2.5 pounds. The tool's head flexes from zero to 45 degrees for ice removal from different angles with a protective guard. The blade is five inches wide. Just keep scarves, long hair and hands a safe distance away from the spinning head; it would be wise to wear eye and face protection. A scratch-free base plate protects the car's windows from damage.



Tackle icy windshields with a power tool! This lebdua electric ice scraper uses your existing 20-volt DeWalt battery. Power through ice and frost removal on your car's windshield in record time!

Buy this tool from Amazon or other retailers for \$60 and use the DeWalt battery already in your tool collection. 

## Safety

# Quick guide to sizing a generator for your home

While your electric cooperative provides reliable power 99 percent of the time, sometimes Mother Nature throws a whopper of a storm causing a multi-day outage.

This guide helps walk you through buying a generator, which provides great convenience during a power outage.

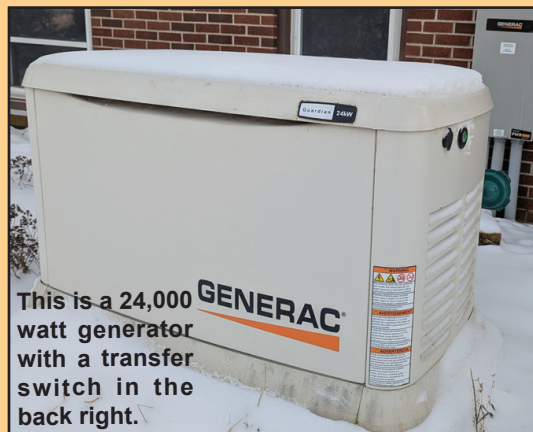
Before buying a generator determine your backup power needs to select the right size. Make a list of essential appliances and devices that you will want to power during an outage. This determines the required wattage size of a generator.

Work with your local electrician. A permanent standby generator requires a transfer switch. This prevents your generator power from flowing back onto the electrical powerlines where co-op line crews could be working. The transfer switch keeps our line crews safe.

### 1. If you rarely lose power...

#### Recreational inverter: Up to 2,000 watts

- Lightweight, about 60 pounds
- Quiet, easy to store
- Power: fridge and a few smaller items (lamp, phone charger, crockpot)



- Before using, disconnect the normal source of power coming into the home.

#### Midsized inverter: Up to 3,500 watts

- Weighs up to 150 pounds
- Power: Fridge, laptop, five to 10 lights, phone charger, and a 10K BTU air conditioner
- Before using, disconnect the normal source of power coming into the home.


### 2. If you occasionally lose power...

#### Portable generators or large inverters: up to 7,500 watts

- Weighs about 300 pounds
- Power: fridge, gas furnace, 10K BTU air conditioner, dishwasher, multiple lights, TV, laptop and more.
- Ability to connect to home's transfer switch.

### 3. If you frequently lose power...

#### Home standby generator: up to 20,000 watts

- Must be permanently installed; starts automatically during outage. Requires a transfer switch.
- Power: nearly all home appliances and electronics simultaneously
- Can run indefinitely on natural gas or propane. 



# Federated Focus

## Apply for two \$1,000 Basin Scholarships by January 27



Attention: High school seniors and undergraduate college students


with a year of college remaining in the Fall of 2025: apply for two \$1,000 Basin Scholarships. The applicants must be the son/daughter of a Federated electric member. Fill out the application, write a short essay on how Federated helps improve the quality of life in the community, along with submitting a grades transcript and reference checklist. Find the application on Federated's website or see the local school counselor. Previous winners are not eligible. Apply by January 27.

### Operation Round Up deadline

The next funding deadline is February 17. Find the application at [www.federatedrea.coop](http://www.federatedrea.coop) or call us.



### Nondiscrimination notice

If you wish to file a Civil Rights complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). 



Scott Reimer

## Manager's Message

### Thank you David A. Hansen, retiring board president!

We presented the 2025 Budget/Workplan for approval at our December 30 Board meeting. This was also David Hansen's last meeting as a Federated director, as he is retiring. David holds a special place in my heart, as he was Board president when I was hired in 2015. We have been through much together and your cooperative was in great hands under his leadership.

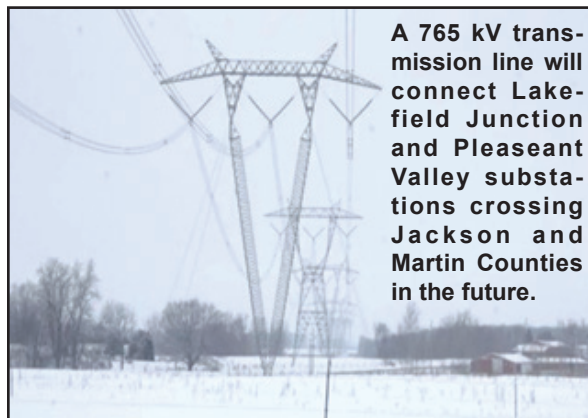
The Board elected David Meschke president at the December meeting; knowing them like I do, our cooperative will be in equally great hands moving into 2025.

### Transmission lines: the predictions for power availability vs. "blackouts"


In our area the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) approved Tranche 2.1 for its long-range transmission plan, kicking off a historic buildout of regional transmission over the next decade. This portfolio consists of 24 projects and over 3,600 miles of 765-kV and 345-kV transmission lines at an estimated cost of \$22 billion. This will benefit the entire upper Midwest and the nation, as we plan for the movement of bulk power. Great River Energy (GRE) will be involved with three projects, including the 765-kV "superhighway" that will cross Jackson and Martin Counties. The full report and a map can be found at: [www.misoenergy.org](http://www.misoenergy.org). Several meetings will be held around the region to hear from landowners, interested parties and other stakeholders so questions can be answered and concerns heard. We will share updates as they develop.

According to the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) more than half of North America faces a risk of energy shortfalls in the next five to 10 years, as data centers and electrification drive electricity demand higher and generator retirements threaten resource adequacy. Summer demand is forecasted to rise by more than 122 gigawatts in the next decade, adding 15.7 percent to current system peaks, according to the reliability watchdog's 2024 Long-Term Reliability Assessment (LTRA). NERC said its 10-year summer peak demand forecast has grown by more than 50 percent within the last year.

Federal policies are needed to support energy production, manufacturing and infrastructure, stated the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson. Grid officials have been sounding the alarm around system reliability for years and the most recent LTRA "continues painting a grim picture of our nation's energy future and growing threats to reliable electricity," he said. According to the report, MISO, which ensures that power flows reliably across 15 states and Manitoba, has shown a "sharp decline in anticipated resources beginning next summer (2025)." The report identifies new generation as being "insufficient to make up for generator retirements and load growth." The report shows "that shortfall risks can also occur during spring and fall, months that are not peak demand seasons for MISO." However, it goes on to say, "unusual heat waves or



**A 765 kV transmission line will connect Lakefield Junction and Pleasant Valley substations crossing Jackson and Martin Counties in the future.**

deep-freeze events pose an even greater threat to reliability." Our power suppliers' Basin/L&O, GRE and WAPA are engaged in preparations for the possibility of shortages and a recently attended Load Shed drill explained the process should it ever get there. Watch for a more detailed *Connections* story in the near future about this. 

# Newest director Red Ayers ready to serve

"I'm excited to be a voice for the members and work in the best interests of the cooperative," stated Tyler "Red" Ayers, Alpha.

Ayers replaced retiring David A. Hanson, Jackson, on the Federated Board of Directors, effective December 30 as the District three director.

"I served two years on Federated's Nominating Committee, learning about the co-op," Ayers said. "When it was my turn to find a director candidate, I struggled to find candidates due to the position's time commitment. Federated General Manager Scott Reimer encouraged me to run."

Ayers has hit the ground running. While his term starts January 1, he already completed four online classes that will help him be a good director. These classes focused on director duties, strategic planning, understanding the electrical jargon and the board operations process.

Ayers also brings experience from serving on the Jackson County Fair Board and he served with the Martin County Relay for Life. He worked for

Welcome to Federated's Board of Directors Tyler "Red" Ayers, Alpha. He becomes the District Three director as David A. Hanson, Jackson, retired December 30.



12 years at HitchDoc in Jackson and presently works at Corteva Agriscience in Jackson, as safety supervisor for the past three years. Ayers is also a member of the Alpha First Responders/Fire Department.

He is married to Nichole. They have three children attending Jackson County Central: Nayeli, a sophomore;

Naiya, an eighth grader; and Malakai, a Kindergartner.

"I bring a young, new set of eyes to Federated's Board," Ayers said. "I have served on other boards so I'm not afraid to ask questions so I can make informed decisions."

Welcome to the Federated Board of Directors Red! 🍷

# New IT employee Ben Lozano loves working with PCs

Federated's newest employee, Ben Lozano, wants to make sure that Federated has all the right connections — computer connections that is.

He was hired as the co-op's first IT systems administrator and started December 11. "This is my dream job," Lozano said. "I previously worked at New Vision so I have cooperative experience. I have set up computer infrastructure, switches and servers, plus deployed programs."

Federated previously relied on an offsite computer consultant; yet, with the addition of Federated Broadband and greater cybersecurity concerns, the needs for an onsite full-time employee grew.



Ben Lozano, Round Lake, started as Federated's IT systems administrator December 11. He will work on the co-op's computer network for both the electric and broadband sides, manage cybersecurity and the co-op's PCs.

Lozano possesses a network system administration degree from Ridgewater College, Willmar.

"I'm excited by all of the opportunities to make the work place better and more secure," he stated. "I have been working on computers since I was 12."

In his free time, this rural Round Lake resident, who lives on Federated's lines, enjoys playing guitar, video games and shooting at the gun range. He moved to southwestern Minnesota four years ago.

"Welcome aboard Ben," said Troy Rasmussen, Broadband operations manager. "Your expertise in IT/cybersecurity will be a great addition to our team and serving our members." 🍷



# 2025 state legislative session preview: requires cooperation to ensure a reliable, affordable and sustainable energy future

Minnesota's legislature enters 2025 facing new challenges and opportunities. The results of November's elections mark the end of two years of single-party control, making bipartisan cooperation essential. Meanwhile, the state's latest budget forecast predicts a \$616 million surplus for the next two years, but projects a \$5 billion deficit by 2027. These fiscal constraints highlight the importance of practical, cost-conscious policymaking.

Electric cooperatives across Minnesota, led by the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), are focused on ensuring the electric grid remains reliable, affordable and sustainable. To achieve this MREA is advocating for the following priorities.

## **Keeping energy costs fair: net metering reform**

As energy technology evolves, the rules governing it must adapt. Net metering compensates members who generate their own electricity with rooftop solar or wind for the power they send back to the grid. However, under the current system, some costs — such as maintaining power lines — are unfairly shifted onto co-op members who don't generate their own power. MREA supports updating net metering policies to distribute costs fairly, while encouraging renewable energy use.

## **Exploring a carbon-free future: lifting the nuclear moratorium**

Minnesota's 25-year-old moratorium on new nuclear power plants is under scrutiny, as energy demands grow and the need for reliable, carbon-free energy increases. Nuclear power could play a critical role in diversifying Minnesota's energy mix and stabilizing



The 2025 Minnesota legislative session kicks off and requires cooperation.

the grid for decades to come. MREA is urging lawmakers to lift the moratorium, as part of a balanced and future-ready energy strategy. It's time Minnesota allowed this very important conversation to happen on the heels of recent innovations in nuclear technology, such as small modular reactors.


## **Supporting rural communities: property tax relief**

Electric cooperatives continue to face rising costs due to misguided property tax laws. In 2024 a bipartisan bill aimed at addressing this issue gained significant support, but failed to pass in the final hours of the session. MREA is renewing its push for property tax reform in 2025, emphasizing the lower costs this would bring to cooperative members and rural communities

across Minnesota. The bill has near unanimous support, but still needs to get across the finish line.

## **A session built on teamwork**

Cooperation this legislative session is not just encouraged — it's required. MREA is committed to working with lawmakers from both parties to advocate for responsible energy policy and bipartisan solutions that prioritize affordability and reliability for Minnesota's electric cooperative members.

As we head into the 2025 legislative session, MREA is dedicated to ensuring the energy policies passed will serve our members and communities for years to come. Together, we can build a brighter, more sustainable energy future. 



From mud to suds...

Turn to your electric cooperative for your new water heater in 2025!

## Butter us up with favorite biscuit recipes for warm winter meal

Whip up a batch of biscuits! Share your favorite biscuit recipes with us, whether it's from scratch, with gravy, as a breakfast sandwich or even dressing up the refrigerator biscuits for hot dish, pizza or breakfast. Send your favorite biscuit recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by January 28. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

### Who owns what for your electric service equipment

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to the service point or meter. The member is responsible for having any wires beyond the service point located; contact your local electrician for this service.

#### Why ownership matters

Understanding ownership is crucial because it determines who is responsible for maintenance, repair and costs.

- If your cooperative-owned security light stops working, the co-op will repair or replace it at no cost.
- If a member-owned yard light stops working, the member must hire an electrician to fix it.
- If the service mast or meter base is damaged, the consumer must hire an electrician to fix it.

Being aware of these distinctions helps members plan for routine maintenance and avoid unexpected expenses. If you're ever unsure about what you own versus what the co-op owns, contact your electric cooperative for clarification.

#### Why the utility can't work on member-owned equipment...

Electric utilities are responsible for delivering reliable power to customers, but our jurisdiction ends where consumer ownership begins. Utilities generally cannot work on consumer-owned equipment for several key reasons related to liability, safety, legal compliance and operational boundaries.

By knowing these distinctions, both the cooperative and member can work together to ensure the reliability and safety of their electric service. 📧

### Monte Cristo Sliders by Ginger Heiderscheidt, Sleepy Eye

- 12 Sweet Hawaiian buns
- 12 slices ham      12 slices turkey
- 12 slices Swiss cheese
- 1/3 c. butter, melted
- 1 large egg      1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1 T. powdered sugar
- raspberry jam for serving

Preheat oven to 350°. Spray a 9x13" pan with cooking spray. Take rolls out of the package and slice in half all the way through without separating each one. Place the bottom half of the rolls in the pan. Place half of the cheese on the rolls. Layer with ham, turkey and the other half of the cheese slices. Place the tops on the rolls. In a small bowl whisk together the melted butter, egg and pepper. Brush all over the tops and sides of the sliders. Bake for 25 minutes or until the cheese is melted and the buns are toasted. Sprinkle the top of the buns with powdered sugar. Serve with raspberry jam on the side for dipping. 📧



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Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees and til-

ing. Register at [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org) or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧





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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.



## 2025: exciting year awaits as fiber installations occurring in both counties

In 2025 Federated Broadband remains dedicated to providing the highest quality internet service possible to all of our customers — new and old. We are committed to:

- **Maintaining reliable service:** We will continue to invest in our network infrastructure to ensure consistent and reliable internet connectivity.
- **Expanding fiber optic availability:** We are actively working to expand the availability of high-speed fiber optic internet service throughout our service area. We will continue to build and expand this network with support from state grants, county dollar match and long-term construction loans.
- **Improving customer service:** We are committed to providing excellent customer service and support. Our team is dedicated to addressing customer inquiries promptly and resolving any issues efficiently.
- **Staying at the forefront of technology:** We will continue to explore and implement the latest technologies to enhance the speed, reliability and value of our internet services.

We know that reliable and affordable internet access is essential for individuals, families and businesses in today's increasingly digital world for every aspect of life from work and school, to healthcare, entertainment, plus connecting with family and friends. We are proud to serve our local communities, family, friends and neighbors; we look forward to continuing to provide exceptional service in this new year and for many more years to come. ☺

## Fill out construction consent forms for 2025

### Fiber construction updates

Construction halted for the winter. Mainline and drop crews for the Jackson County project wrapped up mid-December due to frozen ground conditions. Splicing crews are still out and completing their portion of construction. Our team will be directly contacting homeowners to set up installation appointments, as the splicers complete their work.

The Martin County Border-to-Border project will begin construction in the spring once the ground thaws. This project will begin with mainline construction, followed by individual drops to the homes and splicing of fiber optic cables. Once all of those phases are complete, we will begin home installs. We hope to begin connecting customers before the end of 2025; more information regarding that timeline will be available once crews start working this spring.

Meanwhile, continue sending in Construction Consent forms to be included in these buildouts. More information regarding expanding our fiber optic network beyond these grant areas will be communicated throughout the year and as plans are finalized. ☺



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