



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**DAKOTA ENERGY**  
MAY 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 1

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## **Get Out & Vote!**

**It's Your Civic Duty**

Pages 8-9

**Upcoming Energy Projects**

Pages 12-13

# NOW AVAILABLE: ELECTRIC MOTOR SERVICES

Dakota Energy is your source for electric motor repair and maintenance across a variety of applications.



## OUR TEAM PROVIDES:

- Electric Motor Repair
- Diagnostics & Testing
- Preventative Maintenance
- Wiring for Motor Applications
- Motor & Bearing Replacement
- General Motor Troubleshooting
- Grain Bin & Irrigation Pivot Motors

**FOR ASSISTANCE OR MORE INFORMATION CALL (605) 352-8591**



Touchstone Energy

## Scholar of the Week

**Rexton Blue**

Rexton Blue was named Touchstone Energy's Scholar of the Week for April 19-25, 2026, an honor that recognizes outstanding high school students. A senior at Iroquois High School, Rexton was nominated by Principal Jeff Nolte and received a \$250 scholarship from Dakota Energy, along with the opportunity to compete for additional scholarships at the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year banquet. Rexton is scheduled to be featured on Dakota News Now on April 20 and 21.



**COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS**



(USPS No. 018-949)

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- JoAnn Morford, Miller
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**Manager of Operations:** Matt Zomer

**Manager of Finance & Administration:**  
Eric Hasart

**Manager of Member Services:** Jeff Gilbert

**Communications & Marketing Specialist:**  
Samantha Brodeen

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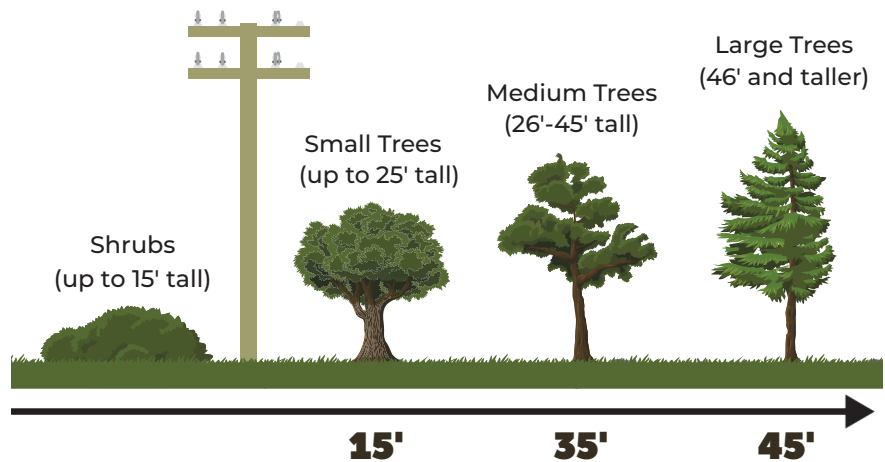
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**DAKOTA ENERGY COOPERATIVE, INC.**  
HURON, SD 57350

# Plant the RIGHT TREE in the RIGHT PLACE

The larger the tree, the farther it should be from power lines.



## Why Tree Placement Matters

Planting trees in the right location helps prevent power outages, reduces the need for future tree trimming or removal, and protects people, property, and electrical equipment. Smart tree placement keeps our community safe, reliable, and energized.

## Stay Clear of Power Lines

Avoid planting trees directly beneath power lines or near utility poles and electrical equipment. Choose smaller-growing trees near utilities and save larger trees for wide, open spaces. Small today doesn't mean small forever.

**CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG**  
Safe digging starts with you.



## ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH: TIPS FOR PRIORITIZING SAFETY

At your local cooperative, Electrical Safety Month is recognized every May, but the importance of practicing safety year-round is always emphasized. From co-op crews to the consumer-members served, everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity that powers daily life, but it can also be dangerous — something your local cooperative understands firsthand from working with it 365 days a year.

Safety is more than a catchphrase. Cooperative leadership recognizes the responsibility to keep employees safe while also helping protect members and the broader community. That's why your local cooperative hosts safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year, highlighting the dangers of electricity. These demonstrations often include emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines, along with discussions about the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the widespread use of electrical devices, tools and appliances, here are a few practical electrical safety tips:

Watch for frayed wires. Power cords can become damaged from age, heavy use or excessive current flow. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them to avoid shock hazards.

Avoid overloading circuits. Circuits can only handle a limited amount of electricity. Running too many devices on one circuit can lead to overheating and potential fire risk.

Label circuit breakers. Understanding your home's electrical system can help prevent overloads. If your home is more than 40 years old and you plan to install large appliances, contact a qualified electrician.

Use extension cords properly. Never plug one extension cord into another. "Daisy chaining" can cause overheating and fire hazards. Do not exceed the cord's wattage, and avoid using extension cords as permanent solutions. If additional outlets are needed, consult a licensed electrician.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to talk with children

about playing it safe and smart around electricity, including staying aware of overhead power lines near outdoor play areas.

Providing a reliable energy supply 24/7, 365 days a year is a top priority. Equally important is keeping the community safe around electricity.

Contact your local cooperative for additional electrical safety tips or to request a safety demonstration at a school or upcoming community event.



**"Do not fly kites by power lines!"**

**Casen Yuker**

Casen cautions readers not to fly kites around power lines. Thank you for sharing your picture, Casen! Casen's parents are Lance and Tarah Yuker from Aberdeen S.D.

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.

# Delicious DESSERTS

## RHUBARB CAKE DESSERT

### Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix  
1 cup sugar  
4 cups rhubarb, diced  
2 cups half and half

### Method

Prepare cake mix as directed on package and pour into a greased 9x13 pan. Mix sugar and rhubarb together. Spoon evenly over cake batter. Pour half and half over top of rhubarb mixture. Bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes. This is like an upside-down cake with custard on the bottom of the cake.

**Marla Gilbert**  
Southeastern Electric

## FUZZY NAVEL CAKE

### Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix  
1 instant vanilla pudding (large, 5.1 oz. size)  
3/4 cup peach schnapps  
1/2 cup vegetable oil  
1/2 cup orange juice  
4 eggs

### Glaze

1 cup powdered sugar  
4 tbsps. orange juice  
2 tbsps. peach schnapps

### Method

Spray a 12-cup fluted baking pan with cooking spray, dust with flour. Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended, spread evenly in pan. Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes until golden brown and cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool cake for 20 minutes. Run a long, sharp knife around the edges to loosen, and invert onto platter. Whisk glaze ingredients together until smooth. With wooden skewer, poke holes on top and around sides of cake. Spoon glaze over the warm cake, allowing to seep in holes, and drizzle down the sides and center. Cool completely before slicing.

**Sally Florey**  
Charles Mix Electric

## HAWAIIAN PINEAPPLE CAKE

### Ingredients:

2 cups flour  
2 cups sugar  
2 eggs  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. vanilla  
Pinch salt  
1 20 oz. can crushed pineapple, undrained (in natural juice, not heavy syrup)

### Frosting

1/2 cup butter, softened  
1 8 oz. cream cheese softened  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar

### Method

Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended. Bake in greased 9x13 pan at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until top is golden brown.

Combine cream cheese, butter and vanilla. Beat until smooth and creamy. Gradually add powdered sugar. Spread frosting on cake while still warm. Garnish with some toasted coconut if desired.

**Sally Florey**  
Charles Mix Electric

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture submitted by William Berry via Shutterstock.

# SERVICE CHARGE EXPLAINED

Dakota Energy understands that questions often arise about the service charge on your electric bill. As a member-owned cooperative, we believe it's important to explain what this charge covers, why it's necessary, and how it supports reliable service for all members.

### What Does the Service Charge Cover?

The service charge pays for the fixed costs required to provide electric service, regardless of how much electricity is used. This includes poles, power lines, transformers, meters, outage response, right-of-way clearing, and routine system maintenance. It also supports essential services such as billing, insurance, facilities, and the employees who operate and maintain the electric system.

### What Does "Serving Members, Not Shareholders" Really Mean?

Dakota Energy is a not-for-profit, member-owned cooperative. Decisions are made locally by a board of directors elected from the membership. Rates are set to recover the cost of providing service and any excess margins are reinvested into the system or returned to members as capital credits.

### When Was the Last Service Charge Adjustment?

Prior to the most recent adjustment, Dakota Energy last increased the service charge in 2024 following a review of costs. Over time, rising expenses reached a level that required an update to the service charge.

### Why Is the Service Charge Increasing Now?

The service charge increase reflects the growing gap between the fixed costs of operating the electric system and the revenue collected to cover those costs. Rising material, labor, infrastructure replacement, and power supply costs made an adjustment necessary to maintain reliable service and financial stability.

### How Much Have Power Supply Costs Increased?

Beginning January 1, 2026, Dakota Energy's wholesale power costs increased due to rate changes from its power suppliers. Basin Electric's increase was passed through East River Electric as a blended 9.4% increase, and power supplied by the Western Area Power Administration increased by 6.2%. Because purchased power is Dakota Energy's largest expense, these changes result in approximately \$1.7 million in additional annual power costs compared to last year.

### Is This a One-Time Adjustment or Should We Expect More?

This rate adjustment is intended to address current and near-term cost pressures, including higher power supply costs expected in 2027. By planning ahead, Dakota Energy aimed to cover a portion of both this year's and next year's increases while avoiding more frequent changes. Any future adjustments would follow the same careful review process and be clearly communicated to members.

### How Was the Service Charge Increase Determined?

The increase was based on a cost-of-service study completed in October 2025 by an independent consulting firm. The study analyzed how costs are incurred across the system and confirmed that the service charge needed to be updated to more accurately reflect those fixed costs.

### Are These Adjustments Competitive Compared to Other Utilities?

Yes. Many electric cooperatives across the region are facing similar power supply and infrastructure cost increases. Several have already implemented, or are planning, rate and service charge adjustments. Even with this change, Dakota Energy remains competitive with other utilities due to its not-for-profit structure and local governance.

### Why Can't the Co-op Keep Absorbing These Costs Like Before?

Dakota Energy delayed rate increases for as long as possible by absorbing rising costs. However, continuing to do so would eventually impact the cooperative's ability to replace aging infrastructure, respond to outages, and meet lender requirements. Adjusting the service charge now helps avoid larger or more frequent increases in the future.

### How Does the Service Charge Support Reliability?

Service charge revenue allows Dakota Energy to replace aging poles, lines, and equipment; perform preventive maintenance; and respond quickly to outages. Many of Dakota Energy's lines and facilities are older than those of newer cooperatives, making ongoing replacement and maintenance essential to reliable service.

### Why Is the Service Charge Especially Important for a Rural Cooperative?

Dakota Energy serves a relatively small number of members spread across many miles of line. The service charge helps fairly distribute the fixed costs of maintaining that system so members receive reliable service without shifting costs unfairly to any one group.

### How Is the Co-op Working to Minimize the Impact on Members?

Dakota Energy carefully manages costs by upgrading aging infrastructure, focusing on preventive maintenance to reduce outages, and planning projects over time to spread expenses. Dakota Energy will continue to monitor wholesale power markets, invest in cost-effective infrastructure, plan long-term to reduce the need for sudden increases, and advocate for members' interests at the regional and state levels. Smart planning today helps protect members tomorrow.

Scan to Learn  
More About  
Your Charges



# FEBRUARY 2026

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, February 24th, with Directors Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Morford, Nemeč, Raschke, Schaefer, and Schnathorst with Wangsness attending via Teams. Manager Felderman and Employees Brodeen, 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
- Microgrids discussion
- Potential new service
- Sale of Spec 9 building
- Inventory results
- Rate information
- SDREA manager’s meeting

**OFFICE SERVICES REPORT**

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

- 2025 financial report
- January financial reports
- Audit fieldwork
- 2025 gross kWh tax report
- Workman’s compensation audit
- Year end Form 7 submission
- Standard cost update
- Capital credit requests

**OPERATIONS REPORT**

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance, and retirement activities
- Tree trimming
- Sticks and ground testing
- Dakota Provisions’ transformer

- Pole changes
- Inventory report
- CRC
- January outages

**MEMBER SERVICES REPORT**

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load control savings
- A/C load control removals
- Motor shop
- Load limiter update

**MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

Marketing/Communications Specialist Brodeen reported on the following items:

- Scholarships
- Demand communication materials
- February bill insert
- Junior Achievement
- Scholar of the Week
- Youth Tour representatives

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT**

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Security news

- Website/cybersecurity
- Demand material

**BOARD ACTION**

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports presented
- Approved \$100 donation to Huron Area Senior Center
- Approved \$100 donation to Highmore Senior Center
- Approved \$400 sponsorship for Miller Thriller event
- Approved \$2,500 sponsorship for State Fair
- Approved Policy No. 046 Budget Billing

**BOARD REPORTS**

Attendees reported on East River’s Energize Forum and Co-op Day at the Capitol.

Director Raschke reported on East River’s regular board meeting.

Year-to-Date Financial Report		
	February-26	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue .....	\$2,482,330	\$5,297,370
Cost of Power .....	\$1,653,283	\$3,477,359
Operating Expenses .....	\$786,667	\$1,520,807
Total Margins .....	\$115,171	\$444,764
KwH’s Purchased.....	19,745,120	43,639,746
Services in Place .....		3,655
Miles of Line .....		2,530
Members per Mile .....		1.44

Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 83.57% of DEC’s total cost of service.

**NOTICE:**  
**MONTHLY BOARD MEETING DATES**  
**10:00 AM - HURON**  
**TUESDAY, APRIL 28**  
**TUESDAY, MAY 26**  
**TUESDAY, JUNE 23**  
**TUESDAY, JULY 28**

## ONE VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE



**Chuck Sloan • Piedmont, S.D.**

**Board Treasurer, West River Electric Association**

**U.S. Air Force 1983-2003**

Chuck Sloan has spent much of his life serving his nation.

Sloan enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1983 and served 21 years on active duty before retiring as a master sergeant in 2004. In that time, he was stationed at bases all around the world, including Oman, South Korea, Turkey, and the Pacific. Since 2004, Sloan has worked as a civilian at Ellsworth Air Force Base, where today he is Chief of Operations Compliance.

Serving in the military, Sloan observed firsthand how seriously service members took absentee voting and civic participation, despite being thousands of miles from American soil. Their passion helped ignite Sloan's own admiration for America's democratic system of government.

"If I found somebody a little laissez-faire about voting, saying, 'my vote probably won't count,' I would give them a spiel," Sloan explained. "Yes, your vote does count, and you'll want to be able to say that you made that vote."

He continued, "If you don't choose to exercise that responsibility, then later on if you're displeased, you really can't

complain about it because you didn't make a choice – If anything, vote and give yourself the opportunity to legitimately complain!"

Sloan said people should never underestimate the importance of showing up and making their voices heard, because in close races, one vote can tip the scale.

"There are many instances when one vote may have been a determining factor," Sloan said. "It may not be a general election, but how about in a state or local election where one vote can be the deciding factor? That happens more often than one would think. Your vote matters, no matter what you do."

Sloan brought that civic-mindedness along with him to West River Electric Association, where he serves on the Board of Directors and helps make decisions in the interest of his neighbors and communities he represents.

Sloan said it all just comes back to civic responsibility and staying involved.

"From the time I turned 18, I've never missed a vote," Sloan said. "It's second nature. It's too important to not do."



## VOTING STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES



**Evan Buckmiller • De Smet, S.D.**

**General Manager, Kingsbury Electric Cooperative**

**De Smet School District Board**

For Kingsbury Electric Cooperative General Manager Evan Buckmiller, his call to public service came after a mid-term resignation on the De Smet School District

Board left a vacancy that needed to be filled.

"The board had to appoint someone to fill the seat," Buckmiller said. "Initially when I was asked, I didn't know if I wanted to do it, but I also knew that my wife and I have two young kids in the school system, so I agreed to fill the spot until the next election."

Buckmiller wasn't expecting to develop a passion for civic-service, but six years and two election cycles later, he's still representing the De Smet community on the school board.

"It's for my kids, to make sure they have the best education opportunities possible to prepare them for their future," Buckmiller added.

He said that while serving on the school board has been a

rewarding endeavor, there are also moments that are discouraging; some people will sit out elections, but are also vocal about board decisions they disagree with.

"I receive phone calls about how we are doing everything wrong, but they don't want to step up to be a part of change," Buckmiller explained.

His advice is simple: show up.

"Public participation at the monthly school board meetings is always encouraged," Buckmiller said. "When a community is engaged, there is more diverse input and you get to see the needs of everyone. The needs for one person might not be the same as another, and when you are sitting on a board you want to hear the needs of everyone so you can make the best decision possible for everyone."

Buckmiller said when more people get involved and exercise their civic duties, the communities like his are better for it.

"Being active in the community makes the community stronger and allows different opinions to be heard," Buckmiller said.

"When you show up to meetings and vote, you are giving the board direction so they can make decisions that are in the best interest of everyone."

## STICK UP FOR YOURSELF & VOTE



**Don Schurdevin • Elk Point, S.D.**  
**Board President, Union County Electric Cooperative**  
**U.S. Navy 1962-1968**

Serving on the Union County Electric Cooperative board for more than 25 years, Don Schurdevin has built a reputation for steady leadership and a strong commitment

to the cooperative and its members. But before serving his neighbors and community on the co-op board, Schurdevin first served in a different way. He served not just his Union County neighbors, but his entire country in the U.S. Navy. Schurdevin enrolled during his junior year of high school in 1962, serving active duty in Vietnam from 1963 to 1965, some of that time aboard the USS Midway. The experience helped shape his views on patriotism, civic duty and personal responsibility.

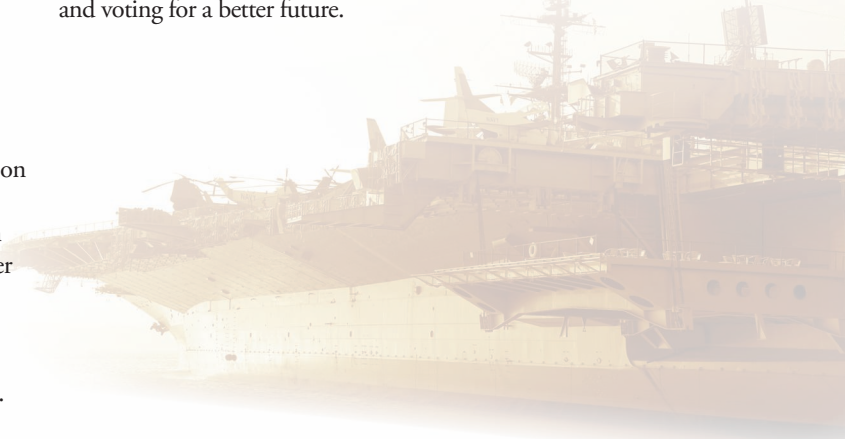
“In the navy, you learn to get along with people, but you learn to also stick up for yourself, because nobody else – is so you better take care of your own business,” he said.

That’s the attitude that Schurdevin brings to his civic participation. He said serving in the military gave him a deeper appreciation for the freedoms Americans enjoy, including voting.

Schurdevin believes participating in elections is one of the most important ways citizens can stay involved in their communities and help shape the future of their community, state and country.

“I think I voted in every election since I could,” Schurdevin recalled. “School board election, county, state – if I was able to vote I was voting.”

That sense of duty carried into his years of cooperative service. As a director, Schurdevin remains focused on serving members and ensuring the co-op continues to meet local needs. Schurdevin encourages others to “stick up for yourself” by staying informed and voting for a better future.



## LEADERS DEPEND ON YOU SPEAKING UP



**Chris Rahn • Mission, S.D.**  
**Member Services Manager, Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative**  
**Todd County School District Board, Rosebud Sioux Tribe**

Chris Rahn was not always interested in his local government. In fact, up until just several years ago, he sat many elections out.

But through his work at Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative and the commitment to community that came with it, Rahn gained a new perspective on civic participation, realizing that change only happens when peoples’ voices are heard.

“I believe everybody who has an opinion should come out and vote,” Rahn said. “One vote matters. One vote can change an entire election.”

Rahn’s indifference to voting began to change as he was asked to take on more responsibilities with the co-op. Cherry-Todd Electric General Manager Tim Grablander nominated Rahn to the Rushmore Electric Federal Credit Union Board of Directors, where Rahn now serves as president.

Shortly after, he was encouraged by local community leaders to apply for a board seat with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. The tribal

council voted to seat Rahn on the judiciary committee, leading to his first real experience with public service. Like flipping a switch, Rahn’s enthusiasm led to his appointment to other tribal boards, including the Tribal Utilities Commission, Tribal Tax Commission, and the Rosebud Energy Services Company.

Rahn said serving in tribal government opened his mind to the impact he can have on his community. That realization inspired Rahn to run for his first publicly-elected position as a school board member for the Todd County School District.

“I wanted to be more involved in my daughter’s education and just listen to the community’s input,” Rahn said, restating the importance of community members actively engaging with elected officials and sharing feedback.

He continued: “I feel like I’ve been able to bridge the gap between the people I represent and the administration and other public leaders.”

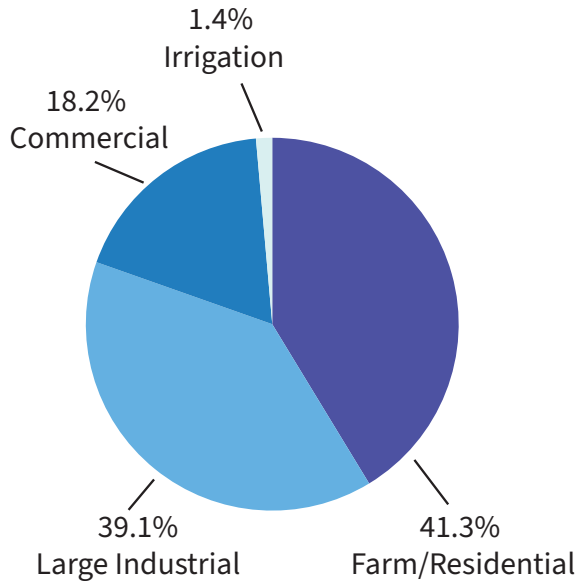
As Rahn looks ahead to years of future public service to work for a better community, he encourages others to step up as well — and all it takes is a vote.

“If you speak up, your voice is heard,” he continued. “When everyone’s voice is heard, we can make better decisions for the community as a whole.”

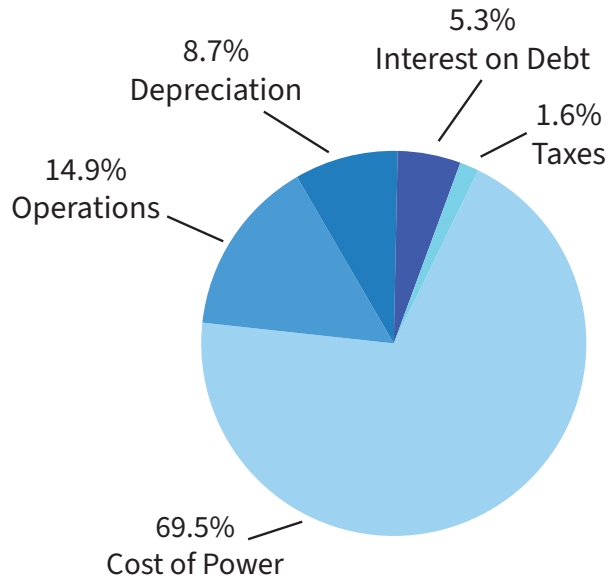
*Photos by Shutterstock*

# All About the Cash

2025 Revenue by Source



2025 Expense by Type



Dakota Energy’s 2025 revenue and expense mix shows that most costs are fixed, with nearly 70% tied to power supply and the rest to operations, debt, and infrastructure. These expenses must be covered regardless of changes in usage, so stable electricity sales help spread costs evenly across all kilowatt-hours sold.

In 2025, total sales were 241.7 million kWh, the lowest level in the last five years but still within an expected range based on weather and normal fluctuations in large industrial demand. While member counts remained stable, even slight changes in usage across major customer classes, such as large industrial and farm/residential, can noticeably affect total system sales.

At the same time, power supply costs increased, raising the overall cost of providing electricity. With higher power costs and fewer kilowatt-hours over which to recover those expenses, rates were adjusted to ensure sufficient revenue to purchase power, maintain the electric system, and meet ongoing financial obligations while continuing reliable service.

## 5 Year Comparison of Total Sales

241,740,869 kWh 2025

263,560,560 kWh 2024

254,945,265 kWh 2023

247,552,353 kWh 2022

250,808,957 kWh 2021

# Work Safely Near Utility Lines



Whether you're running heavy equipment or using handheld tools, working outdoors can put you dangerously close to overhead and underground utility lines. A line strike can cause outages, fires, fines, serious injury or death.

## Look up: Overhead power line safety

- **Survey the job site** each day for overhead lines, poles, guy wires and pad-mounted equipment. Check carefully for lines hidden by trees or buildings.
- **Assume all overhead lines are energized**, including service drops from poles to buildings. Keep clear unless the utility confirms that a line is not energized.
- **Set a clear boundary:** Keep workers, tools, ladders and equipment at least 10 feet from power lines. When using cranes or derricks, keep at least 20 feet away. Follow OSHA guidelines for clearance at different voltages.
- **Use a dedicated spotter** to keep you, your crew and your equipment a safe distance from power lines.

## Dig safely: Underground utility lines

- **Pre-mark the excavation area** with white paint (use black on snow), flags, chalk, lath or whiskers.
- **Use 811 or 811beforeyoudig.com** before you dig to have lines marked. Every job needs a locate request, even small ones.
- **Wait** for utilities to mark their lines before digging.
- **Expose marked utilities carefully** by hand or with soft excavation to verify location and depth.
- **Report** any utility strike or damage to the facility owner. Never cover up damage.

## If equipment contacts a power line:

- **Stay on the equipment.** Tell others to stay back.
- **Call 911** and the electric utility right away.
- **Do not exit the cab** until utility workers say it's safe.
- **If fire or other danger forces you off,** jump clear and do not touch the equipment and ground at the same time. Land with your feet together. Shuffle away with both feet on the ground or hop away with both feet together.

Work safely to protect yourself, your crew and the public. Review your crew's emergency plan so that everyone knows what to do if a line is contacted.

## BUILDING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

Basin Electric's Pioneer Generation Station, located near Williston, N.D.  
*Photo Submitted by Basin Electric*

### Basin Electric Expands Generation Capacity to Meet Growing Demand

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Although the flick of a switch can seem close at hand, the electricity that powers our world is often generated many miles away.

For rural cooperative members, electricity often comes from North Dakota, where Basin Electric Power Cooperative operates a fleet of power plants to serve rural communities across nine states. As demand continues to build across that system, the infrastructure behind it is growing right alongside it.

This steady growth has shaped the work now underway across Basin Electric's service territory. In response, the cooperative has kept up with demand by expanding existing generation facilities, building a new power plant and supporting the system with additional transmission projects in just a few short years.

"We're seeing load growth across our system, and it's coming from a combination of residential, agricultural, commercial and energy development," said Gavin McCollam, Basin Electric's senior vice president and chief operating officer. "When you step back and look at it as a whole, it becomes clear that we need to continue building to keep pace with that growth."



New transmission lines in western North Dakota support Basin Electric's newest generation assets.  
*Photo Submitted by Basin Electric*

#### Pioneer Generation Station

To maintain reliability and keep the lights on for their members, Basin Electric recently expanded its generation capacity through new development to Pioneer Generation Station near Williston, N.D.

Originally developed in the early 2010s, the facility grew in phases over time. Those additions turned Pioneer Generation Station into one of Basin Electric's most important generation assets, but within a decade, the pace of that growth had begun to change.

"Coming out of COVID, not just us but everybody

was seeing rapid increases in loads,” McCollam said. “At that point, we were asking what we could do the quickest to add capacity.”

To meet the need, Basin Electric moved forward with Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. The cooperative completed the project in 2025, adding about 580 megawatts of generation and bringing the site’s total capacity to 822 megawatts, enough to power roughly 400,000 homes.

The expansion moved quickly in part because Basin Electric built on what it already had.

“We had the site and the people that worked there, so we could add onto it a lot quicker than we could analyze and research new sites,” McCollam said.

## Bison Generation Station

Still, Basin Electric continued building for traditional member load growth, beyond Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV, turning to a new project: Bison Generation Station.

Located near Epping, N.D., the natural gas-fueled generation project is being built from the ground up as a large-scale, natural gas facility designed to meet future demand. Once completed, the combined-cycle power plant will produce approximately 1,490

megawatts of electricity, making it the largest power plant solely owned by Basin Electric – almost double the capacity of Pioneer Generation Station. The plant is expected to come online in two phases, with the first unit operating in 2029 and the second in 2030.

Unlike Pioneer Generation Station, which expanded over time, Bison Generation Station is being built as a single, large project.

“We had a history of building small units, piecemealing them in as quickly as we could. That worked for a long time, but eventually we reached a point where we needed to think about building differently,” McCollam said. “There was a point where we recognized that continuing to add smaller pieces wasn’t going to be the most effective approach. We needed to build something at a scale that would allow us to stay ahead of that growth.”

Serendipitously, the transition from Pioneer Generation Station to Bison Generation Station happened on the same day. Basin Electric finished construction at Pioneer and turned the facility over to operations, then received the permits to begin construction on Bison.

“I’m kind of a nerd,” McCollam

said, laughing. “I’m nerdy enough to think this wasn’t a coincidence, and the power plant gods were smiling on us.”

Once complete, it will become a central part of Basin Electric’s generation portfolio.

“It’s going to be the flagship of our gas fleet,” McCollam said. “It’s being designed with the understanding that the system we’re serving today is going to continue to grow.”

## Looking Ahead

According to McCollam, these new generation assets are a response to the organic growth Basin Electric is seeing across its traditional membership, including residential demand, agriculture, commercial activity and energy production.

“We support that growth where it happens, and we make sure the system can deliver power where it’s needed,” he said.

For Basin Electric, the work underway now is part of a longer process to ensure reliability in a time of growing energy demand.

“The entire purpose of Basin Electric is to provide reliable service to our membership,” McCollam said. “As that system grows, we have to continue building to keep up with it.”



# FROM FIELD TO FUEL

A new multi-seed crush processing facility, served by Central Electric Cooperative, is now operational after two years of construction near Mitchell. Photo submitted by High Plains Processing

## New High Plains Processing Seed-Crush Facility Opens Near Mitchell, S.D.

**Frank Turner**

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A new multi-seed crush processing facility is now operational after nearly two years of construction, and its impact is taking shape across the region.

Located two miles south of Mitchell, the High Plains Processing plant is a large-scale seed crush and refining facility, powered by Central Electric Cooperative in the heart of South Dakota's soybean country.

The facility is backed by South Dakota Soybean Processors, the majority owner and operator, which also operates soybean crush facilities in Volga and Miller, along with a large group of local investors.

"There's a lot of local influence in this plant," said Pat Gathman, general manager of the facility. "Many of the investors originally invested in South Dakota Soybean Processors in Volga, and others invested directly into this project here in Mitchell."

That local investment shows up not

just in ownership, but in how the facility fits into the broader agricultural system. For local producers, it means more of what they grow can be processed closer to the farm.

"Instead of having the soybeans go to an elevator to be processed someplace else, they're being processed right here in Mitchell," Gathman said. "It gives farmers a better opportunity from a market standpoint."

For Central Electric Cooperative members, the plant represents one of three industrial loads being served by the cooperative. In addition to strengthening the local economy, large industrial loads like the multi-seed crush facility provide a consistent demand for electricity and help justify new investments in local infrastructure.

"The soybean plant brings new revenues to Central Electric Cooperative, which helps minimize rates for the entire cooperative membership," said Central Electric Cooperative General Manager Ken Schlimgen.

As part of the proposal process and selection as the electric provider, East River Electric Power Cooperative built a new substation and made additional system upgrades to serve the facility. Central Electric Cooperative also completed system improvements to support the load.

"The work was completed over a two-year window," Schlimgen said. "The project was on time and under budget during the worst of the supply chain delays."

Inside the facility, energy from the electric cooperative is used to turn familiar crops into multiple usable products, with the primary goal of separating oil from soybeans, sunflowers and camelina and preparing it for a range of markets. Currently, the plant is only accepting soybeans.

"We go through the preparation area where we crack the beans, heat them up, separate the hulls from the soybean itself, flake it, and then send it over to the extraction area," Gathman said.

The process separates oil from the soybean. The oil is refined and prepared for a range of uses, including renewable

fuels and food products, while the remaining material becomes soybean meal, a high-protein livestock feed.

“We bring it into our oil refinery where we refine it, bleach it, deodorize it and send it to storage,” Gathman said. “From there, it can go out by truck or rail to be turned into renewable fuels.”

The Mitchell location was selected in part because it brings together several key pieces of infrastructure needed to support a facility of this scale. Rail access, utilities and proximity to soybean production all played a role in the decision.

“We’ve looked at Mitchell for many, many years,” said Tom Kersting, CEO of South Dakota Soybean Processors. “You’re on a mainline railroad, it’s good soybean ground, and there’s a strong production history in that area. As we look at other seeds like sunflowers or camelina, you don’t have to go very far west of Mitchell before that becomes even more suitable.”

He added that finding a location with the right infrastructure is becoming increasingly difficult.

“There’s just not a lot of good sites left if you want to be on rail, next to a natural gas line, have a good electrical source and access to wastewater,” Kersting said. “There are a lot of infrastructure needs for a large facility like this, and it’s tough to find all of that in one place.”

That infrastructure includes electric service, which was a key part of the project from the beginning.

“Central Electric has been great to work with,” Kersting said. “They built a large substation not just for this plant, but to expand service throughout the area. It’s been a great partnership, and they’ve been very accommodating and easy to work with.”

Since becoming operational, the plant has already made an impact on the local community. The facility employs about 80 people, with the majority coming from the surrounding area.

“We’ve got some outstanding employees here that are really a part of things,” Gathman added.

For Gathman, the experience of moving to Mitchell has stood out just as

much as the work itself.

“The community has been outstanding,” he said. “Not just from the neighbors that we live around, but the community as a whole. It’s been very welcoming and very inviting.”

After moving multiple times throughout his career, including time spent outside the country, the difference was noticeable.

“My wife and I have moved 12 times, mostly around the U.S., and we did a stint in Brazil,” Gathman said. “I grew up in Fargo, and I love Fargo, but it was nothing compared to the reception we got when we came here.”


That sense of connection is something he hopes to carry forward.

“I can’t say enough about it,” he said. “I really want to help pay that back in the long term.”

As High Plains Processing continues to ramp up, its presence is expected to grow alongside it. The facility adds new demand for infrastructure, new options for producers and a new step in how agricultural products move through the region.



High Plains Processing celebrates the groundbreaking of its seed-crush facility in 2023.  
Photo submitted by High Plains Processing



**MAY 18**  
**Voter Registration**  
**Deadline for Primary**  
**Election**  
5 p.m.  
(South Dakota)

**JUNE 1**  
**Last Day to Request**  
**Absentee Ballot.**  
5 p.m.  
(South Dakota)

**JUNE 2**  
**Primary Election**  
7 a.m.-7 p.m.  
(South Dakota)

*Photo by Shutterstock*

**MAY 2-10**  
**Rustic Designs & More Spring**  
**Show, Flea Market**  
41450 264th St.  
Ethan, SD  
605-770-2411

**MAY 2**  
**Consignment Auction**  
7 a.m. Gates Open  
10 a.m. Auction  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

**MAY 2**  
**Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**  
2-8 p.m.  
Milbank, SD  
605-432-6656

**MAY 3**  
**Prairie Village Opening Day**  
2 p.m. Train Ride  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

**MAY 6-7**  
**Energize! Exploring Innovative**  
**Rural Communities Conference**  
Hosted by SDSU Extension  
Community Vitality  
Community Center  
Wall, SD  
[extension.sdstate.edu/energize](http://extension.sdstate.edu/energize)

**MAY 9**  
**1880 Train Opens**  
Hill City, SD

**MAY 15-17**  
**Open House Weekend**  
Free Entrance  
Custer State Park  
Custer, SD

**MAY 16**  
**2nd Annual Bird Bash**  
8 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Bear Butte State Park  
Sturgis, SD  
605-390-2901  
[valleyhummingbird@yahoo.com](mailto:valleyhummingbird@yahoo.com)

**MAY 23**  
**Free Christian Men's Event**  
8 a.m.-2 p.m.  
The Barn at Aspen Acres  
Spearfish, SD  
Register: [RiseUpMen.com](http://RiseUpMen.com)

**MAY 30**  
**Familyfest Fun Cruise**  
**& SDSC Safety Fair**  
9 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Bucket Trucks, Safety & More  
Sioux Falls, SD  
[thehoodmagazine.com/ff-faqs/](http://thehoodmagazine.com/ff-faqs/)

**MAY 30**  
**Frühlingsfest**  
Spring Street Market  
1-5 p.m.  
Main Street Square  
Rapid City, SD  
605-718-8484

**MAY 30**  
**Miss Prairie Village/Miss**  
**Prairie Princess Pageant**  
6:30 p.m.  
Lawrence Welk Opera House  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

**JUNE 4-6**  
**Black Hills Quilt Show**  
Thurs. 5-8 p.m.  
Fri. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Rushmore Hall  
at the Monument  
Rapid City, SD

**JUNE 13**  
**Journey Into Historic Pickstown**  
9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Ft. Randall Town & Museum  
Pickstown, SD  
605-487-7299

**JUNE 13**  
**Luce Pioneer Day**  
10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Rope & Candle Making, Butter  
Churning, Dutch Oven Cooking  
Lake Herman State Park  
Madison, SD  
605-880-5077

**JUNE 19-20**  
**77th Annual Czech Days**  
Tabor, SD  
[www.taborczechdays.com](http://www.taborczechdays.com)

**JUNE 24-27**  
**Crystal Springs Rodeo**  
Clear Lake, SD  
605-874-2996

**JUNE 26-27**  
**Buckhorn Rodeo**  
Britton, SD  
605-880-5077

**Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**

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.