

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Preserving Our Past

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR ELECTRIC BILL



Matt Hotzler
Manager

August is often one of the hottest months of the year, and when temperatures rise, air conditioners across our region work harder to keep homes comfortable. As a result, many members see higher electric bills and naturally wonder what drives those changes. As your cooperative's leadership team, we believe that understanding your bill is an important part of being an informed member and an engaged owner of your electric utility.

While the total on your bill may appear as a single number, it reflects several components that work together to deliver safe, reliable electricity to your home or business.

One of the largest factors is simply how much energy you use. Electricity is measured in kilowatt hours (kWh), and during the summer, air conditioning is often the biggest contributor to increased usage. When temperatures climb into the 90s or higher, cooling systems run longer and more frequently, consuming more electricity than they do during milder weather. The same concept applies in winter when extremely cold temperatures cause heating systems to run more often.

Another key factor is the cost of generating or purchasing electricity. H D Electric purchases power from East River Electric Power Cooperative, which sources energy from Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA). The cost of producing electricity fluctuates based on fuel prices – such as natural gas and coal – as well as broader market conditions. When wholesale power costs rise, those changes eventually affect the price of electricity delivered to members.

Transmission costs also play a role. In our region, the Southwest Power Pool operates the high voltage transmission lines that move electricity long distances before it reaches our local system. These lines require ongoing maintenance and upgrades to ensure reliability, and as demand for electricity grows, so does the need to invest in this infrastructure.

Closer to home, H D Electric maintains the local distribution system – utility poles, power lines,

transformers, substations, and other equipment that ensures electricity is delivered safely and consistently. These essential operational costs are covered through the monthly basic charge; a flat fee all members pay regardless of how much electricity they use. This structure ensures fairness: whether a member uses a little electricity or a lot, the cooperative must maintain the same level of readiness, staffing, and equipment to serve every home and business around the clock.

Extreme temperatures – both winter and summer – can also influence costs in less visible ways. When electricity demand spikes across a region, wholesale prices can increase. Utilities and grid operators must ensure enough generation is available to meet peak demand, and those costs ripple throughout the electric system.

The good news is that small, practical steps can help reduce energy use and lower your bill. Setting your thermostat a few degrees higher in the summer or cooler in the winter when you're away, replacing dirty HVAC filters, using ceiling fans, sealing air leaks, and avoiding major appliance use during the hottest parts of the day can all make a meaningful difference. These actions also help reduce strain on the grid during peak demand.

At H D Electric, our responsibility goes beyond keeping the lights on. We are committed to making thoughtful, long term decisions that balance affordability, reliability, and the evolving energy landscape. As your cooperative, we believe in transparency, smart investments, and open communication about the factors that influence energy costs. Every dollar matters, and we take seriously our role as stewards of the system that powers your homes, farms, and businesses.

Affordability and safety remain two of our highest priorities, and both align directly with our mission statement: "Committed to Safely Enhance the Quality of Life for our Members, Employees and Communities." With more outdoor activity in the summer months, we encourage you to contact our office if you notice any H D Electric equipment that appears damaged or out of place. Your call helps us respond quickly and keep our system safe for everyone.

And always, thank you for allowing H D Electric Cooperative to serve you.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

H-D ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-905)

General Manager: Matt Hotzler

Headquarters Employees:

Annie Aberle – Finance and

Administration Manager

Michelle Prins – Billing Representative/
MDM Analyst

Heidi Brewer-Grimlie – Accounting Clerk

Jami Bolden – Member Service Representative

Roger Cutshaw – Engineer

Brandon Lee – Facility/Material Specialist

Operations:

Troy Kwasniewski – Operations Manager

Todd Sprang – Line Foreman

Line Crew:

Pat Kirby – Operations Support

Kevin Holida – Lead Lineworker

Joe Raml – Lead Lineworker

Derek Bille – Lineworker

Eric Page – Lineworker

Joseph Jordan Jr. – Lineworker

Jonah Paintner – Apprentice Lineworker

Matt Miller – Lead Equipment Operator/
Mechanic

Brady Mellendorf – Equipment Operator/
Mechanic

Member Services:

Tom Lundberg – Member Services
Manager

Noah Reichling – Electrician Foreman

Jim Thompson – Lead Electrician

Matthew Hoiland – Journeyman Electrician

Darren Matthies – Meter/Load

Management Technician

Board of Directors:

President Bert Rogness – Astoria

Vice President Terry Strohfus – Hazel

Treasurer Steven Hansen – Clear Lake

Secretary Todd Moritz – Castlewood

Sherwin Dekam – Castlewood

Dale Williams – Estelline

Casper Niemann – Lake Norden

Kevin DeBoer – Clear Lake

Calvin Musch – Revillo

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Design assistance by SDREA.

POLE TESTING

Annually, typically in July or August, we have an outside contractor come to test power poles on our system. They check to make sure the poles are solid inside and out. It's that time again, so if you see a group digging around our poles, you can call the office to verify they are in the area or ask them. We provide them a documentation letter from us explaining what they are doing to show anyone with questions. They will test around 1,500 poles this year throughout the season. In addition, H-D Electric personnel test meter poles throughout the year to verify poles are structurally sound.

CAPITAL CREDITS WHAT ARE CAPITAL CREDITS?

Capital credits are one of the many benefits of cooperative membership and represents each member's share of the H-D Electric's margins and ownership. Since H-D Electric is a not-for-profit cooperative, it does not earn profits in the sense that other businesses do. Instead, any margins, or revenue remaining

after all the expenses have been paid, are allocated to the members in proportion to their electricity purchases. These margins represent an interest-free loan of operating capital by the membership to the cooperative. From these margins the cooperative builds equity with the intention of repaying the member's investment, which is done through the retirement of capital credits.



Operating Statistics

	May 2025	May 2026
Customers	3,887	3,937
Amount Collected.....	\$1,224,071	\$1,404,473
Average Bill	\$314.91	\$356.74
Average Kilowatt-Hour	2,680	2,841
Kilowatt-Hours Purchased.....	11,044,612	11,786,723
Kilowatt-Hours Sold	10,417,462	11,185,453



As unmanned aerial systems (UAS) increasingly populate recreational and professional skies, safety remains paramount – especially near critical infrastructure such as overhead power lines. Today we reaffirm that drones should be flown in open spaces away from electrical lines and substations to prevent power outages and dangerous debris that can threaten public safety.

A drone colliding with a power line can cause outages and, if lines are downed, create serious electrical hazards for anyone nearby. Touching downed lines or debris that has fallen on fences, trees or other objects can result in severe injury or death. If you encounter downed power lines, immediately call 911 and notify emergency personnel and the utility company.

To ensure safe and compliant drone operations, follow federal registration and business-approval requirements, and stay informed about local, state and community regulations. FAA safety guidelines remain essential: Inspect your drone for damage before each flight and repair any issues prior to use. Fly at or below 400 feet unless FAA authorization or an allowed exception applies. Maintain visual line of sight; do not fly beyond it. Avoid airports, manned aircraft, stadiums and crowds of people. Do not fly for unapproved commercial purposes without FAA authorization. Refrain from flying in bad weather, including low visibility or high winds. Never fly recklessly or endanger others; violations can result in fines and penalties.

It is encouraged that drone operators plan routes

that maximize safety and minimize proximity to power infrastructure. Responsible pilots, adherence to FAA guidelines and awareness of local rules can prevent outages, injuries and potentially tragic consequences. For more information on legal requirements and best practices, consult FAA resources and your local utility providers.

Together, we can enjoy the benefits of drone technology while safeguarding our communities and critical electrical infrastructure.

As drone use expands, operators should build safety into every mission from the outset. Calibration, pre-flight checklists, and robust maintenance programs help catch issues before takeoff. Operators are encouraged to use situational awareness tools, such as real-time weather updates and wind assessments, to adjust flight plans accordingly. Community education events and outreach can foster a responsible culture among hobbyists and professionals alike, reinforcing the shared responsibility to protect power networks and nearby residents. By prioritizing safety, we preserve access to this transformative technology for all.



"Call 811 before you dig – always."

Laina Nelson, age 10

Laina reminds members to always call 811 before digging. Thank you for sharing your picture, Laina! Laina's parents are Nathan and Kristen Nelson – members of H-D Electric.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.



Family FAVORITES

PARTY IN A PAN

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside. Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted. Makes 9x13 inch pan.

Kathy Zomer
Douglas Electric

WALLEYE WITH HORSERADISH SAUCE

Ingredients:

2 lbs. walleye fillets
1 cup Lawry's Herb & Garlic marinade
1 tsp. Lawry's Season Salt
1 tsp. lemon pepper
1/4 cup butter
2 tbsp. horseradish
2 tsp. dill

Method

Marinate fish in herb & garlic marinade for 30 minutes. Drain. Sprinkle with season salt and lemon pepper. Bake fish until it flakes. Melt butter in saucepan. Remove from heat and add horseradish. Spoon onto fillet after cooked. Sprinkle on dill and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

BBQ MEATBALLS

Ingredients:

Meatballs

3# ground beef
1 can (12 oz.) evaporated milk
1 cup oatmeal
1 cup cracker crumbs
2 eggs
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. chili powder

Sauce

2 cups ketchup
1 cup brown sugar
1/2 tsp. liquid smoke, or to taste
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/4 cup finely chopped onion

Method

Mix all meatball ingredients together and shape into meatballs. Place meatballs in a baking dish.

Mix all sauce ingredients together and pour over meatballs. Cover and bake at 350°F for one hour. The meatballs can be made ahead of time and frozen for several weeks. This makes a large batch, so it can be divided into smaller batches and frozen.

Karen Soulek
Charles Mix Electric

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

EFFICIENCY MATTERS FOR COMFORT



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Everybody wants a comfortable home. Did you know energy efficiency upgrades not only help you save energy, but can make your home more comfortable, too? If you find yourself continually returning to the thermostat on cold winter days or unable to find relief from heat on summer days, these are signs your home needs an efficiency upgrade.

No matter the home, energy efficiency upgrades often start with the same basic principle: Keep outside air from coming inside and keep conditioned inside air from leaking out. Insulation, air sealing, duct sealing and heating, ventilation and air conditioning upgrades can dramatically improve the comfort of your home.

A fully insulated home, including attic, walls and floor, is more comfortable. It's like a blanket for your home. Air sealing is a lesser-known efficiency upgrade that keeps air from entering and exiting the home through cracks and gaps. Some air sealing can be done from inside the home, such as using expanding foam around plumbing pipes and drains under sinks, adding gaskets to outlets on exterior walls, caulking around windows or weatherstripping around doors.

Attics and crawl spaces offer additional opportunities to reduce air leakage and increase comfort. In the attic, sealing gaps around top plates, open soffit areas, cove ceilings and balloon framing can help keep conditioned air where it belongs. In the basement or crawl space, seal around plumbing pipes and drains, vents and electrical wires. If you need help, contact a local contractor.

As a self-proclaimed energy geek, you probably aren't surprised that my first move when my husband and I bought our first home years ago was to air seal and insulate. We sealed and insulated the attic, walls and rim joists in

the basement. The difference in comfort was instant. Our house felt cozier and much more comfortable. The temperature swings from the furnace cycling on and off were dramatically reduced. The home felt warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.

Another benefit from insulation was a surprising reduction in noise from outside. We lived about 15 minutes away from the airport and close to a busy road. When the windows and doors were closed, we could no longer hear the airplanes, and the traffic noise was almost unnoticeable.

Duct sealing can also improve the comfort of your home. Your ductwork delivers heated or cooled air in a forced-air HVAC system. If there are disconnections or leaks in the ducts, the air you paid to heat or cool may not end up where you want it. Disconnects and leaks can cause hot or cold spots in the home. An HVAC professional can inspect or test your ducts to make sure they are connected and sealed properly.

Air sealing and duct sealing can also improve the air quality in your home. Air leakage between the conditioned area of the home and the attic or crawl space can introduce dust, pollen, mold or other allergens you don't want to breathe. Reducing air leakage can reduce the chance of these things circulating throughout your home.

Upgrading to a heat pump can also boost comfort and efficiency. Heat pump technology is often about three times as efficient as electric resistance heat because it uses refrigerant to move heat instead of creating it. If you're upgrading from electric or gas heat, a heat pump can efficiently heat and cool your home, making it comfortable year-round.

If you already have a heat pump or any forced-air HVAC system, annual maintenance and regularly changing your filter maximize system operation and comfort.

Consider improving your home's comfort by completing these energy efficiency upgrades. Your family – and energy bills – will thank you.

WHO POWERS YOU?

For Dean Kueter, Community Service and Cooperative Values Run in the Family

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When something needs to be done in a small town, it often starts with someone willing to take the lead.

In Montrose, Dean Kueter has often been that person. Through years of involvement in local organizations, veterans' projects, school efforts and community work, Kueter has built a reputation as someone willing to step up.

That work did not go unnoticed. Tara Miller, manager of communications at Central Electric Cooperative and a former Montrose Area Foundation board member, saw Kueter's impact and nominated him for the fifth annual regional Who Powers You? contest.

Hosted by the region's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, the contest recognizes local people and organizations making a difference in their communities. Kueter, a Southeastern Electric Cooperative member, was selected as Southeastern Electric's finalist.

"You do those things because you see there's a need and you want to make a difference in your community," Kueter said. "It was meaningful to be recognized for that."

In her nomination, Miller highlighted Kueter's work with the Montrose Area Foundation, his leadership with the local American Legion Post, his 20 years with the Montrose Fire Department and his passion for education and accessibility.

Kueter grew up outside nearby Humboldt and later served as superintendent for the Montrose School District before joining the Cornbelt Educational Cooperative. He is entering his 14th year with the education

cooperative, which serves nine school districts by providing special education and related services, including speech therapy.

"It's really a high-need area," Kueter said. Demand for specialized services continues to grow, while schools struggle to find qualified people for those roles.

Much of Kueter's volunteer work has centered on places and organizations that bring people together. He currently serves as commander of the local American Legion Post, which he said is more than a veterans organization in Montrose. It serves as a gathering place for the community, hosting dances, birthday parties, anniversaries, graduations and other events.

"It truly is a community hub and community center for everyone," Kueter said.

The post is improving the Veterans Memorial on Main Street through fundraising, new statues and landscaping. The Montrose Area Foundation has also supported local causes ranging from the fire department to school projects, youth programs and the swimming pool.

"People are oftentimes more than willing to help," he said. "They just need to be asked, and they want their time to be valued. So, if you call on them to come help with something, you need to make sure you have a job for them to do."

For Kueter, the cooperative connection extends beyond his own contest recognition. His family has also been honored through Southeastern Electric Cooperative's Touchstone Energy programs.

Both of Kueter's children, Kellen and Hallie, have been active in their school, church and community, taking on leadership roles through FFA, student



Dean Kueter, a Southeastern Electric Cooperative member and Montrose-area community leader, was selected as a finalist in the regional Who Powers You? contest.

council and the National Honor Society while also volunteering with local organizations.

Kellen was named a Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week, received a 2024 Southeastern Electric scholarship and was later selected as Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year. Hallie was also named a Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week.

"Obviously, it's a proud parent moment," Kueter said. "Anytime your kid gets any type of recognition, it makes you feel good as a parent."

Kueter said he knows many people connected to Southeastern Electric, including lineworkers and family members who work in the electric cooperative world. As a member-owner, he said the cooperative connection is part of the broader network of relationships that tie rural communities together.

"I'm surrounded by great people who work hard to improve our community," Kueter said. "It takes a lot of people working together to have successful projects. I am just glad to be a part of the team doing this positive work in our community."



SOUTH DAKOTA
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A PAST FIT FOR THE FUTURE

A new lobby welcomes visitors to the Cultural Heritage Center.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

Cultural Center & State Museum Reopens After Extensive Renovation

Jacob Boyko

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After more than two years spent closed for renovation, South Dakota's state museum and cultural center is back up and running to share the story of South Dakota and its people with visitors from across the state and beyond.

The iconic museum built into the Pierre hillside held its grand reopening July 1 in time for the nation's 250th birthday, showing off new exhibits, a gift shop and an expansion that includes a larger meeting room and more space for its archives.

For Museum Director David Grabitske, the reopening marks a new chapter for the South Dakota State Historical Society, which oversees both the museum and state archives housed there. But it also honors the first laws set forth by the Dakota Territory's first territorial legislature, outlining specific steps and functions for historical preservation for untold future generations of its citizens.

According to Grabitske, many of the

first Dakotan settlers were determined to preserve the history they were making day by day as settlers on the vast American frontier.

"The first three acts [by the territorial legislature] were all about transferring property at the end of life – it's all about inheritance," Grabitske explained. "The fourth act of the territory created the historical society. In my mind, the fourth act goes along with those first three acts; it's about how we give things to the future."

Establishing a historical society demonstrated confidence that there would be a future for the Dakota Territory – complete with a permanent population that would live, grow and prosper there.

"We have a mantra around here," Grabitske said. "We collect today for tomorrow's history."

What that sentiment has amounted to is a sprawling collection of more than 17,000 cubic feet of paper, 50 terabytes of data on its servers, and more than 35,000 individual objects.

"The very first collections that arrived were in 1863, and we still have those in our library," Grabitske said. "They were

library books – 514 of them in 11 boxes."

In the process of collecting and disseminating information, historical societies at the time would collect and make copies of books to trade with other historical societies to expand their collections and diffuse knowledge across a wider area and reduce the risk of losing records to fire.

You'll find those 160 years' worth of books, deeds, contracts and reports



On the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Little Bighorn, Curator of Collections Katy L. Schmidt holds a can found on the battlefield.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

throughout the high-ceilinged, climate-controlled archive wing of the building – but you'll also find objects that aren't necessarily old or inherently valuable.

"The reason we add something into our collection is because it's historic, and what we mean by historic is it has significance and integrity," Grabitske explained. "Something being 'old' just fixes it in time. What makes something historic is that it is significant – it tells the story of people in South Dakota, and it has integrity, which means a certain completeness to tell that story."

To illustrate the point, Grabitske described a recent addition to the museum's collection – a painted tire with the words "no hunting."

"You see these things going down the road [in South Dakota], and we realized we were missing [one for the museum]," he explained. "We found one near Timber Lake which had a story. The lady who gave it to us (family of Dorothy Dopp, courtesy of the Timber Lake & Area Museum) had put it up in 1967 and she had faithfully painted it over the years and knew the dates she had painted it. We don't need 400 of these tires – we need one to represent the whole state."

Visitors to the museum this summer can experience the first three rooms of the updated exhibits. These sections house a welcome area, 'What is History?' exhibit and a gallery. The remaining sections are slated for completion in December 2026 and will feature exhibits on South Dakota's environment, people, politics, conflicts and more.

For more information on the Cultural Heritage Center and the South Dakota State Historical Society, visit history.sd.gov.



An exhibit showcasing the famous people of South Dakota.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



This plaster doll (left) was gifted to South Dakota by Japan in 1927 to commemorate the United States' 150th birthday. Fifty years later, for the nation's 200th birthday, Japan gifted South Dakota another doll (right).
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Museum Director and South Dakota State Historical Society Assistant Director David Grabitske walks through the extensive art archive, revealing a painting of an electrical lineman working through a winter storm.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

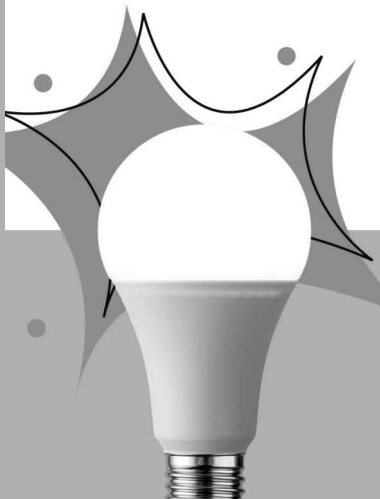


Grabitske demonstrates the new movable shelves installed over tracks within the floor. This upgrade will maximize the available archival space.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

August heat can put your air conditioner to the test, making it a great time to check your system's air filter. A dirty, clogged filter restricts airflow, forcing your cooling system to work harder than necessary to keep your home comfortable. That extra strain can reduce efficiency, increase energy use and contribute to unnecessary wear and tear on equipment. Inspect your filter monthly during periods of heavy air conditioner use and replace it if it appears dirty. A clean filter supports efficient operation and can even enhance indoor air quality—helping you stay cool and comfortable during the hottest days of summer.



H-D ELECTRIC'S NEWEST EMPLOYEES

Please Help Us Welcome Matthew Hoiland and Darren Matthies to the Member Service Department!

Matthew started working as a Journeyman Electrician in June 2026. He has been married to Nikia for five years and has one boy, Baker, and one girl, Bennett. He attended Mitchell Technical College for Power Line Construction and Maintenance, and an Electrician. His hometown is Baltic, S.D., but currently lives in the Watertown, S.D., area where he likes to hunt, fish, enjoy power sports and spending time with his family.



Darren is no stranger to H-D Electric. As he started working here in 2014 in the Building and Maintenance Department. He has recently accepted a new role as Load Management/Meter Tech in May. Darren lives by Gary, S.D., with his wife, Mary, and son, RJ. He is very active in his church and enjoys officiating swim meets – a sport his son competes also in.



KEEP US UP TO DATE

On Your Contact Information

If any of your contact information has changed, please contact H-D Electric Coop to update your account.



Contact us by phone 605-874-2171 or by email info@h-delectric.coop



As school buses hit the road, remember: the most dangerous time for kids is when they're getting on or off the bus.

Stop for red lights.
Watch for kids.
Stay 10 feet back.

Let's work together to keep every child safe this school year.
#BackToSchool #DriveSmart



Thirty-three teens representing 19 South Dakota electric cooperatives traveled to the Washington, D.C., area June 14-20 for the 2026 South Dakota Youth Tour.

The program traces its roots to a 1957 speech by Lyndon B. Johnson, who urged electric cooperatives to send young people to the nation's capital so they "can actually see what the flag stands for and represents." Since South Dakota sent its first group in 1963, more than 1,350 students have represented the Rushmore State on the trip. This year's delegation joined Youth Tour students from 44 other states.

The 2026 group visited many of Washington, D.C.'s most historic and impactful sites, including Arlington National Cemetery, where rows of white headstones tell the story of generations who served and sacrificed for the country. The group continued exploring

themes of patriotism and national history throughout the week, viewing the Declaration of Independence at the National Archives and touring the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, where much of the nation's paper currency is produced.

Students also met with South Dakota's congressional leaders at the U.S. Capitol, including U.S. Sens. John Thune and



Mike Rounds. Together, the group toured many of the nation's most treasured landmarks, including the U.S. Supreme Court and several presidential and war memorials.

At the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center, students concluded their trip with NRECA-led events, where they heard from Youth Day keynote speaker Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic medalist in U.S. men's wheelchair basketball, who shared a message about perseverance and leadership.

"My NRECA Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., was an unforgettable experience that gave me the opportunity to learn about our nation's history and government while creating lifelong memories with an amazing group of people. Throughout the week, we toured the U.S. Capitol, where I learned how our government works, visited the Library of Congress and the Supreme Court, explored the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, and paid our respects at the Pentagon Memorial. We also visited Ford's Theatre, where President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Mount Vernon, Arlington National Cemetery, and the National Museum of the U.S. Army. Each stop taught me something new and gave me a greater appreciation for the sacrifices and leadership that have shaped our country. While I enjoyed every landmark and museum we visited, my favorite part of the trip was the friendships I made along the way. From laughing on the bus rides to spending time together after our tours, everyone quickly became like family. One of my favorite memories was going to the National Harbor with my friends, where we walked around, took pictures, talked, and enjoyed being together. Those simple moments ended up meaning the most because they created memories that will last a lifetime. This trip was so much more than just sightseeing, it gave me new friendships, unforgettable experiences, and a deeper appreciation for my country. I will always be grateful to NRECA for giving me the opportunity to represent my community, learn about our nation's history, and make memories with incredible people that I will never forget."

Amelia Giese

CO-OP SUMMER OUTREACH

Join Us at S.D. State Fair, Dakotafest, Minn. Farmfest

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Attention all co-op members! If you're heading to the South Dakota State Fair, Dakotafest or Farmfest this summer, stop by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booths for some great family fun and a chance to win a prize!

Make sure you fill out your coupon on the back of this magazine and bring it with you to the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair or Dakotafest for your chance to win one of two electric grills sponsored by Karl's TV & Appliance.

South Dakota State Fair – Sept. 3, 2026

South Dakota's electric cooperatives will host the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron, Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026.

This one-day event will feature a slew of energy-themed activities, from bucket truck rides lifting you more than 50 feet above the state fairgrounds to an interactive pole climbing demonstration complete with real spiked boots and climbing gear that linemen use every day on the job. We've also partnered up with South Dakota One Call to remind you to always call 811 before you start digging – but your kids are welcome to use our mini excavator in our sandbox to uncover buried treasure!

While you're here, check out our on-site displays for select highly efficient, all-electric heat pumps and mini-splits, water heaters, yard tools and more!

Find our booth near the Horticulture Building.

Dakotafest – Aug. 18-20, 2026

You'll want to stop by the South Dakota Touchstone Energy Cooperatives building at Dakotafest in Mitchell, Aug. 18-20!

Join us for fresh-off-the-grill brats, oven-baked cookies and freezie pops as you learn about the latest in home energy savings and efficiency. We'll have other cool stuff for you to check out, including an automatic lawn mower, a solar panel display and an EGO Power+ Portable Power Station.

Minnesota Farmfest – Aug. 4-6, 2026

Minnesota members, come visit your electric cooperative at Minnesota Farmfest near Redwood Falls, Aug. 4-6, 2026. Members may enter a raffle drawing for one of five battery-operated yard tools. We'll even have the high-voltage trailer on site for a live demonstration to remind visitors to be safe around overhead and buried power lines.



Kids perfected their utility pole climbing skills at the South Dakota State Fair.

Photo by Jacob Boyko



Touchstone Energy Cooperatives host a booth at Dakotafest in 2025.

Submitted Photo



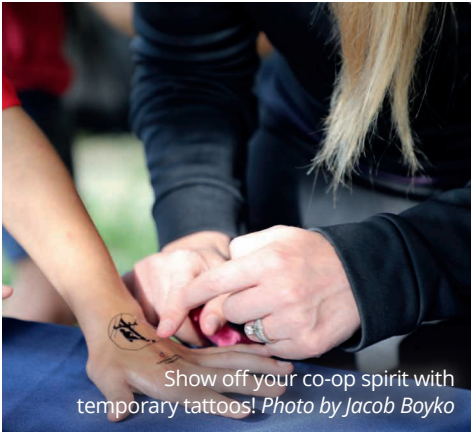
Charles Mix Electric Lineman Joe Michael shows off the bucket truck at the State Fair.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Fairgoers get a lineman's view of the State Fair! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A future lineman readies for his climb.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



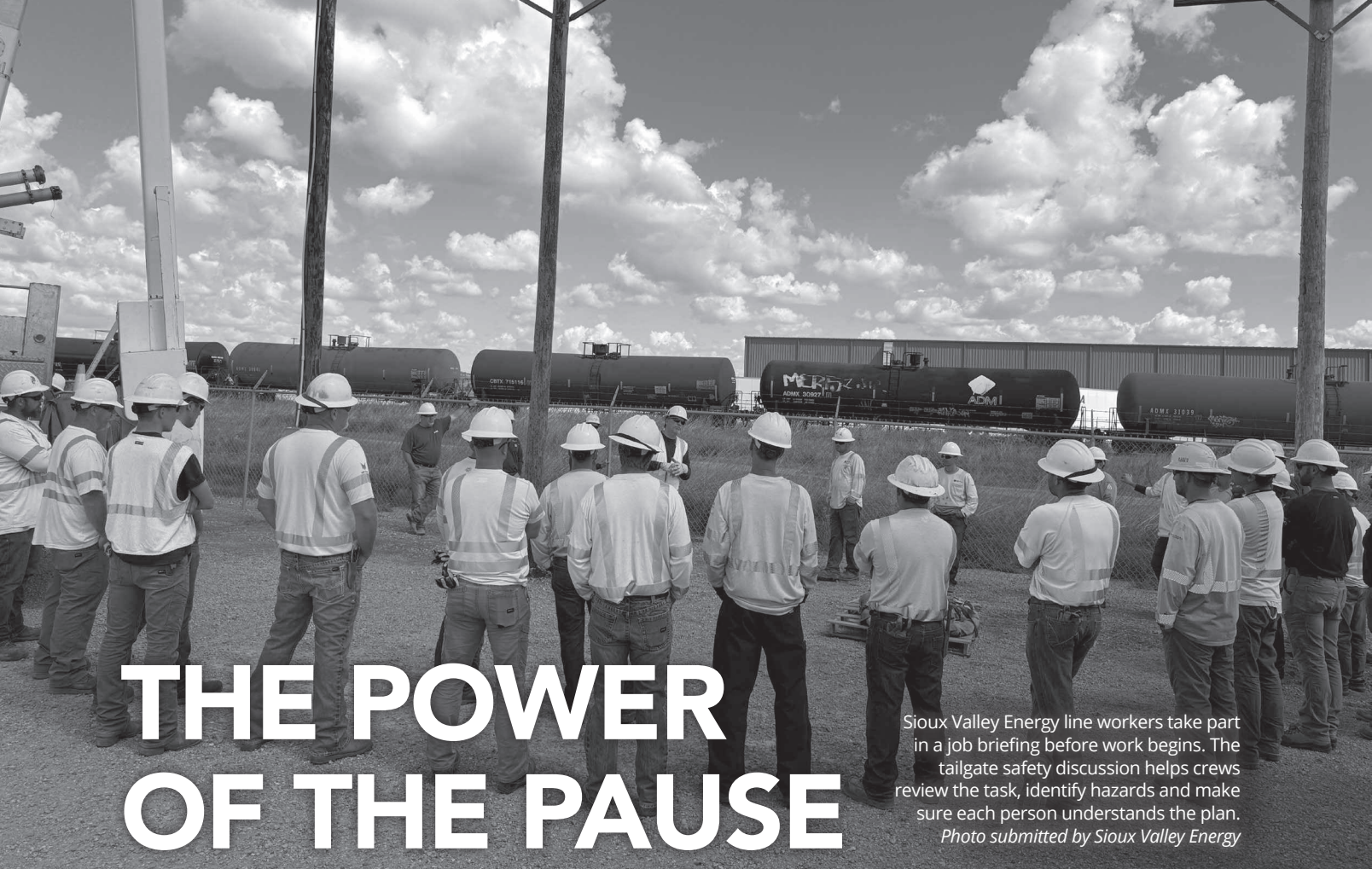
Show off your co-op spirit with temporary tattoos! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A line forms for bucket truck rides.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Booth visitors can win prizes by playing Plinko.
Submitted Photo



THE POWER OF THE PAUSE

Sioux Valley Energy line workers take part in a job briefing before work begins. The tailgate safety discussion helps crews review the task, identify hazards and make sure each person understands the plan.
Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy

How Job Briefings Help Co-ops Think Through Safety

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Before an electric cooperative line crew begins work, the job starts with a pause.

The pause may only take a few minutes, but for crews working around energized equipment, changing weather and other hazards, those few minutes matter.

Before the first step of the job, line crews gather for a tailgate safety session – a documented pre-job briefing where they identify the task, hazards, protective equipment and plan.

For Travis Denison, manager of safety at Sioux Valley Energy, that conversation is one of the most important tools crews have to fight complacency.

“It forces our professionals to stop and go through the steps of the job they’re going to do and identify the hazards with each of

those steps,” Denison said.

Despite the casual name, a tailgate safety session is not a public demonstration or a quick conversation at the back of a pickup. It is a documented briefing used by crews before work begins. The goal is to slow down and communicate, making sure that everyone is focused on the work in front of them.

“These are jobs that our crews do every day, but all of a sudden something in the environment can change. There can be hazards that the crew didn’t talk about or recognize, and somebody can get hurt,” Denison said. “That job briefing or tailgate session is made to stop the crews, make them aware of their surroundings, talk about the job and each of the hazards, and discuss how they’re going to protect themselves.”

Denison’s focus on safety also runs in the

family. His brother, Joe Denison, is a loss control professional with SDREA – the same role Travis previously held before joining Sioux Valley Energy. Both came to safety work after years around line crews and firsthand experience with the risks of electric utility work.

“We were both linemen,” Travis said. “The more experienced you get as a lineman, the more you recognize the mistakes you made as an apprentice. You see the shortcuts that maybe you made yourself or that you see other linemen make.”

So how does a tailgate safety session actually work? The details change with the job, but the idea is the same: slow the job down before it starts.

For instance, if a crew is conducting a pole top rescue training, the briefing begins before anyone climbs. The crew identifies the emergency location, the people involved and who is leading the job and the protective equipment required.

Then they talk through the work itself. If the crew is practicing a mock mayday call or using a rescue manikin, they also talk through what could go wrong during the training. Someone could strain a muscle. A climber could make blunt contact with a pole or hardware. A falling object could injure someone below. Even a knife or hook could create its own hazard if people are not paying attention.

"We list the job, the steps of the job, the personal protective equipment we'll use and the energy sources," Travis said. "We talk about anything to do with the job before we start, so everybody's on the same page."

For Denison, the value of a job briefing is not limited to line crews. Members do not need a formal briefing form before starting work at home or on the farm, but they can use the same pattern to stay safe – name the job, look at the location, identify the equipment involved and talk through what could go wrong.

At home, that might mean looking up before raising a ladder, checking for power lines before trimming trees or calling 811

before digging a post hole, planting trees, building a deck or installing a sign.

That message is especially important on the farm, when large equipment may operate near overhead power lines.

"Be aware of the power lines," he said. "Have that talk. Communicate. Make the people you are working with aware of the potential dangers around them."

Sioux Valley Energy has also worked to carry that message to members through radio ads, videos and public outreach. The cooperative has shared reminders about overhead power lines, green boxes, construction work and the importance of locating underground utilities before digging. At times, Sioux Valley Energy has also partnered with Southeastern Electric Cooperative on public safety messaging.

Denison said the goal is similar to a crew's tailgate session: get people thinking before something goes wrong.

"Think about what you're doing," Denison said.

SDREA - Job Briefing			
Aerial Unit Testing			
Cooperative: <u>Thompson Center Coop</u>	Date of the Testing: <u>6-30-26</u>	Cooperative System Location: <u>L24C72</u>	
Emergency Location: <u>Substation #440</u>	Temperature: <u>76</u>	Humidity: <u>68%</u>	Voltage: <u>7200</u>
<u>Section 14 Township - 112N Range - 48west</u>			
Type of Personnel Involved:			
☒ Line Superintendent	☒ Lead Lineman	☒ SDREA Loss Control:	☒ Foreman
☒ Journeyman	☒ Groundman	☒ Contractor	☒ Apprentice
Work Procedures:			
☒ Person In Charge of the Aerial Unit Testing:	☒ Safe Location for Testing	☒ Set Up Traffic Control Devices if Necessary	☒ Position Aerial Unit Next to Energized Line
☒ Ground Each Truck to System Neutral	☒ Competent Aerial Unit Operator Identified	☒ Inspect the Aerial Unit Boom Condition	☒ Install Skarshaug Tester
☒ Aerial Unit will be tested for 3-5 minutes	☒ Retract Boom to de-energizing test unit	☒ Rubber Gloves Shall be Worn by Person	☒ Rubber Gloves Shall be Worn by Person
☒ Removal of the Truck Ground from System U	☒ Repeat for the next Aerial Unit	☒ Remove Skarshaug Tester from Boom	
Personal Protective Equipment			
☒ Truck Grounds	☒ Work Area Protection Devices	☒ Rubber Gloves	☒ Hot-Sticks
☒ Safety Glasses	☒ High Visibility Vest	☒ Flagger Personnel	☒ Aerial Unit Tester
☒ Hard Hats	☒ Strobes or Beacons		
Special Tools & Equipment Required			
☒ Aerial Unit Tester	☒ Spotting Scope	☒ Stop Watch/Watch	
Potential Hazards			
☒ Contact Energized Lines with Equipment	☒ Vehicular Traffic	☒ Discharge of Hot or Burning Oil	
Energy Source Control			
☒ Substation	☒ Sectionalizer	☒ OCR	☒ Installed 1 Shot
☒ Fuse Cutout	☒ SCADA	☒ Electronic VFI	☒ Other:
Personal at Job Site			
Signature	Signature	Signature	
<u>Joe Denison</u>	<u>Brad Reber</u>		
<u>Danny Savage</u>	<u>Tony Surana</u>		
<u>Billy Bob</u>	<u>Lynne Beckel</u>		
<u>Herb Church</u>	<u>Larry Hardin</u>		
<u>Joan Pike</u>	<u>Derek Donson</u>		

This mock SDREA job briefing form, created for illustration, shows how line crews may document pre-job planning before aerial unit testing. The example highlights the kinds of details crews review before work begins, including location, personnel, work procedures, protective equipment, tools, energy controls and potential hazards.

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Your Phone Number: _____ Dakotafest – Find us in the Touchstone Energy Building!
Your Email Address: _____ S.D. State Fair – Find us in the Horticulture Park!

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WAYS AND COOL OFF IN OUR
LEARNING ABOUT ELECTRICITY



AUG. 18-20
Dakotafest
2300 E. Spruce St.
Mitchell, SD

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

JULY 24-26
Bruce Honey Days
Bruce, SD
605-627-5671

JULY 31-AUG. 2
Sioux River Folk Festival
Newton Hills State Park
Sioux Falls, SD
SiouxRiverFolkFest.com

AUG. 1-2
51st Annual Pioneer Power Threshing Show
MN Machinery Museum
Hanley Falls, MN
507-828-5437

AUG. 1-2
Family Camping Weekend
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

AUG. 4-6
Farmfest 2026
8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Morgan, MN
Ideagroup.com/Farmfest

AUG. 5
Ag Appreciation Day
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Sioux Empire Fair
Sioux Falls, SD

AUG. 8-9
South Dakota Senior Games
Events for People Ages 50+
Huron, SD
Register by July 26
SouthDakotaSeniorGames.org
605-295-2039
sdsrgames@gmail.com

AUG. 9
Czech Heritage Festival
8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Bechyn, MN
320-522-1218

AUG. 12
BFest Concert Series & Farmers Market
Jim McKinney & Friends
Performing
Museum Park
Bruce, SD
605-627-5671

AUG. 15
Melon Festival
Car Show, Live Music,
Bean Bag Tournament
Forestburg, SD
605-770-2132

AUG. 22
Hartford Area Fire & Rescue's 8th Annual Public Safety Day
10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
305 W. South St.
Hartford, SD

AUG. 22
McCrossan Boys Ranch Xtreme Event Challenge
3:30 p.m.
McCrossan Boys Ranch
Sioux Falls, SD
605-339-1203

AUG. 27-30
Steam Threshing Jamboree
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

SEPT. 1-6
20th Annual Sturgis Mustang Rally
Sturgis, SD
SturgisMustangRally.com

SEPT. 3
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives at the South Dakota State Fair
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
State Fairgrounds –
Horticulture Park
Huron, SD
605-224-8823

SEPT. 9
BFest Concert Series & Farmers Market
Matt Gauger Performing
Museum Park
Bruce, SD
605-627-5671

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.