

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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Reliable Power for Today—and Tomorrow



Tim McIntyre
General Manager

Ring in a new year sparks a sense of renewed hope and optimism about the future. As the general manager of Lake Region Electric Association, for me, it's a time to reflect on where we are and where we're going. At the heart of this reflection, I think about ways we can better serve you, the members of the cooperative.

Our team at Lake Region Electric is always looking ahead, exploring ways to innovate and utilize new technologies to improve our services. As our nation increasingly relies on electricity to power the economy, keeping the lights on has never been more important. We're committed to powering—and empowering—our community at a cost local families and businesses can afford.

So how are we working to ensure reliable and affordable power while adapting to a changing energy landscape and our community's evolving needs?

One critical component of reliable power is the mix of energy resources used to generate the electricity that keeps the lights on across Lake Region territory. Most of you know that Lake Region doesn't generate electricity. Instead, we purchase it from our energy provider, East River Electric and from there, we distribute it to homes and businesses throughout our community. East River purchases the power we use from Basin Electric and WAPA. Our current energy resource mix is made up of 42% Coal, 29% Wind, 17% Hydro, 11% Natural Gas and about 1% Recovered energy. We're increasingly using more electricity generated from renewable energy sources, but we still depend on a diverse energy mix to ensure reliable power that's available to our members whenever they need it.

In addition to managing a reliable energy mix, Lake Region Electric is using technology to enhance our local grid, limit service disruptions and improve outage response times.

Crews out in the field use iPads equipped with mapping and other programs to help manage locations and work to be done. Our office uses up to date technology for communications and billing.

Advanced metering technology, also known as AMI, enables two-way communication between the co-op and consumers. In the event of a power outage, AMI helps pinpoint the location of the outage and can even analyze damaged or tampered meters. AMI helps Lake Region save money with real-time data, and ultimately improves power reliability for our entire territory. As technology advancements become more accessible, we are using advanced mapping software to better maintain the environment while providing more reliable service.

One of the best methods for improving our services to you is monitoring trends and leading practices from other electric co-ops in South Dakota and across the country. Learning from other co-ops is one of the many benefits of the cooperative business model because for us, it's about cooperation, not competition.

As we turn our focus to 2024, Lake Region Electric Association will continue working to provide the reliable, affordable electricity you expect and deserve—for today and tomorrow.

Thank you & God Bless,
Timothy McIntyre

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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Applications for this scholarship must be submitted before April 1st.

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For details or to apply for this scholarship,
contact Laura at Lake Region
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Applications are also available on
the Lake Region Electric website:
www.lakeregion.coop

Welcome to our new members:

Brian & Lorie Rabenberg
Mary Prince
Vernadine Black Thunder
Owen Stavick
Mark & Monica Deutsch
Elizabeth & Doug Neuharth

Cooking Safety

Watch What You Heat: Cooking is the Number One Cause of Home Fires

Plan A: Primary Prevention

- The best time to cook is when you are wide awake, and not drowsy from medications or alcohol.
- Always wipe clean the stove, oven, exhaust fan to prevent grease buildup.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves when cooking.
- Keep a pan lid and dry potholders or oven mitts near you EVERY time you cook.
- Turn pot or pan handles toward the back of the stove.
- When heating food in the microwave, use microwave- safe cookware that allows steam to escape.
- Allow food to rest before removing from the microwave.
- When frying, use a pan lid or splash guard to prevent grease splatter.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly. Remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you to check on your cooking.
- After cooking, check the kitchen to make sure all burners and other appliances are turned off.

Plan B: Secondary Prevention

If your food does catch on fire...

1. Cover the pan with its lid. A cookie sheet works too. Leave covered until the pan is cool. NEVER move the pot or carry it outside - the pot is too hot to handle and the contents may splash, causing a severe burn.
2. Turn the heat off. With the lid on and the heat off, the fire should quickly put itself out. NEVER use water to put out a kitchen fire. Water will cause the

oil to splatter and spread the fire, or scald you as it vaporizes.

3. If the fire is inside the oven or microwave, keep the door shut and turn it off. Keep closed until the oven is cool.
4. If the fire gets out of control- get out, stay out and call 9-1-1. Don't return inside for any reason.

STATS

- 47% of all home fires are caused by cooking
- Preventing a burn injury is always better than the pain and trauma of medical treatment afterward.

National Burn Awareness Week (Feb. 4-10, 2024) is a window of opportunity for organizations to mobilize burn, fire, and life safety educators to unite in sharing a common burn awareness and prevention message in our communities.

Source: American Burn Association



Call 811 Before You Dig

Lillee Pannell, Age 10

Lillee Pannell instructs readers to call 811 before digging. Lillee is the daughter of Scott and Kim Pannell from Sioux Falls, S.D., members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.



BRUNCH SPECIALS

FRENCH TOAST SUPREME

Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter
2 tbsps. white corn syrup
1 cup brown sugar
5 eggs
1 cup Carnation milk
1 tsp. vanilla
1/4 tsp. salt

Method

Boil together butter, corn syrup, and brown sugar for one minute. Grease a 9x13 pan and put the caramel mix in bottom. Slice French bread about one inch thick or use Texas toast. Put slices close together on top of the caramel sauce. Beat together eggs, milk, vanilla, and salt. Pour on top of bread. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. When ready to serve, turn the pieces over and caramel will be on top. Best served warm.

Brigitta Hofer
Bridgewater, S.D.

MINI FRITTATAS

Ingredients:

8 eggs
1/4 cup milk
1 1/2 tps. Italian seasoning
1/4 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. ground black pepper
1 cup crumbled cooked bacon
1 med. onion, finely chopped
1 med. zucchini, finely chopped
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese, divided

Method

Preheat oven to 350°F. Beat eggs, milk, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper in medium bowl until well blended. Add bacon, onion, zucchini and 1/2 cup of the cheese; mix well. Spray one (12-cup) muffin tin generously with no stick cooking spray. Spoon about 1/4 cup egg mixture into each cup. Sprinkle with remaining 1/2 cup cheese. Bake 20 to 22 minutes or just until eggs are set. Run small knife or spatula around each cup to loosen mini frittatas. Let stand five minutes before serving.

McCormick.com

CINNAMON PANCAKES

Ingredients:

2 cups pancake mix
1 tsp. cinnamon
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup milk
2 tbsps. vegetable oil
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Method

Stir pancake mix and cinnamon in large bowl until well blended. Stir in eggs, milk, oil, and vanilla just until blended.

Pour 1/4 cup of batter per pancake onto preheated lightly greased griddle or skillet. Cook one to two minutes per side or until golden brown, turning when pancakes begin to bubble. Serve pancakes with Spiced Syrup, if desired.

Kitchen Tip: To make flavorful Spiced syrup, mix one cup pancake syrup, one teaspoon pure vanilla extract and 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon in a small microwave-safe bowl and microwave on HIGH for one minute or until warm, stirring once.

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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Scholarships available to help LREA members

Laura London

Lake Region Electric

Lake Region Electric Association offers scholarships to help ease some of the burden for members with students planning to attend college or technical school.

Education and Concern for Community are two of the seven Cooperative Principles that we are guided by. One way that we show this dedication and concern is by providing scholarship opportunities for those who intend to further their education by attending a vocational program or a traditional college or university. Lake Region Electric Association has two scholarship opportunities available for area students: The Duane Snaza Memorial Scholarship and the Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship. Lake Region Electric Association also helps facilitate the Charles Johnson Trust Scholarship.

The Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC) / Lake Region Scholarship is funded by LREA's energy partner, Basin Electric. This \$1,000 is awarded to the dependent children, including adopted or stepchildren, of member-owners of Lake Region Electric Association. The applicant must be a U.S. citizen and must be a student who is enrolled, or is planning to enroll, in a full-time undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

Recipients for this scholarship are selected based on academic record,

potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, work experience, a statement of education and career goals, and an outside appraisal.

The Duane Snaza Memorial Scholarship was created by Lake Region Electric Association's Board of Directors to honor a former employee. Duane Snaza worked at LREA for three summers. Duane's mother, Jackie Snaza, is a LREA member-owner.

This \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to one student who is the dependent child, including adopted or stepchild, of member-owners of Lake Region Electric Association. The applicant must be a U.S. citizen and must be a student who is enrolled, or is planning to enroll, in a full-time undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

This scholarship is awarded based on the following criteria: participation in school and

community activities, grade-point average, work experience, SAT/ACT scores, statement by student explaining his/her educational and career goals, a written recommendation by a third party and presentation of the application.

To apply for these scholarship opportunities, students must complete the required criteria and the scholarship application, which can be obtained from your high school counselor, by visiting our website www.lakeregion.coop, or from the Lake Region Electric Association Office. Applicants must provide all of the required information and complete the scholarship application.

Submissions MUST BE POSTMARKED OR RETURNED BY FEB. 15, 2024, to Lake Region Electric Association, PO Box 341, Webster, SD 57274. For more information, contact Laura London at Lake Region Electric Association by email: llondon@lakeregion.coop or by telephone: 605-345-3379 or 1-800-657-5869.



Scholarships Available

THROUGH LAKE REGION ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Applications can be obtained from your high school counselor, the Lake Region Electric Office, or by visiting our website: www.lakeregion.coop

\$1,000

Lake Region / Basin Electric Scholarship

\$1,000

Duane Snaza Memorial Scholarship

Submissions must be postmarked or returned to Lake Region by February 15, 2024

FOR QUESTIONS OR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOLARSHIPS, CONTACT: Laura London at Lake Region Electric
605-345-3379 LLondon@lakeregion.coop



Area students shocked and awed by science

Laura London

Lake Region Electric

The Co-ops in The Classroom program is not new, and the information doesn't differ much from year to year, but every class is different, and the experience is fun and refreshing every time we are hosted in our local fourth grade classrooms. This year we scheduled visits at Langford, Britton-Hecla, Waubay, Webster, and Westwood Colony for a total of 7 classrooms. This program is always well received by the students and faculty. Teachers can use the information demonstrated to emphasize lessons that they learn in the classroom. The information is useful to all ages, but Co-ops in The Classroom is directed to students in 4th and 5th grade.

Jennifer Gross is from Madison and though her work home is at East River headquarters, she spends a good portion of her time on the road, visiting about 200 classrooms each year as well as attending tradeshows, fairs, and community events. She has a brilliant smile and an energetic way of engaging students to facilitate learning for all. She typically begins the program by

making a deal with the students, letting them know that she is going to talk fast and give them lots of information and she will be asking for volunteers, with the caveat that if they are good listeners and participants, they will all get to use the equipment at the end of the presentation. It doesn't appear there is a need for this warning because the experiments and information are so intriguing that there is a fine line between science and magic. And who doesn't enjoy a good magic show?

Gross typically begins by asking the students "Who has made electricity today?" She takes this opportunity to explain and demonstrate the difference between static electricity, and man-made electricity. The real fun begins as she fires up a Van de Graaff generator to demonstrate the movement of electrons, with some shocking results. "Not only does it provide a visible and audible example of how electricity moves, but students also get a thrill out of seeing their hair stand up and shocking their friends." Many of the students don't recall the name Van de Graff so they refer to it as a "static machine" or "shock thing." They have the opportunity to

make their hair float, transfer electrons to their friends with a little shock therapy and make paper float. This part of the presentation teaches about insulators and conductors, helping the children understand that even though we are having fun with the little bit of static electricity being produced, that man-made electricity is very dangerous, and can cause serious harm.

The lesson continues with a bicycle connected to stationary mount and a pedal power generator to demonstrate power generation, turning the concept of electricity from abstract into something tangible. Gross says, "By providing the energy needed to make a light bulb turn on, the students are able to quantify how much more energy an incandescent light bulb requires than a CFL or LED." Gross always reminds the children that we want them using energy efficient LED bulbs in their homes. We try to make sure all of the students have the opportunity to see how hard it is to pedal the bike in order to power incandescent bulbs, as opposed to LED bulbs. "Oh man, that's hard!" is the sentiment groaned by nearly every student once the dial is turned to the incandescent side.

The program teaches students ways to conserve electricity, how to be safe around electricity, helps them recognize where electricity comes from and also introduces them to careers in the electrical industry, the cooperative business model and cooperative principles.

The topic of safety ripples through the entire presentation. The children ask questions, tell stories and answer questions regarding electricity and safety. The number of students retaining information that they have learned from different safety demonstrations that Lake Region has provided to the communities is increasing from year to year, which is the most important aspect of the program.



SOUTH DAKOTA'S SNOWMOBILE CLUBS

A group of Black Hills Snowmobile Club members enjoy a ride through the snow covered pines.

Snow Lovers Create Trails and Lifelong Friendships Through Club Membership

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

Being a member of one of South Dakota's many snowmobiling clubs is more like being a member of a big, adrenaline-loving family.

Being a part of a snowmobile club provides the opportunity to meet likeminded individuals that can easily turn into some of your best friends. That's the case for Mike Boock, of Rapid City, who is a longtime member of the Black Hills Snowmobile Club (BHSC).

"Most of the friendships that I have today are because of the snowmobile club. Many of us even camp together during the summer at the lake," Boock said.

Boock said the club boasts up to 70 members in all. While he primarily rides the mountains of Colorado and Wyoming, Boock loves riding in Black Hills when the area receives enough snow.

There are a total of 416 miles of groomed snowmobile trails

in the Black Hills National Forest, making it a pristine spot for snowmobiling.

The snowmobile clubs in the Black Hills have it a little easier than those out east as they don't have to mark, install, groom or repair trails.

"The state takes care of that," Boock said. "This allows clubs like the BHSC to become more of an educational and community support organization."

This allows club members more free time to volunteer or participate in community events, such as the Festival of Lights Parade and Storybook Island Christmas Nights of Light.

Kelly Weaver is the President of the South Dakota Snowmobile Association and a member of the Aberdeen Drift Busters Snowmobile Club.

The Aberdeen Drift Busters maintain what's called the Dakota Midland trail system, which connects Aberdeen, Mina Lake, Richmond Lake, Westport, Frederick and Columbia.

"This provides about 75 miles of riding in a safe, marked, and groomed corridor," Weaver said.

There are rules governing the trail system. While there are no posted speed limits on the trail, when the trail is located in a road right-of-way, the speed limit of the road applies.

There are also laws governing the type of vehicle that can be ridden on a snowmobile trail. Machines must meet the state definition of a snowmobile. ATV's and other motorized vehicles do not typically meet that definition.

Aberdeen Drift Busters has held the title of being the largest snowmobile club in the state for several years. It was established in 1969, the same year the South Dakota Snowmobile

Association was established.

“Currently, our membership is right around 100 families,” Weaver said. “The club has been as large as 225 members but membership has slowed over the past decade due to the lack of snow and the growing number of activities that families have an opportunity to participate in.”

Anyone can join a snowmobile club and snowmobile ownership is not a requirement.

“You are connected with very experienced snowmobilers who can provide information about machines, riding ventures and how organized snowmobiling operates,” Weaver said. “It is a way to connect with people who have a shared passion for the sport.”

Weaver had her first taste of snowmobiling as a young child with her father and neighbors.

“When I was young, I only rode as a passenger, which I found was not to my liking. When I met my future husband, he also had a snowmobile and I had to ride as a passenger once again,” Weaver said.

Weaver and her husband decided to join the Aberdeen Drift Busters while taking a break from riding for a bite to eat years ago.

“In 1986, my fiancé – now husband – and I were on a snowmobile ride and stopped to eat at a trailside business. Another snowmobiler, who we did not know, approached us and told us we needed to join the club. We did and have been actively involved ever since. That snowmobiling ‘stranger’ became a lifelong friend who we’ve shared many snowmobile memories with,” Weaver said. “Like most things we are drawn to, it is the ability to connect with others who share a common interest that keeps us involved. We have met so many people across the state and the nation through our involvement and have experienced some awesome and fun-filled trips over the years. There are so many ways to be involved that even members who are not avid riders can benefit from and enjoy

being part of the club.”

Once married, Weaver decided she’d need her own sled if she were to continue with snowmobiling. When her husband acquired a new Polaris, she was granted a used Arctic Cat Jag that she described as a “trusty starter sled.”

“Early on in our riding, we were able to make trips to the Black Hills, Big Horn Mountains and West Yellowstone. These venues are even more breathtaking in the winter,” Weaver said.

A long day on the trail in a large riding area might last six to eight hours. There needs to be a minimum of six inches of snow on the ground, depending on the terrain.

It may take several layers of snow to create a base for the trail, which can then be groomed and maintained throughout the season.

With adequate snow and a trail in place, an ideal riding day for Weaver would be sunny skies with a little wind, and temperatures between 0 and 30 degrees.

Over in the southeastern corner of

the state, Duane Duerr, President of the Siouxland Sno Trackers, finds great enjoyment in riding his Ski Doo 900 Ave Four Cycle snowmobile.

The Siouxland Sno Trackers is one of the original snowmobile clubs in South Dakota and has around 78 miles of groomed trails for its 80 members.

Duerr grew up in Minnesota and joined the club in 2006 when he moved to South Dakota. Joining the club helped him to learn the trails and rules, and provided him with many friendships.

“I think snowmobiling has become more popular, but involvement in all organizations is down,” Duerr said.

“Many do not realize that snowmobile clubs are why we have a trail system and that they put it in and take it out. Without the clubs, we will no longer have trails in South Dakota. Member support is what makes a difference and too many take that involvement for granted.”

More information on the state’s snowmobile clubs can be found at the SDSA’s website at snowmobilesd.com.



Watertown’s South Dakota Snowmobile Club members take a break during an outing.



Journeyman Electrician Vinson Dargatz stands next to lines sagging from ice-build-up.

Ice Hits Parts of LREA Territory

Laura London
Lake Region Electric

The age-old poem that talks of the night before Christmas describes children nestled in their beds with visions of sugar plums dancing in their heads. The visions for the employees of Lake Region Electric were not too different as we prepared to embark on what everyone was hoping would be a

calm, long Christmas weekend spent enjoying family, food and fellowship.

Then the forecast started to amp up; audible groans and prayers rippled through the facility as employees began to experience flashbacks of the “2016 Christmas storm.” That storm caused outages throughout our entire service territory. Damage stretched from the most southern portion, by Lily, SD, up to the farthest northern portion

by the North Dakota border. Most of the damage was in Day County and Hillhead area. The longest outage for a member was one week. That storm required mutual aid of an additional 40 lineman.

Thankfully, we didn’t have to experience that again in 2023. However, Jack Frost still felt it necessary to poke his nose in and make a mess of some of our lines. Some areas of South Dakota,

including parts of Lake Region territory, were hit with ice. Lake Region had about 221 members experience outages between December 25th and December 28th. The amount of time members were without power during this time ranged from one hour to 26 hours; with the majority of outages lasting less than 10 hours. The ice concentration in the area of our Hillhead Substation is where most of the problems occurred.

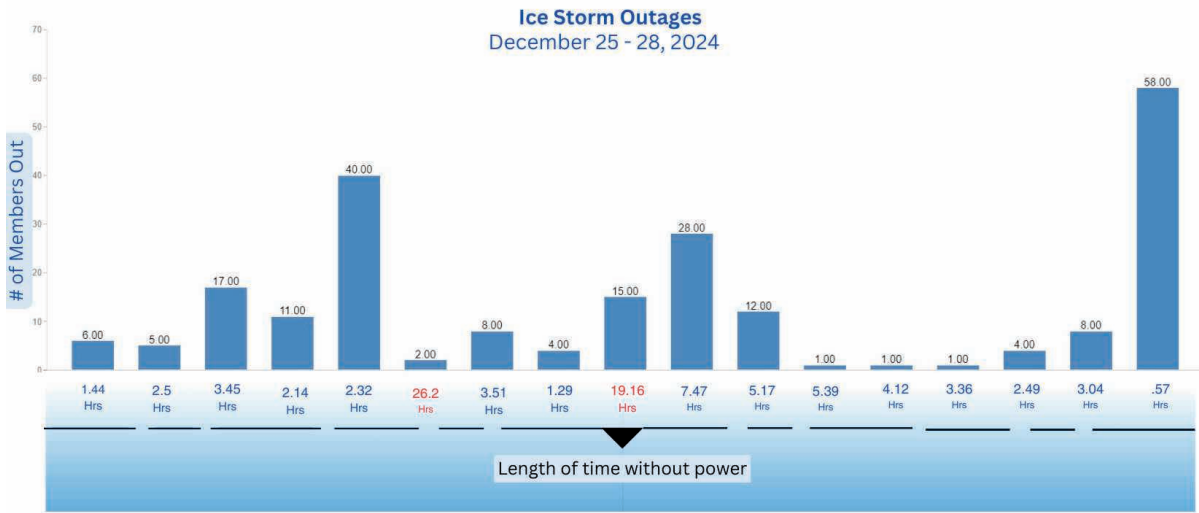
General Manager, Tim McIntyre, said “We were lucky for a lot of reasons. It’s been warm, which caused the poles to lean rather than break off with the weight of the ice on the poles and lines and we didn’t have terrible wind.”

In addition to the luck, we had in this unfortunate event, the infrastructure improvements and investments made by Lake Region and East River helped us out. Areas where we have been able to get underground lines in really cut down on damages and outages.

Clearing ice from electrical lines is not easy. It is a lengthy and very physical task. In true fashion of your cooperative employees, everyone pitched in, going above and beyond to battle the ice and get power restored as soon as was possible.



Iced lines from Dec. 26, 2023.





Jocelyn Cihak takes a dual-credit calculus class offered by Northern State University. Photo courtesy of Northern State University

DUAL-CREDIT

High Schoolers are Gaining College Credits

Scott Waltman

Some graduates of South Dakota high schools are showing up on college campuses with a semester's worth of credits.

Sometimes even more.

The dual-credit program has proven to be both beneficial and popular since it was introduced by Gov. Dennis Daugaard in 2014.

It's easy to understand why. Here's how the program works. High school juniors and seniors at any South Dakota high school can take classes for which they get both high school and college credits. There are scores of

classes to choose from, and the cost to take them is steeply discounted.

For instance, once a student enrolls at any of the state's six public schools or universities, they pay between \$253.85 and \$260.55 per credit hour. That cost for a high school student taking a college-level class through the dual-credit program? It's a mere \$48.33 per credit hour.

That's why education officials in South Dakota love the program.

Nathan Lukkes, executive director and chief executive officer for the South Dakota Board of Regents, said providing an affordable education has been a priority for the regents in

recent years. Tuition freezes and an increased number of scholarships are part of that work. But so are dual-credit classes, he said.

Most of the dual-credit courses are general education classes – or generals, as college students often call them – he said. Through the program, students can have some of those courses out of the way before they even get their high school degrees.

The work done by the regents and the universities resulted in Forbes naming South Dakota the most affordable state in which to get a high school education, Lukkes said.

All six South Dakota public universities offer dual-credit classes, and the number of high school students taking advantage has been going up in recent years.

The number of students taking dual-credit classes changes throughout

the year, but there were 1,223 taking classes at Northern State University in Aberdeen in fall 2023 compared to 1,141 the year before. And at South Dakota State University in Brookings, the number jumped from 903 to 1,031 in fall 2023, according to statistics from the board of regents.

Here's how the systemwide numbers are trending based on the number of students taking dual-credit classes, according to the 2023 South Dakota Board of Regents Fact Book, which was issued during summer at the end of the most recent fiscal year.

2021-2022: 4,300

2020-2021: 3,919

2019-2020: 3,781

2018-2019: 3,168

The 10 most popular classes all had more than 150 students.

College algebra: 990

Fundamentals of speech: 905

Composition I (English 101): 830

General psychology: 513

U.S. history I: 379

American government: 317

Music appreciation (Music 101): 280

Introduction to sociology: 241

Biology survey I (Biology 101): 157

Biology survey lab: 156

In 2021, there were 9,523 dual-credit courses taken by South Dakota high school students, according to information from the regents. That number includes summer courses and students who took more than one course.

At Northwestern High School in Mellette, Superintendent Rob Lewis said about 25% of the juniors and seniors are taking advantage of dual-credit courses. One student has taken a full semester's worth, he said.

Do the math over the course of a semester, and that's a savings of north of \$2,300. And that doesn't take on-campus housing and food into account.

That's just a great deal for high school kids, Lewis said.

Chris Ulrich, the middle school and high school principal at Northwestern, agrees.

"It's a nice opportunity for kids

to get not only college credits, but also experience what college is like," he said.

And they get to do it within the comfort of their high school, Ulrich said. The program is a great transitional step leading from high school to college, he said.

AP, or Advanced Placement classes, were great, but dual-credit classes are even better, Lewis said.

AP classes are college-level courses taught by high school teachers. But they don't always equate to college credit. Dual-credit courses are taught by college instructors and professors and always result in college credit, if a student passes.

In South Dakota, dual-credit courses can be taken on any of the six public university campuses, in Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Huron, Pierre, Watertown and online.

And there's another benefit, Lukkes said. Dual-credit classes create a tie between South Dakota high school students and the regental schools. Any chance a high school student has a chance to engage with a state school creates a bond that could help keep that kid in South Dakota, he said.

Perhaps a Spearfish High School student takes a dual-credit class at Black Hills State University and it's a good experience. Maybe that high school graduate stays in town and enrolls at BHSU.

Lewis, too, said the program is a great way to keep students in South Dakota for college and perhaps beyond.

That's also a focus for the Aberdeen Development Corp., which is starting a program aimed at keeping more Northern graduates in town to start their professional careers.



Rhianna Troske, a student at Northwestern High School in Mellette, takes a dual-credit class while at school. Photo by Scott Waltman



Basin Electric Security and Response Services dispatchers take calls from rural electric cooperative members at Basin's headquarters in Bismarck, N.D.

SRS Dispatchers Keep Watch Over South Dakota Linemen

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

No matter the time of day or night, nor outdoor conditions, members can be assured their calls will be taken during an outage thanks to the Security and Response Services (SRS), a 24-hour dispatching service provided by Basin Electric in Bismarck, N.D.

When a rural electric cooperative is closed, the SRS team takes incoming outage calls from members. "Safety is the reason we exist," said Chad Reisenauer, Director of Community and Member Relations for Basin Electric.

The SRS program started in 1992. Reisenauer has been in charge of the

dispatch team for just over a decade.

"We started with one or two cooperatives that were asking us to monitor alarms and dispatch linemen. Back then it was nothing but a phone and a computer screen where we typed notes. Now we're integrated into outage management systems, we're doing all sorts of things to predict outages and this technology has grown leaps and bounds," Reisenauer said.

The team is comprised of 22 dispatchers total, with 18 of those positions dedicated to dispatching full time, while the other four dedicate half their time to dispatching and the other half to alarm monitoring. Each dispatcher works 12 hour shifts with

four to six dispatchers working per shift, depending on what they're expecting for the day. These shifts begin at 4 p.m. and end at 4 a.m.

"Our job is to be the cooperative during the hours they are closed," said Jolene Johnson, dispatch supervisor.

"We'll back them a little bit if they have a safety meeting or a funeral where they're shutting the office down. We oversee 18 cooperatives in South Dakota. We're a little bit of feast and famine," Johnson said.

Overall, Basin SRS oversees 13 states, from Washington to Illinois to Texas. On any one day, dispatchers could be dealing with a blizzard in the Dakotas, freezing rain in Nebraska and a tornado in Texas.

On a light day, the SRS team will receive 600 to 700 calls for assistance. That number quells in comparison to the number of calls SRS dispatchers receive during major storm events, such as the winter storms events in April of 2021, when a couple of huge blizzards came through the Northern Great Plains region. During that storm, the

SRS team took in around 33,000 calls for service in a 24-hour period.

“That’s a stressful day for our dispatchers. They’re getting beat up continually, then they have to get onto the next call and maintain the safety of the linemen,” Reisenauer said.

“The other type of stress is if Bismarck is getting hit by a blizzard. Then there’s the stress of employees getting into work.”

A new dispatch center equipped with a sleeping room for dispatchers was recently built at the headquarters in Bismarck, which has no windows and a locking door so dispatchers can get as good of sleep as they’re going to get if the weather prevents them from traveling back home.

Dispatchers are also trained to remain calm under high stress situations, especially when the caller on the other end has lost power and is having a stressful day as a result.

“We reassure them that crews are working on it. We do call backs to make sure they’re not left in the dark, no pun intended. We just remain calm, we can’t

let them get us worked up,” said Seth Neer, lead dispatcher.

“No one ever calls us to tell us thanks for keeping the lights on,” joked Reisenauer. “It’s the worst day in the world for them if they’ve got water freezing and pipes bursting. They’re mad about the situation and we stress to our dispatchers that we’re just the voice on the phone and focal point of their anger.”

Neer added that it’s one of those jobs where you have to have the right mentality and the calls are something you cannot take personally.

Dispatchers must successfully pass a training program, which is self-directed.

From the time the dispatcher is hired to the time they are allowed to go live on the phones typically takes two months.

Reisenauer said he wouldn’t put anyone on the phone that he feels wouldn’t be able to handle an emergency.

“This is lineman safety. We literally have their lives in our hands,” he added.

Johnson said the SRS dispatchers are

also taken out into the field to visit local member cooperatives, such as Moreau-Grand Rural Electric, so they can go out and see what linemen are looking at.

“It’s hard for any dispatcher to get a call about a transformer if they don’t know what a transformer looks like,” she said.

Dispatchers track the locations of all linemen and check in with them every 90 minutes. If they miss a status check, dispatch will be sending someone their way. Their duty is to keep track of linemen at all times.

“We’re talking to them everyday. They do get to be family in some ways,” Reisenauer said.

“It’s funny when we bring operations and linemen in and they’ll go ‘I recognize that voice!’ And it turns out they’re good friends with the dispatcher but they’ve never met in person before,” Reisenauer said.

For more information on the SRS team, including quarterly newsletters on the department’s activities, go to Basin Electric’s website – www.basinelectric.com.





FEB. 24, 2024
Nemo 500 Outhouse
Races & Chili Cookoff
 10 a.m.
 Nemo Guest Ranch
 Nemo, 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.

FEB. 3
Lake Hendricks Fishing Derby
 11 a.m.
 City Boat Landing
 Hendricks, MN

FEB. 9-10
Mardi Gras Weekend
 Historic Downtown Deadwood
 Deadwood, SD

FEB. 10
Polar Bear Chili Cook-Off
 11 a.m.
 Main Street
 Hill City, SD

FEB. 11
Beadle County Humane Society Bingo, Silent Auction & Bake Sale Benefit
 2 p.m.
 Huron Community Center
 Huron, SD

FEB. 18-20
MASC presents Disaster! the Musical
 Vesta Community Center
 Vesta, MN

FEB. 22
The Starlets: Pop Female Trio
Aberdeen Community Concert Association
 7 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center NSU
 Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 23-24
Women in Blue Jeans Conference
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD

MARCH 1-3
National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic
 Denny Sanford Premier Center
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 2
Live on Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 7
Elevate Rapid City Economic Summit
 8 a.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 9
French Toast/Pancake Feed & Health Fair
 8:30 a.m.
 Tea Community Building
 Tea, SD

MARCH 9
SunCatcher Therapeutic Riding Academy & 3rd Annual Shamrock Gala and Benefit Auction
 5 p.m.
 Alex Johnson Ballroom
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 11-15
Black Hills Institute's 50th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 15
East Dakota Chapter NWFT 31st Annual Banquet
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 16
Live On Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 16-17
Hill City Antiques, Railroad & Collectibles Show & Sale
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 17
St. Patrick's Day Green Pancakes and Sausage
 8:30 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 20-23
Hill City Restaurant Week
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 23
Tyndall VFW Vegas Night
 7:30 p.m.
 Tyndall Community Center
 Tyndall, SD

MARCH 23
Hill City Children's Easter Egg Hunt
 Visitor Info Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 24
Ham Dinner & Silent Auction
 11:45 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 24
Run for the Rangers
 Hill City, SD

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