

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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2024 Update



Jeremy Lindemann
CEO/GM

Hello, Lake Region Electric Members!

Looking back at 2024, your co-op has had an extremely busy construction season! We have completed year two of a four-year work plan focused on reliability. Crews had favorable conditions that allowed us to trench in over 60 miles of line as we convert lines from overhead to underground, helping decrease the amount of damage from high winds and other elements common in this territory. Replacing and upgrading aging infrastructure continued throughout the year with the aid of pole testing to help identify failing poles. We have worked with our power provider East River Electric to upgrade transmission lines and strengthen our grid to improve reliability and serve new load growth. We have also been working on service orders including adding new services! Our electricians had a busy year responding to service requests and completing many wiring projects for the members of Lake Region. Our office staff stayed busy answering your calls and providing you, the member-owners, with excellent customer service.

Looking ahead to 2025, Lake Region Electric is implementing a rate increase. The power

rate increase is due to a price increase in power purchased from our power suppliers Basin Electric, East River Electric and WAPA. A base rate increase is coming due to inflation and increases to our fixed costs such as transformers, poles, wire and equipment. To help the co-op meet its margins this rate increase is necessary. Lake Region Electric Association is not for profit; we are a cooperative and if we have excess margins, we give those back to you the member in the form of capital credits! We are a conservative organization, and we do our best to cut costs and give you the member the most affordable power we can.

Here at Lake Region Electric Association, we are committed to safe, reliable power and to serving our members! If you have any questions, feel free to contact me or any of my friendly, knowledgeable staff.

In closing, I cannot believe how fast the past year has gone by. I hope all of you farmers had a great harvest, and you hunters all got your deer and your limit of birds!

The holidays are a great time to gather with friends and family, I wish you and yours a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Until next time, we will keep the lights on!
Jeremy Lindemann

We will be Closed
Christmas
Wednesday,
December 25, 2024

Call to report outages: 605-345-3379 or 1-800-657-5869

WELCOME
TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Maureen Holland
Noah Nissen
Hayden McCarlson
Lorri Elverud
Isacc Herschberger
Barney Villa
Melody Nelson
Adam Moran

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LAKE REGION ELECTRIC RIPPLES

(USPS 018-904)

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24 hour Dispatching/Outage Line 1-800-657-5869

SD YOUTH TOUR 2025

Join students from across South Dakota for a free, once-in-a-lifetime trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by your rural electric cooperative.

June 15-21



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Laura London
 LLondon@Lakeregion.coop
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Or visit our website:
www.lakeregion.coop

*Travel, lodging and meals are paid by your cooperative.

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ENJOY A SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON

From late November to mid-January, when families gather, parties are scheduled and travel spikes, safety should be top of mind. Following is tried-and-true advice to ensure your family remains safe and injury-free throughout the season.

Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared

If you're traveling this year, be sure your vehicle is in good running condition, get plenty of rest and be prepared for any emergency. Traveling by car during the holidays has the highest fatality rate of any major form of transportation based on fatalities per passenger mile. Hundreds of people die every year in crashes on New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, according to Injury Facts. Alcohol impairment is involved in about a third of these fatalities.

Stay safe on the roads over the holidays – and every day:

- Prepare your car for winter and keep an emergency kit with you.
- Get a good night's sleep before departing and avoid drowsy driving.
- Leave early, planning ahead for heavy traffic.
- Make sure every person in the vehicle is properly buckled up no matter how long or short the distance traveled.
- Put that cell phone away; many distractions occur while driving, but cell phones are the main culprit.
- Practice defensive driving.
- Designate a sober driver to ensure guests make it home safely after a holiday party; alcohol or over-the-counter, prescription and illegal drugs can cause impairment.

Decorate Safely

Decorating is one of the best ways to get in a holiday mood, but emergency departments see thousands of injuries involving holiday decorating every season.

When decorating follow these tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Keep potentially poisonous plants – mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis – away from children.
- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled “fire resistant.”
- If using a live tree, cut off about two inches of the trunk to

- expose fresh wood for better water absorption, remember to water it, and remove it from your home when it is dry.
- Place your tree at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources, making certain not to block doorways.
- Avoid placing breakable ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower tree branches where small children can reach them.
- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors, and choose the right ladder for the task when hanging lights.
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections.
- Follow the package directions on the number of light sets that can be plugged into one socket.
- Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights, and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow.
- Turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house.

Source: National Safety Council



**“Don’t Spill Water on Electronics...
It Could Start a FIRE!”**

Bethany Langworthy, Age 9

Bethany Langworthy warns readers to be careful with water around electronics. Thank you for your picture, Bethany! Bethany's parents are Kristina and Edward Langworthy, members of West River 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

CREAM CHEESE AND CUCUMBER SPREAD DIP

Ingredients:

1 large cucumber, grated
1 tsp. onion, grated
8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
3/4-1 cup mayonnaise
Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Grate cucumber and onion on several thicknesses of paper towels, squeeze out all the water. Place in a bowl. Blend other ingredients, adding enough mayonnaise to make it a spreading consistency. Serve with crackers or chips.

Mary Ann Klarenbeek
Harrisburg, S.D.

GRANDMA GRACE'S FROZEN FRUIT SALAD

Ingredients:

8 oz. Cool Whip
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1 cup sour cream
3/4 cup sugar
Dash of salt

*Mix all thoroughly until
sugar is dissolved.*

9 oz. can pineapple, crushed
and drained
Small jar maraschino cherries
(halve or chopped if desired)
2 sliced bananas (halve or
quarter slices if desired)
1/4 cup chopped walnuts

Method

Mix thoroughly. Pour into 8x8 or 9x9 container. Cover and freeze. Thaw 10-15 minutes to allow cutting into serving portions.

My mother, Grace Alley, first made this salad for holiday meals. It has become a family favorite, and we always have it for one of our holidays.

Mary Harris
Glad Valley, S.D.

LEMON ROSEMARY GLAZED HAM

Ingredients:

1 bone-in spiral-cut ham,
about 10 lbs.
1 1/4 cups honey, divided
2 tsp. lemon extract
1 1/4 tps. whole rosemary
leaves, crushed, divided

Method

Preheat oven to 325°F. Place the ham on its side in roasting pan. Mix 1 cup of the honey, 1 1/2 tps. of the extract and 1 tsp. of the rosemary in small bowl until well blended. Brush 1/2 of the honey mixture over ham, gently separating the slices so mixture can reach middle of ham. Cover loosely with foil.

Bake 1 hour, basting occasionally with pan drippings. Remove foil. Brush with remaining honey mixture. Bake 45 minutes longer.

Meanwhile, mix remaining 1/4 cup honey, 1/2 tsp. extract and 1/4 tsp. rosemary in small bowl. Serve with ham along with the pan drippings.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Cost of Christmas Lighting

Laura London

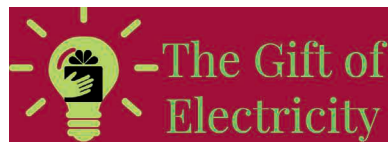
The history of Christmas lighting goes back several centuries, there is a bit of conflicting information out there about who or when the tradition started but one certainty is that it involved candles being clipped to trees. While that must have been a spectacular sight, the safety concerns were also tremendous! Luckily, in 1882 a young inventor and partner of Thomas Edison invented the first electric Christmas lights when he wired a combination of red, white, and blue bulbs then strung 80 of them together, hanging them on a tree that was displayed in the parlor window to be admired. It took a while for this to catch on due to the lack of electricity and the cost of the bulbs, but as homes across America became more electrified, the tradition of decorating with electric lights became commonplace.

Today, there are a multitude of lighting options available for your holiday decorating. Whether you like to keep things simple, or you like to go full Griswold, there are ways to calculate how much those Christmas lights

will affect your electric bill this season.

It sounds a little complicated, but once you do it, the process becomes simple. The first thing you will need to do is figure out the wattage of each bulb or strand. Wattage is a measurement that tells you how much electricity your bulb, or strand will use. This information can be found on the packaging or tag, or you can look up averages for the type of lights you have online. Energy consumption is commonly measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh), or the amount of energy you would use in one hour if you kept a 1,000 watt appliance running for one hour. Next, you will multiply the wattage of each bulb or strand by the number you are using. The next step will be to multiply that total by 0.001 (or one, one-thousandth) to get your kWh. Multiply your kWh by your electric company's power rate; Lake Region's is \$0.1089. This will give you the total cost to run your lights for one hour. You can then multiply the number of hours you have your holiday lights on per day times the number of days you plan to keep them lit.

Lake Region recommends using LED



The Gift of Electricity

Are you tired of wasting money on gifts that don't last?

The Gift of Electricity is a practical gift that can be given any time for any occasion. You can purchase any amount of electricity and give it to the Lake Region Electric member of your choice.

Parents Adult Children

Hard to buy for Friends

Loved ones on a fixed budget

Call Lake Region Electric for more information

605-345-3379 1-800-657-5869



lights for your Christmas tree and holiday displays. Using a timer will also help you save money. There is no need to break the bank making your Christmas merry and bright!

Calculate The Cost of Your Christmas Lights

1. Figure out wattage of each bulb or strand of lights.
2. Multiply the the wattage or strand by the number you are using.
3. Multiply the wattage x 0.001 to get your kWh.
4. Multiply your kWh x your company's power rate.
5. Multiply your kWh by the number of hours per day you will have lights on.
6. Multiply your daily total by the number of days you will have your lights on.

Tree:

50 LED lights = 5 watts

LED lights: 2 strands 2x5=10w

10w x .001 = .010kWh

.01 kWh x .1089 = \$.001089 per hour

\$.001089 x 6 hours = \$.0065 per day

\$.0065 x 30 days = \$.19

100 mini incandescent lights = 45 watts

45w x .001 = .045kWh

.045 kWh x .1089 = \$.0049 per hour

\$.0049 x 6 hours = \$.0294 per day

\$.0294 x 30 days = \$.88



Don and Maxine Knapp
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Don Knapp Remembers When Electricity Came to Hermosa

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In 1947, 17-year-old Don Knapp was working as a ranch hand outside the small western South Dakota town of Hermosa.

It was still somewhat of a primitive time in South Dakota's history; While at night the cities glowed on the horizon, rural folk worked in shadowy barns and shops lit by the dim flicker of a kerosene lantern.

"We milked a lot of the time early in the morning with a lantern, and you didn't think of it as hard or odd because that's the only thing you had those days," Don recalled.

Today, the 95 year old Don and his wife, Maxine, 92, admit they sometimes take for granted the modern amenities electricity brought to rural life – from refrigeration, to lights, to easier labor on their ranch.

Even so, nearly 80 years after Black Hills Electric Cooperative ran lines to Maxine's parents' ranch where her high school friend Don worked, the couple says they still think about the life-changing impact of electricity from time to time.

"Today, we have two refrigerators and

two deep-freezers," Don said, pausing at that realization. "You sometimes don't think about it, but we didn't have that before. Nowadays we butcher beef and it's all frozen – we don't can food anymore like we used to."

Before electricity, Don explained, refrigeration on the ranch was anything but simple.

To cool the milk and keep it fresh, a gasoline-fueled pump would draw cold groundwater from the well to flow around the large milk jugs before being picked up for delivery. Household amenities like butter and cream were sometimes lowered into the well to keep them from spoiling. If you wanted to keep food in the house, a block of ice harvested in the winter was carried in from the sawdust-filled ice house and placed into a boxy cooler, dripping slowly into a puddle.

Maxine also remembers the labor-intensive chores she'd help her mother with as Don worked with her father in the field.

"It was a lot of work!" Maxine said about washing clothes. "The washing machine – it was called a Maytag – was just a round tank with a wringer on it, and you'd run the

clothes through the wringer to get the water out. Then in the winter, the clothes would freeze outside on the line – stiff as a board!"

In September, as Don left the ranch to join the navy, he recalled seeing the co-op linemen near the ranch climbing atop poles and running brand-new power lines – miles out of town.

"I remember seeing them build the lines that summer and I thought, 'My gosh, those guys are climbing clear to the top of some of the poles. How do they do that?'" Don chuckled. "Then they'd come in and wire some of these old homes built 40 or 50 years prior. It had to be an awful challenge, but people knew it had to be done and they stepped up to the plate and got it done."

Maxine remembers being in disbelief when the lightbulb in the kitchen flickered on just a few weeks later.

"You just couldn't believe it," Maxine laughed. "You had this little bulb hanging down, and it was just such a great feeling to think you could see."

The ranch house was zapped into the modern age; It wasn't long before her dad purchased a cooler and milking machine and her mom picked out an electric clothes iron.

"It really relieved a lot of manual labor when the electricity came on," Don said.

It was that deep appreciation that led Don to run for a director seat in 1987. He served 24 years on the co-op board before retiring in 2011.

"Serving on the board made me realize the value of the co-op and the need to have a system like the co-ops serve the rural communities," Don said. "It's just so hard to believe how life was so tough."

Now, close to eight decades later, having in-home electricity is just as natural to the Knapps as it is to their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

"People who were here when the lights first came on, there are not many of them around anymore," Don said. "All the people around now, lights and electricity are just part of life."

"You don't even stop to think, you just plug it in." Maxine chuckled, as their kitchen refrigerator's ice maker rumbled in the background.



HURRICANE AID

Linemen Help Restore Power After Hurricane Helene

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Linemen from five of South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives traveled to the Southeastern U.S. in October to help restore power along Hurricane Helene's path of destruction.

The 18 linemen left Oct. 2 for Pickens, South Carolina, where Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative faced over 64,000 meter outages and more than 800 broken poles in Helene's aftermath.

Zach Hansen, a lineman from West River Electric Association, didn't think twice before he volunteered to go along.

"It's just the co-op way," he said. "There are people in need down there who lost their houses – lost their lives – and this is something we know we can do to help. It's kind of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The linemen stayed at a crowded base camp with dozens of other utility workers from all across the country. They slept on cots in a large, open army-sized tent, but with their busy schedules, they didn't spend

much time there anyway. Most days, the linemen woke at 5:30 a.m. for breakfast and worked in the field until supper at 8 p.m.

The work also presented unfamiliar challenges for the linemen; each time the crew needed to repair damaged infrastructure, they'd first have to start the labor-intensive process of clearing through debris and trees toppled by Helene's heavy wind gusts.

"When we have blizzards and ice storms in South Dakota, it's hard work – and you're trying to stay warm," Hansen explained. "But out here, there's a lot more chainsaw work and fixing wire breaks. It's not just straight miles of line lying down like we're used to at home."

By Oct. 9, fewer than 1,000 meters in Blue Ridge Electric territory remained offline, and the South





Dakota crews were dismissed to begin the 1,200-plus mile journey home.

But as the South Dakota convoy – which included bucket trucks, skid steers and ATVs – moved north, another call came in.

Jefferson Energy Cooperative in Wrens, Georgia, also faced catastrophic damage to their distribution lines, with 100% of their service territory without power after the storm. On Oct. 9, as South Dakota's linemen were driving home from South Carolina to reunite with their families, still over 10,000 homes and businesses remained without power.

Just like before, South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives answered the call.

"When our line superintendent called me that morning and asked me how we felt about going to Georgia, I said, 'well, we're right here, so we might as well go in and help,'" Bon Homme Yankton lineman Gunnar Dally said. "If they need help, we're more than willing to come."

The stop in Wrens delayed the linemen's return home by about a week, but the appreciation from the communities helped keep spirits high.

"When we were on breaks, there were people stopping to thank us for helping," Dally said. "A lot of them were very surprised when we said we were from South Dakota."

Hansen recognized another subset

of heroes: the families.

"The unsung heroes of storm jobs are the people we leave behind," he said. "My wife is at home with six kids taking care of the ranch while I'm gone. If we didn't have those people, we couldn't go out and do the things we needed to do. They are the real heroes."

SDREA General Manager Steve Barnett thanked the linemen for volunteering to help with the storm restoration efforts and for embodying

the values of South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives.

"These 18 linemen gave up time at home with their families to help people in need they've never met in a place they've never been," Barnett said. "Their selfless actions reflect what we stand for as a family of cooperatives, as South Dakotans, and as fellow Americans. We thank them for their work, their spirit and their dedication to keeping the lights on – at home, and in South Carolina and Georgia."



Rate Increase Coming for 2025



Laura London

Members of Lake Region Electric Association experienced a rate increase last June after the cost of service study determined that the existing rate structure was not sufficient to meet the financial obligations of the cooperative. That was the first increase the members of Lake Region have seen in their power bill for ten years. At that time, there were indications of coming increases to the cost of power from our generation and transmission partners East River and Basin Electric Power cooperatives. The Lake Region Electric Board of Directors and management have been closely monitoring and participating in discussions related to potential rate increases. In addition to the cost of power, Lake Region has fixed expenses that are covered through the base rate that members are charged monthly according to the size of their service, regardless of the amount of power they use.

Cost of Power

Even small increases are significant to co-ops like Lake Region because the cost of power accounts for roughly 71% of our expenses. Our generation and transmission (G&T) power cooperatives Basin Electric and East River both announced cost of power increases for the coming year.

Basin Electric has announced that the Basin board of directors authorized a rate increase of approximately 6.5% beginning January 1, 2025. “Several factors are contributing to financial pressure in 2025 that necessitate a rate increase. Lower projected surplus sales in the west and investment and expenses related to growth are

some of these factors,” Todd Brickhouse, Basin Electric CEO and General Manager, said. The primary drivers impacting Basin Electric’s rates are load growth and investments in reliability, decreased surplus sales on the west side of the Basin system, impacts of inflation, and volatility of power markets.

East River’s proposed 2025 budget also indicates a rate increase between 6 & 7.6% will be necessary to cover costs for power, system maintenance, upgrades, and improvements, while maintaining healthy financial margins. As LREA board president, Kermit Pearson shared at the Annual Meeting: adding to the cost increases for our G&Ts, WAPA has rate increases staggered over the next two years. Hydro power accounts for nearly 17% of electricity distributed by Lake Region Electric through East River. The main forces behind the WAPA increase are system upgrades, infrastructure maintenance and dam failure mitigation.

Base Charge

Lake Region is focused on providing reliable affordable power 24/7. We are all more reliant on reliable electricity to our homes and businesses than ever before, and Lake Region is committed to providing that. This commitment requires fixed expenses paid by our members through a monthly base charge paid by all members, regardless of the amount of power they use.

A common question members ask, “What is a base charge?” has a complex answer that can be summed up by saying, the base charge is an accumulation of the remaining 29% of Lake Region’s expenses. Basically, this co-op runs on only 29 cents of every dollar generated. Some examples of these costs are operational costs: materials, equipment, construction, maintenance. Other costs are often considered the cost of doing business: day-to-day operations, office equipment, software programs, labor, and insurance. Interest payments, depreciation, taxes and adherence to and implementation of a growing list of government regulations are also included in the base charge. All expenses have gone up in the past four years and are projected to continue to rise. In order

for Lake Region to continue to operate and remain in good financial standing, we have no option but to increase our base rate in a manner that makes sense and promotes fairness among our membership.

What is Lake Region doing to keep costs affordable?

Lake Region is in current good financial standing and has consistently returned positive results from the annual audit. “We are committed to you; being fiscally conservative is something that everyone at this co-op takes seriously. Every single employee works hard, having developed processes and skills so that we can operate efficiently. We run a tight ship with only 22 employees to care for nearly 2,600 members, 3,442 meters and over 1,600 miles of line. We will continue to have conversations with our vendors to get the best quality products at the most affordable cost.” Jeremy Lindemann, CEO & General Manager stated. Lindemann also recognizes “Not only are our employees focused on efficiency, but they are also very safety oriented which helps keep costs such as loss of work time and insurance costs low.”

Lake Region’s mission statement rings true: “To provide the highest quality of services and products to its members while maintaining competitive rates.” We will continue to be efficient, provide reliable power to our members, and will return excess margins to our members.

What can our members do to keep their bills affordable?

Members often feel like they don’t have control over their bill, but that is not the case. There are a variety of cost saving options. The main thing you can do is to use electricity wisely and efficiently. Monitor your usage through SmartHub to determine how much power you use on a daily basis and track your usage trends; set usage alerts for yourself through the SmartHub app that will notify you if you’re using more power than what you consider acceptable. Unplug appliances and chargers when not in use. Weatherizing your home or shop by sealing cracks, putting plastic over the windows, and regularly changing filters can add up to big savings. It is surprising how these small adjustments add up. Invest in energy saving appliances. LREA offers rebate programs for water heaters and heat pumps as well as our heat rate, which is about half the cost per kWh of regular electricity. Contact our office for more money saving tips and programs or if you have questions about your bill.

Base Charge

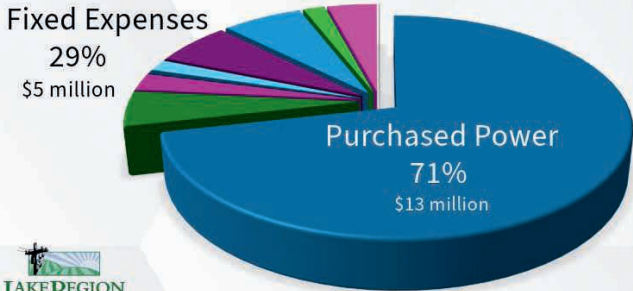
A Brief Overview

Lake Region Electric's annual expenses are roughly \$18 million*.

- Purchased power accounts for 71%, nearly \$13 million, of those expenses.
- The remaining 29% of expenses, roughly \$5 million, are paid by a combination of revenue sources, one of which is the monthly base charge paid by our members. The base charge is an accumulation of fixed costs that the cooperative pays to operate.

**Certain costs, like payroll and fleet use are spread out over multiple categories.*

<p>Depreciation 7%</p> <p><i>How much value of assets decreased.</i></p> 	<p>Administration & General 6%</p> <p><i>Office supplies, equipment, software, meetings, legal services, dues...</i></p> 
<p>Operations 5%</p> <p><i>Overhead & underground lines, some materials & small tools, meters...</i></p> 	<p>Interest 4%</p> <p><i>Interest paid on loans...</i></p> 
<p>Maintenance 2%</p> <p><i>Outage restoration line maintenance, tree trimming...</i></p> 	<p>Taxes 2%</p> <p><i>*Not including sales tax...</i></p> 
<p>Consumer Service, Sales & Info 2%</p> <p><i>Member services, communications, rebates...</i></p> 	<p>Consumer Accounting & Collections 1%</p> <p><i>Records, metering, billing, member assistance...</i></p> 
	<p>Other Miscellaneous < 1%</p>



**Based on 2023 expenses*



STAYING SAFE

First responders put out a fire near Belle Fourche.
Photo submitted by Butte Electric Cooperative.

Butte Electric Cooperative Connects With First Responders

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

October marks First Responders Month, a time to honor the dedication and courage of those who rush toward danger to keep their communities safe. This fall, electric cooperatives across the country expressed their gratitude to these everyday heroes who are always prepared to protect lives and the essential infrastructure that supports local neighborhoods.

Day or night, regardless of the weather, first responders answer the call, whether it's battling a blaze or responding to a medical emergency. When it comes to keeping the community safe, their collaboration with local electric co-ops is key for both local residents and the first responders themselves. Together, they work to ensure that emergencies are managed quickly, effectively and, most importantly, safely.

In September, Butte Electric further strengthened its ties and

communications with local first responders following an eventful summer by hosting a series of safety demonstrations for emergency crews in Meade and Butte Counties and the U.S. Forest Service.

"Earlier this year we faced several incidents that resulted in exposed power lines near first responders," said Matt Sleep, chief executive officer of Butte Electric. "In one case, we had a situation west of Spearfish where strong winds brought down a billboard, exposing lines that sparked and started a fire."

Both Butte Electric and the local fire department responded to the emergency, de-energizing the lines and containing the small grass fire. In a separate incident, a driver suffered a medical emergency and crashed into an electrical pedestal. Although the driver died in the accident, the actions of first responders and the electric cooperative prevented further injuries. The incident, among others, prompted Butte Electric to take proactive steps in preparation for the next possible emergency.

"We wanted to both educate responders and build some rapport, so when they see a power line, they know who to call and that they are comfortable getting in contact with us," said Sleep.

Butte Electric employees organized and led a hands-on safety training using the South Dakota Rural Electric Association's high voltage demonstration trailer, a specialized tool



that highlights the very real dangers of electricity. During the session, linemen demonstrated how electricity can arc, or jump, from one connection to another, always seeking the easiest path to the ground.

The training is one that linemen across the state have facilitated, which includes a memorable demonstration involving a grapefruit to show how contact with electricity impacts organic material. On the outside, the grapefruit appears undamaged after contact with an electrified line but cutting it open reveals it's been cooked from the inside.

The training left an impression with Trevor Papenfuss, an assistant fire management fire officer who has served with the U.S. Forest Service in the Spearfish area for more than 30 years. Papenfuss was just one of roughly 30 U.S. Forest Service members who attended the demonstration.

"We deal with incidents involving electricity at least once a year, if not more," Papenfuss said. "Butte

Electric provided us with a lot of valuable information and a powerful demonstration. Seeing a grapefruit burn from the inside out makes a big impact and impression of just how dangerous live electricity can be. Several of our new wildland firefighters attended and they took away information that will stay with them for a long time."

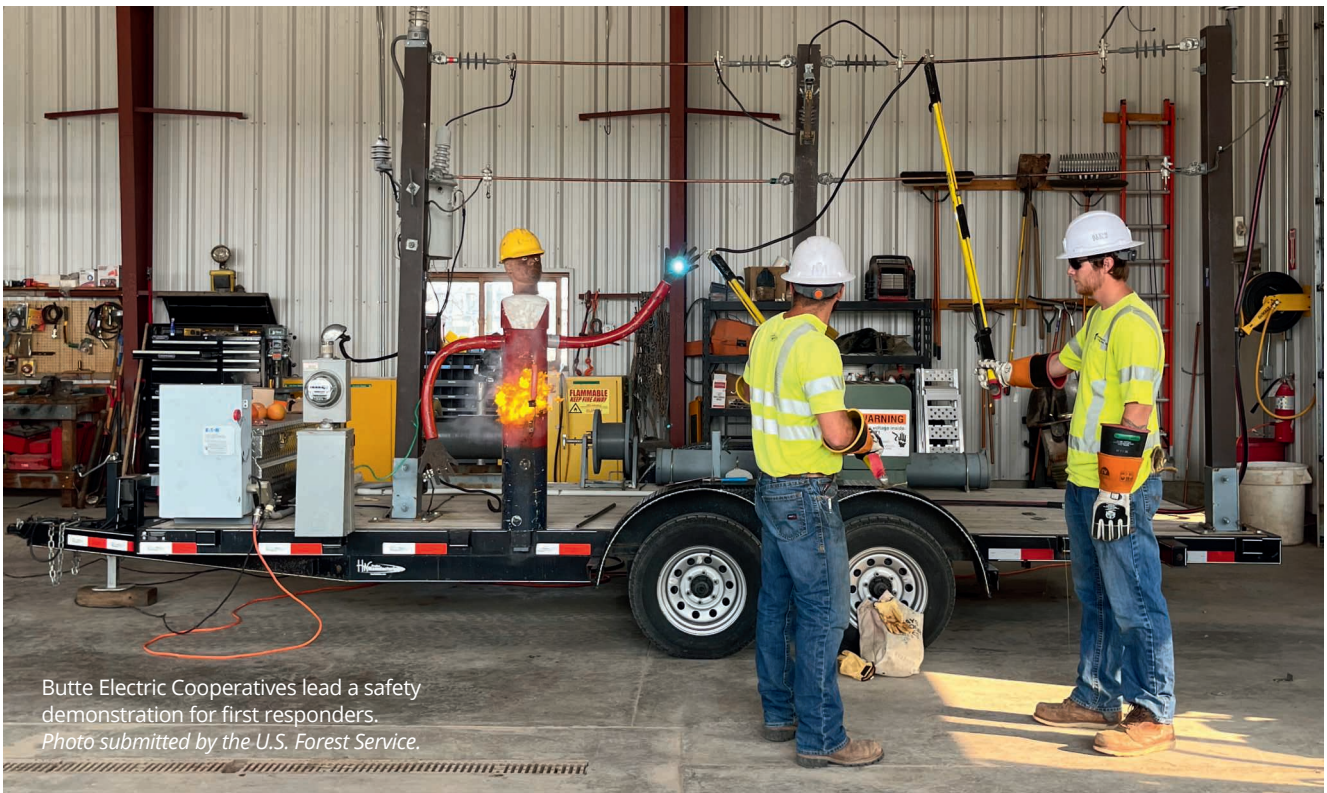
In a separate training tailored to the Sturgis Fire Department, Volunteer Fire Chief of the Sturgis Fire Department Scott Lensegrav said the training was impactful for his fellow volunteers. In addition to noting the value of the demonstration, Lensegrav highlighted the importance of maintaining a strong line of communication between electric service providers like Butte Electric and the fire department, especially during an emergency.

"In a situation involving power lines or electricity, the first thing we do is communicate with dispatch to try and figure out whose power line is involved in the emergency," said Lensegrav.

"The training was just another step in building good communication between our department and utilities. It was also great to have the refresher for our volunteers who have been with us for years and a good learning tool for the new volunteers that are coming into the service."

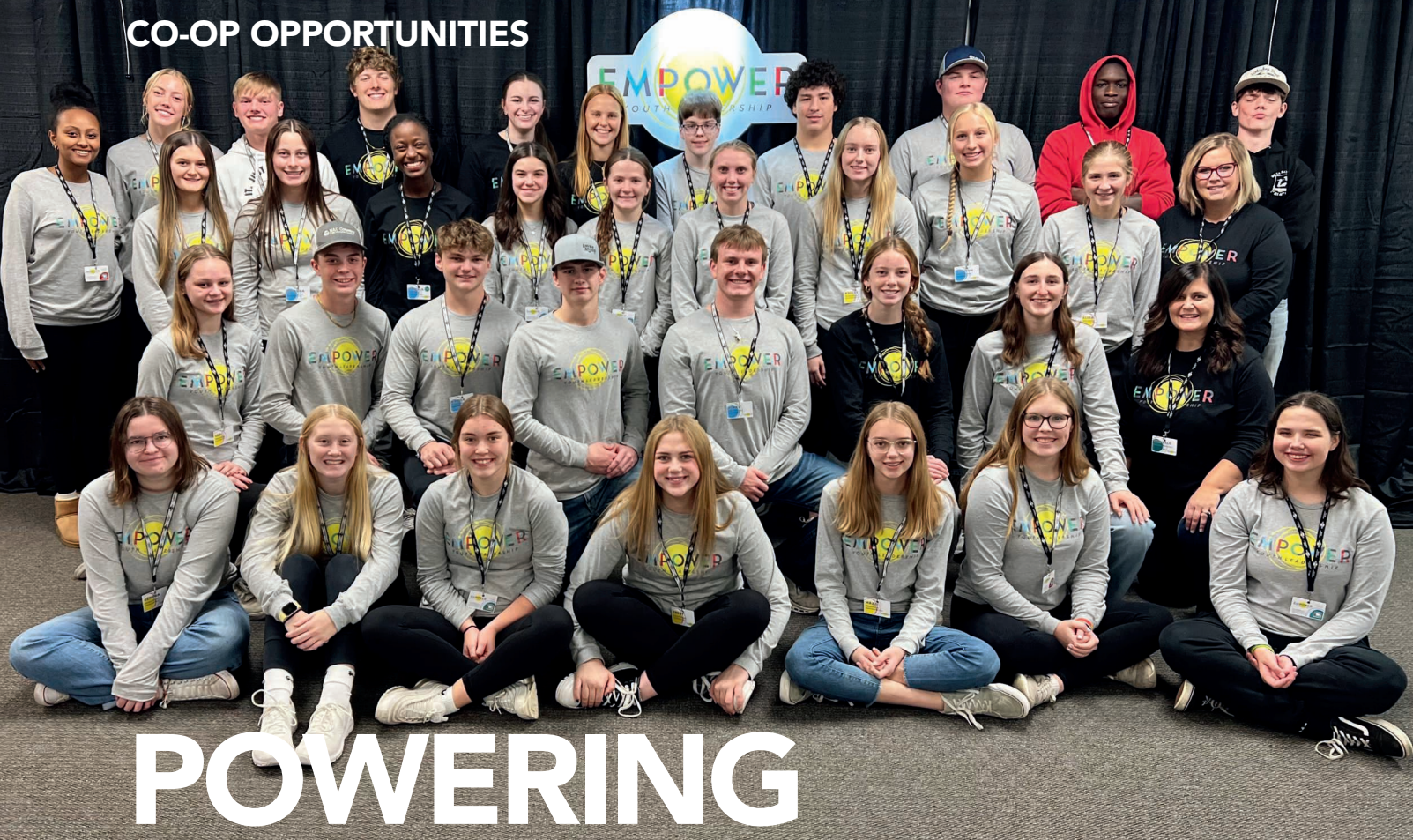
Looking forward, Sleep plans to continue strengthening the relationship between local first responders and Butte Electric for a safer future in their service area.

"It's all about building relationships and familiarity so that first responders know who to talk to and don't hesitate to call," said Sleep. "We deeply appreciate our first responders and want to help them however we can. These emergency personnel and volunteers are what make our communities great, and we just want to play our part in keeping them and our neighborhoods safe."



Butte Electric Cooperatives lead a safety demonstration for first responders.
Photo submitted by the U.S. Forest Service.

CO-OP OPPORTUNITIES



POWERING FUTURES

Electric Cooperatives Ignite Career Paths for Students

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

The path to a fulfilling career can start early, often before a young student's first job. Many opportunities connect ambitious students to real-world work experiences and electric cooperatives across South Dakota are tapping into this potential.

Through hands-on learning experiences such as internships, job shadowing and youth outreach, these early career experiences can ignite a student's passion for the work that takes place at their local electric cooperative, often leading to lifelong careers.

Every year, several students take the time to discover the many facets of an

electric cooperative, from office managers who oversee daily operations to the linemen who keep the lights on. In the office, students see the careful work that keeps operations running smoothly. Out in the field, they witness the skill and dedication of line crews who brave the elements to maintain reliable service. Each role offers unique insights into not only a potential career path but also how a cooperative functions and serves its community.

Sioux Valley EmPOWER Program

Since 2014, Sioux Valley Energy has hosted its annual EmPOWER Youth Leadership Program for high school juniors, helping them explore Sioux Valley Energy, improve leadership

EmPOWER participants from the 2023-2024 school year.
Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy.

skills, and build connections. Often, the EmPOWER program serves as a precursor to the Youth Tour and Youth Excursion trips to Washington, D.C., and Bismarck, N.D., respectively.

According to Sioux Valley Energy's Culture and Training Development Strategist Chinelle Christensen, the EmPOWER program is available to 26 school districts across the electric cooperative's service area.

"We really feel like this outreach is important," Christensen said. "We want people to understand the co-op way, the impact that we have in our communities, and that we are different. It's so critical to be constantly sharing that with the younger generation."

During the program, Sioux Valley also hosts a NetWeaving event where students get a chance to quickly meet and question different career professionals. For three to five minutes, they can further their understanding of a possible

profession by asking questions such as, “What does an average day look for you?” or “What’s the best part of your job?”

“A lot of people don’t realize that we are more than just linemen, and we teach them that,” she said. “A lot of students walk out of our NetWeaving program with an opportunity to job shadow.”

In addition to the EmPOWER, Sioux Valley Energy offers a variety of internships for college-level students. System Engineer Andrew Chmela joined the Sioux Valley team in May after a yearlong internship with the cooperative.

When he was a student at South Dakota State University, Chmela learned from a professor that an internship with Sioux Valley Energy had become available. Chmela applied for the internship, which quickly led to a full-time job with the cooperative.

“During the internship, I was able to job shadow, learn the area and see the company culture for myself,” Chmela said. “Since starting full-time, I love it. Every day is different and it’s challenging in the right aspects. It was a great opportunity to bridge the gap from when you transition from school to internship status to full-time work.”

Lake Region Electric Opportunities

Growing up, Carter Williams would occasionally tag along to work with his dad, Daniel Williams, a line foreman at Lake Region Electric.

“My dad would show me the trucks and talk about all of the stuff they did,” Carter said.

Those days left an impression, and as a sophomore in high school, Carter began thinking about becoming a lineman or electrician for an electric cooperative. Carter expressed his interest in seeing Lake Region Electric first-hand, and the cooperative jumped at the opportunity to facilitate a three-day job shadowing opportunity for him to see industry professionals at work.

The experience inspired Carter to

seek out an internship with Lake Region Electric through a school program. More than three years later, the experience has paid off as Carter is now beginning his first year in the Mitchell Technical College Electrical Construction and Maintenance Program to become a journeyman lineman for a cooperative.

“That internship really helped me decide that I wanted to go into powerline work,” Carter said. “I wanted a job at an electric cooperative because I would have a stable community and I wouldn’t be jumping from jobsite to jobsite. It looks like a really great opportunity.”

Carter’s story is just one of many at Lake Region Electric according to Brett Kwasniewski, manager of member services with Lake Region Electric.

“If there is interest in the field, there are opportunities with Lake Region Electric,” Kwasniewski said. “If a student is interested, I highly encourage them to reach out to us, and that can happen through a guidance counselor, teacher or parent.”

In addition to internships, many cooperatives like Lake Region Electric offer 1,000-hour journeyman or apprentice lineman positions. These

seasonal, entry-level positions are open to those older than 18 and interested in exploring the industry.

“We want to bring in a kid who is interested in the trade to give them real-world experience,” Kwasniewski said. “Really, if you are 18 years of age and you are willing to work, there is a good chance that we will give you a shot at that.”

Cooperative Opportunities

Whether it’s internships, job shadowing or youth programs, these opportunities extend beyond Lake Region Electric and Sioux Valley Energy to cooperatives across South Dakota, each dedicated to building a skilled workforce.

Students are encouraged to reach out to their local electric cooperative to see what opportunities are available, whether they’re seeking hands-on work experience, mentorship or an introduction to the field.

Regardless of Chmela or Carter’s next step, they both know their hometown electric cooperative in South Dakota is cheering them on in their future endeavors.



EmPOWER participants take part in a team building exercise.
Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy.



DEC. 7
Santa at the Zoo
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Great Plains Zoo
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-7003

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.

NOV. 29
Parade of Lights
 Parade of Lights
 7 p.m.
 Chamberlain, SD

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

NOV. 30
Mid-Winter Fair
 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Gregory Memorial Auditorium
 Gregory, SD
 605-830-9778

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

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

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

DEC. 5
Holiday Festival of Lights
 4 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
 Yankton, SD
 605-665-3636

DEC. 6
Kimball's Hometown Holiday
 3:30-7 p.m.
 Legion Hall
 Kimball, SD

DEC. 6
Hometown Holiday Vendor Fair
 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
 Armory
 Howard, SD

DEC. 7
Newell Festival of Trees
 9 a.m. - Doors Open
 11:30 a.m. - Community Lunch
 4 p.m. - Auction
 Newell City Hall
 Newell, SD

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

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

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

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

DEC. 8
Aberdeen Community Concert Association Fund Raiser 2024 Medora Magical Christmas Memories Tour
 3 p.m.
 Aberdeen Civic Theater
 Aberdeen, SD
 605-228-0946
 aberdeencommunityconcerts.com

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

DEC. 15
A Poker Alice Christmas
 2 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD

DEC. 31
American Legion Post 15 Save the Last Dance 2024
 8 p.m.-12:30 a.m.
 El Riad Shrine
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-336-3470

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