

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Co-ops Power Next Generation

**How Co-ops are
Engaging Youth**
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**811: Call Before
You Dig**
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THANK A LINEWORKER

The Plankinton crew worked to remove an aging pole last fall.



Ken Schlimgen
General Manager

Lineworker Appreciation Day is observed on April 14 this year. As the General Manager of your cooperative, I have the privilege of witnessing the dedication and professionalism of our line workers and employees. Their work is essential to the life of this community, and while many are unaware of the full extent of their efforts, I want to give you a glimpse into what they face and why it matters so much.

The job of a line worker is considered by many to be dangerous, and from my perspective, I don't disagree. Safety professionals in our industry have stated that the job of a line worker is unforgiving as you don't often get a second chance. But that doesn't deter line workers. Every single day, in all kinds of weather, they are in the elements, ensuring that power is delivered to your homes and businesses. Whether it's scorching heat, freezing cold, or a storm battering the area, our line workers are there to make sure your lights stay on and your power stays running.

In my former role at the cooperative, I saw firsthand the conditions they work in. When you're working around high-voltage electricity, any mistake can be deadly, but these individuals are trained to do their job safely. They undergo constant training that prepares them for the situations they face, and the learning never stops. They stay up to date with new techniques, safety protocols, and equipment, always with safety as the top priority.

The physical demands of the job are immense, but the team doesn't complain. They work with heavy equipment, climb poles, get in and out of trenches, and carry heavy loads. It's a physically demanding, often exhausting job, but they embrace it, knowing they are what ensures their neighbors have the electricity they rely on.

The sacrifices they make are also worth noting. Line workers are often the first responders to emergencies, arriving at the scene of car accidents, fires, or storm damage. They work in the dead of night, during holidays, and weekends, missing out on family events and personal time. But the payoff is knowing that they are helping their neighbors and friends. Their families understand the commitment, and their dedication is unwavering.

What truly stands out, though, is the sense of camaraderie. This team is like a family—one built on trust, teamwork, and a shared mission. In a job that can be challenging, having someone you can rely on next to you is priceless. It's not just about restoring power; it's about keeping your teammates safe while serving the community. Their bond is the backbone of the cooperative, and it shows in everything they do.

The pride in their work is evident. I've seen it time and time again: when the job is done, when the lights come back on, and when they hear that simple "thank you" from someone who's been waiting in the dark, it makes all the effort worthwhile. It's that satisfaction, knowing they've made a difference, that keeps them going no matter the challenges they face.

Our cooperative is made up of people who are deeply connected to this community. We live here, we work here, and we raise our families here. If your lights are off, there's a good chance ours are too. So, know that when our lineworkers are out there, they are giving everything they have to get the power back on as quickly and safely as possible.

District Meetings

Your cooperative will be hosting district meetings in every county we serve from mid-May through mid-June. Director elections will be held in Miner, Sanborn and Jerauld Counties. Detailed information for these meetings can be found on page 15. Please attend to receive updates on the status of your cooperative, the projects we are involved in and the potential challenges we face. I look forward to seeing you there.

Until next month, stay safe!

CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

- Aurora County - Duane Wolbrink, President
- Brule County - Bradee Pazour
- Buffalo County - Donita Loudner
- Davison County - Jeff Gustafson, SDREA Director
- Hanson County - Mark Hofer - Secretary & NRECA Director
- Jerauld County - Mark Reindl, Treasurer
- Miner County - Robert Banks
- Sanborn County - Todd VanWalleghen, Vice President
- Director-At-Large - Merl Bechen

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 cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at www.centralelec.coop.

Subscription information: Central Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents of each monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301, and additional mailing offices.

Our Mission

Provide reliable energy and services with a commitment to safety and member satisfaction.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met Jan. 20, 2025, at Central Electric Cooperative's headquarters for the regular board meeting. They reviewed reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and financials.

Board Report

General Manager Schlinggen updated the board of directors on territory discussions, East River Electric Managers' Advisory Committee, Basin Electric updates, Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) activities, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association updates and other management initiatives.

The minutes of the December 2-3, 2024, safety meeting were reviewed.

The board reviewed Policy 827 – Avoided Cost Rate. No changes were made.

The NRECA Legislative Conference takes place April 25-30. Director Hofer will attend as an NRECA board member.

Board members reported on the SDREA annual meeting.

Director Wolbrink updated the board on the East River Electric board meeting and activities.

Board members were provided forms to consider a pledge to South Dakota ACRE and America's Electric Cooperative (AEC) political action committee.

Board Action

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- A motion was made and seconded to support the REED application for Wild Oak Golf Course in Mitchell. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve the 4th quarter 2024 invoices for legal services. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve the committee's recommendation that the manager's and directors' expenses for the 4th quarter of 2024 be accepted. The motion carried.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for Feb. 17, 2025.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE JAN. 2025	YEAR TO DATE JAN. 2024
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	37,715,658 kWh	37,492,883 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 4,094,723	\$ 3,743,263
Total Cost of Service	\$ 3,815,004	\$ 3,640,765
Operating Margins	\$ 279,719	\$ 102,499

Distracted Driving

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Distracted driving is any activity that diverts attention from driving, including talking or texting on your phone, eating and drinking, talking to people in your vehicle, fiddling with the stereo, entertainment or navigation system – anything that takes your attention away from the task of safe driving.

Texting is the most alarming distraction. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for five seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

You cannot drive safely unless the task of driving has your full attention. Any non-driving activity you engage in is a potential distraction and increases your risk of crashing.

Consequences

Using a cell phone while driving creates enormous potential for deaths and injuries on U.S. roads. In 2022, 3,308 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.

Get Involved

We can all play a part in the fight to save lives by ending distracted driving.

APRIL
Distracted Driving Awareness Month
an **nsc** initiative
National Safety Council

Teens

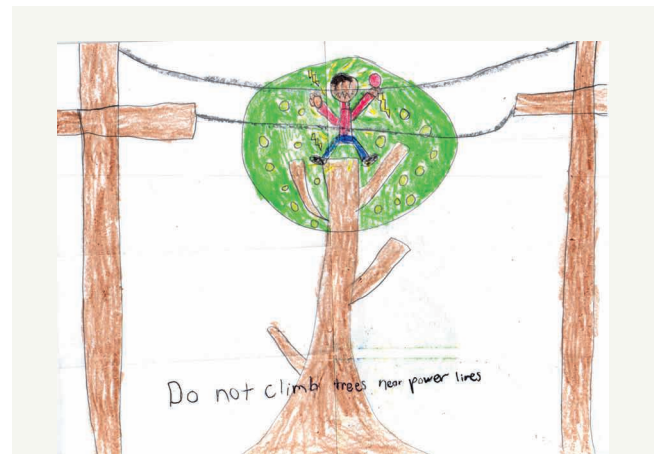
Teens can be the best messengers with their peers, so we encourage them to speak up when they see a friend driving while distracted, to have their friends sign a pledge to never drive distracted, to become involved in their local Students Against Destructive Decisions chapter, and to share messages on social media that remind their friends, family and neighbors not to make the deadly choice to drive distracted.

Parents

Parents first must lead by example – by never driving distracted – as well as have a talk with their young driver about distraction and all of the responsibilities that come with driving. Have everyone in the family sign the pledge to commit to distraction-free driving. Remind your teen driver that in states with graduated driver licensing (GDL), a violation of distracted-driving laws could mean a delayed or suspended license.

Educators and Employers

Educators and employers can play a part, too. Spread the word at your school or workplace about the dangers of distracted driving. Ask your students to commit to distraction-free driving or set a company policy on distracted driving.



“Do not climb trees near power lines.”

Naomi Krcil, Age 7

Naomi cautions readers about the dangers of climbing trees near power lines. Thank you for your picture, Naomi! Naomi's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil, members of Charles Mix Electric Association.

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.

Let's Have BRUNCH

EASY BREAKFAST MUFFIN

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 tsps. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
2 eggs (beaten)
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup milk

Method

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a 12 cup muffin tin with paper liners or spray each cup with cooking spray. In a mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt.

Add in eggs, oil and milk and mix only until combined, don't beat or over mix or they will be dry! Fold in 1/2 cup mix-ins if desired.

Scoop into prepared muffin tin and bake for 15 to 18 minutes or just until golden and a toothpick comes clean. Serve with butter and jam.

Lyon-Lincoln Electric Member

UMM BRUNCH

Ingredients:

Scallops
English Muffin
Eggs

Method

Soak scallops in cold water in fridge for two hours, pat dry, sauté in butter and garlic until opaque (approx. 4 min). Put on toasted English muffin. Cook poached eggs in 10-inch skillet with 1 tbsp. vinegar (3-5 mins.) Remove with slotted spoon and drain on paper towel. Add to the scallops and top with Hollandaise Sauce.

Hollandaise Sauce:

Cut 1/2 stick butter into thirds. In double boiler, combine 1 piece of butter and 3 egg yolks, 1 tbsp. lemon juice and 1 tbsp. water. Place it over boiling water and cook while whisking rapidly. Add remaining butter one at a time, continue to cook. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Kari Reder
Northern Electric Member

SAUSAGE AND EGG TACOS

Ingredients:

4 oz. breakfast sausage, casings removed
1 tbsp. perfect pinch roasted garlic bell pepper seasoning
6 eggs
2 tbsps. milk
1 tbsp. butter
6 small flour tortillas, warmed
1/4 cup shredded Mexican cheese blend
1 med. ripe avocado, peeled, pitted and sliced

Method

Heat medium skillet on medium-high heat. Add sausage and Seasoning; cook and stir until sausage is browned and crumbled. Remove sausage from pan; keep warm. Drain fat from pan.

Beat eggs and milk in medium bowl with wire whisk. Melt butter in same skillet on medium heat. Add egg mixture; cook and stir until eggs are firm.

For each taco, place one tortilla on plate. Top with eggs, sausage, cheese and avocado. Sprinkle with additional seasoning, if desired.

McCormick.com

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

South Dakota Rural Electric – – – – – YOUTH EXCURSION – – – – – July 21-23, 2025

Calling high school freshmen, sophomores and juniors! If you live in Central Electric’s footprint, you are eligible to apply for an unforgettable summer experience: Youth Excursion!

Attendees will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Bismarck, N.D., for a youth event unlike any other. From July 21-23, participants

will stay on campus at Bismarck State College. During this time, they will have the opportunity to sightsee, make friends and gain a new understanding of electricity.

Students will tour the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant to see where South Dakota’s power is generated.

There will also be plenty of time built in for recreation and socializing. Students will play games, visit local attractions and much more.

Participants can look forward to connecting with students from across South Dakota, building strong friendships and learning from their peers. The application is below, and the deadline to apply is June 2.



Apply For Youth Excursion:

To apply for 2025 Youth Excursion, complete the form below and return it with a written recommendation from a teacher or adult that is not your parent explaining why you are a good candidate for the trip. The deadline to apply is June 2, 2025. Please call 605-996-7516 with any questions.

2025 Youth Excursion Application

Name: _____ County of Residence: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

School: _____

2024-2025 Grade Level: _____ Male or Female: _____ T-shirt Size: _____

Return this information by June 2, 2025 to:

Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301

**Please include a written recommendation from a teacher/adult that explains why you are a good candidate for the trip!*

Solutions for Postal Delays



Lindsey Wilson
Customer Service Representative

The United States Postal Service is experiencing delays in mail delivery, greatly impacting rural areas. This is negatively affecting our members and could potentially cause future disruptions.

To help with the situation, we have many available options for managing and paying your electric bill.

Central Electric Cooperative offers a variety of convenient billing and payment options to fit your lifestyle. Whether you prefer online payments, automatic drafts or traditional mail, we have a solution for you.

Billing Notification Emails

When your bill has been processed, receive an email notifying you of the amount due and due date before your printed statement arrives. No registration is required, simply add an email address to your account.

One-Time Online Payment

For a quick and easy way to pay, visit our website and enter your billing account number and last name or business name to process your payment.

Pay by Phone

Prefer to make payments by phone? Call our secure, automated payment line at 855-939-3738 and follow the prompts. This method meets all credit card security standards to protect your information.

Prepaid Billing with Pay-As-You-Go

Looking for flexibility? The Pay-As-You-Go plan lets you purchase electricity in advance, much like filling up your gas tank. No monthly bills, no late fees—just pay when it's convenient for you.

SmartHub Options

Access your account any time, day or night. With the SmartHub app, you can:

- View and update account information
- Check energy usage and charges
- Make one-time or recurring payments
- Update payment details
- View and print statements
- Sign up for billing notifications

Sign up for SmartHub today using your email address and electric account number.

Budget Billing for Predictable Monthly Payments

Even out your electricity costs with budget billing. Your fixed monthly amount is based on the prior average of 12 months of usage. Adjustments are made in May and November based on actual consumption. There is no catch-up month, so any balances roll into the next year. Members must stay current to remain in the program.

Bank Draft or Recurring Payments

Take the hassle out of bill payments. Set up automatic deductions from your bank account or credit card. Payments are processed on the 15th of each month or the next business day if it falls on a holiday or weekend. You will still receive a bill marked "Do Not Pay – Paid by Bank Draft/ Credit Card." To enroll, call 855-939-3738 and choose option 3, or sign up through SmartHub. Please note that declined or returned payments may be assessed a \$30 fee.

Drop Box and Payment Kiosk

For your convenience, payments can be made at the following locations.
Betts Road Service Center Drop Box:
 25487 403rd Ave., (I-90 Exit 325) Mitchell.
Lode Star Casino Motel Payment Kiosk:
 1003 SD Highway 34, Fort Thompson.

For more details or assistance, contact us today at 605-996-7516 or 800-477-2892. We're here to help make managing your electric bill simple and stress-free.



TELL US WHO POWERS YOU!

We know our co-op community is filled with people making a difference. Let's celebrate them! Nominate a hero in your community who goes above and beyond. **They could win up to \$3,000!**



Nominate your local hero at WHOWERSYOUCONTEST.COM



FROM CELEBRATION TO INSPIRATION

Megawatt welcomes members to the football tailgate party hosted by West River Electric.
Photo by Amanda Haugen

How Electric Co-ops Are Powering the Next Generation

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

April marks Lineman Appreciation Month, the perfect time to spotlight the essential role that electric cooperative employees play in their communities. In line with their commitment to education and community involvement, electric cooperatives are celebrating lineworkers through youth engagement initiatives, and it all stems from one of the electric cooperatives' seven cooperative principles: concern for community. For years, programs such as Cooperatives in the Classroom have provided schoolchildren with innovative, hands-on learning opportunities, demonstrating the critical work electric cooperatives perform in their communities.

Whether it's engaging youth through a Neon Leon safety demonstration or taking students to explore Basin Electric's energy infrastructure during the SDREA Youth Excursion, electric cooperatives across the state are constantly finding new and exciting ways to engage the youth within their communities and inspire the next generation. Below are two new avenues for spurring youth engagement in cooperatives across the state:

Megawatt Mascot

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Megawatt, Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative's newest lineman mascot. This summer, select electric cooperatives in western South Dakota are suiting up to introduce Megawatt – a friendly-faced lineman adorned with a hard hat, safety gloves and

bright red cape – to their members.

“The goal is to get younger kids to start thinking about linemen in a certain way – almost larger than life and the backbone of the electric cooperative,” said Rushmore Electric Chief Marketing Officer Matt Brunner. “The hope is that it translates into them considering the lineman profession when they get older.”

Megawatt has already made his debut at several member appreciation events, bringing high-energy fun to parades and tailgates as a true champion of the cooperative spirit. So far, Brunner said the mascot has left a big impression.

“The kids and adults have loved it, and the interactions have been great,” Brunner said. “If nothing else, it's unique. People are constantly asking, ‘Who is that?’ The costume does a great job of starting the conversation: what is a lineman, and what do they do?”

Beyond lineworkers, cooperatives offer a diverse range of career paths.

From engineers to accountants, the cooperative world is full of exciting roles that include opportunities in communications, where professionals share the cooperative's achievements and member services, where employees work directly with the community to meet their needs.

Brunner said he expects the idea to continue gaining momentum over the coming months with new avenues of appreciation for linemen and a better understanding of the day in the life of a lineman, as well as other exciting careers in the electric cooperative industry.

STEM Gains Steam

Jennifer Gross, education and outreach coordinator at East River Electric Power Cooperative, has inspired classrooms for years with a variety of engaging demonstrations, covering everything from science to safety. Last year, Gross introduced a new activity to spark curiosity while incorporating STEM – an approach to education that integrates science, technology, engineering and mathematics into learning. The result led to a crafting activity where kids use simple materials to fashion their own wind turbine.

“We are always trying to come up with new ideas for students,” Gross said. “Incorporating STEM into this project seemed like a natural fit because both teachers and students are very receptive to it.”

The idea is straightforward. Students construct a small-scale turbine from wooden dowels, fins, and a motor capable of generating power. Once completed, they connect their tiny turbine to a multimeter, which measures the energy generated. Instead of relying on natural wind, students use a fan to simulate a windy day. By altering their model turbines, students can find the optimal design for the best output of energy. And just like that, students can step into the role of engineers.



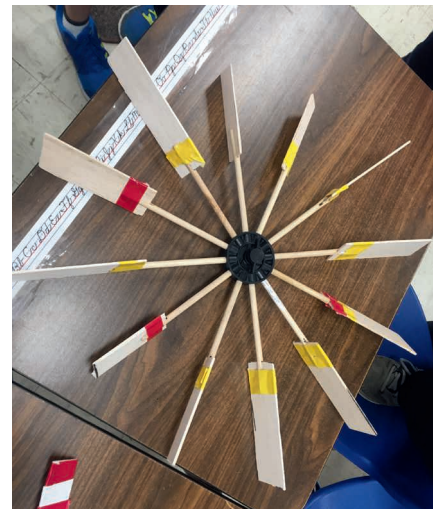
Megawatt is joined by U.S. Air Force personnel enjoying the Annual Base Picnic.
Photo by Amanda Haugen

Gross said the students and the project have a lot in common. Once the building begins, the students' minds begin to whirl – just like a turbine. The activity prompts question after question: Why does the wind blow? How does a wind turbine work? How does the shape and weight of the blade influence the experiment?

“The students enjoy being engineers for this project,” Gross said. “They enjoy having the freedom to choose their materials and design. There's no right or wrong way to do it, and they enjoy that. I mention to the students that careers in wind energy are in high demand and some are 4-year degrees and others are fewer years, but the push for renewable energy sources is growing and our state produces plenty of wind.”

Whether it's through a hands-on activity or an engaging mascot, cooperatives aim to not only educate but inspire, ensuring that today's students can become tomorrow's linemen, engineers, communicators or member service representatives. By

sparking curiosity and introducing young people to the world of cooperatives early on, they're opening the door to careers that keep communities powered and connected.



This is just one example of how students create wind turbines using materials such as balsa wood, foam, card stock, cardboard and paper cups.
Photo by Jennifer Gross

Grants Available for Local Projects

Grant applications for Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round-Up® program are due May 1, 2025. Through Operation Round-Up, funds are awarded to organizations that benefit area communities. Applicants do not need to be members of the cooperative, but eligible projects should have a positive impact in Central Electric's service area, which includes Aurora, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Miner and Sanborn Counties.

Operation Round-Up demonstrates the cooperative principle of "Concern for Community". It is a voluntary program in which members round their electric bill up to the next whole dollar each month, and the extra cents are used to fund grants. A number of cooperative employees and board members also contribute to the fund. Since 2015, Central Electric members, employees and board members have invested more than \$225,000 to support local projects.

Interested parties can reach Tara Miller for more information at 605-996-7516. Complete guidelines and a fillable application can be found online at www.centralec.coop/operation-round-up. Special thanks to participating members for making this program thrive!



Crow Creek Sioux Ambulance Service was awarded a \$1,300 grant to help purchase medical cabinets and supplies.



The Howard School District was awarded a \$1000 grant to help purchase furniture for the preschool.



Immanuel Cemetery Association of Mount Vernon was awarded a \$500 grant to help pay for a new fence.



The Bridgewater-Emery School's Career and Technical Education program was awarded a \$1,500 grant for welding shop supplies.



Learn more online at www.centralec.coop. Click on Member Programs, Operation Round-Up. The maximum grant request is \$3,000.

Employee Years of Service



Norton
Kimball Area
Lineworker
19 years on March 1



Lindsey
Customer Service
Representative
10 years on March 2



Kyle
Journeyman
Electrician
1 year on March 18



Dustin
Mitchell Area
Lineworker
4 years on April 1



Kelly
IT Systems
Coordinator
3 years on April 19

Plugged In With Patrick

Photo Credit: Touchstone Energy Cooperative



Patrick Soukup
Manager of Member
Services and Marketing

Understanding the Rising Cost of Electricity

As we navigate the changing seasons, many of us have noticed a significant increase in our electricity bills. The rising cost of electricity is becoming a pressing concern for households and businesses alike, prompting discussions about its impact on our daily lives.

By comparison, South Dakotans are in a good position, and we pay considerably less for energy than consumers in other parts of the country. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (eia.gov), the price of electricity for residential end-users in South Dakota was 12.42 cents per kilowatt hour in December

2024, while New Yorkers paid 24.37 cents and Californians paid 30.55 cents during the same timeframe.

However, with a recent rate adjustment and the colder weather hitting, we understand your winter electric bills may be higher than expected.

Why Are Prices Increasing?

There are a number of factors affecting the cost of electricity across the United States. Increased demand for electricity is one factor. As more people rely on electricity for heating, cooling, and powering their devices, demand for energy continues to rise.

Fuel prices also affect the price of power. Natural gas, coal and oil have been volatile. When fuel prices rise, power wholesalers must pass those costs on to member cooperatives like East River and Central Electric.

Infrastructure upgrades are a contributing factor as well. Replacing infrastructure requires a significant investment, but it's required to maintain reliability and efficiency. Those ongoing costs are reflected in our rates.

Lastly, regulatory challenges have affected power costs. Environmental regulations aimed at reducing carbon emissions have impacted the cost of generating electricity. Transitioning to renewable energy sources, while beneficial for the environment, may initially lead to higher costs as systems are updated and new technologies are implemented.

Resources for Members

The rising cost of electricity is a complex issue that affects us all. Understanding how and when you use electricity can help you make informed decisions to reduce your usage and lower your bills. Let's continue to support one another and explore solutions that promote energy efficiency.

For more information, please call Central Electric at 800-477-2892. Together, we can navigate these challenges.

Are you Power Line Ready?

Always be aware of your surroundings when moving farm equipment and know what to do in case your equipment contacts a power line.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative has tips and resources available to keep you safe this season.

to learn more about
power line safety visit
YourCoopPower.com



Touchstone Energy®
Cooperatives



DIGGING SAFELY

Call 811 Before You Dig Every Dig. Every Time.

Jocelyn Johnson

jocelyn.johnson@sdra.coop

Every year, underground utility lines are damaged by homeowners and contractors who dig without calling 811. This single call is a crucial step in any project. Striking a water, gas or power line can cause serious injuries, costly repairs and service outages for an entire neighborhood. Whether you're beginning construction on a major project or are simply planting a tree, calling 811 before you dig is a free and simple solution to what could potentially be considerable damage.


What is 811?

The South Dakota One-Call System, or 811, is a mandatory statewide

one-call notification system that was established by South Dakota Statute in 1993. 811 is now recognized as the national "Call Before You Dig" number in the U.S., designed to safeguard people and protect underground utilities. It's a free service that coordinates with your utility providers to help locate and mark underground lines.



Codi Gregg, executive director for South Dakota 811, said, "The main purpose of the program is to avoid digging into any utility and potentially causing a loss of life, loss of property, or any infrastructure buried in the ground."

"We are fully funded by the utilities who want to protect the services they provide," Gregg continued. "It is



GET TO KNOW THE COLOR CODE

Below are The American Public Works Association (APWA) Uniform Color Codes for temporary marking of underground utilities.

 <p>Proposed Excavation</p>	 <p>Electric</p>
 <p>Water</p>	 <p>Communication / CATV</p>
 <p>Reclaimed Water, Irrigation, Slurry</p>	 <p>Temporary Survey Marking</p>
 <p>Gas, Oil, Steam</p>	 <p>Sewer / Storm Drain</p>

South Dakota state law that you contact 811 two business days before you dig.”

South Dakota has underground utility lines for electricity, gas, water, sewage and telecommunications. Inadvertently hitting one of these lines could cause power outages, property damage, water contamination, gas leaks, legal liabilities and injury.

Gregg explained that when an excavator makes the 811 call before they dig, utilities receive the locate and have 48 hours to mark all lines in the designated area with color-coded flags or paint.

“If you happen to dig into a utility or find one that was not located while excavating, you have to report that to 811. If you happen to dig into a gas line or anything toxic, you must call 911 first, then 811.”

How It Works

Contractors, homeowners, ranchers and farmers can easily make a request for underground utility lines to be marked by

following these steps before every project.

1. Call 811 or submit an online request at least 48 hours prior to your project.
 - Information can be found online at www.sdonecall.com.
2. Wait for utility markings.
 - Utility companies will send professionals to mark buried lines using color-coded paint or flags.
3. Get locates on secondary or privately-owned lines if needed.
4. Check markings.
 - Confirm all utility companies listed on your ticket have responded to the request after the two-business days have passed.
5. Dig safely.

Real-Life Examples of Hitting Underground Utility Lines

Contractor Hits Unmarked Secondary Line

Tom Lundberg, member services manager from H-D Electric Cooperative in Clear Lake, S.D., gives the following account of a contact made to a secondary line:

“Normal situations start out like this – South Dakota 811 calls are made from an excavator or member (persons doing the work), and flags and paint go on the ground marking the underground services. This is a normal occurrence. However, some digs are more complicated, and there may be what we call secondary wires, pipes, sewer lines, etc. located in the dig area as well. The words primary and secondary are confusing to some people and they assume that all is well after the 811 call is made. Primary lines are owned and operated by the utility. Secondary lines are member-owned lines that are not marked by any utility. They must be marked by the member-owner of the property.

Unfortunately, we have had many of these lines hit during a dig, which makes it an emergency service call. One example is when we had a 600-amp service for a member that was damaged by a contractor. The call came in to us, and we responded to the site. We realized it could have been a very dangerous situation if the contractor would have entered the dig. Luckily, they guarded the hole until we arrived. The underground wires were extremely damaged, and the contact did not take out the transformer fuse or any kind of overcurrent protection. When I arrived, there was water in the hole, and I could hear the muddy water boiling. At that time, I assumed it was still energized. The first thing I did was turn the power off and assess the extent of the damage. The mud and water were so hot that I had to wait for a while for it to cool off. Repairs were made and everything was put back together. I double checked my work, then turned the power back on. This happened because secondary locates were not completed – resulting

in a three-hour delay for the business and a costly repair.

We have had many of these calls over the years, and we want to communicate that anyone digging for a project must ensure all the dig area is marked for primary and secondary functions (wire, pipe, gas, telephone, sewer).

Long story short, the impact of not marking all the dig area can cost you time, loss of production, money and even worse – injury or death.”

Out-of-State Contractor Hits Underground Power Line

Mike Stadler, manager of electric operations from Grand Electric Cooperative in Bison, S.D., gives the following account of a contact made by company digging gravel:

“We had a dig-in a couple of years ago at a gravel pit. The county contracted a crushing company out of state to mine more gravel from an existing pit they had rights to. The crushing company started by digging test holes with a bulldozer. They would take the bulldozer and dig a hole about eight feet deep, just one dozer width wide, to see how good the gravel was before they committed to mining the whole area. We had underground cable around the pit. When they were exploring new areas to mine, they dug right through our cable and didn’t know it (keep in mind the test holes are 8 feet deep, and our cable is four feet deep). They dug the hole, went in and looked at the gravel, decided it wasn’t worth it, and covered the hole back up. Meanwhile, we had an outage.

When our crew began searching for the cause of the outage, they discovered the fresh dirt which was moved and had to dig it back up to fix it. When I asked the contractor why he didn’t call a locate, he stated the county superintendent said he didn’t have to because there was nothing there. They were very reluctant to pay the bill and thought the county should be liable. When I explained to them it was the law that all contractors are required to call 811, and it didn’t matter what the county told them, they paid the bill. We have since educated the county on 811 laws.”

ELECTION BYLAWS



**Director nominating petition due dates for Jerauld, Miner and Sanborn Counties are noted with the district meeting schedule on page 15. Below are the cooperative bylaws pertaining to director elections.*

Section 4.05. Director Nominations.

A. Nominating Petitions. An individual desiring to be a nominee for a Director position for which an incumbent Director's Director term is expiring must take out a nominating petition ("Nominating Petition") no more than sixty (60) days prior to any Member meeting at which Members are scheduled to elect Directors. Said member shall return the completed Nominating Petition to the Cooperative at least forty (40) days prior to the Member meeting at which Members are scheduled to elect Directors. The completed Nominating Petition shall contain the following:

1. The name of the Nominating Petition Nominee;
2. The Director position for which the Nominating Petition Nominee will run; and
3. The printed names, addresses, and telephone numbers, and original signatures, of at least ten (10) Members residing in the Director District in which said nominee is seeking a directorship, or if for the Director-at-large, ten (10) Members residing in the Cooperative Service Area. After verifying that a Nominating Petition complies with this Bylaw, the Cooperative shall post the Nominating Petition nominees at the Cooperative's principal office.

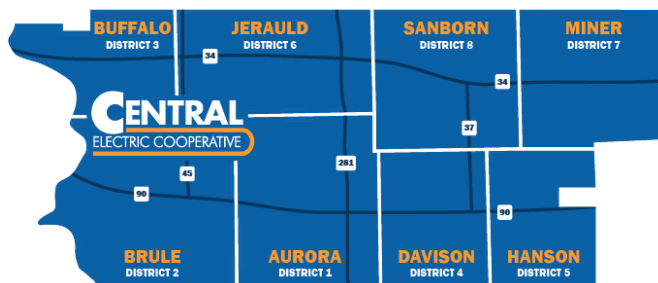
B. Notice of Director Nominations. At least ten (10) days nor more than twenty-five (25) days prior to any Member meeting at which Members are scheduled to elect Directors, the Cooperative shall notify Members of the:

1. Director positions for which the incumbent Director's Director term is expiring; and
2. Names and corresponding Director positions of all Nominating Petition Nominees;

Section 4.06. Director Elections.

Members located or residing in each Director District shall elect Directors as follows:

1. For District Director positions at the District Meeting for which the incumbent Director's term is expiring.
2. For the Director-at-large position at the Annual Meeting by all Members located or residing in the Cooperative Service Area.
3. From the Nominating Petition Nominees.



4. By Member written ballot.

At the Director District meeting by Members residing in said Director District by Member's written ballot, except for the Director-at-large who shall be elected at the annual meeting by Members located or residing in the Cooperative Service Area by Member written ballot.

By a plurality of the votes cast by a quorum of Members present in person who are entitled to vote for the Director position. In case of a tie Director vote with only two (2) candidates running for the Director position, the Director elected shall be determined by a drawing by lot which, for purposes of these Bylaws, shall mean that a piece of paper will be marked with an "X" by a Cooperative representative/employee and placed in a receptacle along with other pieces of paper the same size, one (1) piece for each person involved with the tie. Each person involved in the tie will draw a piece of paper, and the person drawing the piece of paper with the "X" will be the winner of the election.

The persons involved in the tie will draw lots in the same order as their names appear on the ballot. In case of a tie and there are more than two (2) candidates running for the Director position, the number of Directors tying for first position will have a run-off election, and the Director receiving a plurality of the votes cast shall be elected. In the event of another tie of two (2) or more candidates, the Director elected shall be determined by a drawing by lot, the process of which is set forth above.

A quorum at any Member meetings, to include a Director District meeting and/or an Annual Meeting, shall consist of the minimum number of Members required by South Dakota law at the time of such meeting. If a quorum is not present within one (1) hour after the appointed time, no meeting shall be held. If an election of Directors is not held, a special Member meeting at which Members are scheduled to elect Directors shall be held within a reasonable time.

Tellers shall be appointed to collect and count the ballots.

If only one (1) nominating petition has been turned in for a Director position for which the incumbent Director's Director term is expiring, no election shall be held in that District and the Nominating Petition nominee shall be deemed elected as the Director from said District.

Names of Nominating Petition nominees shall be printed on ballots in an order determined by drawing prior to the printing of the ballots.

If no petition is filed, then the board will appoint an individual to fill the open position on the board pursuant to Section 4.10 of these Bylaws.

4.07. Director Terms.

A Director's term is three (3) years ("Director term"). A Director elected at a District Meeting or at the Annual Meeting will be seated as a Director at the commencement of the first Regular Monthly Board Meeting following the Annual Member Meeting. The Cooperative shall stagger Director terms by dividing the total number of authorized Directors elected from the Director Districts into three (3) groups of three (3) Directors each. Members thereafter will annually elect one (1) Director group. Decreasing the number of Directors or length of Director terms may not shorten an incumbent Director's Director term. Despite the expiration of a Director term, the Director continues to serve until a new Director is elected, or until the number of Directors is decreased. Unless otherwise provided in these Bylaws, the Director term of a Director filling a vacant Director's position is the remaining unexpired Director Term of the vacant Director's position.

District Meeting Schedule

Eight local district meetings are planned in May and June. The meetings provide members with a chance to learn about cooperative happenings and have discussions with management and board members.

The meetings will be held in the evening, except for Buffalo County which will offer a noon meal. Registered members will receive a \$10 electric bill credit for attending.

Members residing in Jerauld, Miner or Sanborn County with an interest in serving on the Board of Directors may take out a nominating petition at Central Electric Cooperative's Betts Road office west of Mitchell. See the petition filing dates provided below.

To be considered for a director position in your respective county,

completed petitions must be returned by the petition due date before the close of business at 4:30 p.m. When filed, director petitions must have the signatures of at least 10 Central Electric Cooperative members from the director district in which the candidate is seeking election. Completed petitions must be filed at least 40 days prior to the district meeting in that county.

District 6, Jerauld County, is currently represented by Mark Reindl of Wessington Springs who is eligible for reelection. District 7, Miner County, is currently represented by Bob Banks of Fedora who is eligible for reelection. District 8, Sanborn County, is currently represented by Todd VanWalleghen of Letcher who plans to retire from the board this year.

Interested in Serving as a Co-op Director?

Are you interested in serving on the Central Electric Cooperative Board of Directors? Jerauld, Miner and Sanborn County director terms expire in 2025, and petitions are available at the Mitchell office or by email. Petition timeframes are noted on the district meeting schedule to the left.

Serving on the board of directors for an electric cooperative involves committing yourself to the following standards and guidelines.

- Be a cooperative member in good standing.
 - Permanently reside in the district.
 - Be willing and able to commit to 25+ working days per year to fulfill duties.
 - Attend at least 10 out of 12 regular board meetings each year (usually the third Monday each month).
 - Pass a background check.
 - Have your primary residence served by the cooperative or meet corporate qualifications.
 - Not be a close relative of a director unless the director will stop serving within one year.
 - Not be a close relative of an existing cooperative officer, employee, agent or representative.
 - Not be employed by or materially affiliated with another director.
 - Not be affiliated with an individual or entity directly and substantially competing with the cooperative.
 - Not sell goods or services in substantial quantity to the cooperative or its members.
 - Comply with other reasonable qualifications determined by the board.
- This is a general snapshot of director eligibility guidelines. A full list of director eligibility requirements is available in the cooperative's bylaws which can be viewed online at www.centraleccoop.com.
- Please contact Central Electric General Manager Ken Schlimgen at 605-996-7516 if you have director eligibility questions.



ATTEND YOUR LOCAL DISTRICT MEETING

May 20, 2025
Jerauld County
(District 6)
 Springs Inn Cafe, W.S.
 Meal 6:00-6:30
 Registration closes 6:30
 *Director nominating petitions available
 March 21, due April 10

May 21, 2025
Miner County
(District 7)
 4-H Building, Howard
 Meal 6:00-6:30
 Registration closes 6:30
 *Director nominating petitions available
 March 24, due April 11



May 22, 2025
Sanborn County
(District 8)
 4-H Building, Forestburg
 Meal 6:00-6:30
 Registration closes 6:30
 *Director nominating petitions available
 March 24, due April 11

May 29, 2025
Davison County
(District 4)
 Fairgrounds, Mitchell
 Meal 6:00-6:30
 Q&A session

June 5, 2025
Buffalo County
(District 3)
 IHS Health Fair
 Health Center Grounds
 Fort Thompson
 Meal at Noon

June 9, 2025
Hanson County
(District 5)
 A1 Al's Pheasant Ranch, Emery
 Meal 6:00-6:30
 Q&A session

June 16, 2025
Brule County
(District 2)
 Ag Building, Pukwana
 Meal 6:00-6:30
 Q&A session

June 18, 2025
Aurora County
(District 1)
 Ag Building, Plankinton
 Meal 6:00-6:30
 Q&A session



APRIL 11-12
Forks, Corks & Kegs
Food, Wine & Beer Festival
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

*Photo courtesy of
 Travel South Dakota*

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.

MARCH 29
Moose Lodge Vendor Fair
 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
 516 W. 15th Ave.
 Mitchell, SD

MARCH 31
SDPB Dakota Life
 Free Screening of "Greetings from Wessington Springs"
 7 p.m.
 Opera House
 Wessington Springs, SD

APRIL 3
Viva Las Vegas
McCrossan Banquet Auction
 5:30 p.m.
 Sioux Falls Arena
 Single Ticket \$100
 Tables Available
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-339-1203

APRIL 4
Mitchell Technical College
2025 Alumni Gathering
Cornhole Tournament
 5 p.m. Social
 6:30 p.m. Tournament
 The World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD
 605-995-7342

APRIL 4-5
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Heritage Celebration
 748 S. Main St.
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237

APRIL 4-6, 11-13
Women Playing Hamlet
 April 4-5, 11-12: 7:30 p.m.
 April 6, 13: 2:30 p.m.
 Mighty Corson Art Players
 Corson, SD
 www.mightycorson.com

APRIL 5
Community Breakfast for CASA
 8:30-10:30 a.m.
 RiverTree Church
 601 N. Sanborn Blvd.
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 11-12
Junkin' Market Days
Spring Market
 Fri. 4-7 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD

APRIL 24-26
HuntSAFE Course
 Davison County Fairgrounds & Mitchell Trap Club
 Mitchell, SD
 605-770-5555
 gfp.sd.gov/hunter-education

APRIL 26
Mitchell Lions Club
Pancake Jamboree
 7 a.m.-1 p.m.
 Masonic Lodge
 5th & Lawler
 Mitchell, SD
 www.mitchelllions.org

APRIL 28-30
Shrine Circus
 The World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD

MAY 3-4
Flea Market
 Rustic Designs & More
 41450 264th St.
 Ethan, SD
 605-770-2411

MAY 3-11
Craft & Antique Show
 Rustic Designs & More
 41450 264th St.
 Ethan, SD
 605-770-2411

MAY 3-4
Prairie Village Events
 Sat. Consignment Auction
 Sun. Season Opening
 Madison, SD
 www.prairievillage.org

MAY 29-31
HuntSAFE Course
 Davison County Fairgrounds & Mitchell Trap Club
 Mitchell, SD
 605-770-5555
 gfp.sd.gov/hunter-education

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