A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

DAKOTA ENERGY
APRIL 2025 VOL. 25 NO. 12

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

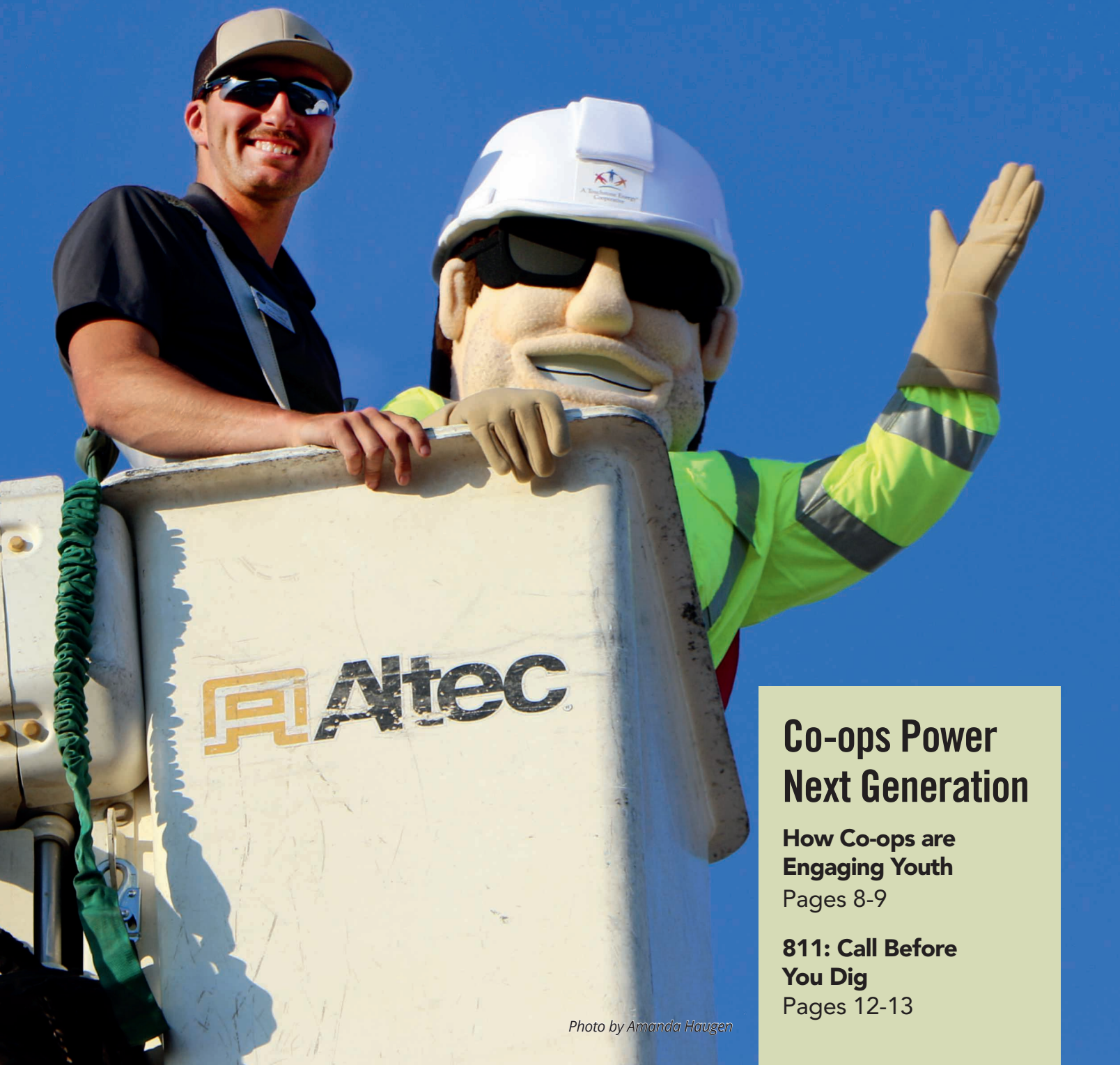

Photo by Amanda Haugen

Co-ops Power Next Generation

Chad Felderman
CEO/GM

Electricity is essential for every aspect of daily life – so essential that we rarely think about how it's produced and delivered to our homes. You might be surprised to learn that behind the scenes, a network of experts is working daily to anticipate how much electricity you need before you even use it. We are all connected to the electric grid, so ensuring the right amount of electricity for all involves a complex process of forecasting energy demand, planning for capacity, and securing enough supply to meet Americans' needs.

POWERFUL SOURCES

First, electricity must be generated at a power plant using either traditional sources, such as coal, natural gas or nuclear energy, or from renewable sources, such as solar, wind or hydropower. At Dakota Energy Electric Cooperative, we work closely with East River Electric Power Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative, our local wholesale power partners, to secure enough electricity for our communities, using a diverse mix of energy sources to generate the power we deliver to your home or business. By maintaining a diverse energy mix of coal, natural gas, wind and hydropower, Basin Electric Power Cooperative has options to ensure reliable power at a competitive cost. On a larger scale, electricity supply and demand across the country are managed through a market that includes long-term planning agreements, where electricity is bought and sold just like other common goods and services. Because Dakota Energy works with our wholesale power partner, which is also a cooperative, we can pool resources and expertise to deliver affordable power to our local communities. Electricity supply changes throughout the day because demand fluctuates based on consumers' needs. For example, Dakota Energy knows that we need to ensure more electricity in the mornings when you're starting your day, and in the evenings when you're cooking dinner, running appliances and watching TV. Demand also increases when weather patterns change, such as extremely warm or cold temperatures.

MANAGING SUPPLY AND DEMAND ACROSS THE GRID

Across the country, other electric utilities are managing the same task of balancing supply and demand, which is why we have a larger network of key players in place to ensure enough power is delivered across the grid. In most cases, the amount of electricity generated and how much is sent to specific areas are coordinated and monitored by regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and independent system operators (ISOs). Dakota Energy's RTO is the Southwest Power Pool (SPP). In some areas, individual electric utilities perform these tasks. SPP acts as a traffic controller for the electric grid. They forecast when you, your neighbors and communities across a large region will need more power. These organizations take measured steps to ensure there's enough supply to meet demand.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the energy sector undergoes rapid change, it is important for all consumers to understand the basics of electricity supply and demand. Electricity use in the U.S. is expected to rise to record highs this year and next, with the demand for electricity expected to at least double by 2050. At the same time, energy policies push the early retirement of always-available generation sources, which will compromise reliable electricity. Dakota Energy remains committed to providing affordable, reliable energy to the members we serve. That is why we are preparing now for increased demand and other challenges that could compromise our local electric supply. Managing the balancing act of electricity supply and demand is a complex job, which is why we have a network of utilities, power plant operators and energy traffic managers to direct the electricity we need and keep the electric grid balanced.

DAKOTA ENERGY
COOPERATIVE, INC.
HURON, SD 57350

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

DAKOTA ENERGY

(USPS No. 018-949)

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Manager of Human Resources & Communications: Jodene Decker

Manager of Member Services: Jeff Gilbert

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

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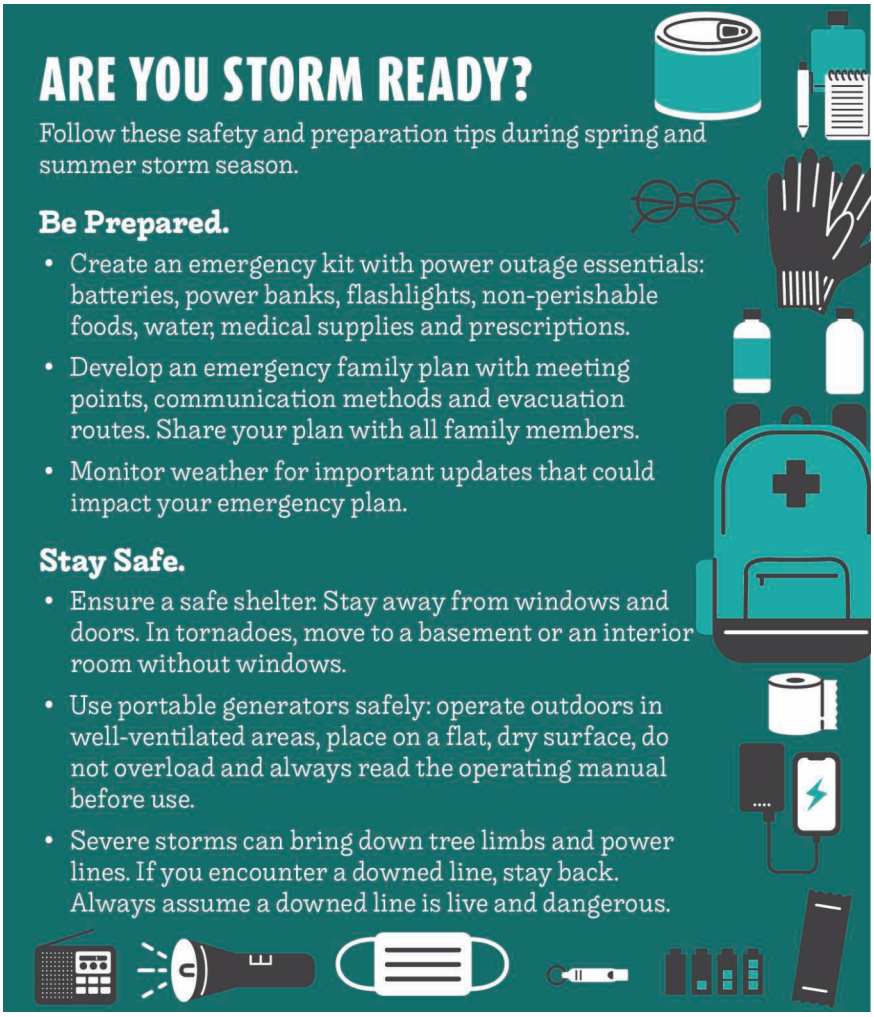


Distracted Driving

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.

Teens

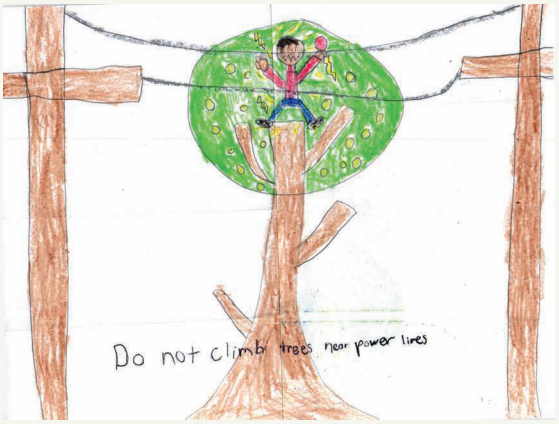
Teens can be the best messengers with their peers, so we encourage them to speak up when they see a friend driving while distracted, to have their friends sign a pledge to never drive distracted, to become involved in their local Students Against Destructive Decisions chapter, and to share messages on 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.

2025 Construction Projects in Place

Matt Zomer
Operations
Manager

Five construction projects are in place for 2025. The projects will consist of replacing five miles of aging three-phase overhead to underground, adding eight miles of three-phase west of Miller to help with loading and reliability, converting two miles of aging single-phase overhead to underground south of Huron and updating aging underground wire south of St. Lawrence for service reliability.

With the construction plan, new services, pole changes and service rebuilds, it will be another busy year!

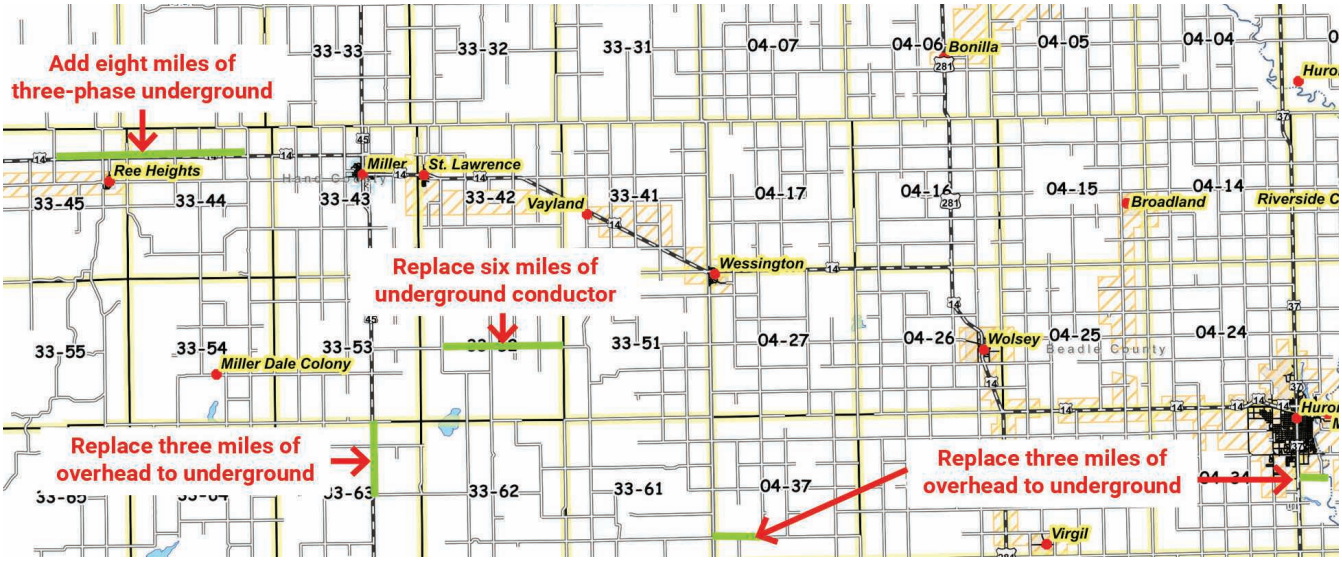
Dakota Energy's Work Plan is a detailed summary of maintenance and construction projects including potential projects for the next four years with budget cost, location, and equipment needed to complete project. The Work Plan takes months of gathering information, determining areas where load growth is taking place or system upgrades are needed for system reliability.

The 2025 construction plan was submitted to the DEC Board of Directors and was approved by the Board last fall. These projects come with a predicted cost of $1.6 million.

Inflation and material supply chain issues have impacted the cooperative as we look to build and maintain the system. Supply chain lead times have been improving, but the cost of materials is still high. Since 2018, the cost of underground wire is up 99.51 percent, underground transformers 171.72 percent, and poles 98.01 percent so we want to be sure we are investing these dollars in the system wisely for load growth and reliability.

There will be cases where new services will need to be built in 2025 which is when the Aid in Construction policy is used to ensure those who directly benefit from the new infrastructure bear the appropriate cost. This ensures the rest of the current membership doesn't have to subsidize projects which benefit one individual or group. The Aid to Construction policy is important in rural areas where the cost of the new infrastructure can be higher due to distance and lower population density.

In closing, if you are looking for a new service, contact Dakota Energy well in advance so we can be sure we have the material needed to complete the project.



JANUARY 2025

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, with Directors Baruth, Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Morford, Nemec, Raschke, Schaefers, 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
- 2024 Annual department summary
- Large load update
- SouthBow
- Crow Creek
- House and senate bills
- CRC
- Greater Huron Development
- Hazard mitigation grant program
- Basin

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- Financial reports
- Demand on bills
- Audit schedules
- Debarment and lobbying certificates
- Emergency storm rate letters
- New IRS mileage rate
- Line and maintenance inventory
- CFC loan advance

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance and retirement activities
- Pole changed
- Glacial Lakes new transformer
- Ames substation outage
- Tree trimming
- Huron Colony underground fault
- Damaged utility poles
- Basin and East River meeting for potential data center

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load control savings
- Community and volunteer activities

HUMAN RESOURCES/ COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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

- 2024 Annual compliance testing
- Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week
- Scholarships
- School safety demonstrations
- OSHA Log 300A
- RESAP annual performance measurements report

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- SCADA pilot
- iPads
- Website/Cybersecurity

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports presented
- Approved donations, resolutions and policy.

BOARD REPORTS

Director Raschke reported on East River's January 2025 regular board meeting.

Director Nemec reported on the SDREA regular board meeting.

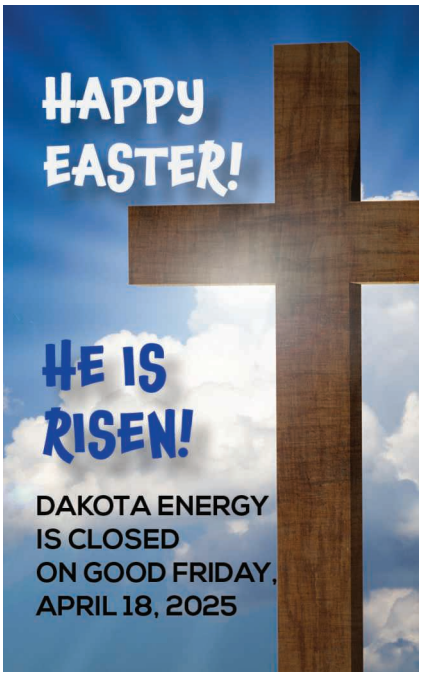
Those who attended reported on the SDREA Annual meeting.

Next monthly board meeting is March 26, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. in the Huron office.

Year-to-Date Financial Report

	Jan-25	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	$2,639,611	$2,639,611
Cost of Power	$1,807,963	$1,807,963
Operating Expenses	$686,456	$686,456
Total Margins	$359,229	$359,229
KwH's Purchased	25,799,084	25,799,084
Services in Place		3,637
Miles of Line		2,534
Members per Mile		1.44

Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 81.65% of DEC's total cost of service.



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."

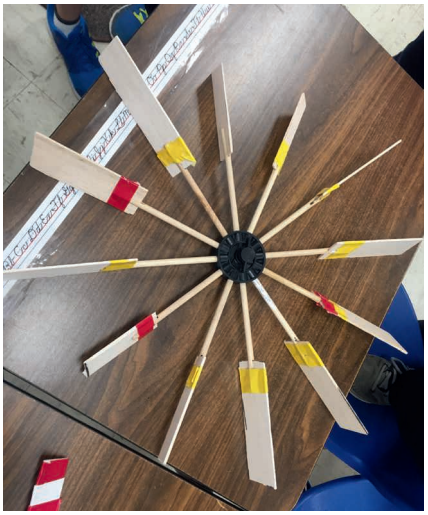
The idea is straightforward. Students construct a small-scale turbine from wooden dowels, fins, and a motor capable of generating power. Once completed, they connect their tiny turbine to a multimeter, which measures the energy generated. Instead of relying on natural wind, students use a fan to simulate 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

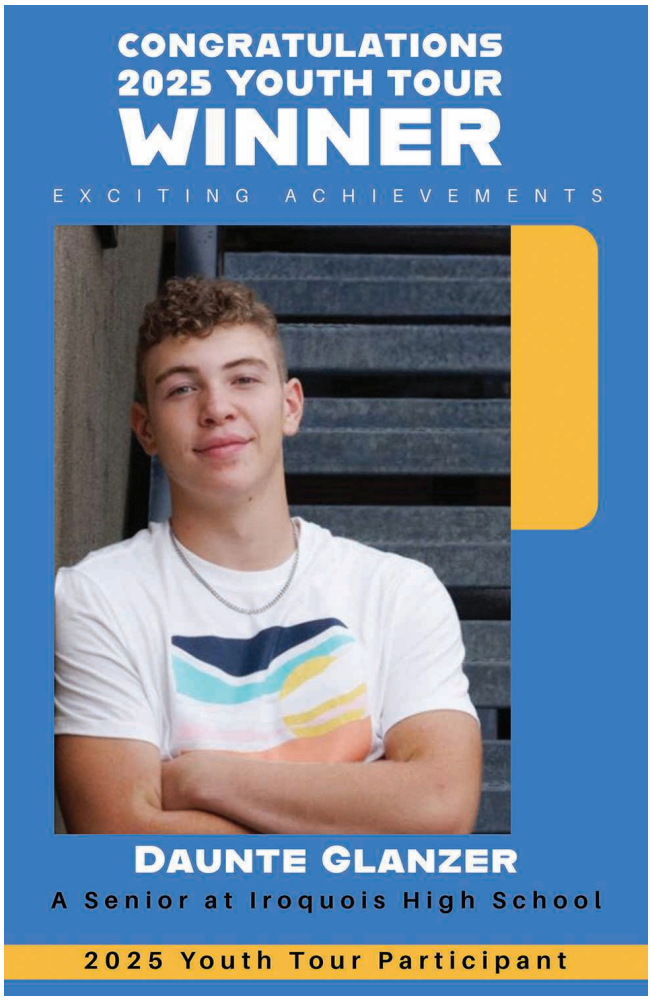
Gross said the students and the project have a lot in common. Once the building begins, the students' minds begin to whirl – just like a turbine. The activity prompts question after question: Why does the wind blow? How does a wind turbine work? How does the shape and weight of the blade influence the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



Why is it important to be involved in your community and how does it prepare you to be a future leader?

Here is Daunte's answer to the above essay question:

There are several reasons why being involved in your community is important. The first and most important reason is because it is Biblical. It is taught in the Bible that you should help others. It is a common theme and praised in many stories in the Bible. It is often shown that people who help others live more meaningful lives. People who do not believe the Bible to be true, also live more fulfilled and meaningful lives when they help others and are involved in their community.

Being involved in your community brings joy to yourself and to others. When people give back to the community it brings a smile to the face of the people who are helped and to the people helping. People love to be active in community events and activities because it makes others happy and brings a sense of fulfillment. The joy that happens when people are involved in communities strengthens communities.

A third reason that it is important to be involved in your community is because you can learn several different skills. While you are involved in your community you can learn communication skills, problem solving skills, responsibility, and the ability to work with a team. These skills are important to possess when thinking about colleges to apply for or careers to pursue. These skills could be looked for in applications and may be the difference between being accepted, hired, or passed over.

A final reason why being involved in your community is important is because you could make connections with people that last into the future. While connecting with people helps build communication skills, it also builds trust. When people know and trust you, you're more likely to succeed at your job, as they're more likely to buy your products, use your services, or shop at your store.

Being involved in your community prepares you to be a future leader by equipping you

with skills and preparing you with future connections. Problem solving skills are used by good leaders to deal with problems and make decisions. Responsibility is needed because leaders deal with many different tasks at a time. These tasks need to be managed well and finished in the correct timespan. To be a leader you must work well with others. Building relationships with people above you is important so they trust you and rely on you in many different situations.

Building relationships with those you work with will make for a better work environment.

Building relationships with the younger generation in your community is also important. It is easier to be a leader to younger people in your community when you have already built positive relationships and friendships with them. By being a good example to younger kids you help inspire them to be involved in your community. When they know, respect, and feel comfortable talking to you, it opens up many chances to lead them now and in the future.

Being active in the community also helps teach that not everything is for your personal gain. A good leader needs to have the mentality of serving others before serving themselves. When a leader works for everyone's gain they are much more effective. The mentality that says, "when we do better, I do better" is the mentality of a good leader. A good leader also has the mentality, WI must do better, so that we may be better." When you are active in the community, although it may be beneficial to you, the most important thing is that it is beneficial to everyone.

Daunte is the son of Ray and Desiree Glanzer of Yale, S.D.

Why is it important to be involved in your community and how does it prepare you to be a future leader?

Here is Jolies's answer to the above essay question:

It is important to be involved in my community for numerous reasons. The first reason I like to think about frequently is the question: if not me, then who? This philosophy can be used to look at a multitude of situations. It is easy to say, "Someone else can go do it," or something of the sort. I could easily mitigate myself from giving back to the community by saying I have volleyball practice, or I am worried what others will think of me, but I get out what I put in. This means that the quality of my own community reflects what work is put into it. Therefore, as anyone would like to see their community clean, organized, cohesive, and all the ideal qualities, my involvement can improve that. Along with this, having commitment to my community carries over to other aspects of my life, and commitment is imperative to leading. Being involved helps to set a good example for younger generations and, in turn, prepares me to be a future leader. Another reason is that involvement helps to improve the community both literally and figuratively. Figuratively, being involved brings members of the community together, builds relationships, and can make lifelong connections. Engagement in the community prepares me to be a future leader by teaching me skills and habits that can be applied to any leadership position. These universal values include independence, sportsmanship, sympathy, compassion, all-inclusion, and so much more. Literally, an example of community involvement is picking up trash and that helps to make a town look cleaner. Professionalism is a great benefit of being involved in my community and can prepare me for future leadership positions. Obviously, there is a time and place for professionalism and fun in the workplace but knowing social cues like this can heighten the probability of success. A specific example of myself involved in community is attending the Beau Keeter Giveback Day every year. Beau Keeter Giveback Day is a memorial day where the community of Miller gathers in dedication to beautifying the town and assisting those who are unable to help themselves. I grew up in a very supportive and loving community with many role models that exhibit leadership. Their commitment to me has fostered my desire to give back to all those who have given so much to me. Taking part in voluntary services like our annual giveback day shows people in the community, both young and old, that I am willing and able to put forth efforts in my community. In my church, I am one of the eldest members of our local youth group and this helps to set a positive example for other young future leaders in the community. Employers are looking for people that are capable and willing to put in the hard work to get a job done, even without being incentivized. To be a future leader means having the self-discipline to put in work, which sometimes is behind the scenes, in order to reach the end goal.

Jolie is the daughter of Trinity Hunter and Greg Palmer of Miller

DIGGING SAFELY

Call 811 Before You Dig Every Dig. Every Time.

Jocelyn Johnson
jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.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

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."

A Greenhouse Tunnel at Cedar Creek Garden. *Photo courtesy of Cedar Creek*

POWERING LOCAL FOOD

Reliable Energy Keeps Greenhouses Growing

Jacob Boyko
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For agricultural producers in tumultuous climates like South Dakota's, a little bit of electricity goes a long way.

Across rural areas of the state, some producers are using greenhouses as a way to extend their growing season, protect their crops from wind and hail, and provide their communities with fresh produce throughout the year.

Cedar Creek Gardens, co-owned by Cherry-Todd Electric members Bud Manke and Peggy Martin, is one such producer utilizing season-extending greenhouse structures. At the site in Mellette County, Martin is able to grow a variety of vegetables throughout much of the year by utilizing greenhouse tunnels.

"We're in growing zone 4, but our tunnels add another zone of warmth," Martin explained. "With the thermal mass of the ground, plus with vegetables like cabbage being very cold resistant, we've sometimes harvested after December 1."

Cedar Creek Gardens wasn't always the green prairie oasis it is today, with its dozen greenhouses and more than 1,000 free-range chickens. The operation started off small – just enough to feed the family, but as they discovered their passion for gardening, its scale kept creeping up.

"The demand was there, so the operation just kept getting bigger and bigger," Martin said.

Local greenhouses like Cedar Creek Gardens play an integral role in communities across South Dakota, ensuring food security for rural communities by providing locally-sourced produce for grocery stores, hospitals and restaurants.

"Local food and direct-to-consumer sales have seen a significant surge in popularity here in South Dakota," Martin added. "There's a clear trend of consumers wanting to know where their food comes from."

But without the extensive systems of grow lights, heating, irrigation – and the electricity that powers all of that – Martin says her operation wouldn't be sustainable.

Cedar Creek Gardens relies on electricity for several key aspects of the operation: irrigation to ensure crops get consistent water, grow lights to create optimal growing environment for transplants in the spring, and cooling

systems and storage facilities for the harvest.

"Reliable electricity from our rural electric cooperative is absolutely essential for Cedar Creek Gardens," Martin said.

With electricity being so critical in every operation at the greenhouse, so too is the reliability. Any outage – summer or winter – risks an entire season of work.

"Cherry-Todd Electric is very aware of the amount of produce that we have, and they don't think of us as 'the middle of nowhere,'" Martin explained. "Cherry-Todd Electric is really good about calling us and saying they're going to be working and let us know when the power will be off so we know to get stuff in the cooler and not open and close the doors."

Cherry-Todd Electric's manager, Tim Grablander, recognizes his members' need for reliable and continuous energy, noting the co-op's stringent practices including line patrolling, hazard recognition and line maintenance procedures to avert potential future problems.

"Cherry-Todd Electric's mission is to not only assure that our power is available to each member, but that we are delivering power at the highest level of reliability as is physically possible," Grablander said. "Our members depend on a consistent and reliable source of energy when and where it is needed. We also recognize the critical nature of power reliability for our healthcare providers, business owners, and our members with assistive medical needs. Reliability is our mission."

But not every outage comes with the luxury of an advanced notice. When severe weather strikes, unexpected outages require quick thinking.

"When we had a blizzard and we lost electricity, we put the cows in with the plants to produce enough body heat so the plants didn't freeze," Martin recalled. "If we lose power on our electric heaters, we could lose all of our plants and not have anything to put into production. Power outages are also a significant risk to our cold storage facilities in the summer, any disruption can cause the produce to spoil, which is a financial loss."

Luckily, those outages are rare; Cherry-Todd Electric and its generation and transmission cooperative, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, emphasize reliable energy generation while other areas of the United States face strain on their electric grid, resorting to costly measures like rolling brown-outs.

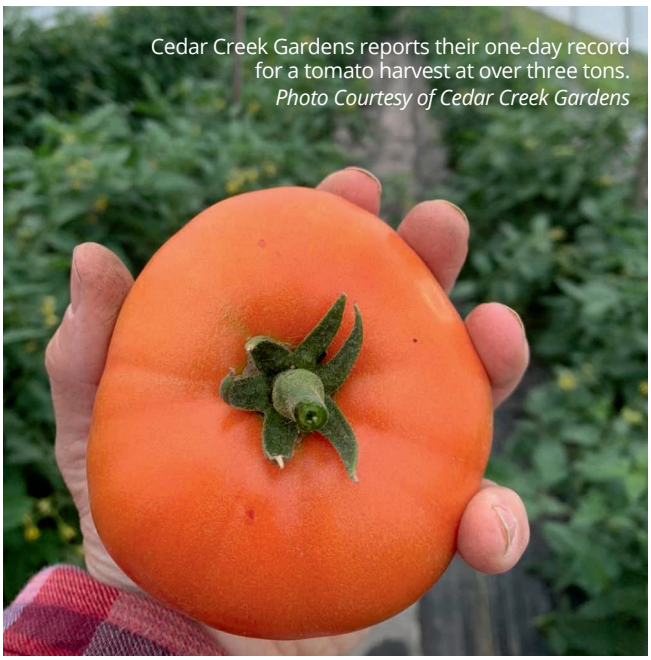
"At Basin Electric, our all-of-the-above energy strategy ensures members have reliable, affordable power when they need it most by prioritizing dispatchable resources like coal and natural gas, alongside wind and solar," said Chris Baumgartner, senior vice president of Member and External Relations for Basin Electric Power Cooperative. "We continue to invest in new generation while maintaining and optimizing our existing resources to meet demand, even during extreme weather conditions. These investments provide the baseload power and stability that businesses like Cedar Creek Gardens depend on – helping to sustain local economies and keep food on tables across the region."

For greenhouses like Cedar Creek Gardens, energy rates directly impact the wholesale cost of her products that businesses and communities rely on. Utilizing efficient LED lighting, temperature sensors, timers and energy-efficient cooling methods help Cedar Creek Gardens further reduce their operational costs, passing the savings onto hungry diners.

By continuing to supply low-cost, reliable energy to producers like Cedar Creek Gardens, co-ops aren't just powering rural America, but helping ensure food availability for communities across the region.

"People don't realize we can grow for so long and so early," Martin said. "We have tomatoes by the Fourth of July and people are shocked because they're used to getting their tomatoes in August. The greenhouses allow us to do that."

Peggy Martin, co-owner of Cedar Creek Garden.
Photo courtesy of Cedar Creek Gardens



Cedar Creek Gardens reports their one-day record for a tomato harvest at over three tons.
Photo Courtesy of Cedar Creek Gardens

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.

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 3
Bachelors of Broadway: Gentlemen of the Theatre
7 p.m.
NSU Johnson Fine Arts Center
aberdeencommunityconcerts.org

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 5-6
Youth & Family Kids Fair
Sat. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
Sun. 12-4 p.m.
The Monument
Rapid City, SD
605-342-4195

APRIL 6
Hay County Jamboree
2 p.m. Matinee
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

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
www.junkinmarketdays.com

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

APRIL 27
Country Roads
2 p.m. Matinee
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

MAY 2-3
SD Spring Square Dance Festival
Fri. 7:30-10:30 p.m.
Sat. 9:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
Faith Lutheran Church
601 N. Cliff Ave.
Sioux Falls, SD
Call for events & times
605-360-2524

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

MAY 3
West River Pheasants Forever Banquet
5 p.m. Central Time
Draper Auditorium
Draper, SD
605-516-0143

MAY 3
American Legion Post 15 Just Because It's Time to Dance
6-10:30 p.m.
Tables Available
El Riad Shrine
Sioux Falls, SD
605-336-3470

MAY 31
Auto Parts Swap Meet & Car Show
8 a.m.-2 p.m.
Brown County Fairgrounds
Aberdeen, SD

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