

NORTHERN

L I G H T S February 2026

POWERING KNOWLEDGE BEYOND THE PAGE

Ever wonder what goes on behind the scenes to keep your lights on or how new electric services are installed? Beltrami Electric Cooperative's YouTube channel brings those stories to life through short, informative videos created just for our members.



From step-by-step looks at electric service installations to safety tips, energy education and highlights of the people and crews who serve you every day, our videos offer a closer connection to your cooperative.

Watching is an easy way to learn more about how power is restored, what certain equipment does and more.

Explore our YouTube channel for helpful videos on energy savings, safety, member testimonials, how-to topics and other co-op information.

Scan the QR code on this page or visit our YouTube channel to watch, learn and stay connected. New videos are added throughout the year, so there is always something new to discover.



YouTube



inside a New Electric Service Installation



The Power of Off-Peak



BEC Member Testimonial-Electric Vehicles



Energy Use Tips: Furnace Filter



This is Your License to Live



Keeping the lights on and supporting the communities we serve

by Jared Echternach, president and CEO

RELIABILITY REQUIRES INVESTMENT

As your local power provider, Beltrami Electric Cooperative's mission has always been simple: keep the lights on and support the communities we serve. But behind every switch, every warm home and every business that opens its doors is a complex system that requires constant care. Reliable electricity doesn't happen by accident. It requires ongoing investment in our local grid — through system repairs, maintenance, line upgrades and the integration of new technologies that help us operate smarter and more efficiently.

The bottom line:

Reliable electricity does not happen by chance. It takes ongoing investment, careful planning and forward thinking to keep power dependable for our members and communities.

Why it matters:

Every flip of a switch relies on a complex system working behind the scenes. Poles, wires, transformers and substations must operate safely and efficiently every day. Keeping that system strong requires regular maintenance, timely repairs and strategic upgrades.

The reality of an aging grid:

Much of today's electric infrastructure was built decades ago. While it continues to serve us well, all equipment has a lifespan. Routine maintenance extends that life, but replacement and modernization are eventually necessary. These proactive investments help minimize outages, shorten restoration times and strengthen the system that serves our growing communities.

Growing demand means new challenges:

Electric use is changing. Advanced HVAC systems, smart appliances and new commercial development all place added demand on the local distribution system. To meet those needs, the grid must evolve. These are good things. Distribution upgrades and overhead-to-underground conversions help ensure we can deliver safe and reliable power today and well into the future.

Technology that works smarter:

New tools are transforming how we operate. Advanced metering infrastructure, fault indicators, trip savers and oil circuit reclosers allow us to detect problems faster and respond more effectively. These technologies help isolate issues, reroute power and provide real-time data that improves maintenance planning and outage response.

The result:

The result is a stronger, more resilient grid that supports economic growth, improves service quality and enhances safety for our crews and communities.

Our commitment:

Reliability is more than infrastructure. It is a responsibility to the members we serve. Every repair, upgrade and technology investment supports your daily life, from homes and farms to businesses and schools.

Looking ahead:

Powering our communities means preparing for what is next. By investing in our local grid today, we are building a reliable foundation for tomorrow and ensuring the electricity you depend on is there when you need it most.

2026 BUDGET AND RATE UPDATE

Your board of directors set the 2026 budget and rates at a special meeting held Jan. 9. The budget includes a 6.2% rate change in April. Minnkota Power Cooperative is our wholesale power supplier and will increase rates by 4.1% in April. Minnkota will also apply a per-kilowatt-hour surcharge. While the exact amount of that surcharge has not yet been finalized by Minnkota, Beltrami Electric will pass it through on retail bills under the existing Purchased Power Adjustment line item on your bill. The surcharge is primarily the result of extended plant outages in 2025 that required significant market purchases to keep the lights on and is needed to help Minnkota meet minimum margin and loan covenant requirements.

Wholesale power accounts for roughly 70% of our costs, so changes in wholesale rates have a significant impact on our operation. The remaining 30% of our costs are internal. Some of these are controllable, some are not. Your board of directors and employees have done an excellent job of keeping controllable costs within budget, yet prices continue to increase for materials, equipment, insurance, labor and other items essential to operating your cooperative.

The monthly access fee for residential, small commercial and large commercial rate classes will remain unchanged. The energy rate for those classes will increase 0.75 cents per kilowatt-hour. The demand charge and load management rates will remain unchanged. Overall, the average rate increase will be approximately 6.2% with the Purchased Power Adjustment. This will vary depending on rate class and how you use electricity.

While none of us like a rate change, the change is needed for your cooperative to remain financially stable. More information will be included in future issues of *Northern Lights*, including tips on how to most efficiently use electricity and cost-saving measures you can implement to save money.

THE COST OF POWER AND DELIVERY

Your cooperative works hard to balance fair electric rates with reliable service. Across the utility industry, costs continue to rise due to higher power supply prices, required system upgrades and inflation affecting equipment and materials. We carefully manage these challenges while investing in the system needed to keep electricity safe, dependable and affordable for our members.

DID YOU KNOW? YOUR ELECTRIC BILL HAS TWO MAIN COMPONENTS:

1. The cost to generate and transmit power to our area (wholesale power cost). This represents about 70 cents of every dollar you pay.
2. The cost to deliver electricity to our members (BEC's cost to get electricity to your home or business).
 - a. This includes the local distribution system that is needed to provide reliable power to our members – including routine maintenance or repairs, system upgrades, insurance, loan interest, member services and resources, and the people behind your power.

WHERE YOUR ELECTRIC DOLLAR GOES

COST OF POWER
69.4%



MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS
8.5%

CUSTOMER, ADMIN, GENERAL & OTHER
9.4%

DEPRECIATION
7.9%

INTEREST
4.5%

OPERATING MARGINS
0.3%

2026 RATE ADJUSTMENT SUMMARY

RESIDENTIAL AND SMALL COMMERCIAL SERVICES:

- The monthly **access charge** of \$50 and the **demand charge** of \$1.50/kW will remain unchanged.
- **The energy (kWh) rate** of \$0.12/kWh will be adjusted to \$0.1275/kWh.
- **Off-peak services:** The monthly **access charge** and the **energy (kWh) rate** will remain unchanged.
- **Purchased Power Adjustment** – this is an adjustable pass-through charge from Minnkota for wholesale power.

- *The rate adjustments will be effective with bills received in April.*
- *Minnkota Power Cooperative will apply a per-kWh surcharge in 2026. That amount has not been finalized and will be passed through the existing Purchased Power Adjustment line item on retail bills.*
- *Look for more information in future issues of Northern Lights.*

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Beltrami Electric Cooperative's board conducted its regular monthly meeting Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2025. A quorum of directors was in attendance.

The following reports were given at the meeting:

- President and CEO Echternach and the board discussed recent safety successes, observations, mutual aid and our four Beltrami Electric crew members that assisted Ontonagon Cooperative.
- President and CEO Echternach made his monthly report, including the Employee Appreciation party, 2026 membership to America's Electric Cooperative's PAC and REPAC, employee updates,

energy sales, union negotiations and the proposed City of Bemidji franchise ordinance.

- President and CEO Echternach presented the 2026-2028 Strategic Plan.
- President and CEO Echternach presented the 2026 Budget.
- Rate discussions were held.
- Mike Birkeland and Angela Lyseng presented the 2026 Marketing and Communications Plan.
- President and CEO Echternach presented the Non-

Union Compensation and Benefits Plan.

- President and CEO Echternach and the directors discussed upcoming meetings, events and education conferences.

The following actions were taken at the meeting:

- Approved the consent agenda.
- Approved to hold a special meeting on Jan. 9, 2026.
- Approved the 2026-2028 Strategic Plan.

- Approved the 2026 Marketing and Communications Plan.
- Approved the Non-Union Compensation and Benefits Plan.
- Approved the Sept. 25, 2026, board meeting date.
- Appointed Jared Echternach as the NRTC Annual Meeting voting delegate.
- Approved director and President and CEO expenses.

The next board meeting will be held on Friday, Jan. 30, 2026.



BEHIND THE SCENES TO KEEP THE LIGHTS ON

Beginning in January, Beltrami Electric Cooperative crews will be conducting routine inspections of electrical lines and equipment throughout our service area. These inspections are an important part of maintaining a safe and reliable electric system for our members.

During this time, members may see BEC lineworkers in their neighborhoods inspecting pad-mounted transformers, the large green boxes often located in yards, and taking meter readings. Transformers and related equipment play a critical role in delivering electricity safely and efficiently to homes and businesses.

WHAT ARE CREWS CHECKING?

Lineworkers will open and inspect pad-mounted equipment such as transformers, switches, fuse cabinets and transition cabinets. They look for signs of rust or corrosion, damage caused by animals like gophers, and any other issues that could affect performance. Crews also check that equipment remains accessible by noting concerns like overgrown trees, bushes, shrubs, fences, etc. These inspections help identify and address potential problems before they lead to outages.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MEMBERS?

No action is needed from members. Lineworkers may be in your yard if your transformer is located there and may briefly stop to check the meter serving your property. Inspections are completed by BEC lineworkers and usually take about 10 to 15 minutes.

If you have questions about this inspection work, please contact Beltrami Electric Cooperative at **218-444-2540**. Regular inspections like these help ensure reliable service today and into the future.

ITEM FOR SALE BY BID



2014 Dodge Ram 2500 crew cab,
tradesman pickup, 4WD, 8 ft bed,
Hemi 5.7L gas engine, 203,319 miles.
Minimum bid: \$3,000

Items are available for viewing at Beltrami Electric's office, 4111 Technology Dr NW, Bemidji, on the east side of the building, in front of BEC's garage area **from Feb. 11-13, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.** Bids will be accepted during this time as well. BEC does not offer any written or implied warranties and reserves the right to reject any or all bids. Items sold "as-is." Cash only. The successful bidder is responsible for all taxes, license and transfer fees.

* May need heater core * Engine noise

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Why it matters to you

Power outages can occur when trees, shrubs or bushes grow too close to power lines. By managing vegetation, your electric cooperative keeps your power safe and reliable.

A three-year vegetation management cycle allows the cooperative to preventively clear and trim trees and other vegetation in the right of way that threaten Beltrami Electric's distribution system. This gives you better and safer service and allows crews to handle maintenance and repairs safely and more efficiently.

Right of way (ROW): refers to a strip of land underneath or around power lines that your electric cooperative maintains and clears. Trees must grow at a distance far enough away from conductors that they will not cause harm to individuals or disruption to electrical service.

Beltrami Electric will contract with Carr's Tree Service for vegetation management in our area in 2026.

Work will be conducted in the following townships in 2026:

Farden, Eland, Hart Lake, Lakeport, Pike Bay, Red Lake, Shingobee, Steamboat River, Waskish and Wilkinson.

Estimate Your Energy Use

How to Estimate Your Energy Use and Cost

Understanding how electricity is used in your home begins with two simple factors: the amount of power an appliance consumes and its operating time. Because both can vary widely, estimating energy use can help you see where your energy dollars are going and identify opportunities to save.

1. Find the Wattage

- Check the appliance label
- Listed in **watts**

No watts listed?

Volts × Amps = Watts

Example: 120 V × 12.5 A = 1,500 W

2. Calculate Daily Energy Use

Watts × Hours Used ÷ 1,000 = kWh

Example:

1,500-watt space heater × 8 hours
÷ 1,000 = **12 kWh/day**

3. Estimated Monthly Cost

kWh × 31 days × cost per kWh = **Cost**

Example:

12 kWh × 31 × \$0.12 =
\$44.64/month

NOTE: Demand is not calculated into these totals.

Small habits add up. Knowing the math helps you manage your energy use and your bill.

WHY IS MY BILL HIGHER IN THE WINTER?

In our region, November through March is typically when members use the most electricity due to cold weather. Here are other factors that cause energy use to increase:

- Shorter days and longer nights mean more time indoors. That typically means more lights, TVs and appliances in use.
- Heating systems run more. Even if you have a propane furnace, your electric use increases because electricity powers the blower motor in the furnace.
- Don't forget about garage blower heaters, additional refrigerators and freezers as well as humidifiers/dehumidifiers in use.
- **Examples of energy use and cost:**
 - Engine block heaters on vehicles use between 500 to 1,500 watts, depending on the vehicle. So, a car using a 500-watt heater would use 124 kWh a month if plugged in for 8 hours a day, or \$14.88/month.
 - Portable plug-in space heaters can dramatically increase your monthly bill as well. A 1,500-watt space heater used for 8 hours a day will use 372 kWh a month, or cost \$44.64/month
 - Heat tape can also significantly increase your usage. The average heat tape uses about 9 watts per foot per hour, so a 100-foot section could use 670 kWh a month if plugged in for 24 hours a day or cost \$80.40/month.



Beltrami Electric's Electrification Department: Chris Henriksen, Ayla Kranz, Bob Gregg and Festus Rockensock.

What can I do to reduce my bill?

- **Use timers:** Implementing timers can significantly reduce energy consumption by ensuring block heaters or heat tapes operate only when necessary, such as during the evening hours.
- **Use space heaters sparingly:** Space heaters are a great way to warm your home in specific areas without heating your entire house. Use them in your office, bathroom or any small space you occupy for short periods, as they're not efficient for heating large areas.
- **Adjust your thermostat:** When you are home and awake, set the thermostat as low as is comfortable. When you are asleep or out of the house, turn the thermostat down to save as much as 10% a year on your heating bills.

Find more energy-saving tips at **beltramielectric.com**. If you have additional questions, contact our office at **218-444-2540**.

Classifieds

Classified ads rules

- Ads are due by the following dates:
 - **MARCH ISSUE:**
Submit by Feb. 2.
- Please submit ads here: **beltramielectric.com/submit-ad.**
- NO real estate, rental, personal or commercial ads will be accepted.
- All ads must be 50 words or less and typed or printed clearly.
- Editor reserves the right to edit or reject any ad.
- Members may only submit one for sale and one wanted or free ad per issue.
- Ads are published at no charge as space permits on a first-received, first-printed basis, **with no guarantee your ad will appear.**
- Ads are only allowed to be repeated for **three consecutive months** and must be resubmitted each month.

For Sale:

Custom made combination spear / angling house and deer blind. 4' x 6' on skids. Tongue and groove interior, fully insulated floor, walls, and

ceiling. \$2,400/obo. 320-249-0734.

Indoor growing equipment. Spider Farmer SF400 450W Light (like new), two fans and one blower, and other miscellaneous items (felt pots, ph/moisture gauge, grow timer, reflective sheeting, one gallon of assorted Fox Farms fertilizers, netting, and other items). \$300. Call 218-766-8536.

Two Vipar Spectra LED Grow lights, model V600, 1 Hipargero LED Grow light, model HG-450. \$50 each or all three for \$125. Please call 218-368-1643 or text for pictures.

½-inch Milwaukee corded angle drill, like new with case, \$175. 612-281-5089.

Bingo machine, large set of cards and balls for sale. \$150/obo. 218-831-4967.

Ariens Sno Trek 2-stage 24-inch manual start snowblower. Recently serviced. Downsizing. \$200. 218-766-1880.

Knee cart for after surgery, new price \$175. (Sanford charges \$75/month to rent one). Will sell for \$95. Jim 218-760-3298.

1996 Polaris 400 Explorer 4-wheeler with plow. Color

is red, runs great. \$1,500/obo. Call 218-368-1073.

Joerns adjustable hospital bed \$200. Manual wheelchair with adjustable back and foot rests, 350# capacity (used only once), \$350. EZ Way patient lift with two battery packs and charger, 500# capacity. \$1,000. 218-368-9141.

Snow rake with extensions \$40. (Located in Bemidji) 320-583-0471.

40-ft dock, new plywood on top, has hitch on to pull out of water. \$400. 218-239-0764.

Wanted:

Looking for someone who has small spruce trees on their land that would allow me to come and dig a few up with a hand shovel to transplant. Please call or text Matt at 218-368-0737.

M1A Springfield rifle 308 cal. Call 218-556-3733.

Taking bids to mow ~5 acres of old grass hayfield planted in rows (8' x 8' spacing) of small spruce seedlings. Location is 3 miles west of Laporte and careful mowing will be needed 3x/year for 3 years. Call or text Jim for more info 608-519-6478.

Are you looking to get an old chair recaned? Call Nate at 218-407-0168.

NEED HELP PAYING YOUR ELECTRIC BILL?

Energy assistance may be available!

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) helps income-qualified households pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. We urge you to contact them immediately to avoid disconnection if you feel you are eligible for aid. (*Eligibility is based on energy costs, household size and the most recent month of income.*)

BI-CAP IN BEMIDJI
6603 Bemidji Ave N
Bemidji, MN 56601
218-751-4631

BI-CAP IN WALKER
8245 Industrial Park Rd NW
Walker, MN 56484
218-547-3438

KOOTASCA
201 4th Street NW, Suite 130
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
218-999-0824

LEECH LAKE
115 6th St
Cass Lake, MN 56633
218-335-3783

MAHUBE-OTWA
120 North Central Ave
Park Rapids, MN 56470
218-847-1385

RED LAKE
15809 High School Dr
Red Lake, MN 56671
218-679-3350



View EAP income guidelines and **APPLY ONLINE.**

FEBRUARY READER'S CONTEST

For your chance to be entered in a drawing to **win a \$10 credit** on your bill, correctly answer the questions and include with your payment or mail to: BEC, P.O. Box 488, Bemidji, MN 56619. Or email answers to info@beltramielectric.com with the subject line "Reader's Contest." Be sure to include your name and BEC account number. **Entries must be received by Feb. 25.**

- 1 Wholesale power accounts for roughly _____ % of BEC's costs.
- 2 A 500-watt engine block heater used for 8 hours a day will use _____ kWh a month.
- 3 More than _____ items were collected for BEC's Mitten Tree.

Member Name:	BEC Account Number:	Email address:
--------------	---------------------	----------------

Congratulations to our Dec. contest winner: Dan & Carol Lauderbaugh

We are looking for you!

Beltrami Electric Cooperative

is looking for **Mattea Chernugal, (Bemidji, Minn.).**

Please call **218-444-2540** if you have any information.



ATTENTION: HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS!



Apply now for a scholarship from Beltrami Electric Cooperative

Beltrami Electric Cooperative and its board of directors are pleased to be able to award scholarships annually to deserving students in our service area.

This year, BEC is offering seven \$1,200 high school scholarships and one \$1,200 at-large scholarship to graduating high school seniors.

- Students must be graduating in 2026
- Parent/guardian must be a current BEC member

Scholarships are made available from unclaimed capital credits. After a period of seven years, Minnesota law allows cooperatives to use unclaimed capital credits for charitable purposes.

HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

Students attending one of the following schools may apply:

Kelliher, Blackduck, Red Lake, Bemidji, Cass Lake, Laporte and Walker-Hackensack-Akeley.

- These scholarships are administered by each school, so students should contact their school's designated guidance office or scholarship committee for applications and deadlines.

AT-LARGE SCHOLARSHIP

The at-large scholarship is for a student NOT attending one of the seven schools listed under the High School Scholarship Program. Charter school or home schooled students are eligible for this scholarship.

The at-large scholarship application deadline is Wednesday, APRIL 1, 2026.

Visit www.beltramielectric.com/scholarships for more information.



Mitten Tree Campaign brings warmth to local children



Blackduck's Head Start students model their new items.



Lee Pemberton delivers items to Kelliher's early childhood education students.

Beltrami Electric Cooperative recently shared the warmth of the season with local children through its annual Mitten Tree campaign. More than 1,000 donated mittens, gloves, hats, scarves and pairs of socks were delivered to area Head Start and Early Childhood Family Education programs, helping ensure children stay warm during the cold winter months.

BEC extends a sincere thank you to everyone who contributed. Donations came from individuals, local churches and knitting groups, with many items thoughtfully selected or handmade with care. Seeing the variety of colorful and creative pieces, each made with local children in mind, was a highlight of the campaign.

Commitment to Community is a core value at Beltrami Electric Cooperative. Whether large or small, every act of generosity helps strengthen the communities we serve. Through efforts like the Mitten Tree, members and employees come together to make a meaningful difference in our communities.

Welcome, Jennifer Veaser, to Beltrami Electric Cooperative

Beltrami Electric Cooperative welcomes Jennifer Veaser as its new vice president of electrification and member experience. Jennifer joined the co-op on Jan. 5, 2026, and brings a wealth of cooperative experience to the co-op, having served in leadership and management roles at Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative, National Information Solutions Cooperative and East Central Energy. She holds a bachelor's degree in mass communications from St. Cloud State University and a Master of Business Administration from Cardinal Stritch University. She is an NRECA Certified Cooperative Communicator and has completed NRECA's Management Internship Program. Jennifer grew up in Little Falls, Minnesota, and is excited to begin this new chapter in the Bemidji area. Jennifer and her husband have two adult sons and are proud grandparents to two grandsons. "I am grateful for the opportunity to join BEC and work with an exceptional team. I look forward to connecting with members and the communities we serve," Veaser said.



NORTHERN

L I G H T S

FEB 2026 | VOL. 73 | NO. 2

Northern Lights (USPS 016488)

Published monthly by Beltrami Electric Cooperative Inc., 4111 Technology Drive NW, Bemidji, Minnesota 56601-5128. Subscription rate is \$5. Periodicals postage paid at Bemidji, MN 56601.

POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to Beltrami Electric Cooperative Inc., P.O. Box 488, Bemidji, Minnesota 56619-0488.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Chair John Lund, *DISTRICT 7*

Vice Chair Sue Kringen, *DISTRICT 8*

Secretary Murl Nord, *DISTRICT 1*

Treasurer Sharon Lembke, *DISTRICT 9*

Directors: Charlie Perkins, *DISTRICT 2*; Kevin Geerdes, *DISTRICT 3*; Craig Gaasvig, *DISTRICT 4*; Robert Wallner, *DISTRICT 5*; Rick Coe, *DISTRICT 6*

President and CEO Jared Echternach

Editor Angela Lyseng

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Monday – Friday

Telephone: 218-444-2540 or
1-800-955-6083

Website: www.beltramielectric.com

Email: info@beltramielectric.com

MN STATE ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

Any time you or an electrician does wiring or other electrical work at your home or farm, Minnesota state law requires a state wiring inspector to conduct a proper inspection of the work. A rough-in inspection must be made before any wiring is covered. A final inspection is also required. Find service territories for electrical inspectors here: <https://workplace.doli.state.mn.us/jurisdiction/>

BELTRAMI & HUBBARD COUNTIES:

Wade Koons | 218-580-8589
wade.koons@state.mn.us

CASS & HUBBARD COUNTIES:

Tony Kohrs | 218-616-1554
tony.kohrs@state.mn.us

GOPHER STATE ONE CALL

1-800-252-1166 or 811
www.gopherstateonecall.org



Anyone who plans to dig is required by law to notify the state of their intentions at least 48 hours in advance. All digging requires a 48-hour notification so that buried telephone lines, TV cable, pipelines, and utility electric lines can be located to ensure that none will be severed or damaged.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To provide excellent value to our members through the safe delivery of reliable electric service, excellent member service and innovative energy solutions at fair and reasonable prices.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Beltrami Electric Cooperative Inc.

® Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Connecting Communities. Powering Life.



YOUTH TOUR 2026

Make Your Mark

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS!

Every generation leaves behind a legacy, footprints that shape the future. The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is your chance to do the same. It's more than a trip to Washington, D.C.—it's an opportunity to step into history, discover your voice and begin writing the story only you can tell.

Delegates selected from Minnesota will join more than 1,800 students from across the country in Washington, D.C., June 15-20, 2026. They'll explore historic monuments and world-class museums, meet with elected officials and, most importantly, develop leadership skills, build their resumes and form lasting connections with other young leaders from across America.

Apply today! Visit beltramielectric.com/youth-tour or scan the QR code.

Application deadline is Feb. 27, 2026.

