



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Jessie Ruml pursues a labor of love growing an assortment of fresh-cut flowers at Pixie Acres Flower Farm near Castlewood
Photo by Rachel Clelland Photography

In Bloom

Cut flowers spread summer cheer
Pages 8-9

Addressing power supply and demand
Pages 12-13

Renville-Sibley crews busy with maintenance and upgrade work



Gene Alex
Line Superintendent

Renville-Sibley linemen started 2022 using an overhead line patrol app to gather information while patrolling lines during the winter months. The linemen look for broken conductors, broken poles, broken insulators, loose wires, tree issues and leaning poles. They create a service order to track issues that need repair.

Renville-Sibley also installed an app on the iPad to track porcelain fuse holder locations. Over time, the porcelain fuse holder develops cracks and eventually breaks apart causing a power interruption to members. The linemen have replaced 182 of the 1,369 porcelain fuse holders on the system. Renville-Sibley plans to change 200 a year. Your linemen strive to maintain safe and reliable lines.

An annual inspection of equipment was also completed in April. Federal requirements state that trucks over 26,000 pounds, as well as any trailer in combination with these trucks, need DOT inspections.

Chapman Metering tested 750 meters throughout the month of May. The test checks the meter accuracy and the installation.

In late April, the linemen started working on overhead to underground conversions in the Winfield township area. They then moved to the Fairfax area to begin other projects including five more overhead to underground conversions. 815101

The 2022 system projects include a continuation of the Wellington Substation and Cairo Substation tie line. This phase of the project starts at State Highway 4 and goes east on Renville County #2 for two miles. This tie line will enhance the reliability to members in Wellington and Moltke townships. The second project is a tie from the Wellington Substation to the Cairo Substation. This project will improve the reliability to the members in Cairo and Severance townships. The linemen will be replacing 1.5 miles of overhead line



Renville-Sibley linemen replace a burnt pole.

with underground cable. This project follows the Minnesota River valley west of Morton. Additional projects include four three-phase line projects as well as building a new line to serve our new facility.

Late June-early July, Renville-Sibley linemen along with an East River line crew will be renovating the Emmet Substation by Renville. The substation has old insulators and switches that need to be replaced. Renville-Sibley linemen will be adding electronic breakers and additional switches to reduce outage time and increase reliability.

Renville-Sibley is getting a fair number of member-requested service upgrades. Any member thinking about a service upgrade should contact Renville-Sibley as soon as possible. Transformer lead times are approaching a year. Underground cable and overhead wire lead times are around 40 weeks. Material lead time may be an issue depending on your project. Renville-Sibley will review projects as requested by members and will

COOPERATIVE

CONNECTIONS

**RENVILLE-SIBLEY
CO-OP POWER**

(USPS 019-074)

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Superintendent's column, *continued*

return a quote as soon as possible. However, we may have some questions during this process. Examples may include how much load are you adding, are you moving or building a new service, who do you use for an electrician, etc. The Minnesota Electrical Inspector is required to visit the site if there are any changes or alterations to the service.

STAR Energy Services provides our below-ground pole testing. This is the fourth year of a 10-year pole inspection plan. The rejection rate through the first three years was around 3 percent. The goal is to test around 1,783 poles in 2022. This is mostly done with a ranger or some form of 4-wheel off-road vehicle. The inspector will be in the Renville and Sacred Heart area in 2022. Please call the office if you have any questions during this process.

Renville-Sibley has a contracted locating service to locate our underground utilities. Often a member

will ask, "Why didn't the underground lines get marked in my yard?" Renville-Sibley owns the lines from the distribution system to the meter and the member owns any lines after the meter. Renville-Sibley will help locate member-owned underground lines in the overhead to underground conversion project.

However, because the lines after the meter are owned by the member it is the member's responsibility to locate these lines. Any member-owned locating request should be done by the member's chosen electrician. In addition, always call Gopher State One Call (GSOC) at least 48 hours before doing any type of excavation. The GSOC phone number is 1-800-252-1166 or go to www.gopherstateonecall.org.

Have a safe and wonderful summer!

Editor's note: Information on the May 30 storm will be in the next newsletter.

Minnesota's extreme heat law

Minnesota Statute 216B.0975 requires that, "a utility may not involuntarily disconnect residential services in affected counties when an excessive heat watch, heat advisory, or excessive heat warning is in effect and has been issued by the National Weather Service."

Renville-Sibley will continue to make efforts to stall involuntary disconnection of our members' electric service for non-payment and will continue to provide our members with past-due account opportunities to work out a feasible payment schedule. However, in order to construct a payment plan, members must contact Renville-Sibley ahead of time to make payment arrangements and to sign a payment agreement.

Renville-Sibley does not want to interrupt service to any member at any time, but in a cooperative, all members are affected by those whose electric bills remain unpaid. To ensure fair and equitable rates for all our members, those members with past-due accounts that neglect to contact the office to make mutually agreed payment arrangements, or members who fail to meet agreed upon payment arrangements, will have their electric service disconnected once the excessive heat watch, advisory or warning has expired.

Reduce your risk of shock in the home

Contact with electricity can result in something as innocuous (but still painful) as a mild shock to severe injuries like nerve damage and burns. In some cases, it can even cause cardiac arrest and death. Here's a list of some of the most common shock risks inside a home.

1. Appliances. Most shocks from household appliances occur during repairs. It's not enough to turn off an appliance before working on it - you need to unplug it to reduce risk. Large appliances are responsible for 18 percent of household 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 (GFCI). A GFCI is a protective device installed on electrical outlets, primarily used where water is present. When the device detects an imbalance in the electric current, it turns off the power to minimize the potential for an electric shock.

2. Ladders. Typically, ladders present a falling hazard, but 8 percent of household shocks are 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 10 feet away and won't contact a power line if it falls in any direction.

3. Power tools. Power tools account for 9 percent of consumer product-related shocks. According to OSHA, 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, use power tools incorrectly or use them in wet conditions. This is another situation in which GFCIs can help.

4. Electrical outlets and extension cords. Inserting anything that doesn't belong - screwdrivers, knives, fingers or toy cars, to name a few - 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.

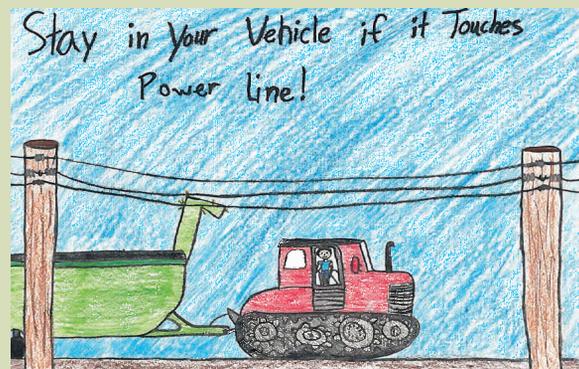
COOPERATIVES RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES



When back-to-back spring snow storms struck Burke Divide Electric Cooperative (Columbus, ND), cooperatives from South Dakota and Minnesota traveled long distances to respond to the call for help.

When a deadly derecho swept through eastern South Dakota in early May, co-op crews worked long hours to restore power to thousands of electric cooperative members. It's what cooperative linemen do.

Find out more about how our line crews respond to emergencies by visiting Cooperative Connections Plus. Simply scan the QR code at right.



Call 811 before you dig

Esmae Beld

Esmae Beld, age 11, offers some sound advice to stay inside your vehicle and call for help if it comes in contact with energized power lines. Esmae is the child of Orlando and Shanna Beld. They are members of H-D Electric Cooperative.

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

DREAMY DESSERTS



DUMP BARS

Ingredients:

- 2 cups white sugar
- 1 3/4 cups flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 cup cocoa
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup chocolate chips

METHOD

“Dump” all ingredients except chocolate chips together in bowl. Mix with spoon. Spread in greased 9x13 pan. Sprinkle chocolate chips on top. Do not stir. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

Deanna Poppen, Sioux Falls

CARAMEL STUFFED KRISPIE BARS

Ingredients:

Caramel filling

- 4 oz. caramel Kraft bits, unwrapped
- 4 oz. sweetened condensed milk
- 8 tbsp. butter

Rice Krispie layer

- 12 tbsp. butter, halved
- 10 cup Rice Krispies, halved
- 8 cup mini marshmallows, split in half
- 2 cup additional mini marshmallows for sprinkling

METHOD

Line pan (9x13) with nonstick foil. Microwave caramel bits, butter and condensed milk until melted and smooth when stirred. Microwave 6 tablespoons butter and 4 cups marshmallows just a minute and stir. Stir in cereal and press into pan. Pour on the caramel. Sprinkle on the additional 2 cups marshmallows and place in freezer for 15 minutes. Use the remaining Krispie ingredients and repeat directions. Press this layer on top of the marshmallows and caramel layer and return to freezer. Switch to the refrigerator and let set for a few hours. Cut into big squares and enjoy.

Eric Neville, Milesville

LEMON MERINGUE PIE

Ingredients:

Pie

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 1-1/2 cups cold water
- 3 egg yolks, lightly beaten
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1/2 teaspoon McCormick® Pure Lemon Extract
- 1 baked pie crust (9-inch)

Meringue Topping

- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon McCormick® Cream Of Tartar
- 3 egg whites
- 1/4 teaspoon McCormick® Pure Lemon Extract

METHOD

Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix sugar and cornstarch in medium saucepan. Gradually stir in water until smooth. Stir in egg yolks. Stirring constantly, bring to boil on medium heat; boil 1 minute. Remove from heat. Stir in lemon juice, butter and extract. Pour hot filling into baked pie crust. For the Meringue Topping, mix sugar and cream of tartar. Beat egg whites in medium bowl with electric mixer on high speed until foamy. Gradually add sugar mixture and extract, beating until stiff peaks form. Spread meringue evenly over hot filling, sealing to edges of crust. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until meringue is golden. Cool completely on wire rack. Store in refrigerator.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



Fourth through sixth-grade students watch a demonstration on safety near power lines presented by Jennifer Gross of East River Electric.

Co-ops in the Classroom brings shocking lessons

The week of May 9th was fun! This was the week I joined Jennifer Gross from East River Electric to bring the Co-ops in the Classroom program to area schools. This program helps students recognize where electricity comes from and ways to conserve electricity. The most important lesson though is to teach the students to respect and be safe around electricity. We explained the relationship between East River Electric and Renville-Sibley



Lenae Wordes
Communications
Manager

Co-op Power. For those of you that may not know, East River is responsible for delivering the power over the transmission lines to our substations. They also provide other services to our cooperative such as load management

and IT services. We visited students from Cedar Mountain, BOLD, St. Mary's, Redwood Valley and RCW. Typically, we would go to the schools each year and visit the 4th-grade students. At RCW, we also visit the 2nd grade students with a different presentation focused on electrical safety. Since we missed a couple years due to the pandemic, some schools also elected to have us visit those classes that haven't seen the presentation.



Above/left, Cedar Mountain student Maria Frietag peddles a bicycle to generate power to turn on an LED light. Above/right, Lila Beckler, daughter of Renville-Sibley linemen Shawn Beckler, has a hair-raising experience while touching the Van de Graaff generator.



The hour-long presentation began with a discussion on static electricity, protons, neutrons, and most importantly electrons. We also discussed what materials are conductors and insulators of electricity. The best way to learn about static electricity is by using the Van de Graaff generator. This is always electrifying! Most students think it is fun to get their hair to stand up and to shock a fellow student. After this shocking experience, we reminded the students this is static electricity, and this type of electricity does not power our daily electrical needs.

We asked students how the power they use is generated. With a little help, most classrooms could name the following major energy sources: hydro, wind, solar, natural gas, nuclear and coal. The students had a chance to generate power by pedaling a bicycle that powered a display board with light bulbs and

a few other appliances. This was easy when there were not many appliances plugged in. As more items were added, this task became more difficult. The point of this experiment was for students to understand the more items they use that demand electricity, the more the power plants must work to provide for their needs. This led to the discussion of conserving electricity.

To wrap up the presentation we discussed what to do if they came in contact with a power line while inside a vehicle or tractor. The correct answer is to call 911 as soon as possible and stay inside unless the vehicle is on fire. If they need to get out because of a fire, the students learned to jump with both feet together and hop away the length of a school bus.

I am thankful that the schools allow us to share the story about electricity.

Selecting a tree for your property? Know its mature height before deciding the proper place to plant

If you are considering planting a tree, carefully select its location before you begin digging. Also, call 8-1-1 before you break ground to get underground utilities marked. If trees are planted in the wrong location, they can be expensive to maintain and even dangerous. Renville-Sibley Co-op Power and Safe Electricity offer tips on how to pick an optimal location.

A mature height of fewer than 15 feet is recommended if planting near lines. Some trees that are generally not tall enough to interfere with lines include crabapple, honeysuckle, juniper, flowering dogwood and hawthorn.

Trees should never be planted directly under power lines, near poles or too close to electrical equipment.

Trees should never be planted directly under power lines, near poles or too close to electrical equipment.

Once you have a tree selected, call 8-1-1 before putting a shovel to the ground. The “Call Before You Dig” number is a free service that locates and marks public underground utilities in your yard or on your land. Call several business days before you plan to dig. Locators will mark public underground utilities such as electric, gas, water, cable and fiber. The service does not mark privately owned lines or pipes.

Other tree tips:

- If your established trees are growing into power lines, contact us to ask about them. In some cases

Plant the **RIGHT TREE** in the **RIGHT PLACE**

The larger the tree, the farther it should be from a power line. Avoid planting beneath power lines, near poles or close to electrical equipment.

Remember, know what's below by calling 8-1-1 before you dig.

Learn more at: [Safe Electricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)

(depending on the tree’s location), we will come out and trim the tree.

- It is important to have trees trimmed. Limbs can fall on power lines during bad weather, resulting in power outages or blinking lights. Broken or drooping limbs could also cause a fire.

- Tall-growing trees with a mature height greater than 45 feet should be planted at least 45 feet away from lines to avoid future pruning. Some of these trees include oak, white and blue

spruce, most pines and most maples.

- Be sure no one climbs a tree near power lines. If branches are touching the wires, the tree could be energized. Even branches that do not touch power lines could become energized if a child’s weight is added. In addition, a child could climb high into the tree and be able to reach the line.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org).



IN BLOOM

Philip and Jessie Ruml raise an assortment of fresh-cut flower varieties on their micro-farm near Castlewood. *Photo by Rachel Clelland Photography*

Specialty micro-farmers raise fresh-cut flowers for weddings, parties and other red-letter events

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The last time you saw a summer bride carrying a brightly colored floral bouquet down the aisle, it's likely those flowers came from some faraway field in some other part of the planet.

But that's quickly changing as a growing group of intrepid micro-farmers throughout the Upper Midwest are finding their way into the specialty fresh-cut flower business.

Emphasis on the word intrepid: it's not easy raising red roses in a climate more associated with icicles than irises.

Jessie Ruml isn't the least bit intimidated. She's in her fourth year of growing a variety of decorative flowers and reports that the bulbs are blooming and business is booming at Pixie Acres Flower Farm near Castlewood.

After 10 years as a dental hygienist waging a protracted war against plaque, Ruml decided to turn in her stainless steel sickle scaler and look for another occupation that would keep her on the

family farm and close to home with her four spirited daughters.

One afternoon while the children were out playing in the yard, she was swiping through her social media accounts and up popped a picture of a brilliant display of dahlias lying in the bed of an old pickup truck. The scene stopped her dead in her scrolling tracks.

"The colors were so vivid, I immediately felt the hair stand up on the back of my neck. I knew in an instant that's what I needed to do with my life," said Ruml, a self-described farm girl originally from Elk Point and a current member of H-D Electric Cooperative.

It didn't take long for Ruml to realize why South Dakota is not exactly known as the fresh-cut flower capital of the world - at least not yet. She compares growing flowers in eastern South Dakota to 24-hour babysitting. It's a painstaking task to bring flower seeds to full bloom in such a capricious and often harsh climate.

She and her husband Philip, who works full time in the ag industry,

don't even consider taking an extended vacation between the months of March and October when the Rums hold a "fall finale" on the farm to sell off the remainder of their crop or donate it to local charities. Flower plants are high maintenance, sensitive to the elements and require tons of TLC with watering, weeding and fertilizing, she explained: "We can't leave them untended for more than a few hours at a time."

But Jessie keeps a positive perspective when her back and her body start aching from all the hard work.

"You have to get on your hands and knees because there's not a lot of mechanical equipment like in larger scale farming," she said. "But all the effort only makes it that much more special to bring somebody joy, to see the happiness on their faces when you give them a bouquet of fresh flowers. It's hard on your body, but I'm grateful for each day I get to put my hands in the dirt."

She breaks up the monotony and the grind of flower farming by conducting floral design workshops, which she describes as a "girls' night out" where there's lots of laughs and perhaps some light spirits flowing in the

ZONE 4 FLOWER VARIETIES

Here are the top five flower varieties most suitable for USDA Hardiness Zone 4 planting:

1. Petunias
2. Daisies
3. Dahlia
4. Zinnia
5. Tulips



Christy Heckathorn, owner of Fleurish Flower Farm and Design near Elk Point, shows Union County Electric General Manager Matt Klein how she uses soil blocking to grow hardier seedlings and increase production. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

studio. Participants learn how to make arrangements and fill vases and tour the fields to see how the operation works.

She also looks for opportunities to support the community, like donating a portion of her sales to assist families whose homes were destroyed by a tornado that severely damaged much of Castlewood on May 11.

Over the past few years, more growers are taking on the challenge of Zone 4 flower farming and have entered the market in places like Belle Fourche, Vermillion, Lake Preston, Sioux Falls, Mitchell, Wolsey, Artesian and others. Many are members of the South Dakota

Specialty Growers Association based in Yankton. The group held a virtual “member meet-up” on June 14 to collaborate, educate and exchange ideas.

One floral designer who jumped into the fresh-cut flower business two years ago is Christy Heckathorn, owner of Fleurish Flower Farm and Design in Ruml’s native Elk Point. In point of fact, it was Heckathorn - a family friend - who designed the floral arrangement for Ruml’s bridal bouquet 15 years ago.

Heckathorn got involved in the industry when she went to work at Pioneer Drugs, a local pharmacy that also had a flower shop and a soda fountain

inside. She spent five years there serving customers and also working on the side to help brides select arrangements for their big day.

While Heckathorn has gathered an wealth of training and experience over the years, she said she delights in using flowers to elicit smiles and positive reactions in her clients and other people she meets – especially those who could use a laugh when battling through personal challenges.

“A lady once came with her family and I could tell she had a lot on her mind,” she recalled. “I talked with her and found out she was going through cancer treatment and they had come here just to get away for awhile, enjoy the flowers and forget about things. My mother just went through cancer treatment. So I told them to come back any time and they would always be welcomed.

“One of the reasons I love flowers is because they bring joy to other people. If you can grow flowers and put a smile on someone’s face as a result of your labor, that’s a good life recipe.”



Jessie Ruml uses a pair of high tunnel greenhouses on her farm near Castlewood to shelter her flower plants from often unpredictable South Dakota weather patterns. *Photo by Rachel Clelland Photography*



Comparative Report

	Current YTD through March 31, 2022	One Year Ago YTD through March 31, 2021	10 Years Ago YTD through March 31, 2012
average # of Consumers	1,888	1,882	1,924
kWhs purchased	69,391,801	72,435,785	49,017,915
Cost of purchased power	\$3,830,010.48	\$4,689,380.86	\$2,388,937.16

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 it to the Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power, PO 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

WHERE'S THE NUMBER?

Last month Jeremy Wertish did not find his member number in the newsletter. The credit will continue to grow with 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 July, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck in your search!

OUTAGE REPORT

Affecting 10 members or more - none

Date: 04-13-22

Time off: 1:12 a.m.

Time on: 1:58 a.m.

Substation: Henryville & Troy

Cause: Raccoon

Date: 04-23-22

Time off: 6:50 a.m.

Time on: 7:20 a.m.

Substation: Emmet

Cause: Raccoon

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

May board meeting highlights

The May board meeting was held on Monday, May 23 at 7 a.m. All board members were present except Roger Manthei. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Norris, Cindy Mertens, Gene Alex, and Lenae Wordes.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the April 25 board meeting
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of April
- Capital credits to an estate
- Safety report for May
- CRC Director election

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Capital credits transferred
- Total new members
- Reports from staff members

as to the activities in their department. Items in the reports include:

- High-level Statement of Operations review – YTD through April (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
- Co-ops in the Classroom

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

NOTICE:

The June board meeting will be held on Monday, June 27 at 8 a.m.
The July board meeting will be held on Monday, July 25 at 8 a.m.

Member Reminder

Renville-Sibley encourages any member planning on making changes to their service in 2022 to please contact our office as soon as possible. In order to complete these projects on time, material may need to be ordered well in advance as often there is extended lead time to get the appropriate material. In addition, crew time will be scheduled in the order project down payments and material are received.

MISSION STATEMENT

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

NOTICE

Earthwork will begin in late June on the new facility. More information on the new facility will be in the August newsletter.

ORU BOARD MEETING

The next meeting of the Operation Round Up Board will be Tuesday, July 26, 2022. Find applications for donations at www.renville-sibley.coop/content/operation-round. Application deadline is July 1.

THANK YOU

The line crew thanks Brian Binnebose for buying lunch for them. It was greatly appreciated!

The Line Crew

Thank you so much for the scholarship! I will use it to begin my studies to become a special education teacher.

Elise Braem



SUMMER POWER

Local co-ops are prepared to meet peak demand for electricity this summer

You may have seen articles recently about the potential for rolling power outages across the West and Midwest that could be triggered by a combination of insufficient generation, increased demand for power and warmer than normal temperatures expected this summer across the region. While no one can predict what extreme weather could be coming our way, or unexpected issues with power plants and renewable resources, electric co-ops in South Dakota and western Minnesota are confident that we will have enough generation to meet our electric needs.

The following questions and answers aim to provide background on Regional Transmission Organizations (RTOs), the role RTOs play in serving consumers, potential power supply impacts to this region throughout the summer,

and some lessons learned from the February 2021 energy emergency.

WHERE DOES MY ELECTRICITY COME FROM?

Decades ago, when electric cooperatives were created to bring power to rural America, there were few electric generation options available. In our region, electric cooperatives worked together to access hydropower from the dams on the Missouri River and later created East River Electric Power Cooperative, Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative to fulfill their power needs.

These generation and transmission cooperatives provide transmission services and construct regional power plants and transmission infrastructure. In the past, when co-ops needed

more electric generation because of economic growth, we built it.

Co-ops still own and build generation units today, but the operation of the grid that serves our region changed significantly about seven years ago. In 2015, East River Electric, Rushmore Electric, Basin Electric and the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), which sells hydropower from the dams, all entered the Southwest Power Pool (SPP). SPP is an RTO that operates throughout the central portion of the United States and allows utilities to work together to provide the most efficient and cost-effective generation and transmission services to control costs.

DOES THE SOUTHWEST POWER POOL (SPP) EXPECT TO HAVE ENOUGH GENERATION TO MEET DEMAND THIS SUMMER?

SPP operates like the “air-traffic controller” of the bulk electric grid from Canada to Texas. It oversees the grid and the wholesale power markets serving most of the electric cooperative consumers in South Dakota. According to a May 12 press release from SPP, the organization said it “expects to have enough generating capacity

to meet the regional demand for electricity through the summer season.” SPP anticipates that demand for electricity will peak at 51.1 gigawatts during the summer season, which runs June to September 2022. According to SPP, a diverse fleet of generation units, including cooperative-owned power plants and renewable resources, will be prepared to serve at least 55.5 gigawatts of demand.

WHAT IS THE MIDCONTINENT INDEPENDENT SYSTEM OPERATOR (MISO) AND WHY DOES IT EXPECT TO HAVE AN ENERGY SHORTFALL THIS SUMMER?

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) is similar to SPP – it is an RTO responsible for matching generation resources with power demand from consumers throughout the Midwest in states like Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan and Illinois. Each RTO serves different areas of the country and has a different mix of generation resources. Some consumers in South Dakota are served from the MISO system, but most cooperative consumers are served through SPP. MISO raised alarms in April when the organization said it projects “insufficient firm resources” to supply the summer demand for electricity.

In 2005, MISO’s total generation mix was 76 percent coal, 13 percent nuclear, 7 percent natural gas and the rest came from a mix of other resources. By 2020, the amount of coal-based generation fell to 33 percent while natural gas grew to 34 percent, nuclear reached 17 percent and wind and solar accounted for 13 percent. It has been a drastic change in a short amount of time. With a higher amount of variable generation resources, less

SPP “EXPECTS TO HAVE ENOUGH GENERATING CAPACITY TO MEET THE REGIONAL DEMAND FOR ELECTRICITY THROUGH THE SUMMER SEASON.”

firm generation available and the anticipation of increased electric usage because of higher than average temperatures, it sets up the potential for rolling power outages across the MISO footprint this summer.

HOW DO THE ENERGY MARKETS WORK?

Basin Electric owns generation and sells it into the SPP and MISO markets. Basin Electric buys all the power they need from those same markets to serve their membership, including your local electric co-op. It helps control costs throughout our co-ops by allowing us to sell generation into the markets when it is economically advantageous, or to access cheaper generation from the market when we need it. It was a critical strategic step taken by electric cooperatives to save their members money. But it also means that we can be subject to SPP directed rolling outages if demand exceeds generation across the entire SPP footprint like we saw in February 2021. Although electric cooperatives in the Dakotas are required to have enough generation to serve our own consumers, because co-ops are integrated in the grid we must share in any potential outages due to an energy emergency.

DID UTILITIES LEARN ANYTHING FROM THE FEBRUARY 2021 ENERGY EMERGENCY?

In February 2021, record-low temperatures and record-high electricity use across a region stretching from the Canadian border to Texas created what SPP called “the greatest operational challenge in its 80-year history.” Yet, even in

the extreme conditions, SPP had about four hours total of rolling outages across its 14-state region. That included South Dakota and cooperatives served by East River Electric and Rushmore Electric. East River was required to drop about 83 megawatts of demand over a short time on Feb. 16, 2021. Rushmore Electric was required to drop 22 megawatts on Feb. 16, 2021. After the emergency, SPP commissioned a comprehensive report and conducted an in-depth analysis of what happened. The report produced 22 actions, policy changes and assessments related to fuel assurance, resource planning and availability, emergency response and other areas.

Joining SPP was a strategic step that our cooperative network took several years ago to capture the benefits of being in an RTO. We have experienced immense financial and operational benefits over the past several years from our membership in SPP which have helped to keep electric rates stable. Looking ahead to this summer, most electric cooperatives in South Dakota are not within the MISO footprint and are not expecting an impact from any potential MISO rolling power outages. However, a few local co-ops in Minnesota and northern South Dakota may be called upon to take a rolling outage. Those co-ops will communicate with members if this becomes a possibility and will work to minimize the impact of these potential outages.



FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

There are more than 25 fairs and festivals on the schedule in South Dakota and southwestern Minnesota. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Electric co-ops support the mission of fairs and festivals to educate and entertain

Billy Gibson

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When Scott Wick was a boy growing up in western Sioux Falls, he set upon a clandestine quest to find a way of sneaking into the Sioux Empire Fair without having to spring for a ducat.

Like a well-trained but cash-starved recon platoon, he and his mischievous chums used to probe for breaches in the site's perimeter, lured by the music, lights and laughter emanating from the other side of the fence.

Things have come full circle. Today, Wick serves as president and CEO of the Sioux Empire Fair. Now he spends his time looking for ways to prevent people from weaseling their way inside the gates.

Wick gets a chuckle out of the irony of those memories and is careful to note that he quickly became a reformed juvenile trespasser. He went on to not

only participate in the fair as a volunteer worker but also became a contributing part of the entertainment.

From third grade through his freshman year in high school, Wick and his compatriots rode their bicycles down to the fair site and went through the front gates - legally - to help hired hands set up the carnival rides, tend to livestock and prepare amusements for thousands of giddy fair-goers.

He even parlayed his interest in the fair into a profitable enterprise. He shares an old dog-eared *Argus Leader* newspaper photo of his 11-year-old self selling rides to patrons on the back of a Brown Swiss steer for 50 cents a pop at the Old McDonald's Farm exhibit.

Aside from his present-day security detail, Wick stays busy not only preparing for the Sioux Empire Fair but also staging more than 130 events held annually at the W.H. Lyons Fairgrounds throughout the calendar year with a full

range of activities such as weddings, flea markets, arts and crafts shows, a Renaissance festival, livestock events and more.

"The Sioux Empire Fair and these other events have a long history and people always come up to me and talk about the old days, back in the 50s and 60s when they used to come here as a kid," Wick said. "The size of the steers and the heifers have changed drastically over the years, but people still come here for the same reason as always - to have some good family fun. For a lot of people, this serves as an annual family gathering or a kind of reunion."

The 83rd event will be held Aug. 5-13 and will feature nine nights of musical entertainment on the Billion Automotive Main Stage with headliners like .38 Special, Old Dominion, Sawyer Brown, Justin Moore and more.

The Sioux Empire Fair is considered to be the top event among fairs and festivals in terms of attendance from visitors across the region, but there are many county and local events that



Fairs and festivals offer opportunities for fun, education and games to test your skills. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

are annual attractions throughout the summer and fall.

The Heartland Association of Fairs, Festivals and Events lists 25 programs taking place across South Dakota.

Electric cooperative organizations serving members in South Dakota and Minnesota have a long tradition of supporting local fairs and festivals through employee engagement and both financial and in-kind contributions.

Sonje Oban, a representative of FEM Electric based in Ipswich, joined the cooperative after working for the Brown County Fair for several years. She sees a similarity in the local roles of electric cooperatives and the organizations responsible for making sure county fairs provide opportunities for education and entertainment for families.

“FEM is community-oriented and community-driven. We wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for the members that we serve and who own the cooperative,” she said. “Having worked with the fair and now with the co-op, I see that in many ways my priorities and goals are the same: to make a positive contribution to the community and to enhance the lives of both our members and the public at-large. There’s also a big similarity in the educational component. The fair

has lots of exhibits and demonstrations relating to the ag industry, while here at FEM one of our goals is to educate our members on how to use power wisely, safely and economically.”

Carrie Vugteveen is vice president of public relations at Sioux Valley Energy based in Colman. The co-op serves east-central South Dakota and southwestern Minnesota and is involved in many local events throughout the calendar year.

One of those events is the Rock County Fair held in Luverne, Minn., each July. SVE brings a high voltage trailer, a bucket truck and an electric vehicle to educate and inform fairgoers about how electric grid systems function, how they’re maintained and how renewable resources are changing the industry.

For the Sioux Empire Fair, SVE joins several other distribution cooperatives, along with transmission provider East River Electric, in

serving lunch for Ag Appreciation Day.

“County fairs are an important part of our communities, which is why the co-op is involved,” Vugteveen said. “A good example is our partnership with the Rock County Fair. A few years ago we worked with organizers to bring attendees safety demonstrations with a high-voltage trailer, examples of equipment we use to work on lines such as personal protective equipment and bucket trucks as well as our electric vehicle ‘EVie.’ To get everyone involved we had Sioux Valley Energy ‘passports’ that could be stamped if they visited our demonstrations. If fairgoers filled their passports, they would receive a prize.”



Electric cooperatives are involved in making sure local events are fun for everyone. *Photo by East River Electric*



JULY 2-4
Fourth of July Holiday Weekend

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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

JUNE 24-26
Black Hills Bluegrass Festival
Rush No More RV Resort & Campground, Sturgis, SD, blackhillsbluegrass.com

JUNE 24-26
Main Street Arts & Crafts Festival
Centennial Park, Hot Springs, SD, mainstreetartsandcrafts.com

JUNE 24-26
Quarry Days
Citywide, Dell Rapids, SD, 605-428-4167

JUNE 25
Zippity Zoo Day
805 S. Kiwanis Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7003

JUNE 26
Prairie Village Variety Show
Prairie Village, Madison, SD, 605-256-3644

JUNE 30-JULY 4
Annual Black Hills Roundup
300 Roundup Street, Belle Fourche, SD, blackhillsroundup.com

JULY 2-4
Sitting Bull Stampede Rodeo
Various Locations, Mobridge, SD, 605-845-2387

JULY 3-4
Custer's Old Time Country Fourth of July
Various Locations, Custer, SD, 605-673-2244

JULY 4
4th of July Parade & Celebration
Kemp Avenue, Watertown, SD, 605-886-5814

JULY 9-10
10th Annual Native POP
Main Street Square, Rapid City, SD, nativepop.org

JULY 9-10
Brookings Summer Arts Festival
Pioneer Park, Brookings, SD, bsaf.com

JULY 13-16
Black Hills Corvette Classic
Various Locations, Spearfish, SD, blackhillscorvetteclassic.com

JULY 14-17
Corn Palace Stampede Rodeo
Various Locations, Mitchell, SD, cornpalacestampede.com

JULY 14-17
Danish Days
Various Locations, Viborg, SD, danishdays.org

JULY 15-17
Gold Discovery Days
Various Locations, Custer, SD, 605-673-2244

JULY 15-17
Laura Ingalls Wilder Pageant
43379 Rose Lane, De Smet, SD, desmetpageant.org

JULY 16-17
Hills Alive
Memorial Park, Rapid City, SD, hillsalive.com

JULY 23
Bierbörse
Main Street Square, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

JULY 23
Yankton Rock-N-Rumble Motorcycle Rally
3rd Street, Yankton, SD, 605-299-9734

JULY 25-30
Days of '76 Rodeo and Parades
18 Seventy Six Drive, Deadwood, SD, daysof76.com

JULY 29-31
Badlands Astronomy Festival
Ben Reifel Visitor Center, Interior, SD, 605-433-5243

JULY 29-31
Bruce Honey Days
Various Locations, Bruce, SD, 605-627-5671

JULY 30
South Dakota Chislic Festival
Prairie Arboretum, Freeman, SD, sdchislicfestival.com

AUGUST 5-13
Sioux Empire Fair
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD, siouxempirefair.com

AUGUST 14
31th Annual Czech Heritage Festival
Bechyn, MN, 320-522-1218

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