

Cooperative Connections

**Faulkton mural is
turning heads**

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**Co-ops practice
road safety**

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The 110-foot mural that towers over the town of Faulkton has attracted attention from across the country



From My Desk

Still Learning 36 Years Later



Ken Schlimgen

General Manager

If you have paid attention to the information on our Facebook page, you would have seen that I celebrated 36 years with the cooperative in January. Yes, I have been around the cooperative for a long time. My career has allowed me to work with and meet so many good people and I thank you, our members, for that opportunity.

One thing that I did not learn over those many years is how to manage and protect our employees and members through a pandemic. By working with other cooperatives I know we did many things right and we also did things that we will improve upon. One of those improvements is to once again reschedule our District Meetings. The board and I felt that our initial hope of hosting the District Meetings in April was still too soon and are now looking to host those meetings in June.

A few things we learned were to communicate differently and the value of relationships. When we work together, work smart and plan appropriately, we can remain strong and accomplish our goals. Despite the unexpected challenges of 2020, the cooperative made it through with much success.

The crews are responding to problems caused by Mother Nature and focusing on maintenance activities. Tree trimming, transformer testing and line inspections are being done to prevent future problems. Our heavy equipment, trailers, lifting tools, power tools and other pieces of equipment are being inspected, repaired and replaced so our employees can work safely and efficiently through the coming construction season.

The plan of work indicates it will be another busy year. We will continue to accelerate the replacement of our oldest overhead lines. We are entering the third year of a four-year plan to replace our metering system. We are replacing load management devices that were installed in homes to control water heaters during peak times. We are targeting the units that are 30 years of age as we believe a high percentage are no longer working.

I want to thank those of you who have contacted our office to discuss your projects for 2021. This is very valuable because of the longer wait times on almost all of the materials we use. We currently know of five new homes and other projects that will require line extensions. If you have a project that may need a different transformer, metering upgrade or require the extension of a power line, please contact us. This helps us to purchase material at the best price and prevent delays to your project.

Basin Electric, East River Electric and Central Electric are forecasting another year with no change in electric rates. From all indications, President Biden intends to put more emphasis on protecting the environment and set new rules for all parts of the energy industry. Some may perceive this as a change in course, but I think it is just a continuation of what our cooperative family has been doing all along.

We will continue to be good stewards to the environment by utilizing renewables and technology. Your cooperative power supply has reached a 30 percent renewable threshold in 2020, exceeding the goal of the former Clean Power Plan. In 2020, Basin Electric agreed to purchase power from South Dakota's first utility scale solar farm. Once it is operational it will raise our renewable energy mix even higher. These decisions are made based on what our membership wants and on economics, not because of government mandates.

Your board and I will do our part in decision making and in advocating for Central Electric at the state and national levels. We will partner with our neighboring cooperatives and our national organization who are bound by the same principles, mission and values.

Cooperatives are most successful when we work together to accomplish goals that we cannot achieve alone. Decisions we make individually can affect every member to some degree, as well as our cooperative's long-term integrity and strength. The Central Electric Board and I will continue to do what is right for our member owners.

Until next month, stay safe!

**This year's
District Meetings
will shift to June**



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

- Duane Wolbrink - President, East River
- Todd VanWalleghen – Vice President
- Bernetta Burghardt – Secretary
- Mark Reindl – Treasurer
- Mark Hofer - NRECA
- Roger Campbell
- Donita Loudner - SDREA
- Darwin "Butch" Morrison
- Jim Headley

General Manager: Ken Schlimgen

Editor: Tara Miller

CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Central Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at www.centralec.coop.

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Office Open by Appointment

Office Information

M-F 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 800-477-2892 or
 605-996-7516
www.centralec.coop



Mission Statement

Provide Reliable Energy & Services with a Commitment to Safety and Member Satisfaction

BOARD MEETING

Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met Dec. 21, 2020, at the Betts Road Service Center for the regular board meeting.

The board approved the Nov. 16, 2020, board meeting minutes and the November safety meeting minutes. The board then reviewed monthly reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, the service department and financials.

Board Report

Manager Schlimgen updated the board on the following:

- East River Manager’s Advisory Committee meeting.
- Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) funding opportunities and strategic planning.
- Future advances of electric vehicle recharging stations.
- South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) legislative committee representation.
- Engineering service contract.
- Covid-19 regional case update. Cases are declining and the office is open to the public by appointment.
- NISC advisory committee update.
- Support for the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act.
- Upcoming industry meetings and conferences discussed.

Virtual legislative discussion held with area lawmakers and SDREA moderator.

You may contact the cooperative office to request more information regarding the board meeting.

Director Donita Loudner gave a report on the SDREA board meeting.

Director Mark Hofer gave a report on the NRECA board meeting.

Director Duane Wolbrink gave a report on the East River board meeting.

Board Action

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved \$650,000 revenue refund to members.
2. Approved nominations of Director Wolbrink as delegate and Director Loudner as alternate to attend SDREA Annual Meeting.
3. Approved nominations of Director Campbell as delegate and Director Wolbrink as alternate to attend National Rural Telecommunications Council (NRTC) Annual Meeting.
4. Approved nominations of Director Wolbrink as delegate and Director Loudner as alternate to attend National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Annual Meeting.
5. Policy 300 was reviewed with no changes.
6. Approved electric energy debt write-offs.
7. Approved accounts receivable debt write-offs.

The next board of directors meeting was confirmed for January 18, 2021, at the Betts Road Service Center.

Financial Report	December 2020	Year-to-Date 2020
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	33,685,002 kWhs	333,333,932 kWhs
Electric Revenues	\$1,993,201	\$31,960,255
Total Cost of Service	\$3,062,029	\$31,236,714
Operating Margins	-\$1,068,828	\$723,541

Five Electrical Dangers in Your Home

Of all the hazards that exist around your home, getting shocked by electricity is one that should not be taken lightly. Depending on the level of electrical current, contact with electricity can result in something as innocuous (but still painful) as a mild shock to more severe injuries like nerve damage and burns. In some circumstances, it can even cause cardiac arrest and death. Here's a list of some of the most common shock risks inside a home.

- **Appliances.** Most shocks from appliances occur when people are trying to repair them. It's not enough to just turn off an appliance before attempting to work on it – you also need to unplug it to reduce risk. Large appliances are responsible for 18 percent of consumer product-related electrical accidents; small appliances account for 12 percent. There's also danger if your appliance comes into contact with water. Many of these hazards can be avoided by using a ground-fault circuit interrupter. A GFCI is a protective device installed on electrical outlets, primarily used where water is present.
- **Ladders.** Typically, ladders present a falling hazard, but 8 percent of consumer product-related electrical shocks were also related to ladders. Electrocutation typically happens when the ladder makes contact with electrical wires. Before you use a ladder, make sure you can clearly see all power lines in the area, including those that may be hidden by tree branches. Ensure that the ladder is at least 10 feet away from them.
- **Power tools.** Power tools account for 9 percent of consumer product-related shocks. When you use power tools that are not double-insulated, are damaged or have damaged cords, you increase your chances of being injured. The chance of danger also increases when you use incompatible cords with power tools, use power tools incorrectly or use them in wet conditions. This is another situation in which GFCIs can help.
- **Electrical outlets and extension cords.** Inserting anything that doesn't belong – screwdrivers, knives, fingers or toy cars - into an electrical outlet can result in a dangerous electrical contact. Use cover plates that fit properly and safety covers on all outlets. By installing tamper-resistant receptacles, outlets will have permanent security against foreign objects being inserted into the slots. Any broken, loose or worn-out plugs, switches and light fixtures should be replaced immediately.

Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at www.sdrea.coop. You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Don't hit the pole! Be safe!"

Monroe Steiner, 6 years old

Monroe is the daughter of Brandon and Jen Steiner of Lake City, SD. They are members of Lake Region 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.

Super Seafood Recipes

Sheet Pan Fish and Chips

1/4 cup buttermilk	1 tablespoon oil
5 teaspoons OLD BAY® Seasoning, divided	1/4 cup flour
1 pound cod fillets, cut into 4x2-inch pieces	1 egg
2 large russet potatoes, cut into wedges (about 1-1/2 pounds)	1 cup cornflake crumbs
	McCormick® Tartar Sauce

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Mix buttermilk and 1 teaspoon of the OLD BAY in large resealable plastic bag. Add fish, then seal the bag. Refrigerate for 20 minutes. Toss potatoes and oil into large bowl. Sprinkle with another 2 teaspoons of OLD BAY; toss to coat evenly. Spread potatoes in single layer on foil-lined 15x10x1-inch baking pan that has been sprayed with no-stick cooking spray. Bake 25 minutes, turning potatoes halfway through. Remove pan from oven. Push potatoes to outside edge of the pan. Set aside. Place flour in a shallow dish. Beat egg, another 1 teaspoon of OLD BAY and 1 teaspoon water in a separate shallow dish. Mix cornflake crumbs and remaining 1 teaspoon OLD BAY in another shallow dish. Remove fish from the buttermilk mixture, allowing excess to drip off into bag. Coat fish in flour, shaking off excess flour. Dip in egg mixture, then press into the cornflake mixture until evenly coated. Discard any remaining flour, egg and cornflake mixtures. Place fish on a wire rack in center of pan with the potatoes. Bake 15 minutes or until fish is golden brown and flakes easily with a fork and potatoes are tender. Serve fish with potatoes and tartar sauce, if desired.

www.mccormick.com

Salmon Cheese Balls

1 16 oz. can of salmon	1 T. salt
8 oz. cream cheese	1 T. lemon juice
1 T. chopped onion	1 T. horseradish

Mix all ingredients together and shape into individual balls. Roll balls in chopped pecans and serve with crackers. Chill before and after shaping into a ball.

Denene Miles, Doland, SD

Shrimp Fettuccine with Pesto

15 extra large shrimp	comes in gluten free variety)
6 cloves of garlic	2-6.7 oz. jars of basil pesto
Extra virgin olive oil	Finely shredded parmesan cheese
12 oz. box of fettuccine (also	

Peel and chop garlic until finely diced. In large saute pan, pour a couple of tbsps. of extra virgin olive oil. Add shrimp (shelled and wiped dry with a paper towel). Cook until orange and slightly browned on each side (2-3 minutes per side). Add garlic and cook until light brown (do not over cook or garlic becomes bitter). Put on plate. Fill saute pan 3/4 full with cold water and bring to a rolling boil. Add entire box of pasta and cook 12 minutes. Stir to make sure pasta has separated. Drain in colander. Put the pasta, shrimp and garlic back into the saute pan. Add two jars of pesto sauce. Cook until heated. When serving, add parmesan cheese on top. Serves 4-6. Shrimp & Garlic with Cocktail Sauce: Prepare shrimp and garlic as directed above. Cool. Serve with cocktail sauce.

Sue Nipe, Sioux Falls, SD

Parmesan Baked Salmon

1/4 c mayo	4 salmon fillets
2 T. Parmesan Cheese	2 t. lemon juice
1/8 t. ground red pepper (cayenne)	10 crackers, crushed

Mix the mayo, cheese and pepper. Place salmon on foil on a cooking sheet. Drizzle with lemon juice. Top with cheese mixture. Sprinkle on cracker crumbs. Bake at 400 for 15 minutes. Then enjoy!

Julie and Jared Frank, Sioux Falls, SD

Please send your favorite beverage 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.



Pictured is a Nissan Leaf home charging station. The appeal of electric vehicles (EVs) is gaining momentum as prices are dropping and range is expanding. (Source: Nissan)

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Ready Or Not — Here They Come

Tara Miller

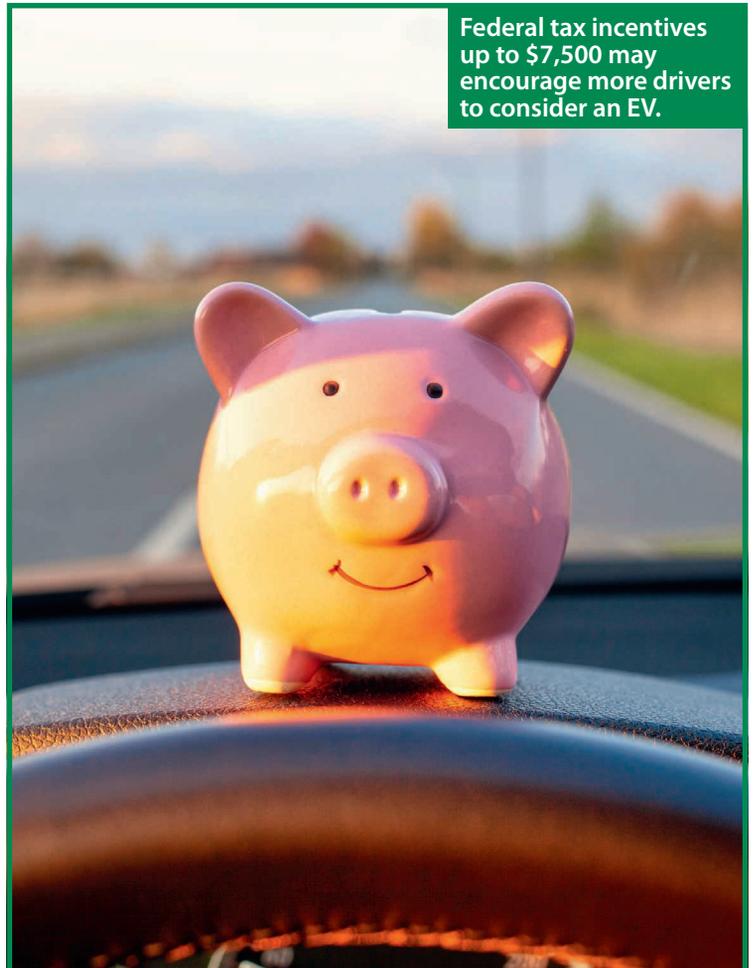
Manager of Communications

General Motors plans to stop production of gas and diesel vehicles by 2035.

As automotive manufacturers shift gears and focus on renewable energy alternatives, electric vehicles (EVs) are inevitably coming to a dealership near you. By 2035, General Motors plans to stop production of gas-powered and diesel-powered engines and only sell electric-powered vehicles.

Kelley Blue Book reports that EVs have come a long way. Consumers now have several model options that offer 200 to 400 miles of range on a full charge, including sedans, hatchbacks, SUVs and pickups.

Tax incentives up to \$7,500 and federal policy changes promoting renewable energy are sparking demand for EVs. However, charging stations can be difficult to find in rural South Dakota. Private industry may adapt to meet this challenge, but the U.S. Department of Energy recently reported that EV drivers do more than 80% of charging at home.



Federal tax incentives up to \$7,500 may encourage more drivers to consider an EV.

Similar to a cell phone, EVs can be plugged in when you get home and ready for use the next morning. General Motors estimated the annual energy use of one of their early EV models, the Chevrolet Volt, was 2,520 kilowatt hours, which is less power than it takes to operate a typical water heater.

Tips for Charging EVs at Home

Review the EV manufacturer's official manual to determine charging equipment specifications before choosing a model or modifying your electrical system. The EV manufacturer can recommend equipment for each vehicle type.

Level 1 chargers are often included with EVs and generally do not require installation; they plug into a normal 120-volt outlet like any other electronic device. They can fully charge a depleted EV battery in 15 to 24 hours.

Level 2 chargers plug into a 240-volt outlet and charge EVs up to seven times faster. These chargers may require additional time and money. According to the U.S. Department of Energy website, installing a level 2 charging station could range from \$500-\$2,000. The amount varies based on charging station features and contractor costs, and it could be substantially higher if additional electrical upgrades are required to comply with local, state and national electrical regulations.

Level 3 chargers are quicker and more powerful than level 2 chargers. Level 3 chargers can be found at public charging stations, but they are not currently practical for home use.

Consult with a Professional

If your home already has 240-volt electric service installed for appliances such as electric dryers and stoves, you will need to hire a licensed electrician

Much like cell phones, EVs can be plugged in when you get home and ready for use the next morning.

to complete the charging station installation. The National Electrical Code (NEC) requires that level 2 charging outlets be on a separate branch circuit. If your home isn't prepared to support level 2 wall connectors, you will need an electrical service upgrade.

A permit may be required to install a charging station. Please contact Central Electric Cooperative before modifying your electrical system or installing a charging station. One of our electricians can ensure your home's wiring complies with local, state and national regulations.

General Motors estimated the annual power consumption used to run one of their early EV models, the Chevrolet Volt, was less than the power used to run an electric water heater. (Source: Energy.gov)



The mural in Faulkton is a prominent feature in the town. Aerial photography by Billy Gibson.

EYE-POPPING APPEAL

Faulkton Mural Attracts Attention from Far and Near

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@srea.coop

The story of how the small town of Faulkton became an attraction for art aficionados far and near actually begins on another continent many years ago.

Today, Faulkton is home to an imposing 110-foot mural displayed on three sides of an Agtegra grain elevator, the town's most prominent structure. Visible from long distances on Hwy. 212, the mural depicts a boy and girl and several wide-brimmed hats blowing between them in the prairie wind. While the meaning of the mural is open to as many interpretations as there are viewers, the intriguing story of how the artwork came into existence is a "10 beer tale," according to Dave Hedt, the community leader who initiated the project.

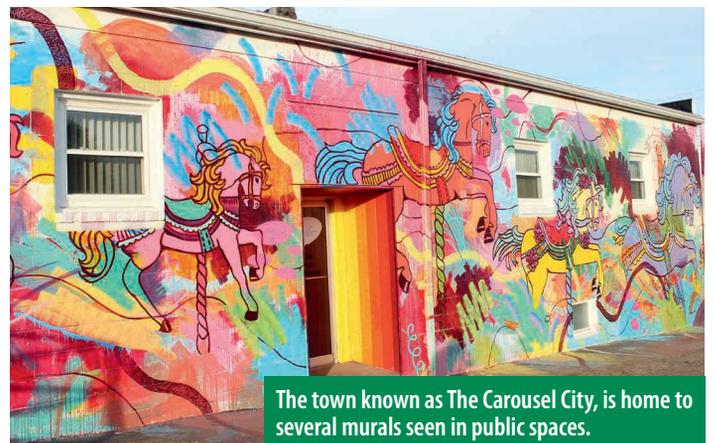
A native of Australia, the mate known among the locals as "Aussie Dave" was nursing a "frothy" in a bar in Melbourne when he encountered a chap from Faulkton who happened to be in Melbourne on business. He and Craig Mutsch struck up a conversation during that chance encounter in 1998 and kept in regular contact until 2013 when Hedt decided to relocate to South Dakota on a permanent basis.

Hedt went to work for Mutsch in the beginning before eventually setting down roots in Faulkton. He later married a gal from Harrold, became a regular at Lakeside Golf Club, built a retail strip center along the highway across from the Agtegra elevator and established several businesses in the quiet town.

The idea of creating the mural is actually credited to Hedt's father, who was visiting his son one day in 2015: "He was here and we were driving into town and he saw the grain elevator. He said, 'Hey, why don't you call Guido about painting a mural on that.' Right away I thought it was a great idea," Aussie Dave recalled.

In this case, Guido is the internationally renowned photographer and visual artist Guido Van Helten, who had painted a highly acclaimed mural on the side of a set of grain silos in Brim, Australia, not far from Hedt's home town of Dimboola.

"That mural had such a positive impact on the community, I knew it would get the same kind of response here and create the



The town known as The Carousel City, is home to several murals seen in public spaces.

Faulkton Mural Fast Facts

- The mural stands 110 feet high
- The project took seven weeks to complete
- Artist Guido Van Helton has done similar projects all around the world
- Local residents donated their time and labor to prepare the grain elevator for painting

same kind of excitement, for the town,” Hedt said.

He got in touch with the artist, who didn’t hesitate to take on the project. Van Helten visited Faulkton several times conducting preliminary work before taking his brushes in hand. As he’d done with previous similar projects, Van Helten spent time getting involved in community events and getting to know the residents of The Carousel City. He was hosted by a local family and tried to capture the ambiance of the town to inspire the visual and thematic elements of his work.

He received tremendous support from the community as folks chipped in to help the project financially and also contributed some “sweat equity” by scraping, cleaning and pressure-washing the elevator’s concrete surface in preparation for Van Helten’s artistic touch.

Grant funding was received from the South Dakota Arts Council and other non-profit groups, while the balance of the funds were raised privately through sponsorships and contributions from local businesses. Hedt is quick to point out no taxpayer money was used. For its part, Agtegra was quickly sold on the idea as plans were to eventually take the elevator out of service and move the operation to another site east of town.

As for what would ultimately appear on the side of the elevator, the residents were lending their support without knowing how the project would actually turn out. They figured they could always paint over it if they felt the mural’s theme wasn’t congruent with the town’s self-image.



FAULKTON MURAL

Artist Guido Van Helton spent several weeks in Faulkton getting to know the local residents and getting a sense of the town’s spirit before he started painting.

“Guido kind of kept that a secret,” Hedt said. “He wanted it to be a surprise, but knew from the other things he’d done that it would be spectacular and something that we would all be proud of. He always paints what he feels is reflective of the town and the people.”

After the surface was prepared, it took several weeks for Van Helten to complete the painting while working suspended beside the large concrete canvas. The painting was unveiled on Sept. 1, 2018. Hedt said the result of the project has brought more positive results than anyone in the town could have anticipated.

“In terms of the financial impact, it’s just unbelievable the traffic we get through the town,” he said. “We had a woman from Washington state fly all the way here just to see it.”

Dawn Melius is owner of a local insurance agency and has been involved in the project since the beginning. She said the mural has brought a unique and welcomed vibrancy to the community.

“It’s such a great work of art, and people can interpret it however they want. That’s part of the fun of it and the attraction of it. It’s such an amazing project and it has brought a lot of interest to the town. Of course, once people are drawn here by the mural and they stop and spend some time around town, they like what they see and they have a real positive experience.”

Find an aerial video of the mural by visiting the Cooperative Connections Plus YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/n2gEDAltHMk>. Find out more about Van Helten at www.guidovanhelten.com.

New construction plans at your home, farm or business?

Call to Discuss Electrical Impacts



Brian Bultje

Manager of Operations

Already in 2021, Cenral Electric has received several new service inquiries. Growing up in farming families, we both understand the drive to continually expand and improve your farming operation.

Many of you have future plans of adding new facilities including livestock buildings, grain bins, dryers, shops, houses or additions. Our request is that you involve your electric cooperative and your electrician in that conversation prior to making decisions or purchases. We do everything we can to make sure you have the electricity available when and where you need it.

Proper Equipment is Key

After adding a new home, an addition to your existing home, a livestock facility, a grain bin or a heated shop, your current electrical equipment might not be able to power everything it could before. Don't wait until you damage equipment or you are unable get enough power before you contact us.

When you're busy on the farm, the last thing you need is an inconvenience that's completely preventable. We will collaborate with you and your operation to ensure that you have the proper equipment size for your needs and understand your electric rate.

Avoid Unexpected Costs

We do our best to manage our costs at your cooperative, and we know that you do the same for your operation. Overloading the cooperative's transformer or damaging your own personal equipment can be very expensive.

Adding to your operation can also impact the location of electrical equipment. Moving electrical equipment or trenching wires can add additional costs to your project. We will assist you in placing the equipment where it will meet your current and future needs.

For larger members exceeding 50 kVA transformer capacity, they pay a demand charge on their electric bill, and those demand charges can also add up quickly. If you are on a demand rate or have the potential to be, we can work with you on how and when to run your equipment for maximum efficiency.

Please contact our office to discuss your residential, business or agricultural construction plans at 1-800-477-2892.



Patrick Soukup

Manager of Member Services/Marketing



Employee Years of Service



Norton Truman

Journeyman Lineman

March 1 – 15 years



Lindsey Wilson

Customer Service Rep.

March 2 – 6 years

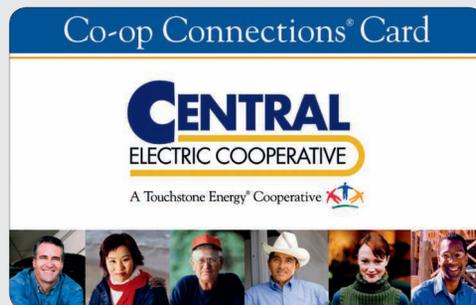


WATCH OUT THIS WINTER!

- *When plowing, avoid electrical cabinets, poles, wires and other equipment*
- *Never touch a downed power line*
- *Treat everything near downed power lines—such as trees or debris—as dangerous*

RE-ENERGIZING SAFETY

Local Discounts with your Co-op Connections® Card



Your cooperative membership earns you discounts at local participating businesses. Simply show your Co-op Connections Discount Card and save.

- **The Pin Cushion (Mitchell)**
Buy 1 Aurifil thread at regular price and get 2nd one at 50% off
- **Rob's Short Stop (Mitchell)**
5% off seafood purchase of \$20 or over.
- **Sun Gold Trophies (Mitchell)**
15% off storewide, some exclusions apply.
- **Tessiers, Inc. (Mitchell)**
10% discount on residential service or maintenance work only. Discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other discount or for commercial work or installations.
- **Two Dreams Boutique (Mitchell)**
10% off in-store order.
- **Village Bowl (Mitchell)**
Bowl 2 games, get the 3rd game free.
- **Williams Musical & Office Equipment (Mitchell)**
10% off regular price.

For a full list of ways to save, visit www.connections.coop.

To request a card or become a participating business, visit www.centralec.coop or call 800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516.





Troy Ziebart, line foreman at Douglas Electric in Armour, loads up his vehicle before hitting the road to perform maintenance work on the co-op's system. Photo by Billy Gibson.

On the Road Again

Cooperative crews log millions of safe miles each year

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Some people follow their instincts to run away from emergency situations, others are obligated to steer towards them.

South Dakota's electric cooperative linemen often find themselves headed toward the site of potentially hazardous predicaments, whether it's simply answering an emergency outage call or engaging in rebuilding many miles of poles and lines in the most austere conditions in the aftermath of a major storm.

In any event, the first task for linemen is to arrive at the scene and make the return trip to co-op headquarters with themselves and their vehicles all in one piece. Many cooperative consumers are unaware of the fact that co-op linemen in South Dakota collectively log more than 8 million miles on the road each year taking care of maintenance projects, installing equipment, performing public service work, answering outage calls or other daily duties.

That figure includes those instances when linemen are called upon to drive long

distances across state lines to assist other fellow cooperatives restore power after a natural disaster, which raises the potential risk for accidents.

Compared to the amount of time and number of miles they travel on a routine basis, cooperative linemen have an impressive track record of operating their vehicles without incident and without harm to either themselves or the motoring public.

According to Mark Patterson, manager of loss control services at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) in Pierre, safe operating practices do much more than just save lives and property; they also keep insurance premiums down and help control the cost of fleet maintenance.

"Safety is such an important aspect of what we do as electric cooperatives, and it takes on many dimensions," Patterson said. "We often think of safety as adopting prudent practices when it comes to working in close proximity to different equipment such as power lines, transformers and substations. But it also includes other aspects such as safety in the workplace,

emergency preparedness, handling hazardous materials and knowing how important it is to be safe out on the road every time we leave the back shop and pull out of the gate."

As with many aspects of their operations, South Dakota's electric cooperatives are using the power of computer software and advanced technology to promote safety on the road. Many co-ops use software programs such as NexTraq, which processes and provides a wealth of information to help maintenance managers keep records on vehicle tracking and telemetry, fuel use and efficiency, service scheduling, driver performance, job completion and more.

These systems deliver real-time data not only on vehicle speed, heading, location, etc., but they also indicate where each vehicle is positioned at any given moment within the service territory so that supervisors can more effectively and efficiently coordinate movements of various crews throughout the system and throughout the work day.

"Linemen from the old days would be amazed at the advanced technology we



Cooperative linemen log thousands of hours on the road but sometimes find themselves having to take their vehicles off the paved surfaces. *Aerial photography by Billy Gibson.*

now have at our disposal,” Patterson said. “And it’s not just things like hydraulics and buckets and all the equipment we use today, but also the computer-based tools we have to help us do our jobs better. It all adds up to making the best use of the members’ resources and ultimately making sure the electricity we deliver is as affordable as possible. Members can count on the fact that cooperatives are trusted stewards of their resources and we’re doing everything we can to keep costs low.”

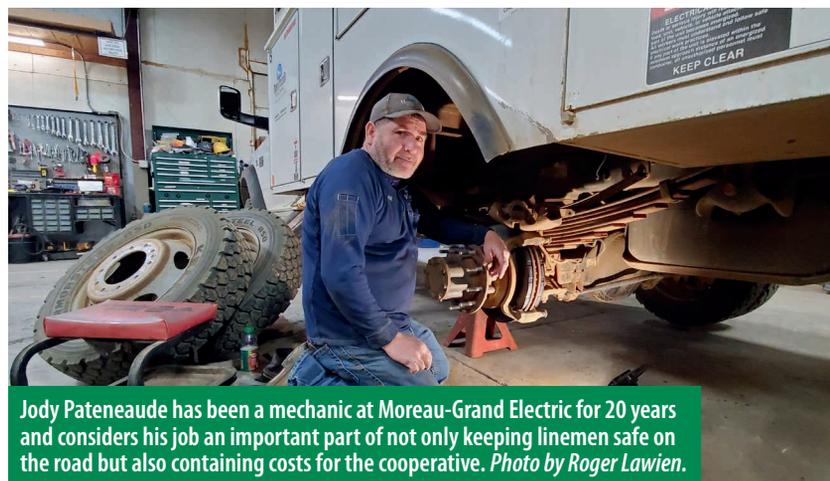
One of those mechanics who remembers the “old days” is Jody Pateneau, who has kept watch over the vehicle fleet at Moreau-Grand Electric for the past 20 years. Pateneau, who notes that linemen are required to carry a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and that he has one himself, said fleet maintenance was more of an art in the past.

“We kept records as well as we could, but we would just kind of know when parts or brakes or oil needed to be changed

and what needed to be done,” he said. “But with the new technology, we know what needs to be taken care of a long time before the guys driving the vehicle know. Our job is to make sure there are no break-downs when our guys get out there and that no one is in danger, and the computer helps us accomplish that goal.”

Patterson pointed out that the public also plays a role in making sure cooperative linemen and their vehicles stay accident-free. He said every year linemen and other utility workers across the country are severely injured or killed either in their vehicles or in their work sites.

“We should all be more aware of emergency workers who perform their jobs along roadsides or other places where traffic is present,” Patterson said. “We always remind the public to ‘slow down and move over’ when they see a work area or utility vehicle nearby. It’s not only good, sound advice, but it’s also the law in the state of South Dakota.”



Jody Pateneau has been a mechanic at Moreau-Grand Electric for 20 years and considers his job an important part of not only keeping linemen safe on the road but also containing costs for the cooperative. *Photo by Roger Lawien.*

Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for “Co-op Connections Plus” and you’ll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to “like” and “subscribe.”



Renewable Energy Credit Program Available

Central Electric members have the opportunity to power their home or businesses with 100% renewable energy harnessed from wind power.

How does it work?

To participate, members purchase renewable energy credits (RECs).

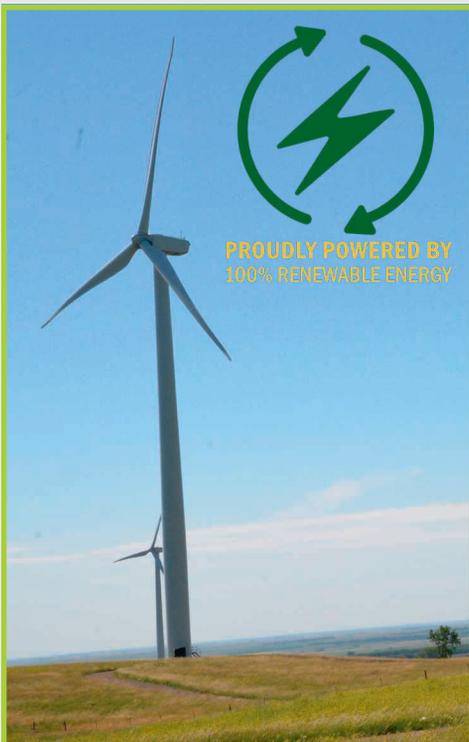
RECs are produced when wind farms generate power. The RECs represent the valuable renewable attributes of that energy form.

How much does it cost?

The cost is \$1.00 per REC, which equals 1 MWh (or 1,000 kWhs).

If your monthly usage is 1,200 kWhs, your cost is \$1.20 plus tax, in addition to your regular electric bill.

For more information, contact our office or visit www.centralec.coop!



Surplus Truck For Sale



2004 International 7400 4x4 Digger Derrick Truck

Price: \$23,500

Mileage: 187,390

DT466 engine 6-speed Allison automatic transmission.

2004 Commander C4045 digger derrick with 4,729 hours.

Tire tread is approximately 50%.

The vehicle will be available to purchase at Central Electric's Betts Road office at 11:00 AM on Thursday, Feb. 25. Interested parties must be present. If multiple interested parties are present, an auction will begin and parties can increase their bid from the listed price. For more information, contact Brian Bultje or Andrew Baier at 1-800-477-2892.

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Note: Please make sure to call ahead to verify the event is still being held.

February 18-25

Twelfth Annual Black Hills Film Festival, Virtual
605-574-9454

February 20

Family Gras, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-6000

February 20-27

SD State High School Wrestling Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

February 25

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood Live: Neighbor Day, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-6000

February 27

Nemo 500 Outhouse Races Nemo Guest Ranch, Nemo, SD
605-578-2708

March 5-6

SD High School State Debate & IE Tournament, Central High School, Aberdeen, SD

March 5-7

BH Rapid's President's Cup 2021, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Rushmore Hall, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 11-14

Team 8-Ball Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Rushmore Hall, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 12-13

St. Patrick's Day Weekend, Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976



St. Patrick's Day Weekend, Mar. 12-13, 2021

March 13

28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride and Tour, Spearfish Canyon Lodge, Lead, SD
605-641-4963

March 13

St. Patrick's Day Celebration, Knights of Columbus Hall, Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

March 13-14

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun Show, American Legion Hall, Philip, SD
605-859-2280

March 19-20

Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6000

March 23-24

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Fine Arts Theatre, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 25

A Lakota View of the Dead Hills, Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center, Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

March 27

SD State High School All-State Band Concert, Mitchell Fine Arts Center, Mitchell, SD

April 8

The Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest, Sioux Falls Arena/Virtual, Sioux Falls, SD
605-339-1203

April 9-10

Forks, Corks and Kegs Food, Wine and Beer Festival, Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1876

April 9-18

Four Weddings & An Elvis, Mitchell Area Community Theatre, Mitchell, SD
605-996-9137

April 17

Winefest Renaissance, Boys and Girls Club of Aberdeen Area, Aberdeen, SD
605-225-8714

April 23-24

Junkin' Market Days, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD
605-941-4958

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.