



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



DAKOTA ENERGY
AUGUST 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 4

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Preserving Our Past

**Historical Society Unveils
New Cultural Heritage Center**
Pages 8-9

Co-op Summer Outreach
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Congratulations, **AMY!**

Dakota Energy Cooperative is proud to congratulate Amy Iverson on her retirement after more than 41 years of dedicated service.

Since joining the cooperative in December 1984, Amy has been a dedicated and dependable member of the team. Over the years, she advanced from bookkeeping and data processing roles to Senior Accountant, helping guide the cooperative's financial operations with accuracy and professionalism.

Known for her strong work ethic and appreciation for her coworkers, Amy has made a lasting impact on Dakota Energy and will be greatly missed. As she begins this new chapter, we wish her many happy days spent with family, friends, and especially her grandchildren.



Thank you, Amy,
for your years of
commitment and service.

**Congratulations on a
well-deserved retirement!**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT

Brian Baum MEMBERSHIP-AT-LARGE DIRECTOR

As Dakota Energy's annual meeting approaches, we're highlighting Brian Baum, Membership-at-Large Director, who is seeking reelection this August.

A cooperative member since 1998, Brian was motivated to run for the board by a desire to serve local communities and ensure members feel informed and represented. During his three years on the board, he has been proud to work alongside fellow directors, management, and employees to keep the cooperative operating efficiently and reliably.

Brian believes the cooperative principle of Concern for Community best reflects his values, both through his service on the board and his involvement with Faith Alive Community Church. Looking ahead, he remains focused on maintaining reliable, affordable electric service while preparing for the future energy needs of Dakota Energy members.

Outside of board service, Brian enjoys farming southwest of Huron with his wife, Jessica, and cheering on their three sons, Tucker, Jack, and Riggs, in their athletic activities.



“Thank you for your continued trust in Dakota Energy Cooperative. I am proud of the dedication our employees show every day in serving our members and communities.”

WORKSTUDIO SOFTWARE UPGRADE

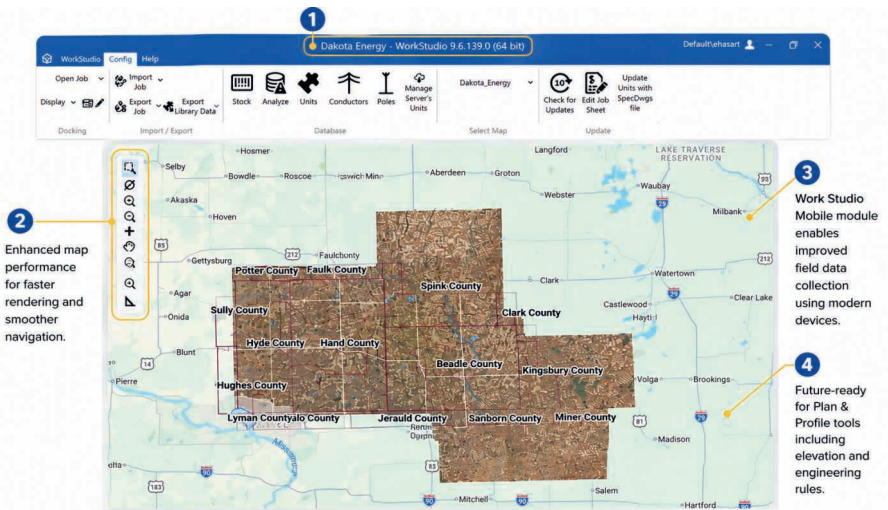
We recently upgraded our Stakeout server software from version 9.0 to the latest available release, version 9.6. This upgrade delivers several quality-of-life improvements to the staking client while also introducing enhanced efficiencies on the server side, helping streamline daily operations.

One of the key benefits of this update is that it positions us for upcoming features such as Plan and Profile. These tools will require the implementation of additional engineering rules, but once in place, they will provide a side view of line buildouts, including elevation data.

This added visibility will improve system integrity and reliability by helping eliminate staking errors during the design and office planning stages.

In addition to these improvements, we successfully implemented the Work Studio Mobile module, which was previously unavailable due to our older system version. This module enables improved data collection in the field using modern devices, resulting in more accurate documentation of asset locations, including poles and underground infrastructure.

Overall, this upgrade strengthens both our current workflows and our ability to adopt future advancements, ensuring greater accuracy, efficiency, and reliability across our staking operations.



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

**DAKOTA
ENERGY**

(USPS No. 018-949)

Board President: Darrell Raschke, Huron

Board of Directors

Nick Nemec, Holabird - Vice President
Daniel Langbehn, Huron - Secretary
Brian Bonebright, Wessington - Treasurer
Brian Baum, Alpena
JoAnn Morford, Miller
Doug Shaefer, Orient
Shaun Schnathorst, Huron
James Wangsness, Miller

CEO/General Manager: Chad Felderman

Manager of Operations: Matt Zomer

Manager of Finance & Administration:
Eric Hasart

Marketing & Communications Specialist:
Samantha Brodeen

Manager of Member Services: Jeff Gilbert

IT Administrator: Jared Rakness

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

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**DAKOTA ENERGY
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

DAKOTA ENERGY COOPERATIVE, INC.

ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING

2026

**THURSDAY
20
AUGUST**

**11:00 AM-1:00 PM
Q&A: 1:00-1:30**

**Attend in person
or drive-thru**

Three locations connected live

Photo ID or postcard required

Vote for directors and
receive a \$40 bill credit

No lunch provided





As unmanned aerial systems (UAS) increasingly populate recreational and professional skies, safety remains paramount – especially near critical infrastructure such as overhead power lines. Today we reaffirm that drones should be flown in open spaces away from electrical lines and substations to prevent power outages and dangerous debris that can threaten public safety.

A drone colliding with a power line can cause outages and, if lines are downed, create serious electrical hazards for anyone nearby. Touching downed lines or debris that has fallen on fences, trees or other objects can result in severe injury or death. If you encounter downed power lines, immediately call 911 and notify emergency personnel and the utility company.

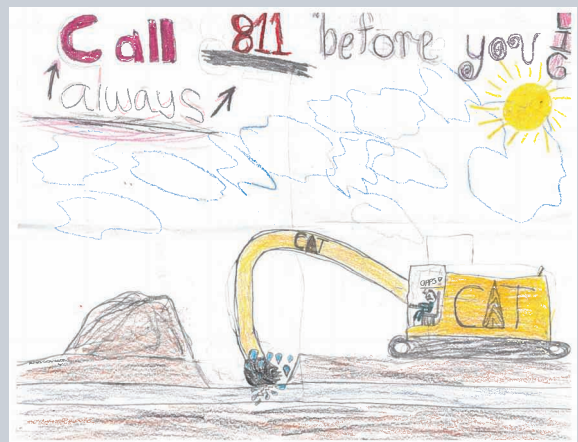
To ensure safe and compliant drone operations, follow federal registration and business-approval requirements, and stay informed about local, state and community regulations. FAA safety guidelines remain essential: Inspect your drone for damage before each flight and repair any issues prior to use. Fly at or below 400 feet unless FAA authorization or an allowed exception applies. Maintain visual line of sight; do not fly beyond it. Avoid airports, manned aircraft, stadiums and crowds of people. Do not fly for unapproved commercial purposes without FAA authorization. Refrain from flying in bad weather, including low visibility or high winds. Never fly recklessly or endanger others; violations can result in fines and penalties.

It is encouraged that drone operators plan routes

that maximize safety and minimize proximity to power infrastructure. Responsible pilots, adherence to FAA guidelines and awareness of local rules can prevent outages, injuries and potentially tragic consequences. For more information on legal requirements and best practices, consult FAA resources and your local utility providers.

Together, we can enjoy the benefits of drone technology while safeguarding our communities and critical electrical infrastructure.

As drone use expands, operators should build safety into every mission from the outset. Calibration, pre-flight checklists, and robust maintenance programs help catch issues before takeoff. Operators are encouraged to use situational awareness tools, such as real-time weather updates and wind assessments, to adjust flight plans accordingly. Community education events and outreach can foster a responsible culture among hobbyists and professionals alike, reinforcing the shared responsibility to protect power networks and nearby residents. By prioritizing safety, we preserve access to this transformative technology for all.



"Call 811 before you dig – always."

Laina Nelson, age 10

Laina reminds members to always call 811 before digging. Thank you for sharing your picture, Laina! Laina's parents are Nathan and Kristen Nelson – members of H-D 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.



Family FAVORITES

PARTY IN A PAN

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside. Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted. Makes 9x13 inch pan.

Kathy Zomer
Douglas Electric

WALLEYE WITH HORSERADISH SAUCE

Ingredients:

2 lbs. walleye fillets
1 cup Lawry's Herb & Garlic marinade
1 tsp. Lawry's Season Salt
1 tsp. lemon pepper
1/4 cup butter
2 tbsp. horseradish
2 tsp. dill

Method

Marinate fish in herb & garlic marinade for 30 minutes. Drain. Sprinkle with season salt and lemon pepper. Bake fish until it flakes. Melt butter in saucepan. Remove from heat and add horseradish. Spoon onto fillet after cooked. Sprinkle on dill and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

BBQ MEATBALLS

Ingredients:

Meatballs

3# ground beef
1 can (12 oz.) evaporated milk
1 cup oatmeal
1 cup cracker crumbs
2 eggs
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. chili powder

Sauce

2 cups ketchup
1 cup brown sugar
1/2 tsp. liquid smoke, or to taste
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/4 cup finely chopped onion

Method

Mix all meatball ingredients together and shape into meatballs. Place meatballs in a baking dish.

Mix all sauce ingredients together and pour over meatballs. Cover and bake at 350°F for one hour. The meatballs can be made ahead of time and frozen for several weeks. This makes a large batch, so it can be divided into smaller batches and frozen.

Karen Soulek
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.

SAFETY REMINDER



IF YOU HIT A UTILITY POLE

1. STOP SAFELY

Pull over in a safe location and stay in your vehicle.

2. CALL 911

Dial 911 if anyone is injured or if there are downed power lines.

3. REPORT IT

Contact Dakota Energy Cooperative as soon as possible.

☎ (800) 353-8591

4. STAY AWAY

Stay at least 30 feet away from downed or damaged lines and equipment.

5. NEVER ASSUME

Never assume a line or equipment is de-energized.

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN. REPORTING THEM MAKES THE DIFFERENCE.

Each year, Dakota Energy Cooperative responds to a number of vehicle and equipment related impacts with power poles and other electrical equipment. While accidents happen, what concerns us most is when these incidents go unreported. A “hit-and-run” on a power pole is not only a property-damage issue, it is also a serious safety hazard and a financial burden that ultimately affects all members.

When a pole is struck, even if it remains standing, the structural integrity may be compromised. A damaged pole can fail hours or days later, creating risks for lineworkers, first responders, and the public.

Unreported damage also increases the likelihood of outages, which can affect farms, homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure across our service territory.

The cost of replacing a single pole, including labor, materials, equipment, and emergency response, can range from hundreds to several thousands of dollars depending on the location and complexity of the repair. When the responsible party does not report the incident, those costs may be absorbed by the cooperative and, ultimately, by the membership.

FIRE MITIGATION. COMMUNITY PROTECTION.

Dakota Energy Cooperative follows a comprehensive Wildfire Mitigation Plan that includes vegetation management, system inspections, and risk assessments. Our staff is trained and prepared to respond in high-risk areas where a damaged pole could create a serious fire danger.



SCAN TO LEARN MORE
about our Wildfire mitigation plan.

Thank you

for helping keep our communities safe and our electric system reliable for everyone.

YOUR QUICK REPORT COULD PREVENT A FUTURE OUTAGE AND HELP AVOID SERIOUS INJURIES OR LOSS OF LIFE.



If you or someone you know is involved in an accident with a power pole, please report it immediately. Your call allows us to respond quickly make the area safe, and prevent further damage or outages.

THANK YOU FOR DOING YOUR PART!



SEE DAMAGE? REPORT IT!

If you see a damaged power pole or electrical equipment, even if you didn't cause the damage, please let us know. Your report could help prevent a serious accident.

MAY 2026

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, May 27, 2026, with Directors Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Morford, Nemec, Raschke, Schaefer, Schnathorst and Wangsness present. Manager Felderman and Employees Brodeen, Gilbert, Hasart, Lummis, Picek, Rakness and Zomer were present.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly kWh sales and revenue
- Basin Electric
- Joint safety meeting
- Wildfire Mitigation Plan
- Crow Creek easement
- DGC update
- Dakota Metal Recycling
- Southwest Power Pool
- Spec 9 building

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- Financial reports for April
- CFC 10-year financial forecast
- Unclaimed capital credits
- NISC meeting
- CrescoNet meeting
- Demand and kWh revenue comparisons
- Board meeting software

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance and retirement activities
- Huron Substation back online
- Yale Substation scheduled outage
- Contractor installing underground
- Rebuilt eight services
- Reconductoring north of Highmore

- 2026 construction projects
- Cooperative Response Center
- Outage report

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load control savings
- Demand limiter
- Electric motor shop
- South Dakota State Fair and DakotaFest planning
- Youth presentation at Highmore School

MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Marketing/Communications Specialist Brodeen reported on the following items:

- Human Resources conference
- Demand communications
- Electric motor service materials
- Youth and community engagement

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Security news
- Website and cybersecurity
- Outage Management System update

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports as presented.
- Approved a \$400 donation to the Old Settlers Bull Bash, a \$150 donation to the National Child Safety Council, and a \$1,800 LiveTicketTV sponsorship.
- Approved Policy No. 041 – Sales of Retail Material and Equipment, Policy No. 103 – Board-Management-Employee Relations, Policy No. 105 – Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination, and Policy No. 120 – Employee Management and Leadership.
- Approved the 2026 Annual Meeting Official Notice.
- Approved a \$40 annual meeting bill credit for all registered attendees at the 2026 Annual Meeting.
- Approved capital credit estate retirements totaling \$3,973.92.

BOARD REPORTS

Director Raschke reported on East River's May 2026 regular board meeting.

Year-to-Date Financial Report

	May-26	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$2,353,606	\$12,417,183
Cost of Power	\$1,528,435	\$8,192,593
Operating Expenses	\$607,073	\$3,491,442
Total Margins	\$290,743	\$1,111,247
kWh's Purchased	18,162,667	100,987,174
Services in Place		3,653
Miles of Line		2,529
Members per Mile		1.44
Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 84.87% of DEC's total cost of service.		





SOUTH DAKOTA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A PAST FIT FOR THE FUTURE

A new lobby welcomes visitors to the Cultural Heritage Center.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

Cultural Center & State Museum Reopens After Extensive Renovation

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

After more than two years spent closed for renovation, South Dakota's state museum and cultural center is back up and running to share the story of South Dakota and its people with visitors from across the state and beyond.

The iconic museum built into the Pierre hillside held its grand reopening July 1 in time for the nation's 250th birthday, showing off new exhibits, a gift shop and an expansion that includes a larger meeting room and more space for its archives.

For Museum Director David Grabitske, the reopening marks a new chapter for the South Dakota State Historical Society, which oversees both the museum and state archives housed there. But it also honors the first laws set forth by the Dakota Territory's first territorial legislature, outlining specific steps and functions for historical preservation for untold future generations of its citizens.

According to Grabitske, many of the

first Dakotan settlers were determined to preserve the history they were making day by day as settlers on the vast American frontier.

"The first three acts [by the territorial legislature] were all about transferring property at the end of life – it's all about inheritance," Grabitske explained. "The fourth act of the territory created the historical society. In my mind, the fourth act goes along with those first three acts; it's about how we give things to the future."

Establishing a historical society demonstrated confidence that there would be a future for the Dakota Territory – complete with a permanent population that would live, grow and prosper there.

"We have a mantra around here," Grabitske said. "We collect today for tomorrow's history."

What that sentiment has amounted to is a sprawling collection of more than 17,000 cubic feet of paper, 50 terabytes of data on its servers, and more than 35,000 individual objects.

"The very first collections that arrived were in 1863, and we still have those in our library," Grabitske said. "They were

library books – 514 of them in 11 boxes."

In the process of collecting and disseminating information, historical societies at the time would collect and make copies of books to trade with other historical societies to expand their collections and diffuse knowledge across a wider area and reduce the risk of losing records to fire.

You'll find those 160 years' worth of books, deeds, contracts and reports



On the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Little Bighorn, Curator of Collections Katy L. Schmidt holds a can found on the battlefield.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

throughout the high-ceilinged, climate-controlled archive wing of the building – but you'll also find objects that aren't necessarily old or inherently valuable.

"The reason we add something into our collection is because it's historic, and what we mean by historic is it has significance and integrity," Grabitske explained. "Something being 'old' just fixes it in time. What makes something historic is that it is significant – it tells the story of people in South Dakota, and it has integrity, which means a certain completeness to tell that story."

To illustrate the point, Grabitske described a recent addition to the museum's collection – a painted tire with the words "no hunting."

"You see these things going down the road [in South Dakota], and we realized we were missing [one for the museum]," he explained. "We found one near Timber Lake which had a story. The lady who gave it to us (family of Dorothy Dopp, courtesy of the Timber Lake & Area Museum) had put it up in 1967 and she had faithfully painted it over the years and knew the dates she had painted it. We don't need 400 of these tires – we need one to represent the whole state."

Visitors to the museum this summer can experience the first three rooms of the updated exhibits. These sections house a welcome area, 'What is History?' exhibit and a gallery. The remaining sections are slated for completion in December 2026 and will feature exhibits on South Dakota's environment, people, politics, conflicts and more.

For more information on the Cultural Heritage Center and the South Dakota State Historical Society, visit history.sd.gov.



An exhibit showcasing the famous people of South Dakota.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



This plaster doll (left) was gifted to South Dakota by Japan in 1927 to commemorate the United States' 150th birthday. Fifty years later, for the nation's 200th birthday, Japan gifted South Dakota another doll (right).
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Museum Director and South Dakota State Historical Society Assistant Director David Grabitske walks through the extensive art archive, revealing a painting of an electrical lineman working through a winter storm.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Grabitske demonstrates the new movable shelves installed over tracks within the floor. This upgrade will maximize the available archival space.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

YOUTH TOUR



A WEEK TO REMEMBER

For two Dakota Energy Cooperative members, Youth Tour 2026 was an opportunity to experience history firsthand, meet new people from across the country, and create memories they will carry with them for years to come.

Dakota Energy's Youth Tour representatives, Ellie and Annaliese, joined students from across the United States for a week of exploring Washington, D.C., visiting historic landmarks and learning about the people and events that shaped our nation. From the U.S. Capitol to the National Mall, the experience gave both representatives a deeper appreciation for America's history.

For Ellie, the Holocaust Museum was the most impactful stop. "The place that made the biggest impression on me was the Holocaust Museum," she said. "Seeing all of the terrible things people suffered through made my understanding of the Holocaust much deeper."

Annaliese also found the museum especially meaningful, saying it tells an important story that should never be forgotten. She also enjoyed exploring King Street in Alexandria, Virginia, where the historic buildings, local shops, and unique atmosphere made it one of her favorite memories from the trip.

Ellie also appreciated the opportunity to visit the U.S. Capitol and meet with Senator John Thune, who took time to answer questions and visit with the group.

Beyond the historic landmarks, Youth Tour was about building friendships and learning from students with different backgrounds and experiences. "It was interesting meeting other people from around the USA and seeing how they talk and use phrases," Ellie said.

Even an unexpected bus breakdown became a memorable part of the trip, giving the students extra time to connect and strengthen new friendships.

Looking back, both representatives encourage other students to apply for Youth Tour. "You get to see and learn about so much and make new friends," Ellie said. Annaliese described the experience as "informative, exciting, and hot," adding, "Just go for it and be prepared for hot weather."

Through historic landmarks, meaningful conversations, and new friendships, Ellie and Annaliese returned home with a greater appreciation for our nation's history and memories that will last a lifetime.

*“ Youth Tour is a
once-in-a-lifetime
experience.”*

-Ellie

JUNE 29 & JULY 2 STORMS

STRONGER Together

THROUGH THE STORM.

The severe storms that swept across Dakota Energy Cooperative's service territory on June 29 and July 2 served as a powerful reminder of both the challenges of delivering electricity across rural South Dakota and the strength of the communities we serve.



WIDESPREAD DAMAGE

High winds and a tornado left a path of destruction across portions of Beadle, Hand, and Hyde counties, damaging power lines, poles, transformers, and other critical electrical equipment. At the height of the June 29 storm, nearly 500 members were without power after two substations experienced complete outages. Just days later, another round of severe weather caused additional outages affecting more than 230 members.



QUICK ACTION AND HARD WORK

As soon as the storms passed, Dakota Energy crews began assessing damage and restoring power. Lineworkers, operations personnel, and office staff worked long hours under difficult conditions to safely return electricity to homes, farms, businesses, and essential facilities. Mutual aid crews also joined the restoration effort, helping reduce outage times and ensuring repairs were completed as quickly and safely as possible.



A RURAL REALITY

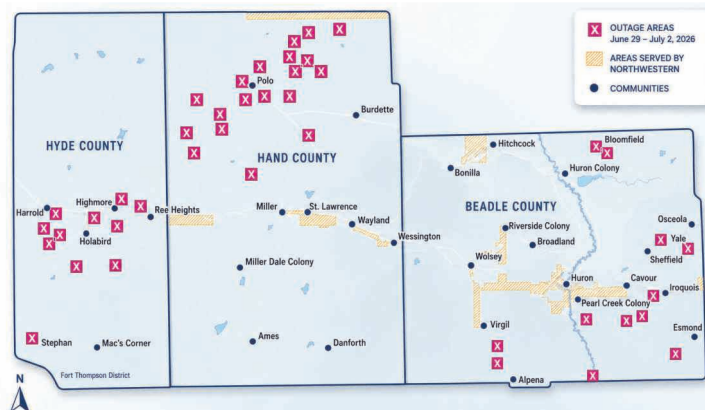
In total, the storms destroyed 46 utility poles across our system, 15 in Hyde County, 9 in Hand County, and 22 in Beadle County, along with numerous spans of power line and electrical equipment. For a rural electric cooperative serving more than 2,500 miles of distribution line, damage spread over such a large geographic area presents unique restoration challenges.



THE STORMS BY THE NUMBERS

46	UTILITY POLES DESTROYED across our system	614	OVERTIME HOURS worked
500+	MEMBERS WITHOUT POWER June 29	230+	MEMBERS WITHOUT POWER July 2
3	COUNTIES IMPACTED Beadle Hand Hyde	2,532	TOTAL MILES of line

STORM IMPACT MAP



Thank you!

We are incredibly grateful for the patience and understanding shown by our members throughout both storms. We also extend our appreciation to the neighboring cooperatives, local emergency responders, businesses, and community members who provided assistance, meals, equipment, and encouragement to our crews during a demanding week.

**TOGETHER, WE ARE
STRONGER THAN ANY STORM.**



DID YOU KNOW?

Dakota Energy Cooperative serves more than 2,500 miles of distribution line across three counties. When severe storms cause widespread outages, restoring power requires careful coordination, specialized equipment and time to safely reach and repair damage across our large service territory.

“ Every restored line helps a family return to its routine, keeps a farm operating and allows a business to serve its community. That responsibility drives our crews to work safely and tirelessly until power is restored to every member. ”

- Chad Felderman, CEO/General Manager

CO-OP SUMMER OUTREACH

Join Us at S.D. State Fair, Dakotafest, Minn. Farmfest

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Attention all co-op members! If you're heading to the South Dakota State Fair, Dakotafest or Farmfest this summer, stop by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booths for some great family fun and a chance to win a prize!

Make sure you fill out your coupon on the back of this magazine and bring it with you to the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair or Dakotafest for your chance to win one of two electric grills sponsored by Karl's TV & Appliance.

South Dakota State Fair – Sept. 3, 2026

South Dakota's electric cooperatives will host the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron, Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026.

This one-day event will feature a slew of energy-themed activities, from bucket truck rides lifting you more than 50 feet above the state fairgrounds to an interactive pole climbing demonstration complete with real spiked boots and climbing gear that linemen use every day on the job. We've also partnered up with South Dakota One Call to remind you to always call 811 before you start digging – but your kids are welcome to use our mini excavator in our sandbox to uncover buried treasure!

While you're here, check out our on-site displays for select highly efficient, all-electric heat pumps and mini-splits, water heaters, yard tools and more!

Find our booth near the Horticulture Building.

Dakotafest – Aug. 18-20, 2026

You'll want to stop by the South Dakota Touchstone Energy Cooperatives building at Dakotafest in Mitchell, Aug. 18-20!

Join us for fresh-off-the-grill brats, oven-baked cookies and freezie pops as you learn about the latest in home energy savings and efficiency. We'll have other cool stuff for you to check out, including an automatic lawn mower, a solar panel display and an EGO Power+ Portable Power Station.

Minnesota Farmfest – Aug. 4-6, 2026

Minnesota members, come visit your electric cooperative at Minnesota Farmfest near Redwood Falls, Aug. 4-6, 2026. Members may enter a raffle drawing for one of five battery-operated yard tools. We'll even have the high-voltage trailer on site for a live demonstration to remind visitors to be safe around overhead and buried power lines.



Kids perfected their utility pole climbing skills at the South Dakota State Fair.

Photo by Jacob Boyko



Touchstone Energy Cooperatives host a booth at Dakotafest in 2025.

Submitted Photo



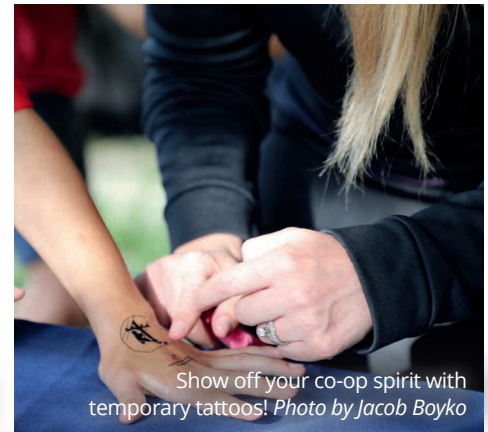
Charles Mix Electric Lineman Joe Michael shows off the bucket truck at the State Fair.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Fairgoers get a lineman's view of the State Fair! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A future lineman readies for his climb.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Show off your co-op spirit with temporary tattoos! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A line forms for bucket truck rides.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Booth visitors can win prizes by playing Plinko.
Submitted Photo



THE POWER OF THE PAUSE

Sioux Valley Energy line workers take part in a job briefing before work begins. The tailgate safety discussion helps crews review the task, identify hazards and make sure each person understands the plan.
Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy

How Job Briefings Help Co-ops Think Through Safety

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Before an electric cooperative line crew begins work, the job starts with a pause.

The pause may only take a few minutes, but for crews working around energized equipment, changing weather and other hazards, those few minutes matter.

Before the first step of the job, line crews gather for a tailgate safety session – a documented pre-job briefing where they identify the task, hazards, protective equipment and plan.

For Travis Denison, manager of safety at Sioux Valley Energy, that conversation is one of the most important tools crews have to fight complacency.

“It forces our professionals to stop and go through the steps of the job they’re going to do and identify the hazards with each of

those steps,” Denison said.

Despite the casual name, a tailgate safety session is not a public demonstration or a quick conversation at the back of a pickup. It is a documented briefing used by crews before work begins. The goal is to slow down and communicate, making sure that everyone is focused on the work in front of them.

“These are jobs that our crews do every day, but all of a sudden something in the environment can change. There can be hazards that the crew didn’t talk about or recognize, and somebody can get hurt,” Denison said. “That job briefing or tailgate session is made to stop the crews, make them aware of their surroundings, talk about the job and each of the hazards, and discuss how they’re going to protect themselves.”

Denison’s focus on safety also runs in the

family. His brother, Joe Denison, is a loss control professional with SDREA – the same role Travis previously held before joining Sioux Valley Energy. Both came to safety work after years around line crews and firsthand experience with the risks of electric utility work.

“We were both linemen,” Travis said. “The more experienced you get as a lineman, the more you recognize the mistakes you made as an apprentice. You see the shortcuts that maybe you made yourself or that you see other linemen make.”

So how does a tailgate safety session actually work? The details change with the job, but the idea is the same: slow the job down before it starts.

For instance, if a crew is conducting a pole top rescue training, the briefing begins before anyone climbs. The crew identifies the emergency location, the people involved and who is leading the job and the protective equipment required.

Then they talk through the work itself. If the crew is practicing a mock mayday call or using a rescue manikin, they also talk through what could go wrong during the training. Someone could strain a muscle. A climber could make blunt contact with a pole or hardware. A falling object could injure someone below. Even a knife or hook could create its own hazard if people are not paying attention.

"We list the job, the steps of the job, the personal protective equipment we'll use and the energy sources," Travis said. "We talk about anything to do with the job before we start, so everybody's on the same page."

For Denison, the value of a job briefing is not limited to line crews. Members do not need a formal briefing form before starting work at home or on the farm, but they can use the same pattern to stay safe – name the job, look at the location, identify the equipment involved and talk through what could go wrong.

At home, that might mean looking up before raising a ladder, checking for power lines before trimming trees or calling 811

before digging a post hole, planting trees, building a deck or installing a sign.

That message is especially important on the farm, when large equipment may operate near overhead power lines.

"Be aware of the power lines," he said. "Have that talk. Communicate. Make the people you are working with aware of the potential dangers around them."

Sioux Valley Energy has also worked to carry that message to members through radio ads, videos and public outreach. The cooperative has shared reminders about overhead power lines, green boxes, construction work and the importance of locating underground utilities before digging. At times, Sioux Valley Energy has also partnered with Southeastern Electric Cooperative on public safety messaging.

Denison said the goal is similar to a crew's tailgate session: get people thinking before something goes wrong.

"Think about what you're doing," Denison said.

SDREA - Job Briefing			
Aerial Unit Testing			
Cooperative: <u>Thompson Center Coop</u>	Date of the Testing: <u>6-30-26</u>	Cooperative System Location: <u>L24C72</u>	
Emergency Location: <u>Substation #440</u>	Temperature: <u>76</u>	Humidity: <u>68%</u>	Voltage: <u>7200</u>
<u>Section 14 Township-112N Range-48west</u>			
Type of Personnel Involved:			
☒ Line Superintendent	☒ Lead Lineman	☒ SDREA Loss Control:	☒ Foreman
☒ Journeyman	☒ Groundman	☒ Contractor	☒ Apprentice
Work Procedures:			
☒ Person In Charge of the Aerial Unit Testing:	<u>N/A</u>	☒ Set Up Traffic Control Devices if Necessary	☒ Position Aerial Unit Next to Energized Line
☒ Safe Location for Testing	☒ Ground Each Truck to System Neutral	☒ Inspect the Aerial Unit Boom Condition	☒ Install Skarshaug Tester
☒ Competent Aerial Unit Operator Identified	☒ Aerial Unit will be tested for 3-5 minutes	☒ Competent Ground Personnel Identified	☒ Rubber Gloves Shall be Worn by both
☒ Removal of the Truck Ground from System U	☒ Retrack Boom to de-energizing test unit	☒ Repeat for the next Aerial Unit	☒ Remove Skarshaug Tester from Boom
Personal Protective Equipment			
☒ Truck Grounds	☒ Safety Glasses	☒ Work Area Protection Devices <u>out of Right a Way</u>	☒ Rubber Gloves
☒ High Visibility Vest	☒ Hard Hats	☒ Flagger Personnel	☒ Aerial Unit Tester
☒ Strokes or Beacons			
Special Tools & Equipment Required			
☒ Aerial Unit Tester	☒ Spotting Scope	☒ Stop Watch/Watch	
Potential Hazards			
☒ Contact Energized Lines with Equipment	☒ Vehicular Traffic	☒ Discharge of Hot or Burning Oil	
Energy Source Control			
☒ Substation	☒ Sectionalizer	☒ OCR	☒ Installed 1 Shot
☒ Fuse Cutout	☒ SCADA	☒ Electronic VFI	☒ Other: _____
Personal at Job Site			
Signature	Signature	Signature	
<u>Joe Denison</u>	<u>Brad Rehner</u>		
<u>Danley Swartz</u>	<u>Tony Surana</u>		
<u>Billy Bob</u>	<u>Lynna Beckel</u>		
<u>Heath Church</u>	<u>Larry Hardin</u>		
<u>Jaen Pike</u>	<u>Derek Donson</u>		

This mock SDREA job briefing form, created for illustration, shows how line crews may document pre-job planning before aerial unit testing. The example highlights the kinds of details crews review before work begins, including location, personnel, work procedures, protective equipment, tools, energy controls and potential hazards.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____ Dakotafest – Find us in the Touchstone Energy Building!
Your Email Address: _____ S.D. State Fair – Find us in the Horticulture Park!



AUG. 18-20
Dakotafest
2300 E. Spruce St.
Mitchell, SD

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

JULY 31-AUG. 2
Sioux River Folk Festival
Newton Hills State Park
Sioux Falls, SD
SiouxRiverFolkFest.com

AUG. 1-2
Family Camping Weekend
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

AUG. 4-6
Farmfest 2026
8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Morgan, MN
Ideagroup.com/Farmfest

AUG. 5
Ag Appreciation Day
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Sioux Empire Fair
Sioux Falls, SD

AUG. 7
Raise Em' Rank Bull Riding & Breakaway Roping
Geddes, SD
605-680-2763

AUG. 8-9
South Dakota Senior Games
Events for People Ages 50+
Huron, SD
Register by July 26
605-295-2039

AUG. 13-15
Clay County Fair
Vermillion, SD

AUG. 14
Member/Community Appreciation Day
Clay County Fair
Vermillion, SD

AUG. 21-23
Yankton Riverboat Days & Summer Arts Festival
Yankton, SD
605-665-1657

AUG. 22
Extreme Bull Riding Tour
7:30 p.m.
Yankton Rodeo Grounds
Yankton, SD
605-760-4217

AUG. 22
McCrossan Boys Ranch Xtreme Event Challenge
3:30 p.m.
McCrossan Boys Ranch
Sioux Falls, SD
605-339-1203

AUG. 27-30
Steam Threshing Jamboree
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

SEPT. 1-6
20th Annual Sturgis Mustang Rally
Sturgis, SD
SturgisMustangRally.com

SEPT. 3
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives at the South Dakota State Fair
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
State Fairgrounds – Horticulture Park
Huron, SD
605-224-8823

SEPT. 11-12
Center of the Nation 9/11 Remembrance
6 p.m. Fri: Remembrance Walk
Sat. 8 a.m.-4 p.m.: Blood Drive
Herrmann Park
Belle Fourche, SD
605-641-3245

SEPT. 12
The Hay Country Jamboree
7 p.m.
Gayville Hall
Gayville, SD

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.