

NORTHERN

L I G H T S October 2026



Touchstone Energy® Open raises record \$25,000 for United Way

The 22nd Annual Beltrami Electric Touchstone Energy® Open brought golfers, sponsors and volunteers together for a day of fun and community impact on Sept. 11 at Castle Highlands Golf Course. Thanks to the incredible support of local businesses and participants, the tournament raised a record-setting \$25,000 and has raised more than \$249,000 since the tournament began in 2005.



FIRST PLACE went to the Affinity Aces team from Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union. Pictured: Nicole Wangberg, Natalie Rader, Gail Johnson and Sarah Kuesel.



SECOND PLACE went to the WESCO team. Pictured left: Mark Bakk, Al Ripley, Jack Kinnunen and Brad Clarine.



THIRD PLACE went to Team Echternach. Pictured right: Penny Echternach, Tyler Echternach, Jesse Echternach and Jared Echternach.



The Beltrami Electric Touchstone Energy® Open Golf Tournament Committee presents a check to the United Way of Bemidji Area. Pictured left to right: Becky Theis, Kathy Dreher, Angela Lyseng, Jeff Noren, United Way of Bemidji Area Director Denae Alamano, Rich Riewer, Ayla Kranz, Bob Gregg and Jessica Delaney.



Beltrami Electric extends sincere thanks to all who made this record-breaking event possible – our business sponsors, the golfers and the volunteers. Your commitment ensures the tournament's continued success and strengthens the United Way's work in the Bemidji area.



Cooperative update and thanks

by Jared Echternach, president and CEO

BOARD REORGANIZES

Your board of directors conducted its annual reorganizational meeting in August. All existing officers were reelected, including:

- John Lund, *Chair*
- Sue Kringen, *Vice Chair*
- Murl Nord, *Secretary*
- Sharon Lembke, *Treasurer*
- John Lund, *Cooperative Development Governor*

Congratulations to the executive committee for its leadership and thank you for your service.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Your line crews have been working on several large projects this summer. Our work along Beltrami County Road 22 is complete. This major project required the relocation of approximately 7 miles of existing underground line to accommodate the road reconstruction.

Crews are also working on a feeder project near Guthrie, converting 4 miles of three-phase overhead line to underground. Several underground wire replacement projects have been completed, including Rosby Acres, Kansas City Road, Wolf Lake Drive, 500th Street in Helga Township, Old Long Lake Road and Monroe Avenue. Your cooperative's distribution system consists of more than 3,500 miles of line and is now more than 76% underground.

New service construction has been tracking with prior years and things are starting to accelerate. We typically experience a fall

rush for new services. If you are thinking of a new service this year, please contact us as soon as possible.

COOPERATIVE MONTH

October is one of my favorite months of year. The fall colors are beautiful, mornings are crisp and fresh, and outdoor opportunities abound throughout our service area. October is also Cooperative Month, and I'd like to take a moment to celebrate the cooperative business model under which we and thousands of cooperatives all over the world operate. We have many local cooperatives, including communications, food, agriculture, credit unions, housing and energy, and I thank each of them for their services and for supporting our communities.

Have safe and enjoyable fall!

KINDS OF CO-OPS

Cooperatives come in many forms—from electric utilities and credit unions to farm supply stores and housing co-ops—but all cooperatives are built with a common purpose: to meet the needs of the members they serve.

Co-ops strengthen local communities, keep decisions close to home and invest in long-term success.

October is National Co-op Month.



BELTRAMI ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Beltrami Electric's board conducted its regular monthly meeting on **Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2026**. A quorum of directors was in attendance.

- President and CEO Echternach and the board discussed recent safety successes and observations.
- President and CEO Echternach made his monthly report, including an annual meeting recap, energy sales and an employee update.
- President and CEO Echternach and the

directors shared highlights of meetings attended on behalf of the cooperative and discussed upcoming meetings and events.

- Arlene Hogquist presented the July financial report.
- Jennifer Veaser discussed the annual meeting held Aug. 12, 2026.

The following actions were taken:

- Elected John Lund as Chair, Sue Kringen as Vice Chair, Murl Nord as Secretary and Sharon Lembke as Treasurer.
- Elected John Lund as Governor of Cooperative Development, LLC.
- Approved the consent agenda.
- Set the 2027 annual meeting for

Aug. 11, 2027, at the Beltrami County Fairgrounds.

- Approved holding February's board meeting on Feb. 26, 2027.
- Approved President and CEO and director expenses.

The next board meeting will be held Friday, Oct. 23, 2026.

BUSINESS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

A NEW CHAPTER FOR A FAMILIAR LANDMARK



When a long-standing business closes its doors, a community feels the impact. Fortunately for the Cass Lake area, one local landmark has been given new life.

Just a few months ago, Mike and Jen Flaten purchased the former Johnson Lumber Co. with a vision of once again providing local contractors, homeowners and do-it-yourselfers with the building materials and services they need without making the drive to neighboring communities.



The business officially opened in late April after several weeks of installing a modern inventory and point-of-sale system, establishing vendor relationships and

building inventory from the ground up. Although they have only been open a short time, business has steadily grown

as word spreads that the lumber yard is back.

The business is built on a wealth of industry experience. General Manager Josh Kaasa, Jen's brother, brings more than 20 years of construction and lumber industry experience to the operation. Mike also has deep roots in the industry, having grown up working in his family's small lumberyard. Their combined experience, along with the Flaten family's commitment to customer service, is helping shape the business into more than just a place to purchase building materials.

"Our goal is to provide great service and build relationships," the owners explained. "Surrounded by lakes and seasonal homes, we want to be the place local contractors know they can count on year-round."

Today, the business offers lumber, roofing, siding, steel, jobsite delivery, propane, dock and lift sales, and barge services.

Looking ahead, the owners plan to continue expanding their inventory and services while exploring additions such as home plan design and garage door installation.

Beltrami Electric was pleased to assist the business with energy-efficient LED lighting upgrades through our commercial lighting rebate program. The new lighting improves visibility throughout the facility while helping reduce long-term energy costs.

As the business continues to grow, Mike and Jen are grateful for the warm welcome they've received from area residents and contractors. Together with Josh and their growing team, they remain committed to providing outstanding customer service while investing in the Cass Lake community.

We wish them continued success as they build for the future – one project, one customer and one relationship at a time.



OCTOBER READER'S CONTEST (FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A BILL CREDIT)

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 Oct. 25.**

1. MJ Building Center is located in _____, Minnesota.
2. The chair of Beltrami Electric's board of directors is _____.
3. If you spot a dead tree near our lines, you should:
 - a. Call Beltrami Electric
 - b. Take it down yourself
 - c. Ignore it

Member Name:	BEC Account Number:	Phone/Email address:



STAY WARM. *Be Prepared.*

DO YOU HAVE A DUAL-FUEL HEATING SYSTEM ON OFF-PEAK?



NOW is the time to ensure your backup heat source is ready and your fuel supply is sufficient.



BE PREPARED

Dual-fuel systems are often controlled during periods of high demand, such as cold winter nights.



CHECK YOUR SYSTEM

Test your backup heat source and make sure it's working safely and properly.



CHECK YOUR FUEL

Keep your propane, gas or wood supply filled and ready for when it's needed.

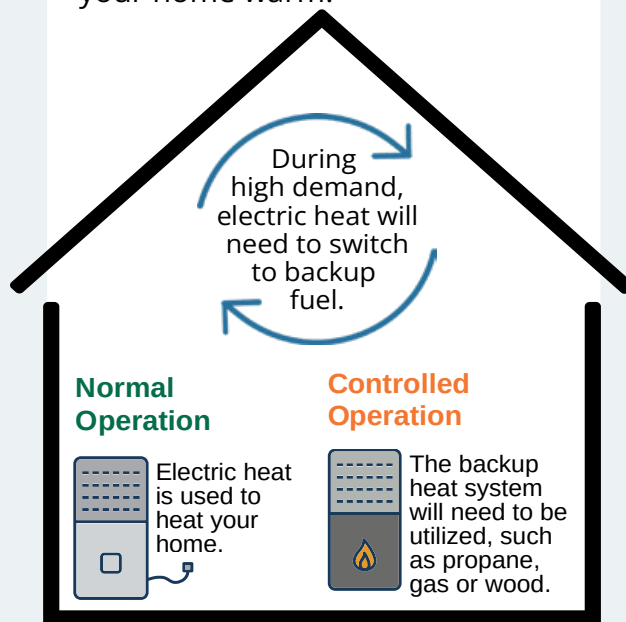


WE ARE PREPARING FOR 200 HOURS

of estimated demand response this winter. For perspective, we had 143 hours of control on dual-fuel systems last winter.

WHAT IS A DUAL-FUEL HEATING SYSTEM?

A dual-fuel system uses electricity as its primary heat source and a backup fuel, such as propane, natural gas or wood. When your electric heat is controlled during periods of high demand, your backup heat takes over to keep your home warm.



KEEP YOUR LOAD CONTROL INFORMATION HANDY

Contact us if you need the information below at 218-444-2540 or info@beltramielectric.com

Heat	Equipment: _____	Load Group: _____ Double Order: _____
Water Heater/Dryer	Equipment: _____	Load Group: _____ Double Order: _____
Other	Equipment: _____	Load Group: _____ Double Order: _____

Welcome, Nate Menefee

Nate joined Beltrami Electric Cooperative (BEC) as our staking technician in August. He comes with a wealth of experience and education in the power industry, with a strong business background. He earned an Associate of Applied Science degree in Power Generation from Itasca Community College, a bachelor's degree in business from Bemidji State University and a master's degree in business from St. Cloud State University. He will be helping with work plan projects, road jobs and more. Nate grew up in Squaw Lake and resides with his family in Bemidji. We are excited to welcome Nate, his wife, Carissa, and his children to the BEC cooperative family.



Nate Menefee,
Staking Technician

Winter Construction Charges



- New electric services run to a home, outbuilding or other facility between Nov. 1 and May 1 will result in additional construction charges.
- These charges apply due to the higher costs and additional steps of construction during winter conditions. Please contact our office at 218-444-2540 for more information.

SHINE A LIGHT ON A LOCAL CO-OP HERO

Do you know someone who goes above and beyond to make a difference in our community? Maybe they volunteer their time, help those in need or have led a project that has made our community a better place.

Beltrami Electric Cooperative is proud to join Minnesota's Touchstone Energy® cooperatives in presenting the Cooperative Heroes Award, recognizing individuals who exemplify cooperative values such as integrity, innovation, reliability, accountability and commitment to community.

Anyone served by a Minnesota electric cooperative can nominate a community hero.

- Three winners will be selected, with \$1,000 awarded to first place and \$500 each to second- and third-place winners for the local nonprofit or cause of their choice.

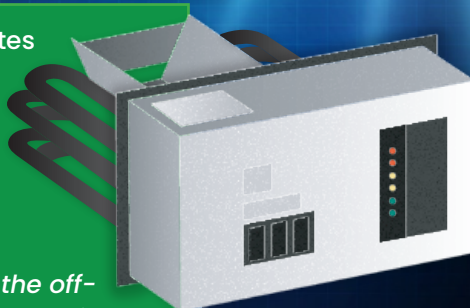
Nominations are open Oct. 1-Nov. 15 and are being accepted by our statewide association partner, the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA). Submit a short application at mrea.org/programs/touchstone-energy.



Help us shine a light on the people who are making a difference in our communities!

ELECTRIC PLENUMS: THE REAL ★ MVP OF HOME HEATING

- Eligible for rebates of **\$25/kw**
- Around **HALF OFF** the standard electric rate
- Participation in the off-peak program is required.
- To learn more, just give Beltrami Electric Cooperative a call at **218-444-2540** or visit **ValueofElectricity.com**.



VEGETATION MANAGEMENT:

Clearing the way for reliability



Lee Pemberton
Operations Manager

Why it is important

It's about keeping our system reliable and safe for crews, our members and the communities we serve. That's why vegetation management – what we call right-of-way clearing – is so important. Your cooperative has been proactively installing underground power lines for decades and currently has more than 76% of our system underground.

Our vegetation management approach

Every year, we bring in trained contractors to trim hazardous trees and remove brush along our power lines. We also use biodegradable herbicides to keep brush and weeds like poison ivy under control.



What you can do

See something, say something – If you spot a dead or leaning tree near our lines, give us a call rather than trying to take it down yourself. Working around power lines is dangerous, and we have the equipment and training to handle it safely.

Plant wisely

When you're planting new trees or shrubs, think about how big they'll be in 10 or 20 years and how close they'll be to the lines or the green transformer box in your yard. A fence, flowerbed or even a few shrubs too close can slow us down when time really matters. Remember, power lines can sag in the heat or sway in the wind.



Final thoughts

I spent years as a lineman, and I can tell you firsthand that trees are one of the biggest challenges we face in keeping the lights on. I know right-of-way clearing isn't the flashiest part of what we do, but trust me, it's one of the most important. The work our crews and contractors do today makes the system stronger for the next storm that rolls through.

If you ever have questions about trees or other vegetation near our lines or equipment, or how to plant safely around power equipment, give us a call.



BELTRAMI ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

POLE INSPECTIONS

EXO, Inc. - Contractor

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Beginning in September, Beltrami Electric's contractor, EXO, will conduct utility pole testing in the cooperative's service territory. EXO has their pickups marked with their logo and will be utilizing a UTV to travel from pole to pole.

This inspection involves the crews digging around each pole to inspect the pole's condition. This allows us to identify poles that need to be replaced and is part of our ongoing efforts to maintain a safe and reliable distribution system.

If you have questions or concerns regarding these pole inspections, please contact our office at **1-800-955-6083**.

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OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Chair John Lund, *DISTRICT 7*

Vice Chair Sue Kringen, *DISTRICT 8*

Secretary Muri 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

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

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

Website: www.beltramielelectric.com

Email: info@beltramielelectric.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 | 612-770-1938
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.

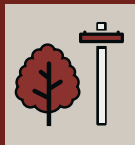
® Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Connecting Communities. Powering Life.

WATCH THE WIRES HOME FIRE PREVENTION TIPS

EXTERIOR FIRE PREVENTION

Don't plant shrubs or trees near electrical infrastructure like power lines or transformer boxes. If they grow into the equipment, the contact could spark a fire.



- If a tree is growing close to a power line, don't trim it yourself – call Beltrami Electric Cooperative.

When it comes to outdoor fires, offense is your best defense. Prep your lawn/home to be inhospitable to embers that may come from neighbors or wildfires.



- Keep grass mowed, remove dead plants, and trim shrubs and trees away from the house.
- Clear the roof and gutters of debris.
- Keep combustible materials like firewood, propane tanks and mulch piles away from the house.

INTERIOR FIRE PREVENTION

The easiest way to prevent fire inside the home is to remember electrical safety.



should be plugged directly into the wall outlet.

- Don't overload outlets or power strips. High-wattage appliances like space heaters and air conditioners
- Replace damaged cords and appliances immediately.
- If you notice flickering lights, buzzing noises or warm outlets, call an electrician. You could have faulty wiring.

Beyond electrical safety, there are other steps you can take to prevent indoor fires.



- Never leave cooking food unattended.
- Test your smoke alarms every month.
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from furniture and combustible materials.
- Clean the lint filter of your clothes dryer after each load, and inspect and clean the vent system regularly.
- Keep working fire extinguishers on every floor. Know how to use them.



WATCHTHEWIRES.COM