



# BENCO Electric Cooperative Link

MAY 2024



## 2024 ANNUAL MEETING



# CEO CORNER

Thanks to all BENCO members who attended the BENCO Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato on April 6. We had a great turnout with approximately 1,600 people attending.

Members heard reports from Board President Brad Leiding, auditor Craig Popenhagen of CliftonLarsonAllen, and myself.

Three incumbent directors were elected to represent their districts for a three-year term, including Terry Genelin, District 1; John Wells, District 4; and Scott Johnson, District 9.

At the organizational meeting following the annual meeting, the

Board of Directors elected officers Brad Leiding, President; Don Westphal, Vice President; Scott Johnson, Secretary; Terry Genelin, Treasurer; and Great River Energy Director, Gary Stenzel.

Be sure to save the date of Saturday, April 5, 2025 for next year's annual meeting.

In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Cooperatively yours,



# FROM THE BOARD

March 28, 2024  
Brad Leiding Presided

The board reviewed and approved the minutes of the February 22, 2024 board meeting.

Dave reported on the GRE budget and meeting with several legislators during the MREA Annual Meeting.

Attending directors reported on the NRECA PowerXchange.

Attending directors reported on the CoBank MN Customer Meeting.

The 2023 Audit, as recommended by the Finance and Audit Committee, was approved.

The Capital Credit Margin Allocation for the year 2023, recommended by the Finance and Audit Committee, was approved.

## 5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Always call 8-1-1 first, because you never know what's below. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:

Source: call811.com

### 1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before you start.



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

### 2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for a response to your request. Affected utilities will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.

2-3

### 3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded by comparing the markers to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



### 4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. They are your guide for the duration of your project.



### 5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project.



## PCA UPDATE

PCA FOR FEBRUARY

\$0.0206

PCA FOR MARCH

\$0.0206

PCA FOR APRIL

\$0.0206

The Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) is due to changes in the monthly wholesale rate from our power supplier, Great River Energy (GRE).

IF THERE IS A  
DOWNED  
POWER LINE

**THINK BEFORE  
YOU ACT**

An overhead power line can become damaged or fall due to a severe storm, car accident, public damage or other reasons. If you see a downed power line, take these actions:



Consider all power lines energized and deadly.



Stay at least 50 feet away.



Call 9-1-1 or the utility to report the downed line.



Do not approach it or try to move it with another object.



Do not get out of a vehicle or cab.



Do not approach the scene.



Warn others to stay away.



Turn around and go another way.

Even if you do not see a downed line, realize one could be hidden by storm debris, water, snow or ice.

### OTHER THINGS TO KNOW



Energized downed lines spread voltage through the ground or nearby objects.



If you go near a downed line, you can become electricity's path to ground.



You cannot tell if a power line is live just by looking at it.



Even if a power line appears coated, it's never safe to go near it.

While transmitting and distributing power is typically safe, extreme scenarios like downed power lines are extremely dangerous. Never approach a downed power line.

## SAFETY FIRST: MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

May is National Electrical Safety Month and at BENCO, safety continues to be our #1 priority. Over time, BENCO has created an environment of safety by putting the safety of our members, employees and community above all else. BENCO's mission is to safely provide the best possible service, at the lowest possible cost, consistent with sound business management for our members, while also returning our employees home safely to their families each night.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation, each year thousands of people in the United States are critically injured and electrocuted as a result of electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. There is much you can do to keep yourself and your community safe around electricity.

In addition to electrical safety in the home, it is vital to use caution outdoors as well. BENCO reminds you to use caution when working or playing outdoors, and make sure all items are clear of overhead lines. Always remember to call 811 before digging. Many outdoor projects are happening this time of year and it's very important to contact Gopher State One Call before beginning your project. GSOC will locate any buried lines and wires below the surface. Learn "5 Steps for Safe Digging" on page two of this newsletter.

Remember: never touch or attempt to move a downed power line. Always report these, in addition to unlocked substations or padmount transformers if you come upon them. These can be reported to BENCO by calling 507-387-7963.

Because we live and work in the community we serve, we care about our neighbors. BENCO conducts electrical safety demonstrations in schools, at companies and for community events. If you would like BENCO to provide a safety demonstration at your school, business or community event, please contact Chelsea at 507-387-7963 or [chelseag@BENCO.org](mailto:chelseag@BENCO.org).

# REPLACING A WATER HEATER? CONSIDER ELECTRIC



Which “appliance” gives you a hot shower, clean dishes and a load of fresh laundry daily? The water heater!

Did you know water heaters are available for purchase through BENCO as one of our members?

BENCO offers 50 - , 85 - and 100-gallon Rheem Marathon electric water heaters to members of the cooperative for the low price of \$450 plus tax. Also, the water heater is guaranteed to not leak for the entire life of the device.

These water heaters are used in conjunction with BENCO’s load management program and allows BENCO to control, or turn the water heater off, during peak times. By controlling the water heater during peak times, BENCO is able to lower

the overall wholesale power bill by purchasing energy when it is sold at a more affordable rate.

Although members will not see direct savings on their monthly bill after purchasing the water heater, the load control on the water heater helps BENCO control its peak energy purchases, which help keep the entire Cooperative’s wholesale energy costs down.

Visit [BENCO.org/water-heaters](http://BENCO.org/water-heaters) to purchase a water heater, learn more through Frequently Asked Questions, view the Water Heater Wiring Diagram and learn about Terms and Conditions. Members can also contact our Energy Services department at 507-387-7963.

## WHERE, OH WHERE?

The following is a list of former BENCO members who have unclaimed capital credit checks or credit balances on their inactive account. Please contact Angie at 387-7963 with any information on locating the former BENCO members.

### N

Paul J. Nees, Mankato  
Mike Neff, Owatonna  
Kody Nehowig, Mankato  
Bryan M. Neibuhr, Woodbury  
David Neidhart, Corrales, NM  
Jacque A. Neilson, Mankato

Steve Neitge, Faribault  
Clinton T. Neitzel, Wells  
Doreen Neitzel, Wells  
David Nelsen, Mason City, IA  
Andrew R. Nelson, Hayfield  
Benjamin D. Nelson, Truman  
Chris Nelson, St. Peter  
Darlene Nelson, Madison Lake  
Diane J. Nelson, Mankato  
Diane L. Nelson, Wheaton  
Erik E. Nelson, Eagan  
Harold Nelson, Nicollet  
Joe W. Nelson, Mankato  
John Nelson, Columbia Heights  
Julie A. Nelson, Nicollet  
Julie L. Nelson, Lexington, SC

Karin Nelson, Albert Lea  
Mark D. Nelson, Madison Lake  
Mary K. Nelson, Wasta, SD  
Robert H. Nelson, Shakopee  
Steve M. Nelson, Lake Crystal  
Steven Nelson, Rochester  
Tim Nelson, Lewisville  
William F. Nelson, Faribault  
Steven T. Nesheim, Lake Crystal  
Michael Ness, Green Bay, WI  
Orville Nessel, Glenville  
Charlene Ness-Miraglia, Waxhaw, NC  
Janet M. Netzke, LeSueur  
Mark M. Neu, Mankato  
Matthew Neubauer, Wells  
Steve R. Neubauer, Mankato

# OPERATION ROUND UP GRANTS OVER \$27,000 IN FIRST HALF OF 2024



The Operation Round Up Trust Board gathered in March when 19 grants, totaling \$27,170, were awarded to the following non-profit organizations: Blue Earth Area Schools, MRCI, Feeding Our

Communities Partners (FOCP), Maple River Robotics, Connections Shelter, Minnesota Warrior Ice Hockey - Mankato, MN Brain Injury Force, Habitat for Humanity of South Central MN, Nicollet Fire Department, Winnebago Ambulance, Echo Food Shelf, Faribault County Food Shelf, Janesville Food Shelf, Kiester Food Shelf, Lake Crystal Area Food Shelf, Maple River Loaves and Fishes Food Shelf, St. Peter Food Shelf, Wells Area Food Shelf and the Winnebago Food Shelf.

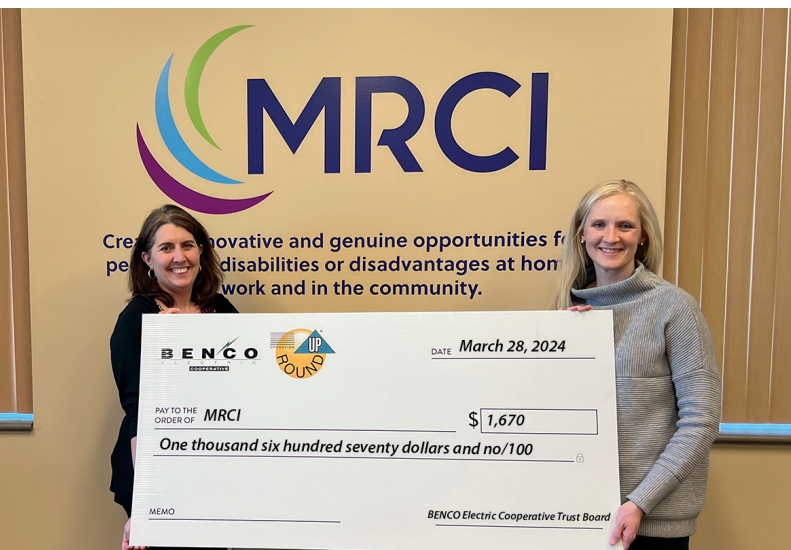


The Nicollet Fire Department will use funds granted in March toward Particulate Blocking Hoods (hoods used under firefighters' helmets to protect their heads and necks from heat and smoke).

to non-profit organizations throughout the year. The non-profit organizations receiving grants are organizations that impact people within the BENCO service territory.

Since the program's inception in 2002, Operation Round Up has donated over \$368,000 to organizations benefiting our region. BENCO members serving on the Operation Round Up Trust Board include: District 1 - Allan Muehlhausen; District 2 - Sheila Opsal; District 3 - Darlyne Deopere; District 4 - Matt Starkey; District 5 - Ruby Isebrand; District 6 - Dawn Gilman; District 7 - Matt Zebro; District 8 - Nancy Jenkins; and District 9 - Dennis Koziolk. To date, approximately 45% of BENCO's membership contributes to the organization. The Operation Round Up Trust Board disperses funds twice per year.

Do you know of a worthy non-profit organization that benefits the members of BENCO Electric Cooperative? If so, please encourage that organization's representative to apply online by visiting our website at [BENCO.org/operation-round-up](http://BENCO.org/operation-round-up). Interested organizations can also print the application, complete and mail to: Operation Round Up Trust Board, PO BOX 8, Mankato, MN 56002.



MRCI was an Operation Round Up recipient in March. The organization aims to provide services at home, at work and in the community for individuals with disabilities or disadvantages.

Operation Round Up is an organization through BENCO Electric Cooperative where members' utility bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar. The "rounded up" dollar amount is added to the BENCO Electric Cooperative Trust that is then allocated



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# what's cooking?

Receive a \$20 credit on your electric bill if your recipe appears in the newsletter.



## OREO TRUFFLES

From the Kitchen of: Molly Yocum

### Ingredients:

- 1 16 oz. pkg. Oreo cookies, divided
- 1 8 oz. block of cream cheese
- 2 8 oz. pkgs. semi-sweet chocolate

### Directions:

Crush nine cookies to fine crumbs in a food processor. They can also be placed in a Ziplock bag and crushed with a rolling pin. Set aside. Crush remaining cookies to fine crumbs; place in mixing bowl. Add cream cheese and mix until blended. Roll mixture into one-inch balls. Melt chocolate according to package directions. Dip balls in chocolate and place on a baking sheet lined with wax paper. Sprinkle with reserved cookie crumbs. Refrigerate until firm and store in a covered container in refrigerator. Enjoy!



This newsletter is published monthly by BENCO Electric Cooperative.

**Office Hours:** Mon -Fri - 7:30 am - 4:00 pm  
**Phone:** 387-7963 or 1-888-792-3626

**Outages/After Hours:**  
387-7964 or 1-888-792-3626

Chelsea Germs - Editor

### Board Meetings:

Board meetings are held the last Thursday of each month. Members are welcome to contact directors with items of interest in advance of the meeting or if they wish to attend. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

### Board of Directors:

**Brad Leiding** - President - District 3  
**Don Westphal** - Vice President - District 2  
**Scott Johnson** - Secretary - District 9  
**Terry Genelin** - Treasurer - District 1  
**John Wells** - District 4  
**Marilyn Lynch** - District 5  
**Blake Meshke** - District 6  
**Gary Stenzel** - District 7 - GRE Director  
**Duane Ehrich** - District 8

**ENTER TO WIN. SEND YOUR FAVORITE RECIPE TO:**

BENCO Electric Cooperative, Attn: Chelsea, PO Box 8, Mankato, MN 56002