

# Why Trim Trees?

Trees are the #1 cause of outages!

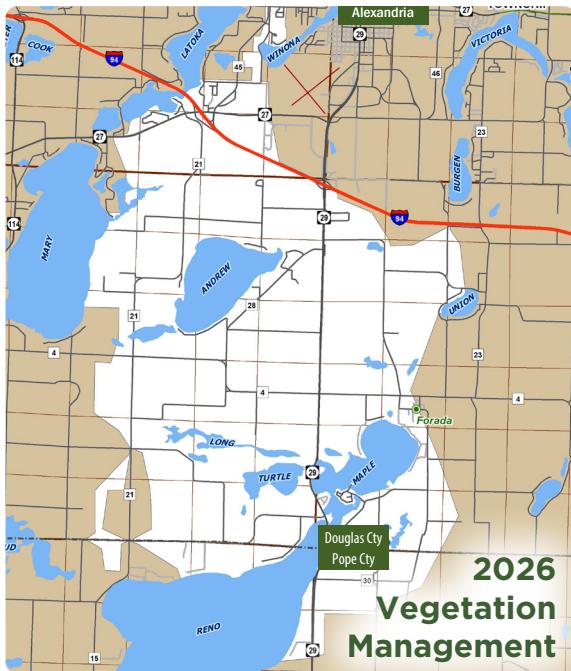


Photo courtesy of Carr's Tree Service

# NEWSLINE

June 2026

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## Vegetation Management Leads to Fewer Power Outages

Over the past five years, we have spent over \$3.3 million on tree clearing, and our declining outage hours are proof that the investment pays off. Our goal is to maintain a ten-year rotation of trimming, tree removal, mowing and spraying through out our service territory.

Our contractor, Carr's Tree Service, is working in areas served by the Holmes City Substation and then moving into areas served by the Lake Mary Substation (see map to the left). Carr's Tree Service is accredited by the Tree Care Industry Association and has certified arborists on staff.

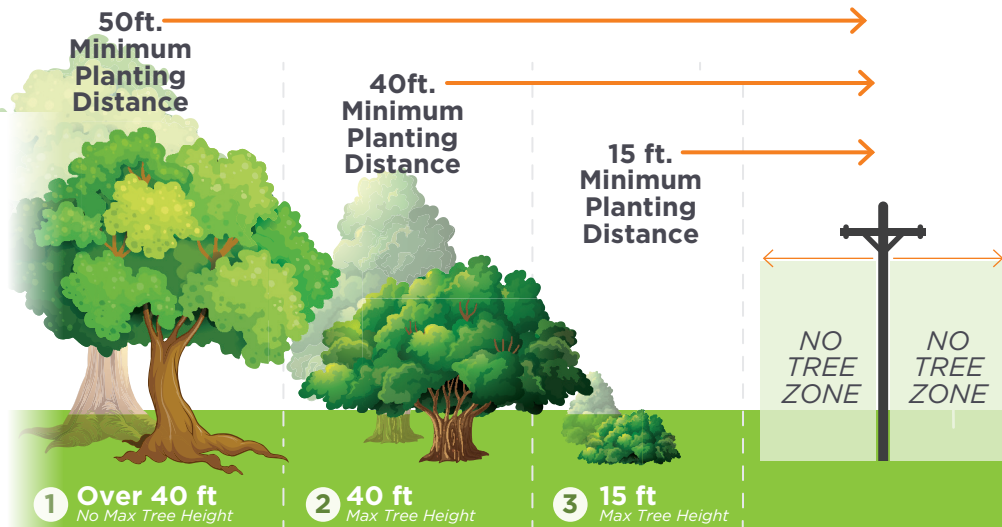
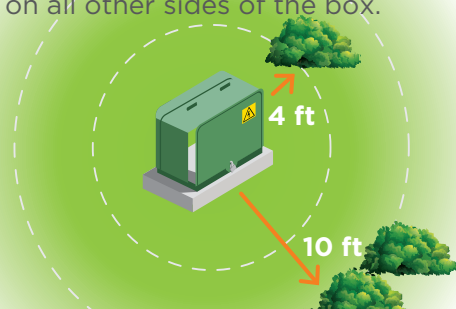
## Please Read Before Planting Trees

### Planting Guidelines

Landscaping is a great way to increase the value of your property and save energy, but trees and shrubs planted too close to power lines and other electrical equipment can create both safety and reliability concerns. These guidelines help ensure a safe and reliable service for all REA members.

### Pad Mount Transformers

Mature trees, shrubs, and plants need to maintain 10-feet of clearance in front of doors and 4 feet on all other sides of the box.



- 1 Over 40 ft No Max Tree Height
- 2 40 ft Max Tree Height
- 3 15 ft Max Tree Height

**Quick Tip!** Please do not landscape or install fences near REA's pad mount transformers, junction boxes or at the base of power poles. Our crews need plenty of space to access this equipment. Thank you!

- 1 **Trees over 40 feet**  
These trees must be planted at least 50 feet from the electrical wires and no closer that 35 feet from buildings to allow proper root development and minimize root damage to buildings
- 2 **Trees under 40 feet**  
These trees may be planted 40 feet from electrical wires, but no closer.
- 3 **Trees under 15 feet**  
These trees may be planted 15 feet from the electrical wires, but no closer.



**Al Haman**  
CEO

# A Note from the CEO

## Let's talk transformers and how they work

This newsletter, particularly this column, has been focused on heavy topics in recent months. I thought I'd write about some day-to-day things we deal with at the cooperative: maintaining and upgrading our delivery system to keep it in good operating condition.

We operate 19 distribution substations. Substations are where we take possession and control of the electricity we purchase from our wholesale power supplier, Great River Energy.

One of the most important pieces of equipment we have is called a transformer. A transformer converts voltage from a higher level, which is dangerous to run through our distribution system, to a lower, safer level. For us, the highest incoming voltage is 115,000 volts, which is converted to 12,500 volts.

The conversion takes place inside a large tank filled with oil, a steel core that looks like a doughnut, and copper wire wound around two legs of the doughnut, like spools of thread. When a high-level voltage is applied to one spool, electromagnetics in the steel core cause a lower-level voltage on the second spool. In this way, the

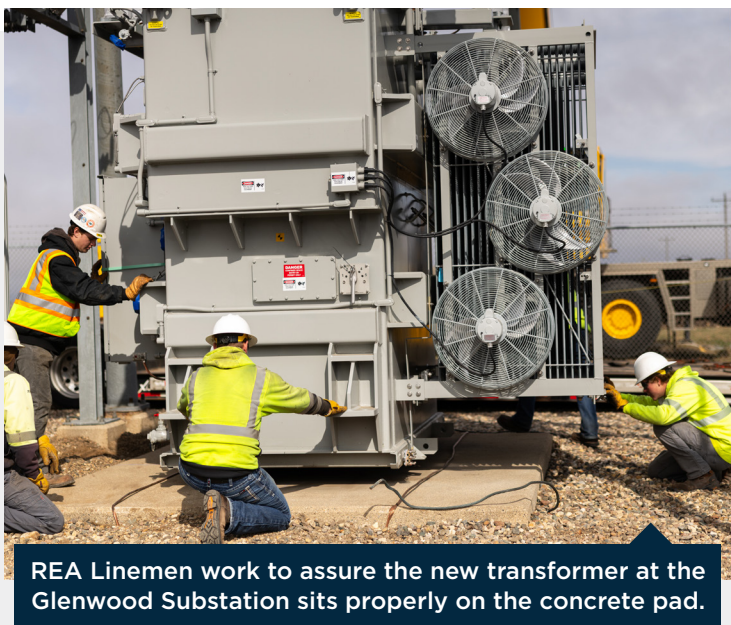
high voltage is reduced to a safe level for distribution on our lines.

The same process takes place at your home. The gray "tub" on a pole or the green "box" on the ground converts 12,500 volts of our distribution lines into the 120 and 240 volts that are used in your home.

All transformers are rated for a specific load based on the size of the wiring inside. The load to be served is matched to the transformer's rating. As load grows, we must anticipate when a larger rated transformer is to be scheduled to replace an in-service unit.

We recently went through this process at our Glenwood Substation, east of Glenwood. The substation transformer was serving a greater load than its rating, so we installed a new, larger unit this past April. This transformer is rated at 7,500,000 watts and costs \$600,000, roughly double what it would have cost in 2020. For comparison, the typical transformer serving your home is rated 25,000 watts and costs \$2,500. We recycle transformers that are at the end of their useful life.

I hope this provides you with some insight into the vital role transformers play in delivering safe and reliable electricity to you, our members.



**REA Linemen work to assure the new transformer at the Glenwood Substation sits properly on the concrete pad.**



**Transformers come in a variety of sizes, but they all play an important role in delivering electricity.**



## REA Board of Director Meeting Highlights - April 2026

- » Reviewed the March 2026 Financial Report noting kWh sales and net power cost are below budget, while the YTD margin remains under budget.
- » Approved new Member Advisory Council Members: Reilly McCormick, Miltona, for District 2; Joe Roers, Alexandria, for District 5; KC Brackett, Alexandria, and Larry Ahlbrecht, Nelson, for District 6.
- » President Anderson reported on the April Great River Energy (GRE) Board Meeting. He noted a \$6,099.37 donation from GRE has been received for REA's Operation Round Up program.
- » Selected Director Anderson as REA's representative on the Great River Energy Board of Directors.
- » Selected Director Staples as REA's representative on the STAR Energy Services Board of Governors.
- » Approved several Great River Energy resolutions in regards to the Power Purchase Contract and Transmission Service Contract.
- » Approved E-30 Minnesota Paid Leave Policy.
- » **The regular June Board Meeting will be Tuesday, June 30, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.**

# Include Home Energy Savings in Your Vacation Plans

Whether you're traveling for a long weekend or a month, these easy tips can give your electric bill a break when you take a break.

**Unplug before you go.** Turn off smart power strips and unplug appliances like computers, televisions, video game consoles, coffee makers, fans and devices. Remember, appliances not in use still consume energy if plugged into an outlet.

**Turn off ceiling fans.** While ceiling fans can help offset the cost and energy of air conditioning, they should be turned off when you're away.

**Turn off lights or set timers.** A timer lets you save energy when programming lights for a specific time of day. If your lights are on a security timer, remember to use LED bulbs, which use five times less energy.

**Close curtains and blinds.** This is a quick and easy way to maintain some coolness indoors and block the afternoon heat.

**Use a smart thermostat** to control your energy use from your smartphone, wherever you are. The best part? Coming home to a cool house without wasting energy or money for the duration of your trip.



**Stock the fridge!** You might think an emptier refrigerator is better, but maintaining a full unit of cold items (like water-filled bottles) will keep the other items cold. If you're gone for a month or more, you might want to consider unplugging the refrigerator and emptying it entirely.

*Source: Department of Energy*

## Is Your Electric Heat Still On?

REA recommends checking boiler and baseboard heating systems to ensure they are turned off. This easy step can prevent a battle between your cooling and heating system, especially in basements.

**Save money and energy this summer by turning off the heat!**

## Dehumidifier Basics

Using a dehumidifier to suck moisture out of the air can cost more than \$100 a year on electric bills. Consider replacing a standard dehumidifier with an energy efficient Energy Star® model. Replace your old dehumidifier with an Energy Star unit and receive a \$25 rebate from REA.

Contact REA at 800-473-1722 for a rebate form or visit [www.RunestoneElectric.com](http://www.RunestoneElectric.com).



# Be Prepared for Power Outages

## BE INFORMED



- » Call us at 800-473-1722 for 24-hour service.
- » Never assume we know you are without power.
- » Be sure to have a corded phone or a charged cell phone in the house, because cordless phones won't work when the power is out.

## BE PREPARED



- » Our automated phone reporting system uses the phone number(s) associated with your account(s) during an outage. Update your number(s) by calling us at 800-473-1722, emailing [rea@runestoneelectric.com](mailto:rea@runestoneelectric.com), or through your SmartHub account under contact information. Please do this before an outage occurs.
- » Prepare an emergency kit that includes non-perishable food items, bottled water, first aid kit, battery-powered weather radio and extra batteries.

## BE SAFE



- » Always stay away from downed power lines and/or trees and branches that are caught in a power line. A downed power line may still be energized.

## BE PATIENT



- » We understand that power outages are an inconvenience to our members. Our number one goal is keeping the lights on, and to restore your power as safely and efficiently as possible.
- » We appreciate your patience!

# Avoiding Electric Shock in Real Life

*This story first ran in July 2021. We thought the information was so important that we needed to share it again!*

“We had a scary situation at our family cabin in Northern Minnesota earlier this summer. We have a little shack down by the lake that has power, and so my uncle had plugged in his on board battery charger. The following morning, another uncle noticed dead fish floating in the water around the dock. Something was wrong, so we unplugged the battery charger.

After investigating, we found that the old shack only had a two-prong outlet with no ground. We also discovered a problem with the wiring on the battery charger. The neutral conductor was making contact with the charger case and the case was in contact with the aluminum hull. Without a grounded conductor or GFCI to clear the fault in the outlet, the boat hull, other connected metal and the water surrounding the boat were energized.

Luckily the charger was plugged in after everyone had come out of the water for the day. It could have been a disaster if the charger had been plugged in while my family and our dogs were in the lake. Thankfully we noticed the dead fish early in the morning before anyone had entered the water.

We wired a GFCI outlet in the shack to fix the situation, and my uncle replaced his battery charger. We feel pretty fortunate that nothing bad happened with this dangerous situation.”

- REA Lineman Ross King



## GFCI Outlets by the lake

The National Electrical Code requires GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) protection for any outdoor outlets. It's recommended to follow manufacturer guidelines for testing.

For more information, visit [esfi.org](http://esfi.org).

## NEWSLINE

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Ally Koudela, Communications Specialist

### In Case of a Power Outage

- » Please call 800-473-1722 for 24-hour service. Please report any tree branches in lines, twisted wires, broken poles and if your neighbors are also out of power.
- » Be sure to have a corded phone or a charged cell phone in the house, because cordless phones won't work when the power is out.
- » Program the number above into your cell phone for easy access.
- » Never assume we know you are without power. Always call to report an outage.

*REA will use reasonable diligence to furnish adequate and dependable electric service, but it cannot and does not guaranty continuous and uninterrupted service*

**This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer**

**Sign up to get text messages from REA on control days!**

Simply text #loadcontrol to 22300  
Msg and data rates apply

## GFCIs



Your **Protection** from Electrocutation



Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters have saved thousands of lives since their introduction to the National Electrical Code in the 1970s. Make sure your home is properly protected against ground faults with the correct installation of GFCIs.

# 50%

The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that **50% of home electrocutions** have been **prevented** by the introduction of GFCIs.

GFCI Protection is required for outlets installed in:

<b>Bathrooms</b> 	<b>Garages</b> 	<b>Outdoors</b> 	<b>Balconies, Decks, and Porches</b> 
<b>Kitchen Countertops</b> 	<b>Within 6 ft of a Sink</b> 	<b>Laundry Areas</b> 	<b>Within 6 ft of a Bathtub or Shower</b> 



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**Call before you dig.**



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