



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

DAKOTA ENERGY
NOVEMBER 2024 VOL. 25 NO. 7

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Local art teacher's mural commemorates dedicated Burke lineman.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Rural Murals

Small Communities Showcase History and Culture Through Mural Art

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Understanding Electric Demand



Jeff Gilbert
Manager, Member Services

WHAT IS ELECTRICAL DEMAND?

Electric demand refers to the amount of electrical power members require at any given time. It is a critical aspect of energy management and is measured in kilowatts (kW). Understanding electric demand helps cooperatives plan their energy supply, maintain system reliability, and provide affordable rates to their members.

HOW IS DEMAND CALCULATED OR DETERMINED?

Demand is measured in kilowatts and not in kilowatt-hours. A kilowatt-hour (kWh) is a unit of energy and it represents the amount of electricity used over time. On the other hand, demand refers to the instantaneous power consumption at any given moment, typically measured in kilowatts (kW).

For better understanding let's use an example of a water heater. The water heater has a power rating of 3 kW. This means that it consumes 3 kilowatts of power while operating. For this given day, the water heater ran for 2 hours. Power = 3 kW (demand) and Time = 2 hours. To calculate energy consumption the following equation is used: Energy (kWh) = 3 kW X 2 hours = 6 kWh.

Demand (3 kW) is the instantaneous power that the water heater draws when it is on. Energy consumption (6 kWh) is the total energy used by the water heater when it operates for two hours.

WHAT BENEFIT DOES THE COOPERATIVE RECEIVE BY CHARGING THE MEMBER DEMAND?

The more members that manage their demand, less is needed to secure more generation and build facilities such as transmission lines, substations, etc. Managing the growing demand will help keep rates low. By understanding your peak demand, you can better manage your electrical usage.

HOW CAN A MEMBER REDUCE THEIR DEMAND?

The best way to reduce demand is to consider how and when you use all electric devices in your home or business. Spreading out the time you use electrical devices will help lower demand.

UNDERSTANDING DEMAND

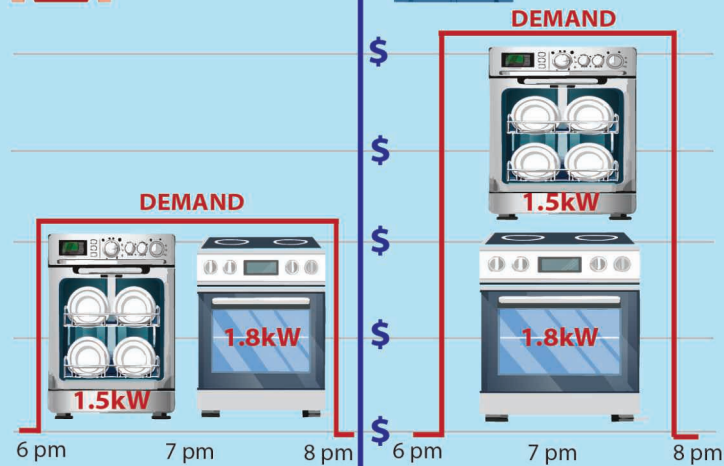
As more appliances in your home run at the same time, your demand for power increases. The members in the following example use the same amount of energy to run their appliances, but each member is putting a different demand on the electric grid.



Sue cooks her food for one hour, then runs the dishwasher the next hour.



Dennis runs the dishwasher during the same hour he cooks his food.



Sue:
Energy: 3.3 kWh
Demand: 1.8 kW

Average Appliance Use (60 min runtime)
Range: 1500 Watts = 1.5 kWh/1.5 kW
Dishwasher: 1800 Watts - 1.8 kWh/1.8 kW

Dennis:
Energy: 3.3 kWh
Demand: 3.3 kW

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

DAKOTA ENERGY

(USPS No. 018-949)

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Manager of Finance & Administration: Eric Hasart

Manager of Human Resources & Communications: Jodene Decker

Manager of Member Services: Jeff Gilbert

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Olivia Resel received a check for \$250 from Dakota Energy Cooperative.

TOUCHSTONE ENERGY SCHOLAR OF THE WEEK

Miller High School Senior Olivia Resel honored for her accomplishments.

The first Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week of the new school year is Olivia Resel, a Miller High School senior. She was selected for the week of September 15-24, 2024.

Olivia was excited to receive this honor, which validated that all her hard work had finally paid off. All the long hours of studying and balancing homework and sports have helped her to reach her potential.

Olivia has been a captain of the volleyball team for three seasons and a basketball videographer. She has also been part of band and chorus.

Academically, Olivia is a member of the National Honor Society and a Regent Scholar. Her other activities include the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the Catholic Youth Organization, and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. During the summer, Olivia hits the pool with the Miller Swim Club.

Miller High School counselor Courtney Van Zee nominated Olivia. She stated that from day one in high school, Olivia's been at the top of her class. She did not have to worry about Olivia because she always expected her to do the job quietly.

Olivia is enjoying her last year of high school and is planning to go to college at USD to study dental hygiene.

Olivia's parents are Dakota Energy members Jason and Marissa Resel of Wessington.

HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY TIPS

Rachel Dotson

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture

It's the time of year when many families will be gathering around the dining room table savoring the flavors of their favorite holiday meals. Check out how to keep your holiday meals safe this season with a few tips from Land-grant University Extension Services.

Shopping Safely

Before shopping, check the ingredients you have at home and verify their expiration date. It is helpful to prepare a shopping list before going shopping. Make sure you have sufficient room in your refrigerator for all purchased food items. Cold foods that need refrigeration or freezing should be purchased last.

Oklahoma State University Extension advises while shopping, keep raw meat, poultry and seafood away from other foods in your grocery cart. Placing raw meat, poultry and seafood in plastic bags can be a good method to separate them from other foods. Ask a cashier to place your raw meat, poultry and seafood in a separate bag.

Safe Food Handling Practices

- When it comes to preparing meats, washing poultry and meats at home is no longer necessary and is not recommended by the USDA. University of Connecticut Extension recommends thawing meat in a refrigerator or in a cold-water bath.
- Defrost meats in the refrigerator for approximately 24 hours, depending on size, or submerge meat in its original package in cold water and allow 30 minutes of thawing time for every pound.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt. Even wash prepackaged greens to minimize bacterial contamination.
- While preparing food, use two cutting boards: one for preparing raw meat, poultry and fish, and the other for cutting fruits and vegetables, cooked food or preparing salads.
- Don't forget to also wash hands with soap and water before and after handling food.

Storing Leftovers

Bacteria grows when the food is left out for more than

two hours at room temperature. Divide leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension advises reheating cooked leftovers to 165 degrees. Use a food thermometer to measure temperature accurately. Sauces, soups and gravies should be reheated by bringing them to a boil. When microwaving leftovers, make sure there are no cold spots in food where bacteria can survive.

Multistate Approach for Food Safety

Food-borne illnesses affect 48 million Americans each year. Research and education have led to major advances in food safety; however, challenges remain. Many methods that use heat or chemicals to ensure food safety are not 100% effective and can damage food color, texture, flavor and nutrients.

Researchers at 32 Land-grant Universities are collaborating on innovative solutions for food safety and quality.

Their work is helping meet consumer demand for minimally processed, additive-free food items with longer shelf lives, higher nutrient content and less potential to cause food-borne illnesses.



Farm Safety "Always Be Alert"

Clyde Manas, Age 8

Clyde Manas warns farmers and ranchers to be careful with their equipment around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Clyde! Clyde's parents are Terry and Lacey Manas, members of Bon Homme Yankton 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.

Holiday DELIGHTS

EASY CRANBERRY SALAD

Ingredients:

12 oz. fresh cranberries
 20 oz. crushed pineapple, drained (reserve juice)
 1/2 cup pineapple juice (from reserved juice)
 2 cups sugar
 3 oz. pkg cranberry jello (may also use cherry jello)
 1/4 cup maraschino cherries, finely chopped

Method

Boil cranberries with pineapple juice and sugar. When berries pop, remove from heat. Add dry jello, pineapple and cherries. Refrigerate. Keeps for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

Elaine Rieck
 Harrisburg, S.D.

CAKE BATTER DIP

Ingredients:

8 oz. softened cream cheese
 8 oz. thawed cool whip
 1/3-2/3 cup milk
 1 box Funfetti cake mix (unprepared)
 Sprinkles

Method

Add whipped topping and cream cheese to a large mixing bowl and beat with a hand mixer until smooth and creamy.

Add cake mix and 1/3 cup milk and stir with a wooden spoon until combined. Dip will be very thick, so add more milk, a little at a time, until you get to your desired consistency. I used about 2/3 cup for my dip.

Garnish with sprinkles and serve with whatever dippers you prefer (graham crackers, animal crackers, vanilla wafers, pretzels, fresh fruit, etc.)

Kayla Beaner
 Centerville, S.D.

OPEN-FACED HOT TURKEY SANDWICHES

Ingredients:

1 container (12 oz.) turkey gravy
 8 slices cooked turkey
 1 loaf baguette bread, (12 in. long)
 1 cup fresh spinach leaves
 1 cup prepared stuffing, warmed
 1/2 cup cranberry sauce

Method

Cook gravy and turkey slices in large skillet on medium-high heat until heated through.

Cut baguette in half lengthwise, then cut each piece in half. Place bread, cut-side up, onto four serving plates.

Top bread evenly with spinach, turkey, stuffing, any remaining gravy and cranberry sauce.

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

Stay Safe on Winter Roads



Winter months can bring snow, ice and windy conditions, creating hazards for drivers. It is important to be prepared in case there is an accident.



Safe
Electricity.org®

Before a winter storm

Perform seasonal maintenance on your car to ensure:

- Batteries are charged.
- Tires have sufficient tread.
- Spare tire is inflated.
- Jumper cables are in good condition.
- A winterized car emergency kit.
- Windshield wipers work.
- Headlights, brake lights and turn signals work.
- At least a half-full tank of gas.

Prevent frostbite and hypothermia

If you are stranded in your car after an accident, observe the following precautions:

- Do not stay in one position for too long.
- Stay awake.
- Do not overexert yourself to avoid strain on your heart.
- Watch for signs such as a change in skin color, numbness, shivering, slurred speech, loss of coordination or confusion.

Winter storms and power lines

Always treat sagging and downed power lines as energized and dangerous. Keep at least 50 feet away from the area.

- If your vehicle hits a power pole, stay inside.
- Contact 9-1-1 and wait for the power to be shut off by utility workers.
- If your vehicle is on fire, jump clear with feet together, avoiding contact with both the vehicle and ground simultaneously.
- Shuffle or "bunny hop" away from the vehicle, keeping feet together to prevent different electric currents through your body.
- Never drive over a downed power line, which can cause additional hazards.



AUGUST 2024

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, August 27, 2024, with Directors Baruth, Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Nemeč, Raschke, Schaefer, and Wangsness present. Manager Felderman and Employees Decker, Gilbert, Hasart, Picek, Rakness, and Zomer were present.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly energy sales and revenue
- Basin Electric Annual Meeting
- Crow Creek Resolution
- TransCanada
- Member meeting for future service in Hand County
- GHDC
- CRC
- Annual Meeting information
- Supply chain

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- Financial reports for July
- Capital credit allocation options
- Proposed 2025 Capital and construction budget
- Pay-by-Phone number change
- Form 990
- 2024 Capital budget recap
- KRTA ratio review

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance and retirement activities
- Two mile overhead rebuild
- Pole changes

- Service rebuilds
- Glacial Lakes Energy fall shutdown
- Installed regulators in Highmore substation north circuit
- Dakota Provisions transformer change due to oil sample result
- Ree Heights line

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load control savings
- National Night Out
- Load control receivers

HUMAN RESOURCES/ COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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

- 2025 Benefits premiums and renewal information
- Beadle County Achievement Days safety presentations
- First Responders training
- Keaton Zomer job shadowed the line workers and electricians

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Miller server room
- Annual meeting review
- Website/Cybersecurity

BOARD ACTION

An election of officers was held with the following results:

- President - Darrell Raschke
- Vice-President - Nick Nemeč
- Secretary - Tom Baruth
- Treasurer - Brian Bonebright

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports presented
- Approved a date change for the September board meeting to Tuesday, September 24
- Approved to appoint Baum as delegate and Wangsness as alternate to the Mid-West Electric Annual Meeting.

BOARD REPORTS

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

Those in attendance reported on the Basin Electric Annual Meeting.

Those in attendance reported on the NRECA Board Leadership course.

Next monthly board meeting is October 22, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. in the Huron office.

Year-to-Date Financial Report

	August-24	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$2,205,380	\$17,448,193
Cost of Power	\$1,602,802	\$12,507,483
Operating Expenses	\$641,583	\$4,930,473
Total Margins	\$151,993	\$939,145
KwH's Purchased	22,310,764	173,533,296
Services in Place		3,628
Miles of Line		2,534
Members per Mile		1.43





RURAL MURALS

Small Communities Showcase History and Culture Through Mural Art

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Lemmon

Visitors from all over the map flock to Lemmon each year to explore the town's plethora of fascinating exhibits, from the Petrified Wood Park to the life-size steampunk-style sculptures by local artist John Lopez.

But of all the town's unique offerings, there's one stand-out exhibit that ties everything together: Boss Cowman Square.

Lopez's life-size metal sculpture of cowboy legend George Edward Lemmon is the focal point of the square. The Boss Cowman clutches the reins of his steampunk stallion, his eyes fixed on the horizon watching for stray cattle.

"Dad Lemmon," as the town's founder is so fondly known among locals, settled the town in 1906 between the Grand River and North Dakota border. It would soon be a stop along the incoming Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, which Dad Lemmon had been recruited to platte westward.

The sculpture is accompanied by a background mural depicting a scene far away from the bustling saloons and general stores of early Lemmon. In the scene, saddled-up cowboys under the careful

watch of the Boss Cowman sculpture guide a meandering herd hundreds of heads long across a river – no problem for Dad Lemmon, whose roundup skills and knowledge of the land were legendary across the West.

In 2015, as Lopez dreamt of what would one day be Boss Cowman Square, he recruited the help of two Nigerian artists, Dotun Popoola and Jonathan Imafidor, to help bring the vision to life.

"We studied a few materials and made sure all the elements were well captured, like the kinds of trees, the way the river looks and the butte in the background," Imafidor recalled about the 2016 project.

One obstacle that posed a challenge for the traveling artists – beside the shock of South Dakota's cold spring weather – was the slight differences between the cattle they knew in Nigeria and the cattle of the American West.

"We are representational artists and we've done a lot of drawings of cows, so we kind of had an idea of what the cattle should look like," Imafidor explained. "But in Lemmon, the kind of cattle that are found in the region are a little different than what we have in Nigeria. I remember when we started painting the cattle ... John Lopez told us, 'I don't think you can find those here.' Then he brought some material for

Cowboys keep a herd of longhorns moving at the bank of the Missouri River. Visitors will notice the sculpture of Dad Lemmon turned around to keep an eye on the progress. *Photo provided by John Lopez.*

us so we were able to see the difference and then we made the corrections."

After about a month of work, the mural was completed and the Boss Cowman Square was unveiled to the public in July 2016.

Burke

In Burke, K-12 art teacher Kate Witt isn't shy about brightening up her community. The mom of four has designed and painted four murals around town, including one depicting the town's beloved utility worker, Rich Bailey.

Rich's wife, Margaret Ann Bailey, commissioned the mural after Rich's passing in 2023. The mural shows the lineman hanging onto a utility pole as he works on the power lines.

"When we came here in 1970, there wasn't a bucket truck or anything," recalled Margaret Ann. "So he climbed everything, whether it was blizzarding or lightning, and he made sure people had electricity."

The mural also features emergency vehicles, as Rich served for decades as a volunteer firefighter and an emergency medical technician. Parked beneath the lines, the rusted white pickup truck Rich drove around town that over the years became synonymous with himself.

"With this mural specifically, I felt I had

a big important job,” Witt said. “This is a man who the town really loves, and I had a big job to make something beautiful that [Margaret Ann] was going to be proud of.”

Witt incorporated her own signature styles into the mural; her white outlines make the lineman’s silhouette stand out against the more geometrically designed Missouri River bluffs and cloudy sunset in the background.

“That’s where I have a little fun, putting in the modern twist and bold colors,” Witt continued. “I put this white line around everything which made some elements almost look like they’re stickers on a wall.”

Since Witt completed the mural last August, it’s become a point of pride for Margaret Ann who says it’s a testament to her husband’s years of dedication to his community.

“There was an older gal here in town, and she called him at 2 o’clock in the morning and said ‘my air conditioner isn’t working and it’s darn hot in my house,’” Margaret Ann recalled.

She said her husband explained that his job was to fix power lines, not air conditioners. Still, he went to flip the breaker on the woman’s fuse box anyway before going back to sleep.

“That’s the kind of guy he was, and I’m proud,” Margaret Ann said.

Tabor

Where in South Dakota can you find roses, ears of corn, a cardinal and Czech kolaches all in one mural?

Only in Tabor, probably.

Commissioned for the town’s 150th anniversary in 2022, the colorful mural on the sidewall of the local library meanders through the community’s history. From the heavy Czech influence of the earliest settlers represented by pastries and roses to the school’s original mascot, the cardinals, Robbie Jelsma worked very intentionally to portray the town in a way only a knowledgeable local artist could.

Growing up in nearby Springfield, Jelsma is no stranger to Tabor and its famous Czech Days, which draws thousands of people from across the country for the three-day celebration.

“I wanted to represent Czech Days and the Czech culture, so I did my own

research,” Jelsma said.

He incorporated roses, which are the national flower of the Czech Republic, as well as the fluffy pastries with fruit in the middle called kolaches.

He also incorporated local history—Tabor’s school mascot was the cardinal before merging with Springfield and Tyndall to form Bon Homme School District.

When he’s not painting murals, Jelsma is a highly sought-after tattoo artist specializing in more realistic styles. For him, the highlights of the Tabor mural is the level of depth and realism he achieved in his roses and clouds.

The hardest part of painting the mural is working with the elements, as there’s a laundry list of work that needs to be done on the surface before any real painting can begin: washing; smoothing; primer.

On top of that, unpredictable Midwestern weather requires a careful eye on the weather radar for any outdoor painting projects, Jelsma said.

“We started about early October so the fall was just getting started, and you never know in South Dakota if the weather is going to hold out or if you’ll get an early snow or strong wind,” he recalled about his three and a half weeks working on the project.

For Jelsma, the finished mural is as big of a point of pride for him, having been selected and commissioned for the work, as it is for the people of Tabor who get to show it off every summer during Czech Days.

“It’s cool I was thought of for the project,” Jelsma said. “It’s an art project that I think just lights everybody up a little bit when you drive down main street and you see something like that in a small town.”



Artist Robbie Jelsma puts the finishing touches on his mural ahead of the 2022 unveiling. Photo provided by Robbie Jelsma.

FIRST RESPONDERS



First responders used a simulated vehicle accident to learn how electricity can add another safety element to their rescue.

FIRST RESPONDER TRAINING

In collaboration with Beadle County Emergency Manager Dave Jensen and SDREA Loss Control Professional Joe Denison, Dakota Energy hosted a First Responder training session. This event was designed to equip the area firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) with the necessary knowledge and skills to handle electrical hazards in emergency situations.

Attendees were provided with a unique and invaluable opportunity to engage in a hands-on learning experience. They were able to navigate a simulated accident scenario in which a car overturned into an electrical transformer and was in contact with overhead lines. This practical exercise was set up in Dakota Energy's training yard.

CEO/General Manager, Chad Felderman stressed the importance of always assuming the line is live and calling the electric utility to

cut the power before approaching the vehicle.

Dakota Energy line workers, who are highly trained to handle such situations, arrived at the scene and played a crucial role in ensuring the safety of all involved. After the power was turned off, they instructed everyone to stay back

until they gave the all-clear, after which firefighters and EMTs were able to use their equipment to safely remove the victims from underneath and inside the car.

Operations Manager, Matt Zomer reviewed the different meters and disconnects. He stated, "Just because a meter is pulled does not mean that the power has been shut off. Calling the electric utility is the only way to ensure the power is off." Manager of Member Services, Jeff Gilbert reviewed how to ensure the power is off



Attendees were able to refresh their skills to remove victims from a vehicle and learn that how the utility needs to be involved as a first step in that process.

if a generator is connected to a structure.

The training ended with a high-voltage safety demonstration led by Line Foreman, Robert Feldhaus and line workers, Stephen Lafreniere and Brennen Brueggeman.

Participating organizations included: Hitchcock Fire Department, Huron Ambulance, Huron Fire Department, Iroquois Fire Department, Ree Heights Fire Department, and Wolsey Fire Department.



DEC Line workers disconnect the power making the accident scene safe to work.



DEC Manager of Member Services Jeff Gilbert explains how to disconnect a generator.



DEC Line Foreman Robert Feldhaus demonstrates the danger of electricity using the high voltage trailer.

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PREPARING FOR WINTER WEATHER

Jacob Boyko

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As we near the frigid winter months of South Dakota, it's important for you and loved ones to stay ready for an emergency.

Even though power outages are rare, a loss of electricity can affect modern lives in critical ways; In an instant, you may no longer be able to heat your home, prepare food or access critical information.

It's crucial to prepare for power outages and other general emergencies by keeping supplies in both your home and vehicles as well as making sure you and your loved ones have a plan in place.

Brad Reiners, director of communications for the state Department of Public Safety, encourages South Dakotans to stock

up on essentials like food, water and batteries prior to the winter months.

"Make sure you have enough food and water for at least three days, and each person in the household should have one gallon of water per day," Reiners said.

State DPS recommends keeping non-perishable food items like pasta, canned goods and nutritious snacks that don't require refrigeration and don't need to be heated or cooked before consumption.

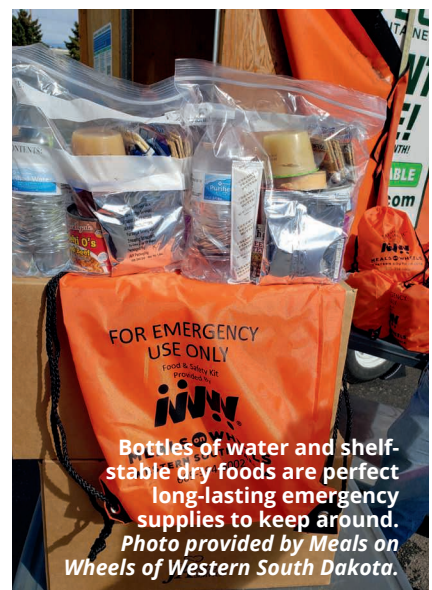
"Never use gas powered generators, grills or portable stoves indoors, as they can produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide," Reiner added.

As you prepare, remember to be proactive about your health. Have your medical prescriptions refilled in advance of a severe storm and keep a battery bank charged so you can power your cell phone in case you need to

access telehealth services, emergency services or access critical information.

In your car, keep warm blankets, winter clothes, snacks, a shovel, flashlight and a set of jumper cables in case you get stranded.

"It's also advisable to check your tires for proper inflation and tread, and make sure your windshield wipers are in good condition with freeze-resistant washer fluid," Reiners added.



Bottles of water and shelf-stable dry foods are perfect long-lasting emergency supplies to keep around.
Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.

If you plan to rely on a generator or wood burning stove for heat if the power goes out, check beforehand that your equipment is in safe working order, and you have enough fuel to last several days.

Keeping warm clothes, blankets and sleeping bags at the ready can be lifesaving if you're unable to heat your home.

Meals on Wheels here to help with Blizzard Bags

For senior citizens, some of this advice is easier said than done. Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota understands that better than anyone, and they have come up with a solution.

"Blizzard Bags" have been a part of the organization's lineup for over 20 years now and include some of the essentials seniors need when hunkering down for severe weather.

"We deliver shelf-stable meals for seniors who, especially in rural areas, may not have access to food for a while if their electricity goes out," said Jennifer Paschke, regional manager for Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota. "We provide five meals in those bags they can use during a loss of power or being stranded in their homes due to weather."

The food supplied is generally items that don't require a heat source, like packages of tuna salad and crackers, protein bars or cans with a pop-top seal so no can opener is required, Paschke said.

The bags also include water and other donated supplies like batteries and flashlights from local businesses, including some rural electric cooperatives.

"The biggest success story I know in

my area is a couple of years ago when they had tornados in Philip," Paschke remembered. "The water we provided [in the blizzard bags] were some of the only sources of water some of those people had. Just having that food and water can be a godsend for some people."

Blizzard Bags are available to seniors age 60 and up who are a part of the Meals on Wheels program. The bags cost roughly \$20 to put together, according to Pascke, and are funded in part by community donors. The organization provides home deliveries for seniors living in both cities and rural areas.

Anyone interested in getting service or helping with the cause can contact Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota at (605) 394-6002.



Meals On Wheels of Western South Dakota provides blizzard bags to seniors in case weather conditions affect normal delivery. Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.



EMPOWERING THE FUTURE

The Impact of Local Electric Cooperative Youth Programs

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It is a core tenet of rural electric cooperatives to inform the public – particularly young people – about the nature and benefits of cooperation. Electric cooperatives have a long history of engaging youth in South Dakota through cooperative-sponsored youth

experiences, including trips like the annual Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., Youth Excursion in North Dakota, and Youth Leadership Conference at the annual NRECA PowerXchange conference.

These opportunities provide many South Dakota students with their first travel experiences outside the state. For

Youth Tour participants Mallory Gant, left, and Madison Robertson pose for a photo at the FDR Memorial in Washington, D.C.
Photo by Frank Turner.

many, it's their first time flying on an airplane. Students not only gain valuable insights into rural electric cooperatives and energy, but they also learn basic life skills, such as how to navigate a city or use public transportation.

Former SDREA communications director Brenda Kleinjan, now a communications specialist with Sioux Valley Energy, was the driving force behind many of these programs through her 20 years of youth engagement for South Dakota cooperatives. From 2000 to 2019, Kleinjan coordinated and facilitated the many youth trips sponsored by electric cooperatives, leading hundreds of students to explore the impact of rural electricity on Capitol Hill and energy generation in North

Dakota over the course of her career.

According to Kleinjan, many alumni of the electric cooperative youth programs have gone on to achieve great things.

“These trips are an investment that our co-ops are making for not only our youth and their families, but our state and regions’ future,” Kleinjan said. “We are tapping into the drive of our most energetic teenagers with the idea of encouraging them to explore their world, their communities and their future.”

Youth Tour

Since 1963, South Dakota electric cooperatives have sponsored youth trips to Washington, D.C., each June for the annual Youth Tour. This year, Mallory Gant was one of 36 students from South Dakota who participated in a weeklong exploration of the nation’s capital, learning about the cooperative network and rural electrification. Sponsored by Charles Mix Electric, Gant visited the many memorials and monuments of the capital city and met South Dakota’s congressmen in the U.S. Capitol to ask questions.

Gant, who lives on farm and ranch outside Platte, made the most of her time by making new friends while experiencing the history of sites like Ford’s Theater, Mount Vernon and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

“It was definitely an eye-opening experience – to be able to fly on a plane and visit these huge cities,” Gant said. “A big part of the trip for me was meeting the friends I made along the way. Since the trip, I’ve seen them at volleyball and FFA events. When you go on the trip, you are out there with people you don’t know, so you are forced to get out of your comfort zone and meet new people. I think it sparked a lot of friendships for me.”

Youth Leadership Council

In addition to Youth Tour, Gant was selected as this year’s South Dakota representative for the annual Youth

Leadership Council. As the state’s sole representative, Gant will join 43 other young leaders at the NRECA PowerXchange Conference in Atlanta from March 7-12 next spring.

“From the first moment of being a representative, I had to introduce myself to a room of almost 2,000 kids,” Gant said. “It really put me on the spot, but it was really cool to be able to know I was capable of doing that.”

Leading up to the event, Gant is working to complete a creative and engaging community project by setting up an agriculture-focused electric safety booth at the upcoming South Dakota 4-H Land and Range Judging Contest with Charles Mix Electric, her sponsoring electric cooperative.

Gant will also prepare and deliver a short speech at a Charles Mix Electric meeting for the opportunity to be chosen as the 2025 Youth Leadership Council National Spokesperson. If chosen, Gant will deliver a speech in Atlanta Georgia at the PowerXChange Conference.

“I think the whole experience has made me a more vocal and outgoing person,” Gant said.

Youth Excursion

Erica Fitzhugh is one of many alumni from the rural electric youth program whose life has been shaped by her experience traveling to North Dakota to learn about electricity generation.

In 2005, Northern Electric sponsored Fitzhugh, then a high school junior, on a trip to tour energy infrastructure in Beulah, North Dakota.

Fitzhugh vividly recalls visiting Basin Electric Power Cooperative’s complex, where electricity is generated and transmitted to homes and businesses, as well as the Freedom Mine, the nation’s largest lignite coal mine by deliveries.

“I remember standing in the bucket of the dragline for a photo and thinking it was an amazing experience,” Fitzhugh said.

Her connection to the local electric cooperative continued after the trip. As a member of 4-H, Fitzhugh attended monthly meetings hosted at Northern Electric’s office. Each year, she would write thank-you letters to Jim Moore, Northern Electric’s CEO at the time, for supporting their program and hosting their meetings.

Years later, Northern Electric awarded Fitzhugh The Northern Electric Scholarship when she was a high school senior. That investment paid off when Moore later hired Fitzhugh as the Northern Electric director of communications.

“Jim Moore was the person who hired me, and I had handwritten him thank you letters in high school for the 4-H club,” said Fitzhugh, now a communications specialist for Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

Interested in Local Youth Opportunities?

Whether it’s scholarships, Youth Tour or Youth Excursion, there are several youth events and opportunities catered to young electric co-op members that continue to thrive. Please contact your local co-op to learn more about these ongoing youth opportunities.



NOV. 22-JAN.5
 Winter Wonderland
 Nightly - 5 p.m.-12 a.m.
 Falls Park
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-275-6060

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.

OCT. 26
Mortimer's Monstrous Halloween
 3 p.m.-6 p.m.
 Oakwood Lakes State Park
 605-627-5441

NOV. 2
Wall Community Craft Show
 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
 Wall, SD
 605-279-2665

NOV. 2
Fall Fling Craft Show
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Dakota Christian School
 Corsica, SD
 605-366-7940

NOV. 8-9
Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show
 Friday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-332-6004

NOV. 9
Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival
 4 p.m.-8 p.m.
 Main Street
 Deadwood, SD

NOV. 9
Christmas at the Homestead
 12 p.m.-4 p.m.
 North Sioux City, SD
 605-232-0873

NOV. 9-10
Zonta Craft & Vendor Show
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Ramkota Hotel
 Pierre, SD
 605-280-1511

NOV. 16
Festival of Trees
 6 p.m.
 Lead, SD
 605-584-2067

NOV. 23-24
Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival
 Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Aberdeen, SD

NOV. 27, 29-30
Christmas Trees & Greenery
 Wed. 5 p.m.-9 p.m.
 Fri.-Sat. 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 6B Seed & Supplies
 39525 220 St. Alpena, SD

NOV. 30
A Hometown Christmas Market
 2 p.m.-6 p.m.
 Main Street
 Elk Point, SD

NOV. 29-DEC. 29
Trees & Trains Exhibit at SD State Railroad Museum
 Hill City, SD
 605-665-3636

DEC. 1
A Christmas Carol
 2 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-624-2859

DEC. 5
Christmas on the Prairie
 4 p.m.
 Main Street
 Miller, SD

DEC. 6-8, 13-15
A Sherlock Carol
 Dec. 6-7, 13-14, 7:30 p.m.
 Dec. 8, 15, 2:30 p.m.
 Corson, SD
 mightycorson.com

DEC. 7
KJAM Parade of Lights
 5:30 p.m.
 Madison, SD
 605-256-4514

DEC. 7
Santa Day
 2 p.m.
 Stockholm Buggy Museum
 Stockholm, SD
 605-467-3940

DEC. 7-31
Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens
 5 p.m.-9 p.m.
 Brookings, SD
 605-688-6707

DEC. 14
Parade of Lights
 Wessington, SD
 605-359-2049

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