



Cooperative Connections

Faulkton mural is turning heads

Pages 8-9

Co-ops practice road safety

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The 110-foot mural that towers over the town of Faulkton has attracted attention from across the country



Numbers Behind the Power: Understanding Electric Cooperative Wholesale Rates



Shayla Ebsen

Communications
and Marketing Manager,
East River Electric

When severe weather strikes, our local crews in South Dakota and Minnesota are at the ready to quickly make repairs and restore power to the grid.

A lot goes on behind the scenes to calculate electric rates – from the wholesale level to the retail level.

When was the last time you took a close look at your electric bill? If you're like most, you probably don't review it often, and when you do, it can be tempting to just scan and focus on the bottom line. We get it, time is short, and life is busy. But it's important to gain a good understanding of what the charges on your electric bill mean.

A lot goes on behind the scenes within our cooperative family to calculate electric rates — from the wholesale level to the retail level. This article breaks down how everything comes together to create the amount you pay each month.

The journey of electricity

Understanding all that goes into your electric bill starts with learning how electricity is made and how it's delivered to your home. Before your local electric co-op, Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association, can send electricity to your home, that electricity must be created by a generation unit. In our cooperative network, the electricity you receive at your home is a combination of energy created by wind, hydropower, natural gas, coal, or other fuels. Electricity is generated at the same moment it's needed and wholesale power providers like East River Electric Power Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative have a watchful eye on the electric system around the clock making sure your lights come on when you flip the switch. Depending on the weather, the generation mix can vary (if the wind is blowing, there's more wind on the system; if the wind isn't blowing, more traditional energy sources are used to meet electric usage).

Once the electricity has been generated, it travels over high-voltage transmission lines to substations, where the voltage is reduced. The electricity then travels over distribution power lines and the voltage is reduced again to safely find its way into your home. In our cooperative network, East River Electric owns and maintains the substations and most of the transmission power lines. For some of the Minnesota Cooperatives, like Renville-Sibley, East River wheels power across Xcel transmission lines. When severe weather strikes, our local crews in South Dakota and Minnesota are at the ready to quickly make repairs and restore power to the grid.

Understanding your power bill

Now, returning to your power bill, the first thing you might see is a facility or base fee. This is one of three types of costs on your bill. Rates are set based on cost of service studies done at the local co-op. The facility fee is a set amount you pay each month to cover a portion of your share of the onsite costs of Renville-Sibley, your distribution cooperative; including metering, billing, and local infrastructure. It's a necessary service charge so all members contribute to the fixed costs for operating the cooperative. All members pay the facility fee regardless of how much energy they consume so they all contribute to help keep the cooperative running. The facility charge can vary by cooperative and is determined by the number of members who are supporting those costs. A cooperative with two consumers per mile of line will likely have a higher facility fee than a cooperative with four consumers per mile of line because the more rural co-op will have more infrastructure and fewer consumers in which to spread the cost. Renville-Sibley has an average of 1.8 member/consumers per mile of line.

For most residential accounts, the next two types of costs are usually combined as an energy fee on your bill, which is based on your electric usage each month. The energy you use at your home or farm is metered and charged on a kilowatt-hour (kWh) basis. The kWh rate is made up of wholesale power costs, including the generation and transmission needed to get the power from a generation unit to Renville-Sibley. A lot of things are considered when setting a wholesale power rate – construction costs, interest rates, regulatory requirements, depreciation of assets, materials, labor, and more. Some of those costs are controllable, others are not.

One great benefit of being a member-owner of a not-for-profit electric cooperative is that you have a say in how our cooperative network is run. East River Electric is governed by a board of directors made up of representatives from our member systems. One of Renville-Sibley's Board members, Whitey Hinderman, is on the East River Board of Directors. East River is also cost-based, so our rates are set by our members in a way that allows us to collect enough revenue to pay for providing power, with a small margin to meet lending requirements and plan for any unexpected costs. Those margins (money made over the cost of providing power) are given back to the members who own the cooperative. That's something you won't see from a for-profit company.

Generating and distributing power is an intricate business and involves a lot more than the generation of electricity, but rest assured that East River Electric will always meet the necessary demand of Renville-Sibley members to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity to the area consumers.

Renville-Sibley

Cooperative Connections

(USPS 019-074)

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Wayland Zaske – Vice Chair
Alan Neyers – Secretary/Treasurer
Gary Eekhoff
Matt Haubrich
Whitey Hinderman
Gary Peterson
Kylie Rieke
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Shawn Beckler – Crew Chief
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Brad Braulick – Crew Chief
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Brayden Fischer – Journeyman Lineman
Cindy Mertens – Administrative Services Manager
DeeAnne Newville – CEO
Clint Olson – Journeyman Lineman
Kathy Ridl – Office Assistant
Lenae Wordes – Communications Manager

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Web site: www.renville-sibley.coop

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Scholar of the Month

Congratulations to Abby Mulder from CMCS High School for being selected as the January Scholar of the Month. She was nominated because she is an excellent student while holding an after-school job.

She is a talented baker and shares the baked goods with others. Abby also gives of her time by playing piano in church and teaching children's church. Renville-Sibley Co-op Power salutes Abby Mulder as the January Touchstone Energy Scholar of the month.

More information about the Scholar of the Month program can be found on our website www.renville-sibley.coop under the Customer Service tab.



Abby Mulder has been named January Scholar of the Month.

Kylie Rieke, Gary Eekhoff Earn CCD Certificates

Congratulations to Kylie Rieke and Gary Eekhoff for completing all the required training courses to become a Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD). To receive this status, they completed five courses and a learning assessment of each course. These training courses provide the foundation of knowledge needed for leadership as a Renville-Sibley board member. The courses completed include:

- Strategic Planning
- Financial Decision Making
- Director Duties and Liabilities
- Understanding the Electric Business
- Board Roles and Relationships

Completing these courses demonstrates the commitment they have to the success of your cooperative. Congratulations Kylie and Gary! 984600

All directors of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association have now completed the CCD program and have earned their certificate.



Gary Eekhoff



Kylie Rieke

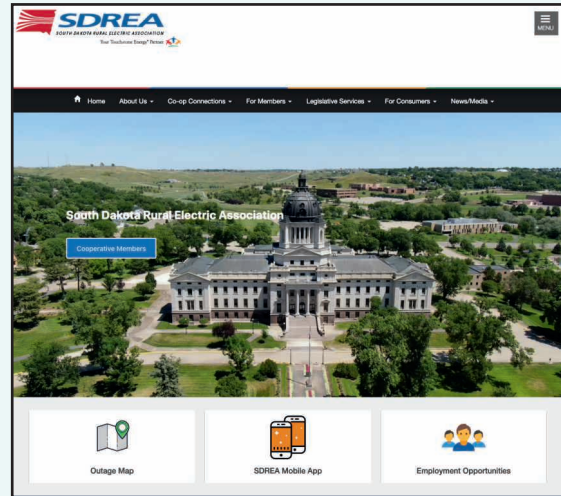
Five Electrical Dangers in Your Home

Of all the hazards that exist around your home, getting shocked by electricity is one that should not be taken lightly. Depending on the level of electrical current, contact with electricity can result in something as innocuous (but still painful) as a mild shock to more severe injuries like nerve damage and burns. In some circumstances, it can even cause cardiac arrest and death. Here's a list of some of the most common shock risks inside a home.

- **Appliances.** Most shocks from appliances occur when people are trying to repair them. It's not enough to just turn off an appliance before attempting to work on it – you also need to unplug it to reduce risk. Large appliances are responsible for 18 percent of consumer product-related electrical accidents; small appliances account for 12 percent. There's also danger if your appliance comes into contact with water. Many of these hazards can be avoided by using a ground-fault circuit interrupter. A GFCI is a protective device installed on electrical outlets, primarily used where water is present.
- **Ladders.** Typically, ladders present a falling hazard, but 8 percent of consumer product-related electrical shocks were also related to ladders. Electrocutation typically happens when the ladder makes contact with electrical wires. Before you use a ladder, make sure you can clearly see all power lines in the area, including those that may be hidden by tree branches. Ensure that the ladder is at least 10 feet away from them.
- **Power tools.** Power tools account for 9 percent of consumer product-related shocks. When you use power tools that are not double-insulated, are damaged or have damaged cords, you increase your chances of being injured. The chance of danger also increases when you use incompatible cords with power tools, use power tools incorrectly or use them in wet conditions. This is another situation in which GFCIs can help.
- **Electrical outlets and extension cords.** Inserting anything that doesn't belong – screwdrivers, knives, fingers or toy cars - into an electrical outlet can result in a dangerous electrical contact. Use cover plates that fit properly and safety covers on all outlets. By installing tamper-resistant receptacles, outlets will have permanent security against foreign objects being inserted into the slots. Any broken, loose or worn-out plugs, switches and light fixtures should be replaced immediately.

Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at www.sdrea.coop. You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Don't hit the pole! Be safe!"

Monroe Steiner, 6 years old

Monroe is the daughter of Brandon and Jen Steiner of Lake City, SD. They are members of Lake Region 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.

Super Seafood Recipes

Sheet Pan Fish and Chips

1/4 cup buttermilk	1 tablespoon oil
5 teaspoons OLD BAY® Seasoning, divided	1/4 cup flour
1 pound cod fillets, cut into 4x2-inch pieces	1 egg
2 large russet potatoes, cut into wedges (about 1-1/2 pounds)	1 cup cornflake crumbs
	McCormick® Tartar Sauce

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Mix buttermilk and 1 teaspoon of the OLD BAY in large resealable plastic bag. Add fish, then seal the bag. Refrigerate for 20 minutes. Toss potatoes and oil into large bowl. Sprinkle with another 2 teaspoons of OLD BAY; toss to coat evenly. Spread potatoes in single layer on foil-lined 15x10x1-inch baking pan that has been sprayed with no-stick cooking spray. Bake 25 minutes, turning potatoes halfway through. Remove pan from oven. Push potatoes to outside edge of the pan. Set aside. Place flour in a shallow dish. Beat egg, another 1 teaspoon of OLD BAY and 1 teaspoon water in a separate shallow dish. Mix cornflake crumbs and remaining 1 teaspoon OLD BAY in another shallow dish. Remove fish from the buttermilk mixture, allowing excess to drip off into bag. Coat fish in flour, shaking off excess flour. Dip in egg mixture, then press into the cornflake mixture until evenly coated. Discard any remaining flour, egg and cornflake mixtures. Place fish on a wire rack in center of pan with the potatoes. Bake 15 minutes or until fish is golden brown and flakes easily with a fork and potatoes are tender. Serve fish with potatoes and tartar sauce, if desired.

www.mccormick.com

Salmon Cheese Balls

1 16 oz. can of salmon	1 T. salt
8 oz. cream cheese	1 T. lemon juice
1 T. chopped onion	1 T. horseradish

Mix all ingredients together and shape into individual balls. Roll balls in chopped pecans and serve with crackers. Chill before and after shaping into a ball.

Denene Miles, Doland, SD

Shrimp Fettuccine with Pesto

15 extra large shrimp	comes in gluten free variety)
6 cloves of garlic	2-6.7 oz. jars of basil pesto
Extra virgin olive oil	Finely shredded parmesan cheese
12 oz. box of fettuccine (also	

Peel and chop garlic until finely diced. In large saute pan, pour a couple of tbsps. of extra virgin olive oil. Add shrimp (shelled and wiped dry with a paper towel). Cook until orange and slightly browned on each side (2-3 minutes per side). Add garlic and cook until light brown (do not over cook or garlic becomes bitter). Put on plate. Fill saute pan 3/4 full with cold water and bring to a rolling boil. Add entire box of pasta and cook 12 minutes. Stir to make sure pasta has separated. Drain in colander. Put the pasta, shrimp and garlic back into the saute pan. Add two jars of pesto sauce. Cook until heated. When serving, add parmesan cheese on top. Serves 4-6. Shrimp & Garlic with Cocktail Sauce: Prepare shrimp and garlic as directed above. Cool. Serve with cocktail sauce.

Sue Nipe, Sioux Falls, SD

Parmesan Baked Salmon

1/4 c mayo	4 salmon fillets
2 T. Parmesan Cheese	2 t. lemon juice
1/8 t. ground red pepper (cayenne)	10 crackers, crushed

Mix the mayo, cheese and pepper. Place salmon on foil on a cooking sheet. Drizzle with lemon juice. Top with cheese mixture. Sprinkle on cracker crumbs. Bake at 400 for 15 minutes. Then enjoy!

Julie and Jared Frank, Sioux Falls, SD

Please send your favorite beverage 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.



RENVILLE-SIBLEY
CO-OP POWER

Choose Renewable Energy for Your Home or Business

You can easily purchase renewable energy from your local electric cooperative, Renville-Sibley Co-op Power. Renville-Sibley has Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) available for purchase to offset your current usage with 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% renewable energy options. The price of the RECs will be added to your current electric bill.

The electricity you receive will still be the same reliable, affordable energy you have always received from Renville-Sibley Co-op Power but, by participating in this program, you will be supporting current and future renewable projects in our area.

Your home or business will be joining hundreds of other people from across the nation who are supporting renewable energy. By purchasing RECs, your business could add value to your products or services, promote future regional renewable projects and showcase your support for renewable energy sources.

FAQ's

What is a Renewable Energy Credit (REC)?

- 1,000 kWh (kilowatt hours) produced by a renewable energy source equals 1 REC
- RECs are also called Green Tags
- RECs represent the valuable renewable attributes of wind energy

Where do the RECs come from?

The RECs come from several wind farms in the region that supply renewable energy to Renville-Sibley Co-op Power. These include, but are not limited to:

- North Dakota: PrairieWinds 1, Wilton 1 & 2, Baldwin Wind Project and Minot Wind Project
- South Dakota: Crow Lake Wind, the Chamberlain turbines, Day County Wind Farm and South Dakota Wind Project

How much does it cost?

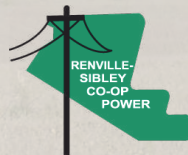
To participate a rate adder per kWh will be added to your bill:

- \$0.001 /kWh for 100% renewable
- \$0.00075 /kWh for 75% renewable
- \$0.00050 /kWh for 50% renewable
- \$0.00025 /kWh for 25% renewable

For example, if your monthly usage is 1,200 kWh and you would like to participate at the 100% renewable level, you would pay an additional \$1.20 for the month.

Do I need to purchase any special equipment?

No. Renville-Sibley will continue to fulfill all your electric needs and you can enjoy the benefits of renewable energy.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

1.800.826.2593
renville-sibley@renville-sibley.coop

Renville-Sibley Co-op Power is an equal opportunity provider & employer.

Why is My Power Out?

Mother Nature's wrath can mean service disruptions

Although we work hard to do all we can to keep the lights on, there are circumstances beyond our control that can interfere with power delivery. Winter weather is one example. Winter storms can impact the distribution of electricity due to ice, heavy winds, sleet and other conditions. Regardless of the reason, know that when the lights go out - even during extreme weather - we are doing all we can to safely and efficiently restore power.

Wintry conditions can cause outages or hiccups with power delivery that include blinking lights or ebbs and flows in the amount of power that comes in your home. Although blinking lights can be a symptom of other problems such as loose wiring connections or overloaded circuits, they can also be caused by extreme weather conditions. Wintery conditions include:

Ice/freezing rain: Ice accumulation on power lines makes them heavy. One-half an inch of ice can add as much as 500 pounds to a power line. This added weight can impact power distribution and even bring down a power line. Ice that forms on power lines also increases its surface area, which means gusts of wind have more to catch. The weight of ice on tree limbs can cause them to fall on power lines as well.

Wind: Wind can cause tree branches to brush power lines, which can result in blinking or flickering lights. This is why it's important for us to keep trees cleared around power lines and poles. In addition, heavy winds (or extreme wind plus ice) can cause lines to move and sway. If they gain enough momentum, they can gallop or jump. This, in turn, can cause disruptions in service since the extreme motion can cause lines to either break or make contact with each other, which they are not meant to do.

Melting Ice: Melting ice can be extremely heavy, putting extra strain on power lines and causing the lines to touch or rest on one another. Because of this, melting ice can cause outages even though the temperature is rising. Depending on conditions, melting ice can cause as many or more problems than the ice itself.

Wind or ice + tree branches: Branches, limbs or even tree trunks can fall into power lines and cause problems. Add wind, freezing rain, or ice to the mix for an increased potential for problems.

Icy Roads: Vehicles sliding on ice or that collide with one another can strike a power pole or pad-mounted transformer, causing an outage or other problems.

Blizzards: Heavy snowfall, icy roads, or reduced visibility can make it a little more difficult for our crews to get out and fix problems, although we do all we can to get out there to address service issues as soon as possible.

Be sure to have a storm preparedness kit ready before a storm strikes to help get you and your family through a power outage.

STAYING SAFE DURING AN OUTAGE

We work hard to provide the most reliable service possible. Rest assured, if the power is out, we are on it!

The length of time it takes to restore your power depends on several factors, including the:



Extent of the storm's destruction



Severity of utility equipment damage



Number and extent of outages



Accessibility to damaged equipment

STAY SAFE UNTIL POWER IS RESTORED

- Stay far away and keep others away from downed power lines, which could be live and deadly.
- If you come across a downed line, immediately call 9-1-1 to report it.
- Never enter a flooded room; the water could be energized.
- If you are standing in water, do not turn on/off power or flip a switch.



Prepare for a storm by gathering these items:



Bottles of water



Non-perishable food



Portable phone charger



Prescriptions



Battery-operated radio



Flashlights



Extra batteries



Pet supplies



Blankets



Warm clothing



First-aid kit



Hand sanitizer

THANK YOU for your patience during outages. When the lights go off, we are working safely and efficiently to restore power. The safety of our employees, as well as those we serve, is our TOP priority.

Safe
Electricity.org®

Items to gather include bottled water, non-perishable food, blankets, warm clothing, hand sanitizer, first aid kit/medicine, flashlight, radio, back-up phone chargers, extra batteries, and toiletries.

To learn more about preparing for storms and electrical safety, go to SafeElectricity.org.



The mural in Faulkton is a prominent feature in the town. Aerial photography by Billy Gibson.

EYE-POPPING APPEAL

Faulkton Mural Attracts Attention from Far and Near

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@srea.coop

The story of how the small town of Faulkton became an attraction for art aficionados far and near actually begins on another continent many years ago.

Today, Faulkton is home to an imposing 110-foot mural displayed on three sides of an Agtegra grain elevator, the town's most prominent structure. Visible from long distances on Hwy. 212, the mural depicts a boy and girl and several wide-brimmed hats blowing between them in the prairie wind. While the meaning of the mural is open to as many interpretations as there are viewers, the intriguing story of how the artwork came into existence is a "10 beer tale," according to Dave Hedt, the community leader who initiated the project.

A native of Australia, the mate known among the locals as "Aussie Dave" was nursing a "frothy" in a bar in Melbourne when he encountered a chap from Faulkton who happened to be in Melbourne on business. He and Craig Mutsch struck up a conversation during that chance encounter in 1998 and kept in regular contact until 2013 when Hedt decided to relocate to South Dakota on a permanent basis.

Hedt went to work for Mutsch in the beginning before eventually setting down roots in Faulkton. He later married a gal from Harrold, became a regular at Lakeside Golf Club, built a retail strip center along the highway across from the Agtegra elevator and established several businesses in the quiet town.

The idea of creating the mural is actually credited to Hedt's father, who was visiting his son one day in 2015: "He was here and we were driving into town and he saw the grain elevator. He said, 'Hey, why don't you call Guido about painting a mural on that.' Right away I thought it was a great idea," Aussie Dave recalled.

In this case, Guido is the internationally renowned photographer and visual artist Guido Van Helten, who had painted a highly acclaimed mural on the side of a set of grain silos in Brim, Australia, not far from Hedt's home town of Dimboola.

"That mural had such a positive impact on the community, I knew it would get the same kind of response here and create the



The town known as The Carousel City, is home to several murals seen in public spaces.

Faulkton Mural Fast Facts

- The mural stands 110 feet high
- The project took seven weeks to complete
- Artist Guido Van Helton has done similar projects all around the world
- Local residents donated their time and labor to prepare the grain elevator for painting

same kind of excitement, for the town,” Hedt said.

He got in touch with the artist, who didn’t hesitate to take on the project. Van Helten visited Faulkton several times conducting preliminary work before taking his brushes in hand. As he’d done with previous similar projects, Van Helten spent time getting involved in community events and getting to know the residents of The Carousel City. He was hosted by a local family and tried to capture the ambiance of the town to inspire the visual and thematic elements of his work.

He received tremendous support from the community as folks chipped in to help the project financially and also contributed some “sweat equity” by scraping, cleaning and pressure-washing the elevator’s concrete surface in preparation for Van Helten’s artistic touch.

Grant funding was received from the South Dakota Arts Council and other non-profit groups, while the balance of the funds were raised privately through sponsorships and contributions from local businesses. Hedt is quick to point out no taxpayer money was used. For its part, Agtegra was quickly sold on the idea as plans were to eventually take the elevator out of service and move the operation to another site east of town.

As for what would ultimately appear on the side of the elevator, the residents were lending their support without knowing how the project would actually turn out. They figured they could always paint over it if they felt the mural’s theme wasn’t congruent with the town’s self-image.



Artist Guido Van Helton spent several weeks in Faulkton getting to know the local residents and getting a sense of the town’s spirit before he started painting.

“Guido kind of kept that a secret,” Hedt said. “He wanted it to be a surprise, but knew from the other things he’d done that it would be spectacular and something that we would all be proud of. He always paints what he feels is reflective of the town and the people.”

After the surface was prepared, it took several weeks for Van Helten to complete the painting while working suspended beside the large concrete canvas. The painting was unveiled on Sept. 1, 2018. Hedt said the result of the project has brought more positive results than anyone in the town could have anticipated.

“In terms of the financial impact, it’s just unbelievable the traffic we get through the town,” he said. “We had a woman from Washington state fly all the way here just to see it.”

Dawn Melius is owner of a local insurance agency and has been involved in the project since the beginning. She said the mural has brought a unique and welcomed vibrancy to the community.

“It’s such a great work of art, and people can interpret it however they want. That’s part of the fun of it and the attraction of it. It’s such an amazing project and it has brought a lot of interest to the town. Of course, once people are drawn here by the mural and they stop and spend some time around town, they like what they see and they have a real positive experience.”

Find an aerial video of the mural by visiting the Cooperative Connections Plus YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/n2gEDAltHMk>. Find out more about Van Helten at www.guidovanhelten.com.

Attention Members Impacted by COVID-19?

Renville--Sibley encourages members to contact the office to make arrangements if they are not able to pay their electric bill in full due to the impact of COVID-19. Renville-Sibley employees will work with members to enter into reasonable payment arrangements based on their individual circumstances..



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Don't keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends a temperature setting of 35 to 38 degrees for the fresh food compartment and zero degrees for the freezer.

Make sure the refrigerator doors are sealed airtight to maximize efficiency.

Source: www.energy.gov

Mission Statement

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association will provide efficient, reliable electric energy and services to enhance the quality of rural living.

Where's the Number?

Last month Guggisberg Ag Service did not find their member number in the newsletter. The credit will continue to grow to a value of \$30. Another number has been hidden in this newsletter. If you find your number and call the office by the 1st of March, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck in your search!

Outage Report

Affecting 10 members or more:

Date: 12-23-20
 Time off: 12:50 pm
 Time on: 1:20 pm
 Substation: Cairo
 Cause: Scheduled

Date: 12-24-20
 Time off: 11:21 am
 Time on: 12:21 pm
 Substation: Cairo
 Cause: Transmission system outage

Please contact Renville-Sibley's office for more details about these power outages.

FREE Want Ad Service

Members can submit ads for the following categories: Giveaway, For Sale, For Rent and Wanted. Ads should be, or are limited to, no more than 15 words and must be received by the first of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter. Renville-Sibley reserves the right to edit content or exclude ads due to space restrictions. Ads will be run one time only unless resubmitted. Please complete the following information and mail to the Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power, P.O. Box 68, Danube, MN 56230.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Ad to be placed (limit of 15 words per ad)

Type of ad: Giveaway For Sale For Rent Wanted

January Board Meeting Highlights

The January board meeting was held on Monday, January 25 at 8 am via Zoom. All board members were present. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Newville, Gene Alex, Cindy Mertens and Lenae Wordes.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the December 21 board meeting
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of December
- Capital credits to estates
- Safety report for January
- Nominating Committee appointments
- Schedule A – Standard Pricing Guide – revised
- Depreciation Resolution
- Acknowledged the revised Safety Rule Manual
- NRECA Director Election Voting Delegate and Alternate
- NRTC Annual Meeting Voting Delegate and Alternate
- Revenue Deferral Resolution

The board reviewed:

- Total new members
- Capital credits transferred
- Reports from staff members as to the activities in their department. Items in the reports include:
 - High level Statement of Operations review – YTD through December (unaudited)
 - Organization activities
 - Facilities update
 - East River update
 - Basin Electric update
 - NRECA update
 - MREA update
 - Linecrew work in progress, equipment update and outage update
 - Accounts receivable

Please contact the Renville-Sibley office if you would like more information regarding the board meeting.

Operation Round Up

At the March 2020 meeting of the Operation Round Up board of trustees, a donation of \$2,500 was given to the Danube Area Athletic Club to assist in building a community shelter and support the maintenance/improvements to the ice-skating ring and outdoor facility. The picture below shows the progress of this project. It is great to see the funds put to such good use for the greater community to enjoy. If your non-profit organization has a project or event that would benefit the community, Operation Round Up funds may be available to help your group reach their goal.

The next meeting of the Operation Round Up board of trustees will be Thursday, March 11. Applications for donations can be found on our website <http://www.renville-sibley.coop/content/operation-round>. Applications must be submitted by March 1st to be considered at this meeting.



Notice:

The March board meeting will be held on March 29 at 8 a.m.
The April board meeting will be held on April 26 at 8 a.m.

Comparative Report

Comparative Report

	Current YTD through December 31, 2020	One Year Ago YTD through December 31, 2019	10 Years Ago YTD through December 31, 2010
average # of Consumers	1,882	1,882	1,930
kWhs purchased	182,595,473	166,574,084	182,885,344
Cost of purchased power	\$11,628,476.20	\$9,994,343.64	\$7,485,912.65



Troy Ziebart, line foreman at Douglas Electric in Armour, loads up his vehicle before hitting the road to perform maintenance work on the co-op's system. Photo by Billy Gibson.

On the Road Again

Cooperative crews log millions of safe miles each year

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Some people follow their instincts to run away from emergency situations, others are obligated to steer towards them.

South Dakota's electric cooperative linemen often find themselves headed toward the site of potentially hazardous predicaments, whether it's simply answering an emergency outage call or engaging in rebuilding many miles of poles and lines in the most austere conditions in the aftermath of a major storm.

In any event, the first task for linemen is to arrive at the scene and make the return trip to co-op headquarters with themselves and their vehicles all in one piece. Many cooperative consumers are unaware of the fact that co-op linemen in South Dakota collectively log more than 8 million miles on the road each year taking care of maintenance projects, installing equipment, performing public service work, answering outage calls or other daily duties.

That figure includes those instances when linemen are called upon to drive long

distances across state lines to assist other fellow cooperatives restore power after a natural disaster, which raises the potential risk for accidents.

Compared to the amount of time and number of miles they travel on a routine basis, cooperative linemen have an impressive track record of operating their vehicles without incident and without harm to either themselves or the motoring public.

According to Mark Patterson, manager of loss control services at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) in Pierre, safe operating practices do much more than just save lives and property; they also keep insurance premiums down and help control the cost of fleet maintenance.

"Safety is such an important aspect of what we do as electric cooperatives, and it takes on many dimensions," Patterson said. "We often think of safety as adopting prudent practices when it comes to working in close proximity to different equipment such as power lines, transformers and substations. But it also includes other aspects such as safety in the workplace,

emergency preparedness, handling hazardous materials and knowing how important it is to be safe out on the road every time we leave the back shop and pull out of the gate."

As with many aspects of their operations, South Dakota's electric cooperatives are using the power of computer software and advanced technology to promote safety on the road. Many co-ops use software programs such as NexTraq, which processes and provides a wealth of information to help maintenance managers keep records on vehicle tracking and telemetry, fuel use and efficiency, service scheduling, driver performance, job completion and more.

These systems deliver real-time data not only on vehicle speed, heading, location, etc., but they also indicate where each vehicle is positioned at any given moment within the service territory so that supervisors can more effectively and efficiently coordinate movements of various crews throughout the system and throughout the work day.

"Linemen from the old days would be amazed at the advanced technology we



Cooperative linemen log thousands of hours on the road but sometimes find themselves having to take their vehicles off the paved surfaces. *Aerial photography by Billy Gibson.*

now have at our disposal,” Patterson said. “And it’s not just things like hydraulics and buckets and all the equipment we use today, but also the computer-based tools we have to help us do our jobs better. It all adds up to making the best use of the members’ resources and ultimately making sure the electricity we deliver is as affordable as possible. Members can count on the fact that cooperatives are trusted stewards of their resources and we’re doing everything we can to keep costs low.”

One of those mechanics who remembers the “old days” is Jody Pateneau, who has kept watch over the vehicle fleet at Moreau-Grand Electric for the past 20 years. Pateneau, who notes that linemen are required to carry a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and that he has one himself, said fleet maintenance was more of an art in the past.

“We kept records as well as we could, but we would just kind of know when parts or brakes or oil needed to be changed

and what needed to be done,” he said. “But with the new technology, we know what needs to be taken care of a long time before the guys driving the vehicle know. Our job is to make sure there are no break-downs when our guys get out there and that no one is in danger, and the computer helps us accomplish that goal.”

Patterson pointed out that the public also plays a role in making sure cooperative linemen and their vehicles stay accident-free. He said every year linemen and other utility workers across the country are severely injured or killed either in their vehicles or in their work sites.

“We should all be more aware of emergency workers who perform their jobs along roadsides or other places where traffic is present,” Patterson said. “We always remind the public to ‘slow down and move over’ when they see a work area or utility vehicle nearby. It’s not only good, sound advice, but it’s also the law in the state of South Dakota.”



Jody Pateneau has been a mechanic at Moreau-Grand Electric for 20 years and considers his job an important part of not only keeping linemen safe on the road but also containing costs for the cooperative. *Photo by Roger Lawien.*

Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for “Co-op Connections Plus” and you’ll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to “like” and “subscribe.”





Quin and Tom Brunner (foreground, center) are strong supporters of home schooling. They home schooled each of their seven children. Brunner is a former state legislator who served as an advocate for alternative education options for South Dakota families.

HOME SCHOOLING

Learning from Home Provides Flexibility for Families

Billy Gibson

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If home schooling were a common stock and you jumped into the market 10 years ago, you'd be on Easy Street right now.

Statistics show that since 2010, the number of families home schooling their children in South Dakota has increased 125 percent. And with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the numbers continue to climb steadily. According to state records, there were 5,109 home schoolers in 2019. Last year that number increased 27 percent to 6,698.

Once seen as somewhat of a fringe movement, home schooling is getting a fresh look from families all across the country.

And that's just fine with Tom Brunner, a board member at Butte Electric Cooperative in Newell and a member of the state Legislature for 14 years. Brunner and his wife, Quin, have taught each of their seven children from home. Today those children are grown up and pursuing a variety of career tracks, an occupation list that includes earth science, welding, legal counseling, music instruction and more.

While Brunner no longer serves in the statehouse, he recalls being a vocal advocate for alternative education options for South Dakota families.

"I was grateful to receive a lot of cooperation from my fellow lawmakers and people at the Department of Education because I think everyone understood that the department is responsible for overseeing the education of all of the students in our state, not just those attending public schools," he said.

Looking back on his legislative career, Brunner said he is proud of the work he did to make sure parents and families had choices, but that those families also needed to be held accountable for adhering to certain guidelines. For example, parents must comply with state law by submitting a Notification for Public School Exemption Certificate to the local superintendent each year.

While home school instructors aren't required to attain certification, they cannot instruct more than 22 students and must conduct nationally standardized testing in grades four, eight and 11. Local officials are allowed to monitor those tests while the state is entitled to inspect the records of alternative education programs if there is probable cause of non-compliance.

It's also the local district's responsibility to track the student's progress using the Student Information Management System (Infinite Campus System) to make sure certain educational

How to Begin Home Schooling in South Dakota

To home school in South Dakota, parents must complete the following steps:

- Every year, complete and file a notification for Public School Exemption.
- Return the completed exemption form to the public school district office where you reside.
- Choose the best home school curriculum that includes required subjects of language arts and math.
- Participate in standardized tests in grades 4, 8 and 11.
- Keep good records.
- Have fun learning together!



standards are being met and students aren't "slipping through the cracks."

"I've always felt families have the right to do what's best for the education of their children, but as a state we also have a duty to make sure our children are being taught what they need to know to be successful in life," Brunner said. "There's a fear that kids who aren't in public schools might be used as laborers or just sitting around the house and not being supervised. I've never seen a case where that fear is a reality."

The good news for home school parents and those searching for options is that in addition to the state DOE, there are many resources available. South Dakota is home to roughly 15 associations, alliances, cooperatives and other groups created to help families achieve their educational goals.

There is also the Home School Legal Defense Association based in Purcellville, Va., a non-profit organization whose mission is to "defend and advance the constitutional right of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children

and to protect family freedoms."

Like many aspects of society, home schooling was given a second blush after the pandemic struck. Community schools were among the first public gathering places to be shut down once the virus began spreading across the country. When it became clear the virus wouldn't be disappearing soon, parents became accustomed to juggling the responsibilities of work while dealing with their children receiving instruction remotely.

While some parents struggled with the new reality, others gave consideration to adopting the home school platform on a permanent basis. Observers with the U.S. DOE predict the increased interest in home schooling will be sustained long after the pandemic has passed. The National Federation of Children conducted a poll that indicated 40 percent of U.S. families are more likely to home school or enroll their children in a virtual school after the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, the reason most

parents gave for choosing home schooling for their children was a "concern about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure." Other top reasons were a desire to provide more moral and religious instruction, a dissatisfaction with public school instruction and the ability to take a "non-traditional" approach to education.

Brunner said he has explored and discussed many different sides of the issue and is fully aware that when it comes to matters of public policy, public funding and personal choice, people can have strong feelings.

"In our state, we place a high value on our rights and freedoms," he said. "I've been in many meetings with those who have very strong opinions, but we've always had very civil discussions. And while our opinions might differ, there's always been a clear understanding that we all want the same outcome: making sure all of our children get the education and preparation they need to live a fulfilling life and have an opportunity to raise a family of their own."

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

February 18-25

Twelfth Annual Black Hills Film Festival, Virtual
605-574-9454

February 20

Family Gras, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-6000

February 20-27

SD State High School Wrestling Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

February 25

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood Live: Neighbor Day, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-6000

February 27

Nemo 500 Outhouse Races Nemo Guest Ranch, Nemo, SD
605-578-2708

March 5-6

SD High School State Debate & IE Tournament, Central High School, Aberdeen, SD

March 5-7

BH Rapid's President's Cup 2021, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Rushmore Hall, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 11-14

Team 8-Ball Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Rushmore Hall, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 12-13

St. Patrick's Day Weekend, Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976



St. Patrick's Day Weekend, Mar. 12-13, 2021

March 13

28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride and Tour, Spearfish Canyon Lodge, Lead, SD
605-641-4963

March 13

St. Patrick's Day Celebration, Knights of Columbus Hall, Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

March 13-14

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun Show, American Legion Hall, Philip, SD
605-859-2280

March 19-20

Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6000

March 23-24

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Fine Arts Theatre, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 25

A Lakota View of the Dead Hills, Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center, Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

March 27

SD State High School All-State Band Concert, Mitchell Fine Arts Center, Mitchell, SD

April 8

The Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest, Sioux Falls Arena/Virtual, Sioux Falls, SD
605-339-1203

April 9-10

Forks, Corks and Kegs Food, Wine and Beer Festival, Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1876

April 9-18

Four Weddings & An Elvis, Mitchell Area Community Theatre, Mitchell, SD
605-996-9137

April 17

Winefest Renaissance, Boys and Girls Club of Aberdeen Area, Aberdeen, SD
605-225-8714

April 23-24

Junkin' Market Days, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD
605-941-4958

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.