

# BENCO Electric Cooperative Link

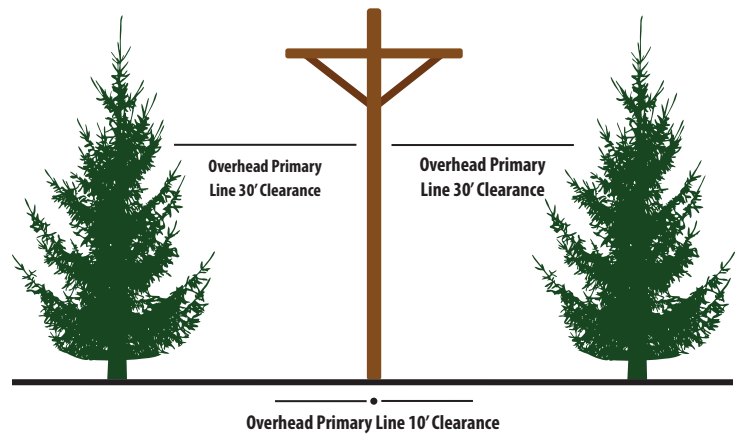
JUNE 2023

## THE IMPORTANCE OF VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

In Minnesota, trees beautify our yards and provide us with shade. However, when trees grow to interfere with power lines, they become safety hazards and are among the most common causes for utility outages. BENCO Electric Cooperative's Vegetation Management Program is the process used to clear trees and/or vegetation that extend into the right-of-way corridor.

BENCO contracts Carr's Tree Service to maintain vegetation for all of the electric power lines and right-of-ways that make up the Cooperative's system. Carr's Tree Service provides vegetation management services to many cooperatives throughout Minnesota and surrounding states.

By outsourcing this task to a third-party, BENCO can ensure right-of-way clearances are maintained year-round.



With more than 2,700 miles of overhead lines that provide electricity to homes and businesses throughout our service territory, there are numerous trees growing near or into lines that require trimming and management. It is important that the trees and branches are a safe distance from the power lines.

### What is the Right-Of-Way (ROW) Corridor for an electric line?

An electric line right-of-way (ROW) corridor is a strip of land that an electric utility uses to construct, maintain, repair or replace overhead and underground power lines. The ROW allows the utility to provide clearance from trees and other things that could interfere with line installation, maintenance and operation. BENCO requires a 30-foot clearance on each side of the poles and a 10-foot clearance on each side of the underground lines.

### Why do we clear rights of way?

We clear rights-of-way for three reasons: to maintain the safety, reliability and affordability of your electric service. Line crews need proper clearance to be able to drive trucks and equipment into the right-of-way to safely perform maintenance and repair work.



*Carr's Tree Service performs routine right-of-way (ROW) tree maintenance off of Highway 14 in rural Amboy.*

# CEO CORNER

The 2023 legislative session was one of the most historical for Minnesota's electric cooperative members. Investments, policy changes and a 100% carbon-free by 2040 mandate all made this legislative session one with large long-term impacts on all electricity users.

In May, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Rural Utilities Service (RUS) announced \$9.7 billion in federal funding for rural electric cooperatives. This is the largest federal investment in rural electric infrastructure since electrification in 1936.

BENCO is currently working toward securing portions of this funding through a consortium with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the

Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), where the two entities are applying for the Grid Resilience Innovation Partnership (GRIP) Program grants. BENCO's financial commitment would be 50% of the total cost.

If funding for BENCO is successfully secured, the dollars granted will be used to support innovative projects that will create a more resilient and reliable grid, in turn, strengthening our local electric system and supporting our 20,000 members.

Cooperatively yours,



# FROM THE BOARD

April 27, 2023  
Brad Leiding Presided

The board reviewed and approved the minutes of the March 30, 2023 regular board meeting.

The board reviewed the Annual Meeting Minutes of April 1, 2023.

The board reviewed and approved the Organizational Board Meeting minutes of April 1, 2023.

Tim reported several line technicians are attending hotline school and safety leadership conferences this month.

Attending director reported on the NRECA Legislative Conference.

The board reviewed the CFC Annual Benefits Ownership Statement.



## PCA UPDATE

ACTUAL PCA FOR MAY  
\$0.0383

ESTIMATED PCA FOR JUNE  
\$0.0421

ESTIMATED PCA FOR JUNE  
\$0.0388

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

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# THE RISING COST OF ELECTRIC UTILITY MATERIALS

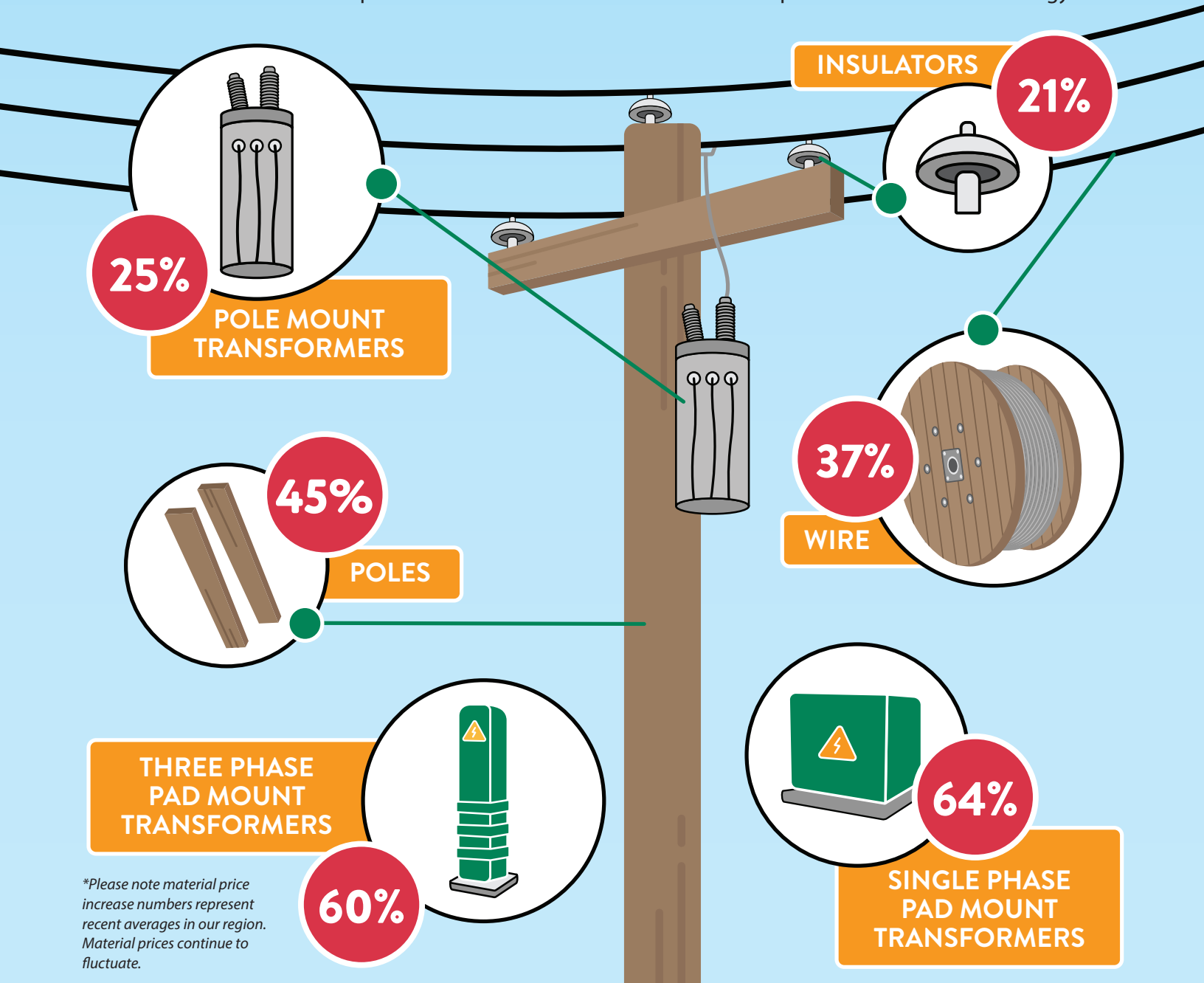
We have all witnessed the increased costs of goods and services in our daily lives. During this, BENCO continues to focus on keeping electric rates as stable as possible. That responsibility becomes more challenging as electric utility material prices have increased in unprecedented manners over the last two years.

Many of the experienced cost increases cannot be avoided as we must continue to invest in utility poles, transformers, wire and insulators to ensure our members receive safe and reliable service. Shown below are some of the core components that BENCO

needs to operate and the corresponding price increase since 2020.

Supply chain challenges also continue. We encourage members to provide BENCO with as much notice as possible if you plan on adding a service, or making significant changes to your service to ensure proper materials are secured.

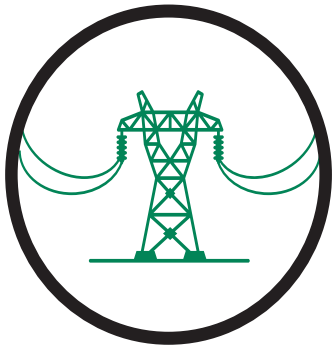
As always, BENCO will continue to manage costs to the best of its ability and work to ensure our membership receives the best possible value for their energy dollar.



*\*Please note material price increase numbers represent recent averages in our region. Material prices continue to fluctuate.*

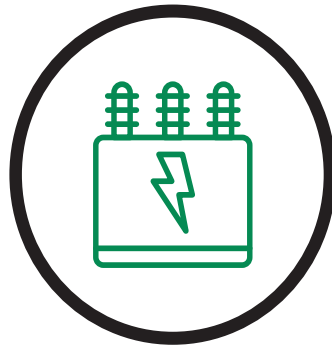
# The Steps to Restoring Power

When a major outage occurs, our crews restore service to the greatest number of people in the shortest time possible – until everyone has power.



## 1. HIGH-VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION LINES

These lines carry large amounts of electricity. They rarely fail but must be repaired first.



## 2. DISTRIBUTION SUBSTATIONS

Crews inspect substations, which can serve hundreds or thousands of members.



## 3. MAIN DISTRIBUTION LINES

Main lines serve facilities such as hospitals, and larger communities.



## 4. INDIVIDUAL HOMES AND BUSINESSES

After main line repairs are complete, we repair lines that serve individual homes and businesses.

## 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.

### M

Tom C. McClintock, St. Peter  
Carl McCollum, Bagley  
David C. McCord, Hanska  
Harlan McCorkell, Mankato  
Don McCormick, Overland Park, KS  
Larry McCormick, Deming, NM  
Penny McCormick, LaCrosse, WI  
Craig J. McCourtney, Janesville

Linda McCullough, Lacombe, LA  
Lynn A. McCullough, Minneapolis  
LaDonna McDonald, Blue Earth  
LeRoy McDonald, Charles City, IA  
Scott L. McDonald, Mapleton  
Todd E. McDowell, Mankato  
Lyle McFarling, St. Peter  
Allison A. McGee, Burnsville  
David K. McGhee, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
Robert J. McGillen, Mankato  
Zachary R. McGinnis, Charlotte, NC  
McGough Const. Co, Rochester  
Travis M. McGraw, Waterville  
Daniel McGuire, Boyceville, WI  
Daniel J. McGuire, Raleigh, NC  
Robert L. McGuire, Mankato  
Sue M. McGuire, Cottage Grove

Lee R. McIntyre, Sergeant Bluff, IA  
Christine L. McKee, Grand Meadow  
Tyrone F. McKenney, Hutchinson, KS  
James G. McKissick, Mankato  
Jesse McLaren, Addis, LA  
Sarah J. McLellan, North Mankato  
McMeredith Development Inc., St. Cloud  
Brock R. McMillan, Spanish Fork, UT  
EP McMonagle, Madelia  
Janine McMurllyn, Phoenix, AZ  
John R. McMurty, Eagle Lake  
William McNamara, St. Clair  
Gary J. McPadden, St. Cloud  
Oris K. McQueen, Wayzata  
Timothy J. McTigue, Eden Prairie  
Darla McArdle, Mankato, MN  
Paul T. McBride, Wells  
Gerald McCabe, Mankato

# OPERATION ROUND UP GRANTS OVER \$25,000

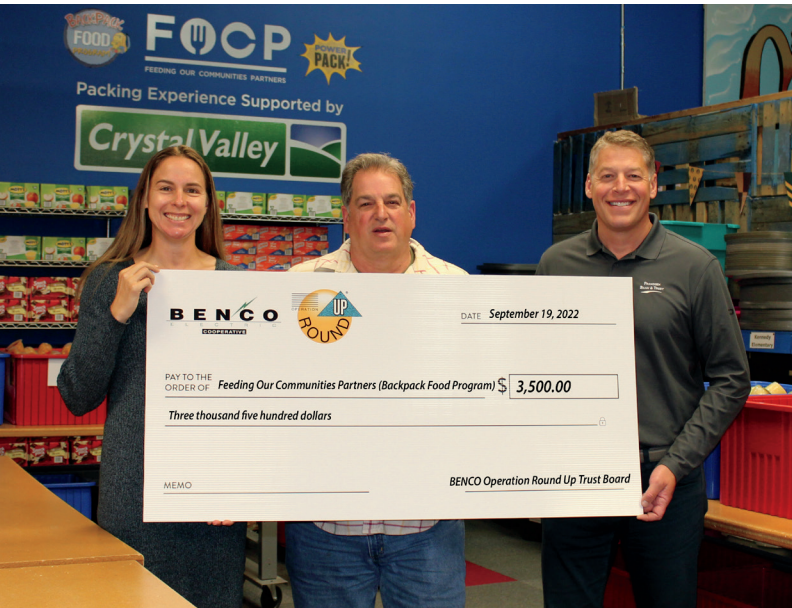


The Operation Round Up Trust Board gathered in March when 22 grants, totaling \$25,210.00 were awarded to the following non-profit organizations: YWCA, Muir Library in Winnebago, Blue

Earth Area Schools, Walters Fire Department, Twin Valley Boy Scouts, Habitat for Humanity, Lutheran Social Services / Meals on Wheels, Winnebago Fire Department, Courtland Fire Department, Genesis Classical Academy, Winnebago Ambulance, Parker Oaks Auxiliary, Feeding Our Communities Partners (FOCP), 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.



*Operation Round Up is governed by a nine-person trust board including (back row L to R): Allan Muelhausen (District 1), Matt Zebro (District 7), Matt Starkey (District 4) and (front row L to R) Nancy Jenkins (District 8), Ruby Isebrand (District 5) and Dawn Gilman (District 6). Not pictured is Kim Williams (District 2), Darlyne Deopere (District 3) and John Eilertson (District 9).*



*Feeding Our Communities Partners (FOCP), also known as the Backpack Food Program, was an Operation Round Up recipient in September. The organization aims to provide food-insecure students with healthy food options at home.*

Operation Round Up is an organization through Benco Electric Cooperative where members' utility bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar. The "rounded up" amount goes into the Benco Electric Cooperative Trust that is then allocated 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 \$340,900 to organizations benefitting the Benco service territory. Benco members serving on the Operation Round Up Trust Board include: District 1 - Allan Muehlhausen; District 2 - Kim Williams; District 3 - Darlyne Deopere; District 4 - Matt Starkey; District 5 - Ruby Isebrand; District 6 - Dawn Gilman; District 7 - Matt Zebro; District 8 - Nancy Jenkins; District 9 - John Eilertson. 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 representatives to apply online by visiting our website at [www.BENCO.org/operation-round-up](http://www.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.



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# what's cooking?

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



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

**Kathy Gerber** - Member Services Manager  
**Chelsea Germa** - Editor

## FAVORITE SALAD

From the Kitchen of: Heidi Moe

### Ingredients:

- 2 bags romaine lettuce
- 2 large pears diced
- 4 oz. blue cheese
- 1 cup candied pecans
- 1 cup raisins
- 1/4 red onion sliced thinly

### Dressing:

- 2/3 cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup lemon juice
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. crazy Jane's salt
- 2 T honey mustard



Mix salad ingredients together; set aside. Mix dressing ingredients together and pour over salad ingredients. Enjoy!

### 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 wish to attend. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

### Board of Directors:

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

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

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