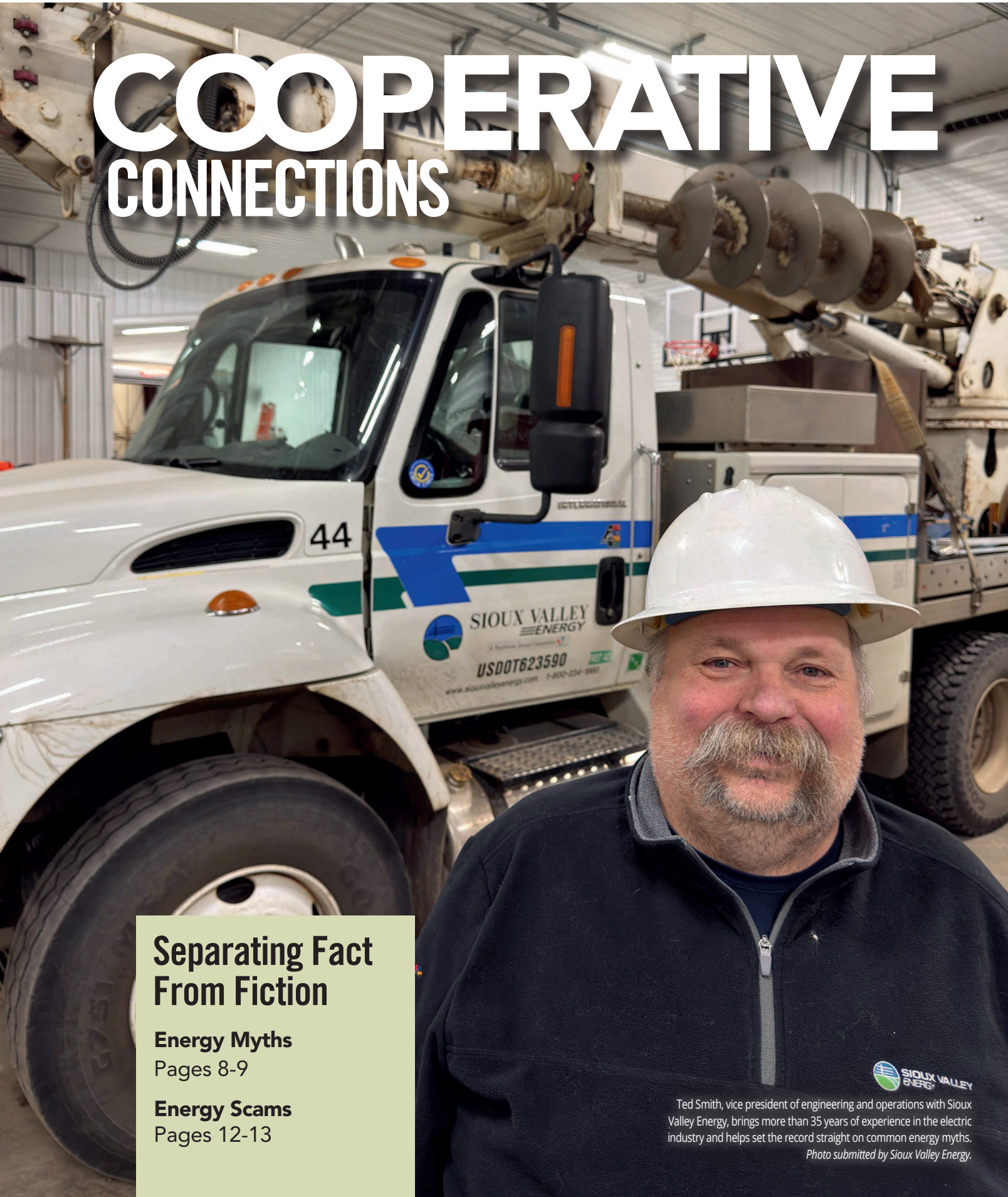
MOREAU-GRAND Electric Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

MOREAU-GRAND ELECTRIC
APRIL 2026 VOL. 26 NO. 12

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS




## Separating Fact From Fiction

**Energy Myths**
Pages 8-9

**Energy Scams**
Pages 12-13

Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations with Sioux Valley Energy, brings more than 35 years of experience in the electric industry and helps set the record straight on common energy myths.
*Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy.*

# Lineworkers are Ready When it Matters Most

**Kent Larson**
Manager

As GM of Moreau-Grand Electric, I have the unique privilege of seeing firsthand what it truly takes to keep the lights on for our members. In April, we take time to pause and recognize the brave men and women who make that possible every single day – our lineworkers.

When storms impact our communities and outages occur, many people experience the inconvenience, but our lineworkers see a call to action. Our crews are always ready when it matters most – leaving family dinners, working through the night and heading into challenging conditions to restore power as safely and quickly as possible. That readiness is not accidental. It comes from rigorous training, deep experience and a shared commitment to serving others.

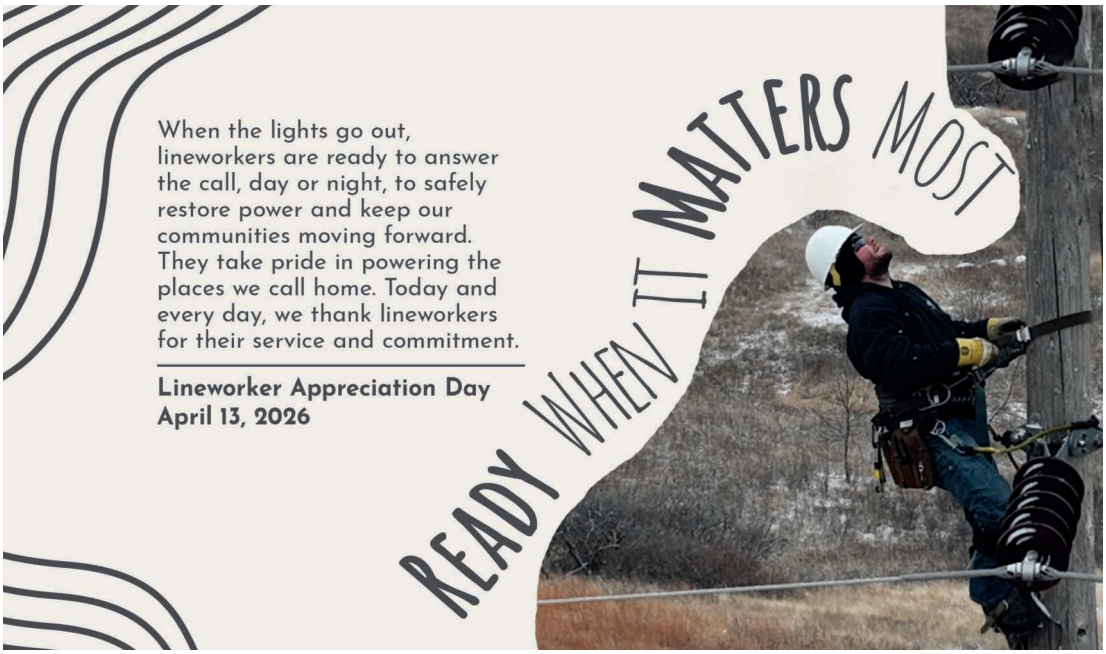
What makes lineworkers especially remarkable is that they aren't just restoring power to a system – they're restoring power to their own communities. They live here. They raise their families here. They understand that electricity is more than a convenience; it's essential to daily life, to local businesses, to schools, farms and emergency services. Powering the places we call home is personal to lineworkers.

Electric cooperatives like Moreau-Grand Electric were built on the principle of neighbors helping neighbors, and our lineworkers embody that spirit every day. They are the first to respond and the last to leave, often working long hours behind the scenes. At times, serving our neighbors means going beyond our own service territory through a process known as mutual aid. During major outage events, Moreau-Grand Electric crews stand ready to assist neighboring co-ops – sometimes close to home, and sometimes across state lines – to help restore power. This spirit of mutual aid strengthens all cooperatives and ultimately benefits the members we serve.

We understand any time the lights go out can be frustrating, bringing everyday life to a halt. We are incredibly grateful to our members for your patience and encouragement during these times. Linework is demanding, physical, and at times, it can be dangerous. Our crews approach each job with a focus on safety and teamwork. They take pride in their craft and in the trust our members place in them.

On April 13, 2026, we will celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day, but one day is hardly enough. Every day, we thank lineworkers for their service and dedication, which are the backbone of our cooperative.

To our linemen: thank you for your hard work, your readiness and your unwavering commitment to the communities we serve. We are proud to stand behind you and grateful for all that you do.



COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS

MOREAU-GRAND
ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-951)

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MOREAU-GRAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly by Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative, PO Box 8, 823 Main St, Timber Lake, SD 57656-0008, for the members of electric cooperatives across South Dakota. Families subscribe to Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better rural living.

Subscription information: Electric cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for $12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Timber Lake, S.D., and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 8, Timber Lake, SD 57656; Phone (605) 865-3511; Fax (605) -865-3340; e-mail mge@mge.coop; Web site www.mge.coop. This institution is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Design assistance by SDREA

# Feb. 24, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes and December 2025 Financial Information

The February 24, 2026, board of directors' meeting was held at the Timber Lake office with the following directors present: Clark, Jewett, Keckler, Lawrence, Maher, McLellan, Schweitzer, Walker and Wall, and Hahne via Webex, and others present: Manager Larson and Finance Officer Lemburg (Delegated Recorder of Minutes).

The Large Power Users monthly report was given by Tammi Ducheneaux, which included large power usage and payments.

The Member Services report was given by JJ Martin, which included working at the Neon Leon display booth at the Black Hills Stock Show, and he will take the Neon Leon display to area schools in April. 14457 233RD AVE ISABEL, SD 57633

Ten applications were received for the Director Scholarship, and JJ provided the application videos to the board for review. The directors voted by secret ballot and awarded the Director Scholarship to Hailey Roggow of Timber Lake High School.

The Operations report was given by Josh Lemburg, which included new service updates, WLKs pole changes in Eagle Butte, some unpaid job orders may be submitted to small claims court for collection, Highway 63 transmission line road move contract update, update on street light poles in Eagle Butte, attended Tech Week in Rapid City, WAPA substation meter update, WLKs Inspections will test transmission poles this year, underground cable purchase update, and truck replacement bid requests were sent out for Truck 22.

Josh gave a demonstration on the Outage Management System, which included the outage map and how outages flow through the system. In 2027, MGEC will have Sectionalizing and ARC Flash Studies completed to help improve outage management and the MGEC mapping system.

Manager Larson stated that for fire mitigation plan purposes, MGEC will start tracking maintenance performed on each individual service.

Manager Larson gave the Manager's report, which included an update on the Dupree School football field lighting project, the Firesteel tower rent contract with Verizon Wireless has been renewed, Rushmore Electric digital mobile radio project update, the January power bill included a renewable energy credit and a bill credit from Rushmore Electric, and received a refund from WAPA for an overpayment made on the substation upgrade.

Manager Larson presented year-end reports for 2025, which included Basin Electric KWH tax, revenue 10-year compare chart, expense 10-year compare chart, balance sheet history, power bill information, debt service coverage ratios, vehicle analysis, and payroll as percent of gross revenue and expense.

NRECA CCD Courses 2600- Director Duties and 2610- Understanding the Electric Business are being offered March 30-31, 2026, in Pierre. Director Lawrence expressed interest in attending.

Manager Larson gave the Rushmore Electric Managers' meeting report, which included a Grip 2 grant update, Basin Electric revenue deferral update, and Northwest Rural Public Power District located south of Lacreek Electric has requested to join Rushmore Electric.

Director McLellan gave the Rushmore Electric special board meeting report, which included purchasing residential lots next to the Rushmore Electric headquarters facility and a revenue deferral update.

Manager Larson gave the SDREA Managers' meeting report, which included Oceti Sakowin Power Authority (OSPA) and Colusa Indian Energy are proposing a microgrid in the Eagle Butte area. OSPA and Colusa Indian Energy are also focusing on building a transmission line from North Dakota down to Nebraska.

Director McLellan gave a legislative update, which included the fire mitigation bill will be heard by the Commerce and Energy Committee on February 25, 2026.

A report was given on Co-op Day at the Capitol, which included Director Lawrence enjoyed her first Co-op Day at the Capitol experience, and there were many co-op representatives who attended this year.

During the roundtable discussion, Director Clark shared photos of Basin Electric CEO and employees attending President Trump's signing of an executive order directing the Department of War to prioritize long-term power purchase agreements with American coal plants.

Board approved the following: the agenda, the minutes from the January meeting, new members, refunds, line extensions, financial statistics, disbursements, safety report, revising Policy 40-16 Employee Travel Expenses and Policy 70-2 Compensation for Directors and presenting the revisions to the Policy Committee, resolution not to allocate the non-operating margins for 2025 in the amount of $50,755.22, and Work Order Inventories #1050-1058 in the amount of $3,007,357.07.

The next board meeting was scheduled for March 17, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. in the Timber Lake office.

## DECEMBER 2025 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

| | DEC '25 | DEC '24 | YTD 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Operating Revenues | $1,590,062 | $1,464,966 | $14,671,556 |
| Cost Of Power | $ 748,866 | $ 667,989 | $7,242,324 |
| Cost Of Electric Service | $1,319,854 | $1,178,224 | $14,077,626 |
| Margins | $ 684,245 | $ 722,116 | $1,056,770 |
| Kwh Purchased | 12,031,828 | 11,656,139 | 111,629,876 |
| Kwh Sold | 12,313,248 | 11,787,795 | 102,269,143 |

# STAYING FOCUSED BEHIND THE WHEEL: A SIMPLE GUIDE TO SAFER ROADS

Distractions behind the wheel aren't just inconvenient – they're deadly. Each moment you allocate to anything other than driving increases the risk for you and everyone sharing the road. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, distracted driving claimed 3,522 lives in the United States in 2021, underscoring how costly a split-second lapse can be. The good news is that small, deliberate habits behind the wheel can make a big difference. Here are three practical ways to stay focused.

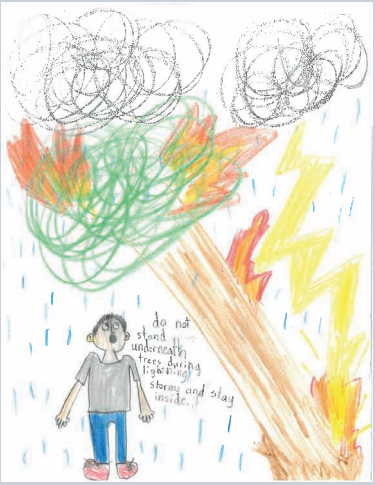
First, minimize phone use. Store your device out of sight before starting the engine. Texting or scrolling through apps draws your eyes from the road, your hands from the wheel and your mind from the task at hand. If you must communicate, pull over safely or use hands-free features only if absolutely necessary and legal in your area. Remember, many places have laws prohibiting texting while driving, with penalties that reflect the risk. Consider enabling "do not disturb" modes that silence notifications while you drive, and set your status to indicate you're driving. This simple barrier can prevent impulsive checks and help you maintain steady attention.

Second, plan your route before you depart. Entering a destination while driving is a dangerous distraction. Take a few minutes to review the route, check traffic conditions, and set your navigation system in advance. With your route loaded, you can keep your attention on driving rather than on-screen instructions during the journey. If possible, choose routes with fewer turns or fewer heavy-traffic segments, and be ready to adjust if conditions change. Having a mental map of the journey can also reduce the need to peek at the screen for updates.

Third, ensure you are well rested. Fatigue can dull reaction times, reduce concentration, and cause your eyes or your vehicle to drift. Prioritize a good night's sleep before long trips, and consider stopping for short breaks on extended drives to refresh your focus. Even brief pauses for stretching and deep breathing can reset your alertness and help you respond more quickly to changing road situations.

Beyond these tips, practice general safe-driving habits: obey speed limits, maintain a safe following distance and stay alert for pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists. If you feel distracted or fatigued, it's wiser to pause and reassess rather than press on. Safe driving is about consistent, proactive choices that protect everyone on the road.

## "Do not stand underneath trees during lightning storms and stay inside."




**Ramsey Faini, Age 8**

Ramsey warns readers about the dangers of lightning storms. Thank you for sharing your picture, Ramsey! Ramsey's mom is Katie Faini from Rapid City, S.D.

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

# MAIN DISHES

## HOMEMADE MAC & CHEESE

### Ingredients:

16 oz. box elbow macaroni noodles
Oil
1 pkg. bacon
3 cups whole milk
1/2 cup butter (melted)
5 oz. can (about 2/3 cup) evaporated milk
16 oz. block Velveeta cheese (cut into cubes)
1 tsp. salt
Guda cheese
Parsley (to taste)
1 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. black pepper

### Method

Cook noodles as directed. Drain noodles and pour a small amount of oil on them while in the strainer. Cook bacon and cut into small pieces. Add all of the ingredients into a Crock-Pot and mix. Cover and cook on low for 1.5 hours, stirring once or twice while cooking. Serve and enjoy.

**Cindi Foster**
**Codington-Clark Electric**

## CHEDDAR POTATO SOUP

### Ingredients:

1 medium onion, chopped
3/4 cup celery, chopped
1/4 cup butter
5 cups peeled potatoes, cubed
3 cups water
3 cups milk, divided
4 tsps. chicken bouillon granules
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
1/4 cup flour
4 cups (16 oz.) cheddar cheese, shredded

### Method

In large Dutch oven or kettle, saute onion and celery in butter for 5 minutes. Add potatoes and water, bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir in 2 cups milk, bouillon, salt and pepper. Combine flour and remaining milk until smooth, gradually stir into soup. Bring to a boil, cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat, add cheese and stir until cheese is melted.

**Sally Florey**
**Charles Mix Electric**

## CARAMELIZED HAM & SWISS SLIDERS

### Ingredients:

12 Hawaiian dinner rolls, split
1/4 cup horseradish sauce (optional)
12 slices deli ham (or 24 if it's thinly sliced)
6 slices Swiss cheese, cut in fourths (so you will have 24 squares of cheese)

**Sauce**

1/2 cup butter
1/4 tsp. onion powder
2 tbsps. brown sugar
1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
2 tsps. poppy seeds
1 1/2 tsps. Worcestershire sauce
1/4 tsp. garlic powder

### Method

Spray a 9x9 or 9x13 glass dish with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside. Preheat oven to 325˚. Spread roll bottoms with horseradish sauce (if using). Fold up pieces of ham to fit the rolls and place them on the bottom halves of the roll. Next, place 2 squares of cheese. Replace tops and place in a single layer in the prepared pan.

**Sauce**

In a small skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour over rolls. Cover with foil and bake covered for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake 5 more minutes. These can also be made ahead of time. Just cover with foil and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Bake as instructed.

**Jerald & Virginia Jensen**
**Sioux Valley Energy**

Picture submitted by zoryanchik via Shutterstock

**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.**

# ELECTRIFY YOUR LAWN CARE

**Miranda Boutelle**
Efficiency Services Group

Electric lawn equipment has seen drastic improvements in cost, motor efficiency and battery power in recent years. From hedge and string trimmers to leaf blowers, chainsaws, and push and riding mowers, there are lots of options for electric lawn equipment.

Electric equipment is quieter than its gas-powered counterparts and typically needs less maintenance. There's no more mixing fuel, changing spark plugs or worrying about gas going bad over the winter. Advances in rechargeable battery technology eliminate having to lug around a heavy extension cord to get your work done. Just pop in a battery and go.

Most popular lawn equipment brands offer battery-powered options, along with newer brands that specialize in electric tools. If you need multiple tools, buying the same brand with the same battery type allows you to swap batteries between different pieces of equipment. That also means fewer battery chargers to store or keep on your workbench.

Opt for equipment with brushless motors. They are more efficient, more powerful and have a longer lifespan than traditional brushed motors. A brushless motor typically costs more but is worth the improved efficiency. A brushed motor transfers electricity using physical brushes, which can wear down over time. The friction caused by the brushes makes equipment run hotter and noisier. A brushless motor uses electronic commutation with less friction, which makes it more powerful, extends the lifespan and allows you to get more done on a single charge.

Just as gas-powered lawnmowers require safe storage and handling of gas and oil, battery-powered equipment requires proper care for maintenance, charging and disposal. Always use the manufacturer's original charging equipment, charge batteries on hard surfaces away from anything flammable, and store chargers in a cool, dry place.

Most manufacturers recommend charging batteries only until they reach full capacity instead of leaving them on the charger until you are ready to use them. This helps prevent damage to the battery from overcharging and heat buildup and reduces potential fire hazards. Unplug chargers when not in use to avoid energy waste.

Similar to gas and oil, old or damaged batteries should not end up in household garbage and landfills, where they can ignite fires and leak toxic chemicals into soil and groundwater. Instead, recycle them at a big-box store or at a county or city waste management site.

If you're looking for a quieter, more efficient, lower maintenance lawn care routine, rethink your equipment options and consider electric models. If you decide to make the switch, check with your electric utility or state agency for potential rebates.

Butte Electric Cooperative employees and other volunteers with Betty Krause after painting her house in Belle Fourche.
*Photo submitted by Clint Haffner*

# Co-ops in the Community

## Butte Electric Volunteers Bring Fresh Paint and a Smile to Retired Nurse

**Jacob Boyko**
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Concern for community is the seventh cooperative principle, and when Butte Electric Cooperative CEO Matt Sleep was approached to help with a nearby volunteer project, he knew it was his co-op's time to act.

• • •

In Belle Fourche, about 25 miles southwest of Butte Electric's headquarters in Newell, City Code Enforcement Officer Clint Haffner keeps a busy schedule. When he's not on the clock for the city handling code enforcement and animal control matters, he's helping lead the local United Way chapter, where he organizes volunteering projects aiming to make Belle Fourche shine a little brighter.

"When I started the job [with the city], I'd come across situations where people are just physically unable to shovel a sidewalk or take care of things," Haffner said. "Some are simply too old. That's kind of how our group began – there just wasn't anyone helping the people who can't do it."

When Butte Electric reached out to Haffner about potential volunteer opportunities, it didn't take him long to think of a project. Betty Krause, a 97-year-old retired nurse had spent 45 years of her life from 1950 to 1995 taking care of the Belle Fourche community. Haffner figured it was time the community gave something back to her.

Haffner approached Butte Electric about painting Betty's house, garage and shed. After all, who would be better than linemen with experience on ladders and working with their hands?

CEO Matt Sleep enthusiastically accepted, and a few weeks later on a warm September morning, volunteers from Butte Electric, Monument Health and the Belle Fourche United Way arrived at Betty's house to begin the work.

"We descended on the property with ladders, scrapers, paint buckets, paint brushes, a paint sprayer, weed eaters, tree trimmers, etc. and got busy," Sleep recalled.

The Butte Electric employees split into four teams; two would tackle the house, one the shed, and the other the garage. They made quick work of the project as Haffner kept everyone fed and hydrated.

"The Butte Electric guys are wonderful," Haffner said. "They're hard workers, handy, crafty, good on ladders. The paint job at Betty's place was smooth and efficient work."

It took about a day of work between the setup, scraping and painting of the three buildings – Betty was awestruck when she went outside to see the finished job.

"It was pretty wonderful, and I've had many compliments," she said of the result. "It shows it's a caring community. It's just awesome and amazing that they'd do it for one person."

While Betty's house received a coat of fresh paint, Sleep said the volunteers also took something back with them.

"When the painting was done, I think Betty's appreciation and thankfulness brought a great feeling of joy and accomplishment to all of us there – maybe even a tear or two," Sleep said. "A project like this just adds a little bit of goodness back into a community. And, we all need a little bit of goodness in our lives."

Butte Electric Cooperative employees paint a house in Belle Fourche in Sept. 2025.
*Photo submitted by Clint Haffner*

From left, in the Sioux Valley Energy shop: Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations; Chad Williams, manager of operations; journey lineworker Jager Rus; and journey lineworker Paul Schamber.
*Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy*

# BUSTING ENERGY MYTHS

## with Ted Smith of Sioux Valley Energy

**Frank Turner**
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Electricity powers nearly every part of daily life, yet most people only think about it when the lights flicker or a bill arrives. Because the system works quietly in the background, assumptions about how it operates tend to fill the gaps.

To sort through several common misconceptions, Cooperative Connections spoke with Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations at Sioux Valley Energy, the cooperative serving South Dakota counties of Brookings, Lake, Moody, Kingsbury, and Minnehaha and Minnesota counties of Rock and Pipestone. Smith has worked in the electric industry for 35 years, including 20 years at Sioux Valley, where he oversees engineering, line crews and dispatch.

Here are several claims he regularly hears from members and how he responds.

### Myth: If the lights go out, it must be a local problem.
### Smith: That's definitely a myth.

An outage can begin anywhere from inside your home all the way back to a generating station two states away. The electric grid is highly interconnected. A disruption in one area can ripple outward across transmission lines that serve multiple utilities.

There have been large historical outages, especially in the eastern United States, where a single event such as a tree contacting a transmission line triggered a cascading failure across multiple states. Entire cities lost power because one initiating fault spread across the network.

Closer to home, severe weather in one region can affect transmission lines feeding a much broader footprint. If a major transmission line trips offline, and another line is already out for maintenance, service interruptions can extend far beyond the original storm area.

"Just because your lights go out doesn't mean the problem started down the road, close to home" Smith said. "It could be much farther upstream."

### Myth: The grid can be powered entirely by renewable energy.
### Smith: At times, yes. Around the clock, no.

Smith pointed to hydroelectric dams along the Missouri River as renewable generation that run continuously, but other renewable resources, such as wind and solar, simply aren't reliable sources of energy and only contribute

significantly when conditions allow.

"Although sometimes it seems like it, the wind doesn't always blow in South Dakota," Smith said. "And solar only produces during daylight hours."

Although battery storage has improved in recent years, Smith says storing enough energy to power the grid around the clock is prohibitively expensive at this point in time.

For now, maintaining reliability requires a mix of generation resources so supply remains available regardless of weather or time of day.

### Myth: If my neighbor has power and I do not after a storm, the cooperative skipped me.
### Smith: That's not how it works.

In some cases, the cooperative may not yet know a member is without service. Reporting outages remains important.

Another possibility is that the issue is on the member side of the meter. Crews may restore cooperative equipment and determine that the damage is within the member's own service.

"When crews see it's a problem on the member side of the meter, they will call dispatch and have them contact the member," Smith said.

He also emphasized the importance of keeping current phone numbers on file. Fewer households rely on landlines today, which makes updated cell phone numbers critical during storm response.

### Myth: Burying all power lines would eliminate outages.
### Smith: No.

Underground lines are not exposed to wind and ice, but they are not immune to failure. Over time, underground conductors deteriorate. Rodents such as gophers can damage them. Excavation damage is also common when individuals dig without confirming where utilities are buried.

Before digging, members should always contact 811, the national call-before-you-dig number. That service notifies utility providers so buried lines can be located and marked before excavation begins. Failing to call 811 can be dangerous and increase the risk of damaging underground infrastructure, causing outages.

And even when damage occurs naturally, locating the fault underground can take time.

"With overhead lines, crews can usually see the damage," Smith said. "Underground, it takes troubleshooting to figure out exactly where the fault is, sometimes leading to longer outage durations."

He recalled one outage that proved especially difficult to diagnose.

"One time we had an outage that we just could not narrow down," he said. "When we finally found the damage, we saw that a gopher had chewed the bottom of the wire. You could not see it from the top. We had to dig up about 20 feet of cable and turn it over before we could see the damage."

Underground systems can reduce certain types of outages, but they do not eliminate them, and repairs often require more time and labor.

### Myth: Wind and solar power are free once installed.
### Smith: The fuel is free, but that's the only thing that's free.

Wind turbines require ongoing maintenance, including mechanical components that need to be regularly serviced. Solar power relies on inverters and other equipment that must be maintained and eventually replaced.

There are construction costs, financing costs and transmission costs involved in delivering electricity from generation sites to homes and businesses. Those transmission and maintenance assets are accounted for over time and included in the overall cost of electricity.

Free fuel lowers one portion of cost. It does not remove the need to build, maintain and replace infrastructure.

### Myth: Electric cooperatives raise rates to increase profits.
### Smith: No. Cooperatives are not-for-profit.

Electric cooperatives are member owned, not investor owned. That means there are no outside shareholders expecting earnings. Instead, cooperatives operate on margins, collecting enough revenue to pay expenses, maintain infrastructure and meet financial obligations.

"The only place we get money is from the people at the end of the line," Smith said. "We don't have a printing press in the basement."

In fact, if revenue exceeds expenses in a given year, a portion of those margins are allocated back to members as capital credits when the board determines it's financially appropriate. Capital credits represent a member's share of the cooperative's financial performance during the years they received service.

However, in recent years, equipment costs have risen significantly. Smith cited bucket trucks that once cost around $220,000 have since more than doubled in price, and major system components have seen similar increases. Usually, the cost of wholesale power from the cooperative's power suppliers makes up the largest share of the budget and those costs have been increasing as well.

Rate adjustments reflect those rising operational costs and the need to maintain reliable service, not profit distribution.

Electricity may seem simple at the flip of a switch, but as Smith makes clear, the system behind it involves infrastructure, coordination and constant evaluation. Understanding how it works helps members separate assumption from reality and better appreciate the network that serves them every day.

# Lineworker Appreciation Day: April 13, 2026

Ethan Aberle

Trevor Bad Warrior

Brock Fischer

Collin Grage

Trenton Hansen

Troy Long

Chad Mettler

Garret Simon

Brent Spafford

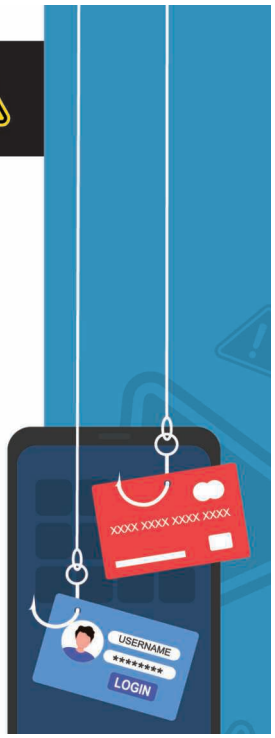
Justin Thorstenson

## Construction Season Notice

With warmer weather and thawed soil comes construction season. If you want to add to or modify your electric service, now is the time to contact Staking Engineer Hunter Smith or Staking Foreman Jace Vrooman. Our service area is very active this time of the year, putting up new buildings, moving in houses, and drilling wells, so the staking departments' schedule fills up quickly.

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Don't fall victim to power outage scams. When widespread outages occur, scammers may target affected utility customers. They can contact you via call, text or email, urging you to act quickly and provide personal information to restore service. Always communicate with your utility through official channels, such as their website, mobile app or phone number listed on your bill. Your safety and personal information are worth taking a moment to pause and verify unknown senders.



# Directors' Scholarship Update

Every year the Moreau-Grand Electric Directors give $2,500 to a future leader in the form of a scholarship. The last three years, the board has elected to open the scholarship to an area senior pursuing any post-secondary degree.

The Moreau-Grand Electric Board of Directors is proud to announce that the 2026 Directors' Scholarship has been awarded to Hailey Roggow!

The Timber Lake senior lives in Trail City with her parents, John and Kathy Roggow.

She plans to study Human Biology at SDSU before eventually becoming a Physician's Assistant. She wants to return to the area to provide our rural communities with the same convenient, quality care she has grown up with.

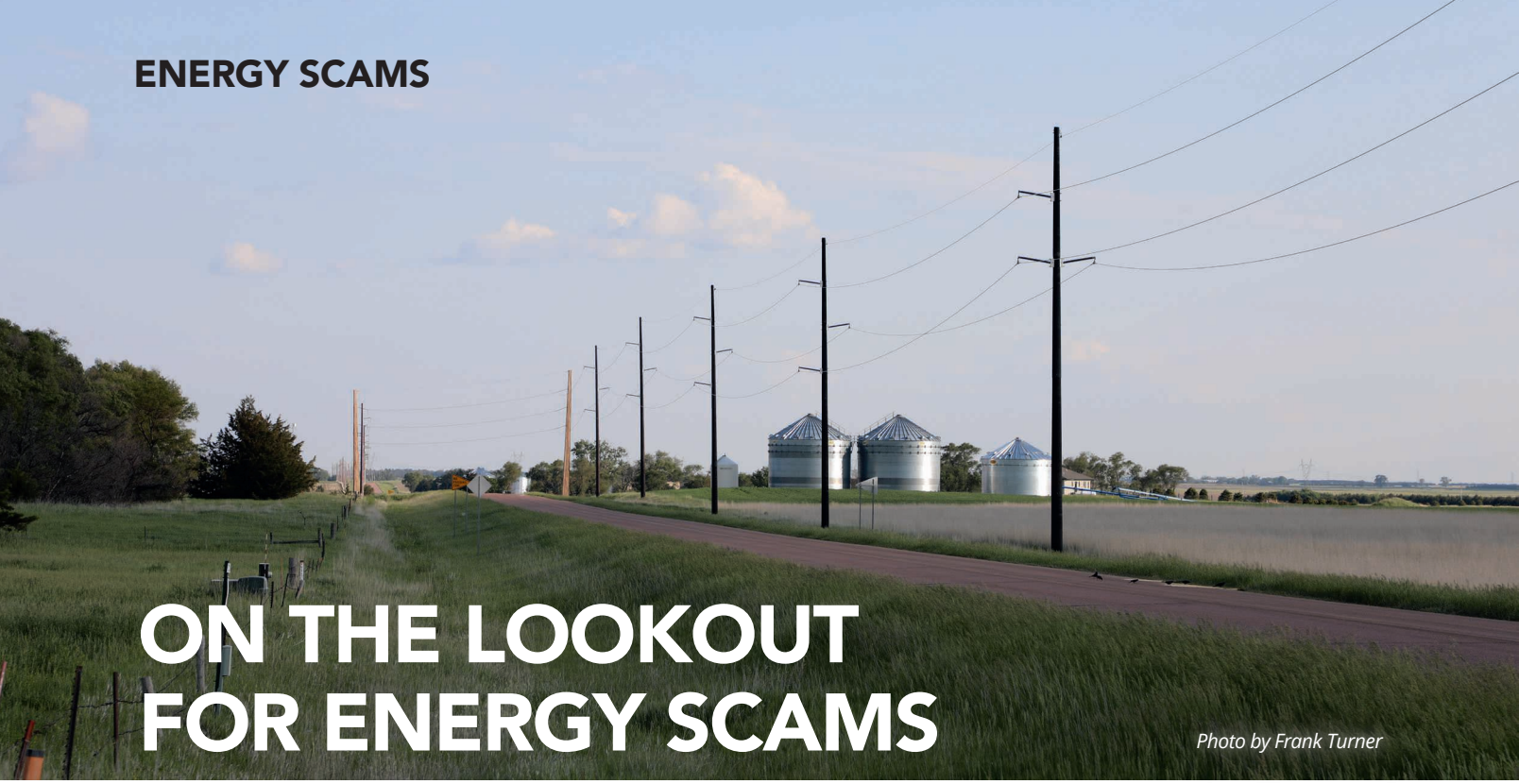
The Board of Directors thanks all the students who applied and sent in application videos. It was a difficult decision to make given the number of worthy candidates. The future is bright at Moreau-Grand!

Congratulations, Hailey!

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY
### TIP OF THE MONTH

As we prepare for the seasonal shift, remember to set your ceiling fan rotation accordingly. In winter months (or whenever your home heating system is running), fan blades should rotate clockwise, which produces an updraft that pushes warm air down. In summer months (or whenever your home cooling system is running), blades should rotate counterclockwise, which produces a downdraft or windchill effect that makes you feel cooler. When used correctly, ceiling fans can boost comfort and allow you to adjust the thermostat a few degrees for energy savings.

Source: energy.gov



# ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ENERGY SCAMS

*Photo by Frank Turner*

**Frank Turner**
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It's no April Fools' joke. Consumers with an electricity connection have long been targets for scams. In today's digital world, those schemes have evolved. As more daily business is conducted online, scammers have shifted their tactics to match. They now use phone calls, texts and emails to create urgency, confusion and fear, hoping consumers will act before taking time to verify the claim.

For victims, these scams can lead to financial loss and identity theft, but understanding how the most common schemes work and what they typically look like is one of the best defenses to staying safe.

## The "Past Due" Disconnection Threat

One of the most common tactics that scammers use is the disconnection threat. They use a fake message claiming a bill is past due and that service will be disconnected immediately unless payment is made on the spot.

The call may sound official. The message may include account numbers or appear to come from your local cooperative's phone number due to caller ID spoofing. The scammer's goal is simple: create panic so you pay first and question later.

In reality, cooperatives follow clear procedures and provide advance notice before any disconnection. A demand for instant payment, especially with threats attached, is a major red flag.

## The "You Overpaid" Refund Scam

Who would not want a refund? Scammers take advantage of that instinct.

In this scheme, a text, call or email claims a member overpaid an electric bill and is owed money. The message often includes instructions to click a link or provide banking information so the refund can be "processed."

The message can sound especially convincing to cooperative members because electric cooperatives do return margins to members in the form of capital credits. Capital credits represent a member's share of the cooperative's annual margins and are returned over time.

However, capital credits are distributed through established, official processes. They are not issued through unsolicited texts, surprise phone calls or links requesting personal banking information. When your local cooperative retires capital credits, members are notified through official channels such as billing statements, newsletters, verified mailings or even through Cooperative Connections.

An unexpected refund message that asks for sensitive information is a red flag. When in doubt, pause and contact your local cooperative directly using trusted contact information.

## Gift Card and Cryptocurrency Demands

Scammers often insist on unusual payment methods such as gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency. They may provide detailed instructions on how to purchase gift cards and read the numbers over the phone.

This is a clear warning sign. Legitimate cooperatives do not request payment in gift cards or cryptocurrency. These forms of payment are nearly impossible to trace or recover, which makes them attractive to criminals.

### Spotting a Scam

Regardless of the method, every scam has similar warning signs that members can watch for:

- High-pressure tactics that demand immediate payment
- Requests for payment through gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency
- Emails or text messages with poor grammar, spelling errors or unfamiliar web addresses

Scammers rely on urgency. Taking a few extra minutes to verify a message can prevent lasting financial consequences.

### What Your Local Cooperative Will and Will Not Do

Your local cooperative will not demand immediate payment without prior notice. Cooperatives follow established procedures and provide advance communication before any service interruption.

Your local cooperative will not ask for Social Security numbers, banking details or other sensitive information through unsolicited phone calls, emails or text messages.

Members have secure payment options available through official cooperative channels, including the cooperative's verified website and approved payment systems. When in doubt, independently locate the cooperative's official contact information rather than using links or phone numbers included in a message.

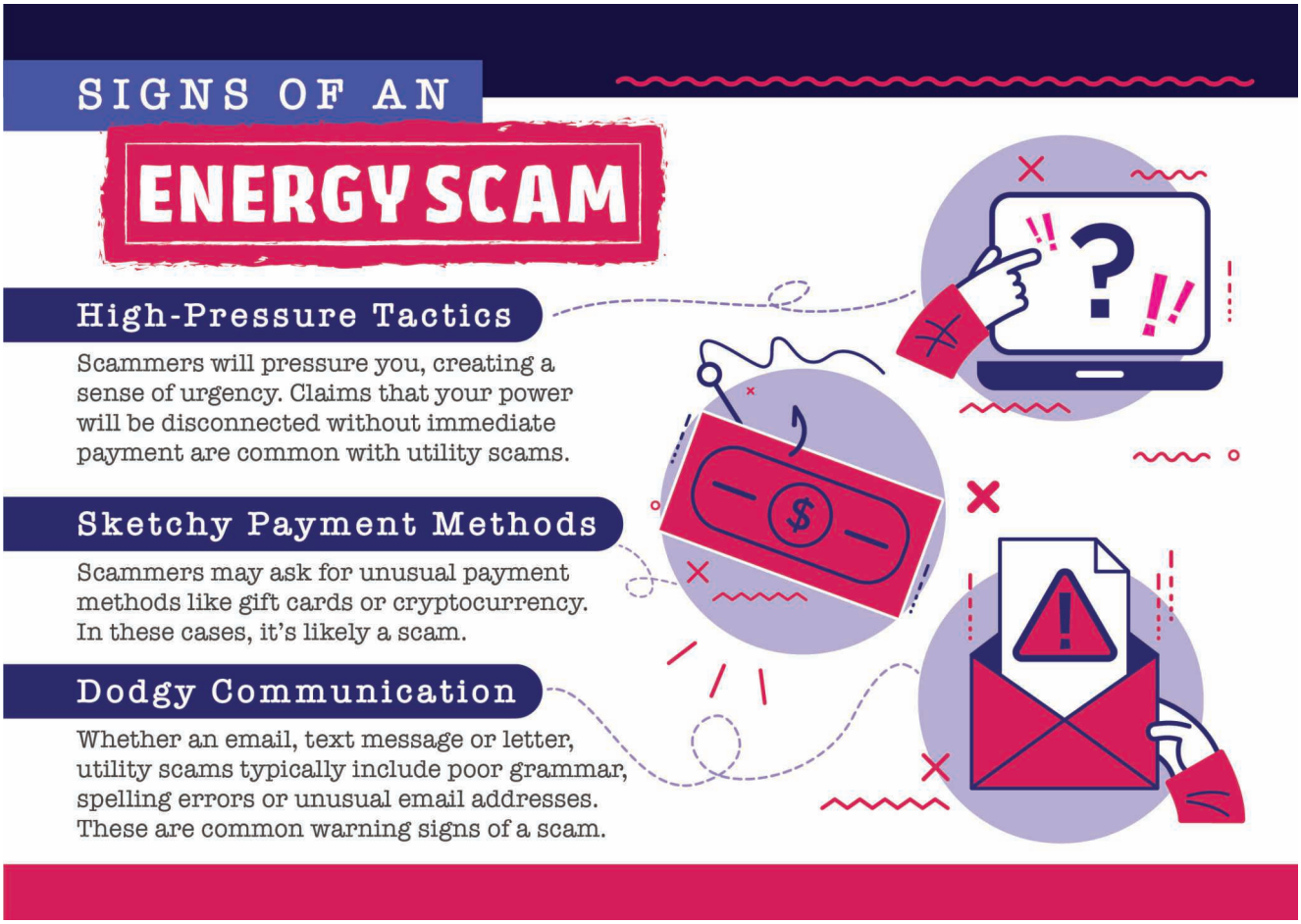
Text alerts are only sent to members who have enrolled in official notification programs, such as outage updates.

### Avoiding Energy Scams

If you receive a suspicious call, text or email claiming to be from your local cooperative, do not use the contact information provided in that message. Instead, use the phone number printed on your billing statement or listed on the cooperative's verified website.

Also, reporting suspected scams helps protect fellow members. By alerting your local cooperative to fraudulent activity, members help strengthen the community's defense against energy scams and ensure the cooperative network remains secure for everyone.

Have a question about whether something is real or not? Reach out to your local cooperative. Electric cooperatives are owned by the members they serve and powered by the communities around them.



# DIAL 8-1-1 BEFORE DIGGING

South Dakota One Call teamed up with South Dakota's Electric Cooperatives to promote safety at the South Dakota State Fair.
*Photo by Jacob Boyko*

## S.D. One Call/811 Q&A With Steve Barnett

**Jacob Boyko**
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

When planning any excavation project in South Dakota – whether installing a backyard fence, planting trees or building an outdoor shop – one simple phone call can protect lives, property and vital infrastructure. South Dakota One Call is the statewide system that helps homeowners, contractors and landowners locate underground utilities before digging begins. It's easy to get started – all you do is call 8-1-1.

Steve Barnett has served on the S.D. Call Board since 2022 when he was hired as the general manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association.

Barnett attends S.D. One Call's board meetings where he advocates for the interests of the utilities and co-op member-owners he represents, while helping guide the organization to better respond to the needs of utilities, rate payers, excavators and everyone else who may use the service.

**Steve Barnett**

S.D. One Call Board Member
Representing Electric Cooperatives

SDREA General Manager

Barnett sat down with Cooperative Connections to discuss the importance of S.D. One Call and how it benefits electric cooperatives and their members.

### Q: What's your role on the South Dakota One Call board?

I serve on the South Dakota One Call Board of Directors as the representative for the 31 rural electric cooperatives operating within our state. The One Call board includes representatives from different utility sectors as well as excavators. I've been involved in this role to help ensure our members' infrastructure is protected and that we're promoting safe excavation practices statewide.

### Q: Why was South Dakota One Call founded, and why is calling 811 so important?

South Dakota One Call serves as a centralized notification center for underground infrastructure. The system was created in 1993 to provide one central point of contact for excavators to encourage more responsible digging. Prior to the founding of S.D. One Call, excavators doing their due diligence needed to make multiple calls to various utilities. Today, thanks to S.D. One Call, the only number you need to dial is 811. That call triggers notification to all participating utilities in the area so they can send locators out to the digsite.

It's important to call 811 because state law requires it. If someone digs without a locate ticket and damages a buried utility, they are fully responsible for the damages and liability. Beyond that, hitting a gas or electric line can be extremely dangerous. There are thousands of miles of buried electric, gas, water, sewer, communication lines and drain tile underground.

Calling 811 is free, and it protects the excavator and the utilities.

### Q: What happens after I call 811?

When you call 811 or submit a request through sdonecall.com:

- Your information goes to the South Dakota One Call center.
- You identify and map out where you plan to dig.
- The system notifies all utilities with infrastructure in that area.

Utilities have 48 hours from the start of the next business day to respond by marking their lines with paint or flags.

After that 48-hour period, excavation can begin.

The service is free to the caller, as the utilities fund the system by paying a small fee every time their infrastructure is identified in an excavation area. The utility is responsible for marking its own facilities.

During this year's legislative session in Pierre, legislators voted to enact a change to how the 48-hour locate window is determined.

Starting July 1, South Dakota will be a "midnight state," meaning the day you submit the ticket does not count toward the 48-hour window. The clock begins at 12:01 a.m. the next business day.

If you submit a ticket at 4 p.m. on a Tuesday, the 48-hour window will start Wednesday at 12:01 a.m. Your project start time will be Friday.

### Q: Since serving on the One Call board, what's one interesting thing you've learned?

What I've come to better understand is how much protection the system provides the excavator. When you call 811 and obtain a valid locate ticket, you've documented that you followed state law and gave utilities the opportunity to mark their facilities. If something is properly marked and you dig carefully around those markings, you've significantly reduced both safety risks and liability exposure. On the other hand, if you dig without a ticket and hit a line, you are fully responsible for the damages and any related costs.

I've also learned how many different types of underground infrastructure exist – everything from electric and fiber to water, sewer, gas, and even private drain tile that crosses into public right-of-way.

### Q: What's the mission of the One Call board?

I think you can summarize the board's mission pretty succinctly: promote public safety by preventing damage to underground utilities, and ensuring excavation across the state is conducted safely and responsibly.

Apart from that, our goal is to continue improving our one-call notification system, making it more efficient and effective, as well as just getting the word out. We've done some of that through letters to the editor in various newspapers and with booths at events including, the South Dakota State Fair. The more we can get the word out, the less problems we have, and that means keeping costs low for our member-owners.

At its core, the board's mission is to reduce injuries, prevent service disruptions and protect both excavators and utility providers through communication, compliance and education.

South Dakota 811 Know what's below. Call before you dig.

**Mark Meier, Chairman**
Watertown Municipal Utilities
South Dakota Municipalities

**Ryan Barr, Vice Chairman**
Midco
Community Antenna Television Companies

**Kay Braaten**
Northern Border Pipeline
Interstate Pipeline Carriers

**Steve Barnett**
South Dakota Rural Electric Association
Rural Electric Cooperatives

**Scott Wiese**
Otter Tail Power Co.
Investor-Owned Electric Utilities

**Brad Wenande**
NorthWestern Energy
Investor-Owned Natural Gas Companies

**Loren Beld**
LL & Sons Excavating, Inc.
Excavating Contractors

**Jim Wedin**
CenturyLink
Telecommunications with > 50,000 customers

**Lloyd Rave**
Minnehaha Community Water Corporation Board
Rural Water Systems

**John Morris**
Morris Inc
Excavating Contractors

**Jake VanDewater**
SDN Communications
Small Telecommunications with < 50,000 customers

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.

## MARCH 27-APRIL 4
**The Passion and the Cross**
Orpheum Theatre
Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-6000
www.ThePassionMusical.com

## APRIL 3
**Bachelors of Broadway: Gentlemen of the Theatre**
7 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

## APRIL 5
**Easter Sunrise Service**
7 a.m.
Mount Rushmore

## APRIL 9
**McCrossan Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest**
Jimmy Buffett Tribute
Polynesian Paradise Dancers
Sioux Falls, SD
www.mccrossan.org

## APRIL 9-11
**Annual Schmeckfest**
German Heritage Celebration
Freeman, SD
605-925-4237
www.schmeckfest.com

## APRIL 11
**Women VetsConnect Retreat**
A Wellness Retreat for Women Veterans and Military Spouses
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
909 W. 33rd St.
Sioux Falls, SD

## APRIL 11
**Minnehaha County Pheasants Forever Annual Banquet**
5:30 p.m.-10 p.m.
Blue Haven Atrium
46594 268th St.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-214-1415

## APRIL 11-12
**The Black Market**
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

## APRIL 18
**Brookings Quilt Show XII**
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Admission: $10
Dakota Bank Center
Brookings, SD
605-690-3246

## APRIL 18
**Tri-Valley Chorus 75th Annual Show**
4 p.m.
Centerville, SD
605-201-9398

## APRIL 20
**The Bronx Wanderers**
7 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

## APRIL 25
**Screams by Night Halfway to Halloween Con**
11 a.m.-5 p.m.
The Social
Sioux Falls, SD

## APRIL 28
**American Legion Bingo**
5-6 p.m. Social
6-6:30 p.m. Meal
6:45 p.m. Bingo
American Legion Post 15
1600 W. Russell
Sioux Falls, SD
605-682-1222

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

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

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

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

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