



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

DAKOTA ENERGY
APRIL 2024 VOL. 26 NO. 12

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Keeping the Lights On

**One Lineman's
Community Outreach**
Pages 8-9

**Commercial
Motor Vehicles and
Public Safety**
Pages 12-13



SCHOLAR OF THE WEEK



Joanlei is presented with a \$250 check from Dakota Energy for being selected the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week.

TOUCHSTONE ENERGY SCHOLAR OF THE WEEK

Miller High School Senior Joanlei Baker is honored for her accomplishments.

Joanlei Baker was selected as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week for the week of March 3-9, 2024.

As an outstanding student at Miller High School, Joanlei said the teachers there have pushed her, and it's worked. She has a 4.0 grade point average and is a member of the National Honor Society.

Joanlei is a role model student, very exemplary, and works hard at everything else she does. In a smaller school, students are involved in many things, and Joanlei is known as a leader.

She has been a volleyball player and a participant in track for four years. This year, Joanlei is the student council president and the Snow Queen.

Joanlei has a creative side. She has enjoyed painting since 4th grade and has entered her pieces in the state fair and scholastic art competitions. She is a member of the Central Plains Arts Council.

To showcase her musical talent, Joanlei is a member of the concert, jazz, and marching bands at her school. She also gives piano lessons.

She hasn't picked a college yet, but she wants to have a STEM major.

"I'm looking towards either aerospace or biology, so it's split down the middle. I think it's my dad, really. He got me into space and astronomy. I've always been curious because the universe is so big, and there is so much to learn," said Joanlei.

Joanlei's parents are Dakota Energy members Michael and Cherry Baker of Saint Lawrence.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

**DAKOTA
ENERGY**

(USPS No. 018-949)

Board President: Darrell Raschke, Huron

Board of Directors

Nick Nemecek, Holabird - Vice President
Tommy Baruth, Alpena - Secretary
Brian Bonebright, Wessington - Treasurer
Brian Baum, Alpena
Chase Binger, Hitchcock
Todd Bushong, Tulare
Chad Dearborn, Miller
Doug Schaefer, Orient

CEO/General Manager: Chad Felderman

Manager of Operations: Matt Zomer

Manager of Finance & Administration:
Eric Hasart

**Manager of Human Resources &
Communications:** Jodene Decker

Manager of Member Services: Jeff Gilbert

Information Technology Administrator:
Jared Rakness

Dakota Energy Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Dakota Energy Cooperative, PO Box 830, 40294 US Hwy 14, Huron, SD 57350. Members subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Dakota Energy Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

Subscription information: Dakota Energy Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. USPS No. 0819-949 Periodicals Postage Paid at Huron, SD 57350. Postmaster: Please send address changes to Dakota Energy Cooperative Connections, PO Box 830, Huron, SD 57350; telephone (605) 352-8591; fax (605) 524-7064; email dakotaenergy@dakotaenergy.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

www.dakotaenergy.com
Facebook @dakotaenergy
Twitter @DakotaEC



**DAKOTA ENERGY
COOPERATIVE, INC.**
HURON, SD 57350

Protecting Our Member Data



Jared Rakness
IT Administrator

Dakota Energy Cooperative works hard to keep its members' data safe. We do this through various means:

- maintaining up-to-date equipment and software
- monthly employee training
- monthly third-party audits
- Payment Card Industry compliance

Any vendor that works with our member data must also meet regulatory compliance.

Our website collects minimal data that is anonymized; this way, it cannot be tracked back to the user. We use that information to view trends in devices and pages accessed to help us better service our members.



TIPS TO KEEP YOUR ACCOUNTS SAFE

Here are couple ways that you can better protect yourself from malicious actors:

- Regularly check for and install software updates.
- Do not open attachments and links from unknown senders.
- Let unknown callers leave a voicemail.
- Use unique passwords for all your accounts.
- Enable Multi Factor Authentication when available.

Break Dirt Without Breaking the Law

As the warmer spring temperatures cause the ground to thaw, contractors and homeowners alike are likely to begin on projects that require some sort of digging.

By law, anyone who is digging in South Dakota needs to call 811 and have a locate ticket in their hand before moving any ground. If you're not the one that's digging and you've hired a landscaper to do the work instead, that landscaper should have a ticket in their name.

When someone calls 811, the call goes through a center in Dallas, Texas. That call center then notifies utilities in the area, according to South Dakota 811 Executive Director Codi Gregg.

An excavator or digger has to allow 48 hours for the utilities in the area they plan to dig into to come on site and mark the location of those underground utilities. On average, there are five to eight utilities notified per call.

If there's a potential loss of life or property, the allowed response time is shortened to a maximum of two hours during normal business hours.

"When the ticket goes in, the excavator is given a list of the utilities that are involved or are working or that are in that area where they're working," Gregg explained.

Those companies that own the utilities will make marks that identify the location. Those flags are also color coded according to the type of utility. As more and more overhead electrical lines are converted to underground lines, it's imperative that anyone who plans on doing a project that requires digging call 8-1-1 to avoid a dangerous and deadly situation.

"It's a free phone call for the excavator to make. There's no real reason for them not to make the phone call other than not being aware of it," Gregg said.

Kristie Fiegen, South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairwoman, echoed Gregg's comments, stating that making the call to 811 is the "most important and easiest call anyone can make before starting a digging project."

"This simple and imperative effort will help to prevent damages to vital underground utilities and safeguard critical services that our residents and economy depend on," Fiegen said. "During the 2024 construction season, I urge everyone to call 811 before you dig and protect all South Dakotans by abiding by our state laws and making safety our highest priority."

- Last year, there were 176,984 notices to the 811 Center of work occurring.
- South Dakota's 811 laws were established in 1993.
- In 2017, South Dakota 811 added damage reporting to our laws, stating if there was a damage, disturbance, or a dislocation of a utility – 811 was to be contacted to report the damage. It was also added that 911 was to be contacted first if there was a leak.
- Free accounts are offered upon request, allowing account holders to enter locate tickets themselves without calling an agent.
- A total of 1,944 utilities were reportedly damaged in 2023. Of that total, 375 excavators did not have a previous ticket.
- According to Common Ground Alliance's Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report, the annual rate of damages to buried infrastructure costs the U.S. a staggering \$30 billion every year and 60% of nationwide damages to underground utilities are caused specifically by professional contractors not contacting 811 prior to digging.



Don't Fly Drones Near Power Lines

Lyndon Kaski, Age 8

Lyndon Kaski warns readers to stay away from power lines when flying drones. Great advice! Lyndon's parents are Jonathan and Amanda Kaski, members of Kingsbury Electric Cooperative.

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.

SALSA SAVORY

FRESH SALSA

Ingredients:

4-6 med. to large tomatoes, seeded and chopped
 1 med. onion, chopped
 4 fresh jalapenos, seeded and finely chopped*
 1 clove garlic, crushed
 1 tbsp. dried parsley or fresh cilantro to taste
 1 tsp. salt

Method

*To prevent jalapenos from burning your fingers, lightly rub fingers with shortening, especially around fingernails.
 Serve with tortilla chips.

Linda Hubbard
 Rapid City, S.D.

LUANN'S FRESH SALSA

Ingredients:

4 med. tomatoes, peeled and chopped
 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
 1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper
 1-2 tbsps. jalapeno or other hot pepper, seeded and finely chopped
 1 tsp. salt
 pepper to taste
 1 tbsp. lime juice or red wine vinegar
 1-2 tps. catsup
 dash garlic powder
 dash cayenne pepper
 1-2 tps. sugar
 cilantro (optional)

Method

Mix all ingredients. Serve with any tortilla or corn chips for dipping. Will keep approximately 1 week in the refrigerator.

Nancy Stenson
 Fort Pierre, S.D.

TAMARIND PASILLA MANGO PINEAPPLE SALSA

Ingredients:

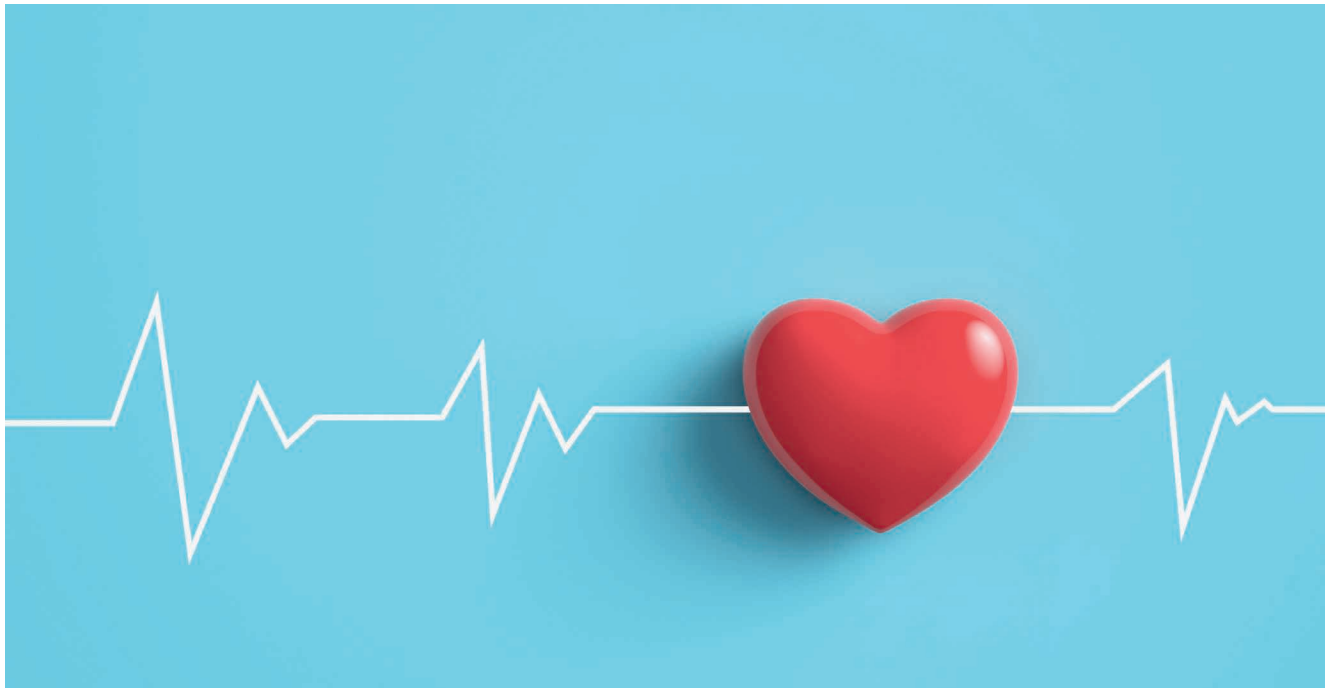
1 1/4 cups diced fresh pineapple
 1 large mango, pitted and diced (about 1 1/4 cup)
 1 small red onion, diced
 1 small red bell pepper, diced
 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro
 1 med. jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
 3 tbsps. fresh lime juice
 1 tbsp. honey
 4 1/2 teaspoons Tamarind Naturally Flavored & Pasilla Chile Seasoning

Method

Mix all ingredients in medium bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving. Stir before serving. Serve with tortilla chips or use to top tacos or nachos.

McCormick

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



HAVING A BACKUP PLAN FOR MEDICAL DEVICES CAN BE LIFESAVING

If you depend on electric medical equipment, your power provider will do all they can to assist you during a power outage by giving your residence a priority tag. Examples of lifesaving medical devices include an oxygen concentrator or a ventilator.

If you or someone in your household depends on life-sustaining medical equipment, contact Dakota Energy to let them know.

Although the utility will do all they can to help, it is best to have a backup plan in place in case of severe weather events, which can cause prolonged outages.

Backup safety tips include the following:

- Have an emergency plan in place with friends and family that outlines places you can go in the event of a long-term outage.
- Before an outage occurs, find out if the medical equipment safely runs on a backup

power source and for how long (see manufacturer's recommendations).

- Keep a full charge on battery-powered devices or have extra batteries available.
- If recommended by the manufacturer, consider purchasing a portable battery pack to power devices.
- Gather related resources that will last for two weeks, including batteries, supplemental equipment and prescriptions.
- Realize that local shelters and hospitals that are also experiencing an outage may be at capacity and have limited resources, including auxiliary power.
- Think about the other special equipment you might need, such as coolers for refrigerated medicine.
- Like any important device, keep up regular maintenance.
- Keep a file that includes the device's manufacturer, serial numbers and photos of the device.

 Safe
Electricity.org®

JANUARY 2024

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, January 23, 2024, with Directors Baruth, Baum, Bonebright, Bushong, Dearborn, Nemec, and Raschke were present. Manager Felderman and Employees Decker, Gilbert, Hasart, Picek, Rakness, and Zomer were present. Directors Binger and Schaefers were absent.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly energy sales and revenue
- CRC
- Inventory
- District 3 Legislative Committee
- GHDC
- Meter changes

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Finance and Administration Hasart reported on the following items:

- Financial reports for December
- 2024 Audit schedules
- Form 990 letters
- Debarment & lobbying certificates
- Emergency storm rate letters
- IRS mileage
- CFC loan advance
- Meyer auction recap
- 2023 annual report

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance, and retirement activities
- Annual truck inspections
- Pole changes
- SCADA installation in the Cavour substation

- December 26th storm
- City of Miller on call
- 2023 annual report

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load management
- 2023 annual report

HUMAN RESOURCES/ COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Manager of HR/Communications Decker reported on the following items:

- Retirement of Mike Moncur
- Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week
- Line department job shadows
- New members of Employee Advisory and Safety Committees
- 2023 annual report

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Cyber security and website analytics
- 2023 annual report

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports presented
- Approved Summit Carbon Solutions Agreement
- Approved resolutions for revenue deferral and revenue retention reserve
- Approved reviewed policies and budgeted donations

BOARD REPORTS

Director Raschke reported on East River's January 2024 regular board meeting

Director Nemec reported on SDREA January 2024 regular board meeting

Directors Raschke, Nemec and Bonebright reported on SDREA Annual Meeting

Next monthly board meeting is March 26, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. in the Huron office

Year-to-Date Financial Report

	Jan-24	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$2,517,627	\$2,517,627
Cost of Power	\$1,769,040	\$1,769,040
Operating Expenses	\$659,374	\$659,374
Total Margins	\$213,506	\$213,506
KwH's Purchased	25,966,810	25,966,810
Services in Place		3,628
Miles of Line		2,537
Members per Mile		1.43





Elliot and Janaye Rayman at their second annual Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser.

One Lineman's After-hours Outreach

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Across the state, linemen are charged with keeping South Dakota's power going. It's a big responsibility: troubleshooting electrical systems, operating heavy equipment, and maintaining power lines. These workers are frequently asked to navigate high voltage and confront dangerous challenges in all kinds of extreme weather. In the face of these challenges, it takes a truly community-minded individual to ensure the community's lights stay on. Many of these crucial workers demonstrate their commitment to their community daily, both during and outside of work hours.

Butte Electric Journeyman Lineman Elliot Rayman, who has been with the cooperative for seven years, serves as just one example of an electric cooperative employee who has pulled extra hours for his local community of Spearfish, S.D. In addition to his role as a lineman, Elliot wears many hats in his community beyond just the hard hat of a co-op employee. He is a veteran of the National Guard, having served a deployment overseas. Elliot and his wife, Janaye, are also deeply involved in their community as the owners of Barefoot Fitness, a gym in the Spearfish community. Janaye, a cancer survivor, operates the gym and is an integral part of their community efforts.

Janaye and Elliot purchased Barefoot Fitness in 2018, fulfilling Janaye's long-standing dream of owning a gym. Shortly after their purchase, the couple learned that Janaye's cancer, previously in remission, had metastasized into Stage 4 breast cancer.

"In 2020, I had reoccurrence everywhere – brain, lungs, liver, bones," said Janaye. "Since then, I have been on a mission every day to heal and recover. It's also been my goal to help others every single day, day in and day out, and that's

what keeps me going. That's my job and it's what I love to do, so I'm not stopping."

"My wife is an inspiration to many people," added Elliot. "She is the strongest person I know."

Undeterred, Elliot and Janaye decided to press on and use their gym as a platform to engage with their local community. Despite Janaye's ongoing battle with breast cancer, the two started a new Barefoot Fitness tradition – an annual Memorial Day fundraiser to benefit South Dakota's gold star families, the families of fallen soldiers.

"After a few years of owning the gym, we decided we needed to give back to the community, because the community had really been there for us through everything," said Elliot. "We knew we had the ability and the platform to give back to the community through Barefoot Fitness, so we settled on a Memorial Day fundraiser that would benefit gold star families in our state."

This May, Elliot and Janaye will host their fourth Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser. Like previous years, the event will feature local catering from Spearfish businesses, such as Spearfish Brewing Company and Timmons Market. The event will also include an optional community workout for all ages.

"We kick off our day with the National Guard leading the pledge of allegiance and national anthem," said Janaye. "We do a prayer, and then we do our Memorial Day workout. It's a team workout that people are encouraged to complete with their family or friends."

According to Janaye and Elliot, the team workout is about more than just breaking a sweat. Instead, it's about remembering those who gave their lives for this country.

"You always hear about people doing things for veterans, but you never hear about the story on the other side of

that – the families," Janaye said. "A lot of times the family is forgotten so we really want to honor the families that also made a sacrifice."

At the end of the day, Elliot and Janaye said none of their efforts would be possible without the support they have received from the Spearfish community, the veteran community,

and the electric cooperative community.

"Butte Electric and the co-op world have helped us out so much," said Elliot. "The culture of the co-op community is huge: there is brotherhood – it's the way people help each other out. You just can't ask for a better group of people, and that's the same way with the veteran world."



Janaye and Elliot lead a community workout session, challenging participants to complete 300 weighted ball throws.

LINE WORKER'S APPRECIATION



Whatever it takes: Powering life, from a line worker's perspective

LINE WORKERS ARE RANKED AS ONE OF THE 10 MOST DANGEROUS JOBS IN THE COUNTRY.

I'm one of ten line workers at Dakota Energy who work in all weather conditions to make sure our community has the power to live their lives. I love my job. It's hard work, but it's very rewarding. I hope this will give you a better look into what we face and more importantly, why we do it.

THE DANGER

A lot of people know line work is dangerous because we work near high-voltage electricity. Move just the wrong way or lose focus for a split second, and it could be deadly. You have to be aware of your surroundings and the safety of the person next to you. We often work on energized power lines, and you can't always tell they are energized by just looking at them. You're working with an element of danger that requires concentration, and there is no margin for error.

The environment compounds the pressure, because when you need power most is usually when the weather is the worst. I'm often working in storms with rain, wind, extreme heat and cold, in the dark, or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it's dangerous, but that's what we're trained to do.

Many may not realize it, but we undergo years of training before we can officially be called a line worker. We typically start as an apprentice, helping crews with tools and keeping job sites safe, then we transition through the training, which typically spans four years. After an apprenticeship, with more than 8,000 hours of training under our belts, we transition to journeyman line worker status—that's when we're considered officially trained in our field.

But the education is ongoing.

Line workers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

THE PHYSICAL DEMAND

The daily expectations of a line worker are physically demanding, but you won't hear any of us complain about that. I know what I signed up for—loading heavy materials, climbing poles and in and out of buckets. A lot of times, we go places the trucks can't, so I might be hiking to the job site loaded down with 40 pounds of personal protective equipment. But that's the job. Most of us are just glad to be outside.

THE SACRIFICES

There are some sacrifices to being a line worker. I'm often first on the scene of an emergency, seeing things that are devastating like car

accidents, structure fires and damage from severe storms. You don't know what type of situation you're going to face or when you're going to face it. We get calls all hours and in the middle of the night. I've missed a lot of games and family dinners, but my family is very supportive, and it pays off in the end. We make sure there is nothing standing in the way of helping our friends and neighbors get back to normal life.

IT'S WORTH IT

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. My co-op is my second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood. In this work, you have to depend on the person beside you in life-or-death circumstances. It's a culture of trust, teamwork and service. It's all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on for everybody else.

I have a lot of pride in my work. Even when it's cold and wet, I know I'm working to keep people warm. There's a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell "Thank you" from the window after the lights come back on or seeing people flipping the light switches on their porches after an outage is restored. No matter how tired I am or how long I've been working, that feeling always makes it worth it.

Dakota Energy and its employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off too. So, you can trust that we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible— so you can get back to normal life.

To the Top!

Training Stages for Electric Line Workers

Known for their strength and agility, line workers are dedicated to ensuring our communities have reliable power. Safety is always top priority on the job, which is why line workers spend thousands of hours training as they advance their skills.

Here's a look at the career progression of a line worker.

Crew Leader

A crew leader is an advanced position that requires supervising line workers on job sites, coordinating with contractors and directing daily activities for crews.



Journeyman Line Worker

Post-apprenticeship and with roughly 8,000+ hours of training under the belt, journeyman line workers are fully trained in their field. They repair, update and install overhead and underground power lines, as well as other electrical equipment.



Apprentice Line Worker

Before reaching line worker status, they are required to work as an apprentice. Apprentice line workers earn competitive wages while receiving hands-on training and experience in the field. They typically spend four years in their apprenticeship.



Groundperson/Linehelper

Many line workers begin their career as a groundperson, or linehelper. They assist line crews with tools, keeping job sites safe and operating smaller equipment.



Regardless of stage, all line workers continue education and training throughout their career. Training and testing requirements vary from utility to utility.



SDHP Trooper Megan Koch stands by her patrol vehicle. Koch works within the state's Motor Carrier Division. *Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel*

COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

When commercial motor vehicles come into the state of South Dakota, it's the job of the South Dakota Highway Patrol's Motor Carrier Division to ensure the drivers of those vehicles have the necessary paperwork, permits and documents.

The task is one of public safety.

Making sure the carriers are adhering to safe driving practices is just another way to ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be while driving on the state's roadways.

South Dakota Highway Patrol

Trooper Megan Koch is one of the officers who works within the motor carrier division.

"Our main focus is making sure the motor carriers or trucks are safe on the roadways and keeping everybody else safe. It helps them perform their job of carrying their property or passengers across the state lines and within the state. We help make sure that they can do that job," Koch explained.

Mainly, Koch works specifically with commercial motor vehicles that carry over a certain weight or property of monetary value within the state or interstate.

"When we do an inspection on a driver, we're checking a bunch of different things. Weight sometimes is one of them, but not always. It just depends on the situation," Koch said.

"They have to have certain paperwork with them and they are required to follow certain rules. It depends on what they're doing."

The dependent variables include whether a carrier is traveling with goods within the state or going out of the state and how far away they are from the hub, or where they leave every day or go home to every day.

Koch also checks their paperwork to ensure the drivers are within compliance of state law.

"They have to follow certain hours that they can work so that they don't get tired while driving. It's a big thing that we follow for safety," Koch said.

"We also check things like

equipment violations, headlights, taillights, tires, you know, stuff that makes them safe on the roadway and keeps them safe. We'll also check for things such as bad driving behavior, if they're not staying within their own lane, using blinkers, not properly stopping at stop sign – stuff like that. So, if we see something like that, we can initiate an inspection."

Koch, a Plankinton native whose father was a truck driver, said the division is typically checking brake lines and lights.

In South Dakota, there are four main ports of entry. The ports are located along Interstate 29 in Jefferson and Sisseton, and along Interstate 90 in Sioux Falls and Tilford.

Each carrier is issued a "safety score," which is assessed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

"That's based on whether or not they have the proper paperwork, if they're driving within their hours, if they have the proper equipment and whether or not they've received any driving or alcohol violations," Koch said.

If a driver has a high enough safety score, they aren't required by law to stop at a port for inspection.

Overall, it all comes down to keeping the roadways safe for everyone, regardless of what type of vehicle they are driving.

"These rules and laws are in place for a reason. They have to be extra alert and awake while they're driving and that all of their equipment works properly. If you're driving a very heavy, large vehicle, you need excellent brakes. You have to be able to stop in time. That is the main reason we're checking all these things. It helps everybody on the road."

The division also works

with rural electric cooperatives when oversized loads travel along the state's highway system, according to Lieutenant Austin Schmitz, District Four Assistant Commander with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Sometimes oversized loads require that overhead power lines be moved out of the way to let the carrier pass through.

"As a district we do work with a lot of the cooperatives such as East River Electric. We all get together when planning for oversized loads coming through our area," Schmitz said.

"They usually run the route first and let us know what lines they need to move."

That was the case when a massive generator was moved across the state. The generator was so heavy and huge that the truck carrying it could only travel 30 miles per hour. That truck was also equipped with over a hundred tires, Schmitz said.

"That generator came through Watertown a couple of years ago and we've got some more coming in two or

three years," Schmitz said, referring to the multi-million pound machines.

"The planning for those started last year. That equipment will be coming in through the Great Lakes on a ship. They'll pick them up there and then they'll move through our state then Wyoming, Montana, however they can go," Schmitz said.

The truck carrying the heavy equipment is too big to go across most bridges and overpasses, so finding a route that allows the machinery to snake across the country is tricky.

While moving huge pieces of machinery can be one of the more interesting parts of the job, it's the flexibility of the job that Koch enjoys most.

"I get to pick and choose where I want to go for the day. I get to do something a little bit different every day. Because, I mean, nothing is ever the same," Koch said.

"It's kind of nice to be able to do that and make the day what you want of it."



A SDHP officer has the latest technology at his or her fingertips to ensure trucks on South Dakota roads are operating safely. Photo Credit: South Dakota Highway Patrol

Fun and Unique Places to Stay in South Dakota

Scott Waltman

South Dakota is known as the land of infinite variety, and for good reason.

From the Black Hills to the Badlands to the rolling East River prairies and from scorching heat to bitter cold, South Dakota covers a wide swath of geography, weather and activities.

That carries over to places to stay across the state.

There are plenty of fun and unique Airbnb and Vrbo options in South Dakota with something to please everybody who doesn't need the hustle, bustle and traffic of a major metropolitan area. Not surprisingly, some of the best options are near water. Others are remote for folks who want to unplug for a few days, while some are near farms and ranches and offer the opportunity to help with modest chores, if visitors so choose.

Here is a look at some of the more distinctive and interesting staycation options in South Dakota.

Lookout Loft Treehouse near Valley Springs

How about planning a stay in a treehouse? That's possible with the Lookout Loft Treehouse near Valley Springs. Two decks, a fire pit, a hot tub and 360-degree views more than make up for any lack of space for a guest or two looking for a getaway that sets itself apart from most others. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Wrap-around deck
- Pillow-top mattress
- Hot tub

- Propane fire pit
- Kitchenette
- Air conditioning and heat

Mansfield Micro-Cabin

In the heart of the pheasant belt, this small Escape Vista trailer is ideal for hunters seeking for South Dakota's state bird or those who just want to escape. No city lights, no traffic, no interruptions. Just peaceful prairie surroundings with easy access to top-notch hunting. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Queen bed
- Full bath
- Patio
- Kitchen
- Backyard

Log cabin in Vanocker Canyon

There's a lot to like about this custom-built log cabin that's surrounded by the Black Hills National Forest on three sides. With 1,300 square feet, it's roomy and sleeps as many as eight guests. There's a deck, patio and hot tub, and the cabin is settled on 40 acres between Nemo and Sturgis. There's easy access to ATV trails and nearby golf courses. Take in the local history knowing Gen. George Custer camped in the canyon during the summer of 1847. This rental is available through Vrbo.

Amenities

- Gourmet kitchen
- 60-inch high-definition TV
- Deck and patio
- Log pool table
- Luxury bath
- Propane grill



Cabin over water on the prairie near Philip

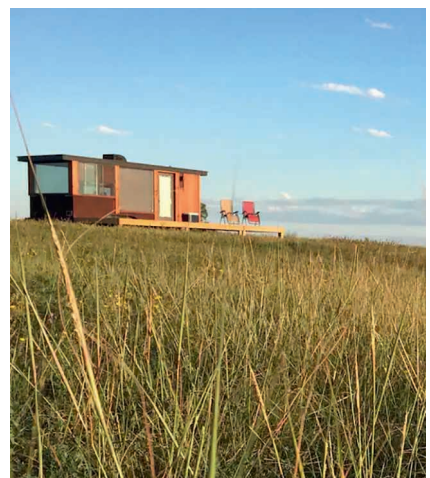
- Fireplace and fire pit
- Washer and dryer

Dennis Ranch near Red Owl

Settle in and enjoy a working cattle ranch that's a century old at the Dennis Ranch. Take a personal tour led by your hosts. Go for a hike, search for arrowheads and dinosaur bones or just enjoy nature and bird-watching. For an extra fee, guests can watch or help with day-to-day ranch work. Those who can ride horses can hop on and ride alongside working cowboys and ranchers. Visitors will stay in a house with the hosts, who will happily share the history of the land and ranch.

Amenities

- Two bedrooms
- Dedicated workspace
- Wi-Fi
- Washer and dryer
- Fire pit
- Shared patio



Mansfield Micro-Cabin



The Still House near Rapid City

The Still House near Rapid City

How's a tent with an attached deck sound for a unique option? That's what The Still House offers. Visitors won't exactly be roughing it with sleeping bags on the ground. The 16-foot-by-13-foot wall tent is more like luxury camping near the Black Hills. A heated shower is attached and there's a private, odor-free, environmentally friendly "outhouse" just a few steps away. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Wood-burning fireplace
- Private deck
- Barbecue grill and outdoor kitchen
- Fire pit
- Outdoor shower
- Outdoor furniture and dining area
- Hammock

37-foot recreational vehicle near Hot Springs

If you don't have your own RV, but you're willing to stay in one, here's something to consider. This large RV offers a few extras, including a beautiful patio overlook and a hot tub. The Evans Plunge mineral springs are just a 15-minute drive away. This rental is available via Vrbo.

Amenities

- Seven beds, including three bunk beds
- One full bath
- Private property with an overlook view of Hot Brook Canyon

- Propane fire pit
- Hot tub available upon request
- Mountain view

Cabin over water on the prairie near Philip

Relax and enjoy in this locally constructed prairie home that sits along the bank of a small dam. Don't expect the bells and whistles offered by a top-end motel room. This is a place for people who enjoy nature and the outdoors. Hop in a kayak and row away a portion of the day while getting a little exercise. This rental is available via Airbnb.

Amenities

- Four queen beds
- 43-inch TV
- Private patio
- Kayak
- Grill
- Fire pit

The Lodge at Broken Arrow Farms near Pierre

If you have a big gathering and need lots of room, The Lodge is worth considering. It's huge. The nine bedrooms can accommodate as many as 28 guests, and there are eight and a half bathrooms. Need a place for a family reunion,

team-building event or an upscale base for fishing or hunting? You've found it. Just northeast of Pierre, the waters of the Missouri River are nearby and easy to access. This rental is available via Vrbo.

Amenities

- Pool table
- Bluetooth sound system
- Patio
- Four king beds, 10 queen beds
- Fire pit
- Barbecue

Deep Snow near Terry Peak Ski Area

This is a stop for folks who love snow skiing, but it makes for a great summer stay, too, with plenty of hiking options. Terry Peak Ski Area is not even 1,000 feet away, so don't forget to pack your gear. There are no shortage of other options, either, with the history and casinos of Deadwood nearby and the entire Black Hills area as a possible playground. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Fully equipped kitchen
- Hot tub
- Wi-Fi
- Patio
- Grill



Log cabin in Vanocker Canyon



APRIL 5-7, 2024
PBR: Unleash the Beast
Denny Sanford
PREMIER Center
Sioux Falls, 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.

MARCH 30
BHEC Community Easter Egg Hunt
 10 a.m.
 Hermosa Baseball Fields
 Hermosa, SD

MARCH 31
Easter Sunday Sunrise Celebration
 7 a.m.
 Mount Rushmore National Monument
 Keystone, SD

APRIL 2
Clay-Union Electric Ribbon Cutting & Open House
 3 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
 31321 SD Hwy. 19
 Vermillion, SD

APRIL 5
A Night at the Races fundraiser for Safe Place of Eastern SD
 6:30 p.m.
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 5-7
71st Annual Hayes Play: Under a Cowboy Moon
 7 p.m.
 Hayes Community Hall
 Hayes, SD

APRIL 12-14
The Farmer's Daughter 19th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 13
Front Porch 605 Shop Hop
 9 a.m.
 Groton, SD

APRIL 14
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 20
Healthy Kids Day
 10 a.m.
 Liberty Center YMCA
 Box Elder, SD

APRIL 20
Groton Firemen's Spring Social
 7 p.m.
 Groton Fire Station
 Groton, SD

APRIL 21
Fiddle & Popular Song
 2 p.m.
 Gayville Hall
 Gayville, SD

APRIL 26
Mitchell Technical College Alumni Cornhole Tournament
 6:30 p.m.
 World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 27
66th Annual Lions Pancake Jamboree
 7 a.m.
 Masonic Hall
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 27
Spaghetti Feed & Silent Auction for Black Hills Raptor Center
 4:30 p.m.
 Canyon Lake United Methodist Church
 Rapid City, SD

MAY 5
Opening Day
 Historic Prairie Village
 Madison, SD

MAY 11
Opening Day
 1880 Train
 Hill City, SD

MAY 18
Booth Day
 10 a.m.
 D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery
 Spearfish, SD

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