

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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Tips to help you stay safe from scammers



Emily Johnson
Communication
Specialist

Consumers with water, gas and electricity connections have long been targets for utility scams. But in today's digital world, every swipe and click increases the risk of potential scams.

Scammers are more sophisticated than ever before, and they understand our increasing reliance on technology. With their sharpened digital knives, scammers have adapted their tactics to trick unsuspecting consumers through a variety of methods.

Northern Electric wants to help you avoid energy scams, whether a financial loss or a leak of your personal information. This month, I'd like to share updates on some of the latest utility scams, as well as tips to help you stay safe from even the craftiest scammers.

Recent Utility Scams

Scammers typically disguise themselves – either physically or digitally – as utility employees or representatives to steal consumers' money or personal information. A common trick is to claim a consumer's bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach consumers through a variety of means, including phone calls, text messages, emails, and even in-person visits. However, the digital line of attack is increasingly more common.

For example, new capabilities disguising caller ID or "spoofing" can make the phone number you see on caller ID appear to be from a trusted source. Spoofing makes it easier for scammers to deceive you because it's more difficult to verify the call immediately. Another recent scam uses fraudulent websites that are identical to a utility payment webpage – and what's worse, these pages are often promoted on search engines to trick consumers into clicking and making a payment.

Another recent scam involves phone calls, text messages, or emails claiming you overpaid your electric bill and will receive a cash or banking refund. This offer may seem too good to be true, and it is – it's likely a scam aimed at stealing your personal information.

Spotting a Scam

There are several red flags you can look for when identifying an energy scam. Scammers often use high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity or other services will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.

Additionally, scammers may ask for unusual payment methods such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. If someone is pushing for an unusual payment method, it's likely a scam.

You've probably noticed that many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors and odd email addresses. These are red flags, so when you see these dodgy forms of communication, consider it a potential scam.

What Northern Electric Will (and Won't) Do

Northern will never demand an instant, immediate payment and threaten to disconnect your service without prior notices or warnings. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our members to avoid disconnects.

Northern will never ask for your banking details over the phone or through email. We offer several secure payment options, including in-person, over the phone, smart-hub or scheduled payments.

Avoiding Scams

Whether in-person, over the phone or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual claiming to be a Northern Electric employee requesting banking or other personal information. We will only send you text messages if you have opted in for important alerts. If you're ever in doubt about a potential energy scam, give us a quick call at 605-225-0310 so we can assist. Northern wants to help protect you and our communities against utility frauds, and by notifying us about potential scams, you can create the first line of defense. We encourage you to report any potential scams so we can spread the word and prevent others in our community from falling victim.

The year may be coming to an end, but our work to make your life easier never stops. Wishing you and yours all the best from all of us at Northern Electric Cooperative. We look forward to serving you in 2025!

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Nolan Wipf

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 info@northernelectric.coop

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Manager of Information Technology: Derek Gorecki

Communications Specialist: Emily Johnson
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Executive Secretary: Amy Golden

Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Northern Electric Cooperative, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

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Postmaster: Please send address changes to Northern Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427; telephone (605) 225-0310; fax (605) 225-1684

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NOVEMBER BOARD REPORT

Northern Electric Cooperative's November regular board meeting was held November 22, 2024, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present or virtually. As the first order of business, the board approved the October 24, 2024, minutes, and October expenditures. The Board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on the actions taken by the East River Board at the November 7, 2024, meeting. The next East River Board Meeting will be held December 5, 2024.

RESCO Director Todd Hettich reported on the RESCO Fall Board of Directors meeting on November 6-7 in Minneapolis, MN.

MANAGERS REPORT

General Manager Char Hager's report to the board included the following items:

- Report on Rural Electric Development (REED) Board Meeting held on November 4.
- Report on East River MAC meeting held on November 5.
- Report on the employee meeting on November 6.
- Report on the East River New Director and Employee Orientation held November 18.
- Informed the board of the East River Energize Forum to be held on February 5-6 in Sioux Falls, S.D.

BOARD REPORT

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

- Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 A.M. on Friday, December 20th, 2024.
- Approved Work Order Inventories #24-10 for \$655,764.25 and #24-10MC for \$423,335.35 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for construction already completed.
- Authorized acceptance and execution of arrangement letter offered by Eide Bailly LLP to perform audit for the Cooperative for the year ending December 31, 2024.
- Selected Nolan Wipf as delegate and Mike Traxinger as alternate for the 2025 SDREA Annual Meeting and Legislative Dinner.
- Authorized the execution of Southfork Investment lease.
- Authorized the building committee to move forward through the bid letting phase of the building project.
- Held Executive Session.

Talk to your director or co-op manager if you have questions on these matters.

FINANCIAL REPORT

	October-24	October-23
kWh Sales	22,135,558 kWh	23,040,043 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$2,376,040	\$2,328,687
Total Cost of Service	\$2,283,518	\$2,314,732
Operating Margins	\$92,522	\$13,955
Year to Date Margins	\$522,963	\$296,802

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

OCTOBER-2024	1,592 kWh	\$205.75	0.1292 per kWh
OCTOBER-2023	1,849 kWh	\$211.04	0.1141 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 83.5% of NEC's total cost of service.

Snow Safety

There is no end to the terms for “really big snowstorm,” and those terms come in handy, particularly in America’s snowiest cities. Just check out these average annual snowfall totals in towns of at least 10,000 residents, according to the Farmer’s Almanac:

Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan – 119.3 inches
Syracuse, New York – 114.3 inches
Juneau, Alaska – 93.6 inches
Flagstaff, Arizona – 87.6 inches
Duluth, Minnesota – 83.5 inches
Erie, Pennsylvania – 80.9 inches
Burlington, Vermont – 80.2 inches
Muskegon, Michigan – 79.3 inches
Casper, Wyoming – 77 inches
Portland, Maine – 70 inches

But with really big snow storms – and even everyday, run-of-the-mill snowfalls – comes a risk of death by shoveling. Nationwide, snow shoveling is responsible for thousands of injuries and as many as 100 deaths each year.

So, why so many deaths? Shoveling snow is just another household chore, right?

Not really, says the American Heart Association. While most people won’t have a problem, shoveling snow can put some people at risk of heart attack. Sudden exertion, like moving hundreds of pounds of snow after being sedentary for several months, can put a big strain on the heart. Pushing a heavy snow blower also can cause injury.

And, there’s the cold factor. Cold weather can increase heart rate and blood pressure. It can make blood clot more easily and constrict arteries, which decreases blood supply. This is true even in healthy people. Individuals over the age of 40 or who are relatively inactive should be particularly careful.

National Safety Council recommends the following tips to shovel safely:

- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Take it slow and stretch out before you begin.
- Shovel only fresh, powdery snow; it’s lighter.
- Push the snow rather than lifting it.
- If you do lift it, use a small shovel or only partially fill the shovel.

- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion.
- Know the signs of a heart attack, stop immediately and call 911 if you’re experiencing any of them; every minute counts.

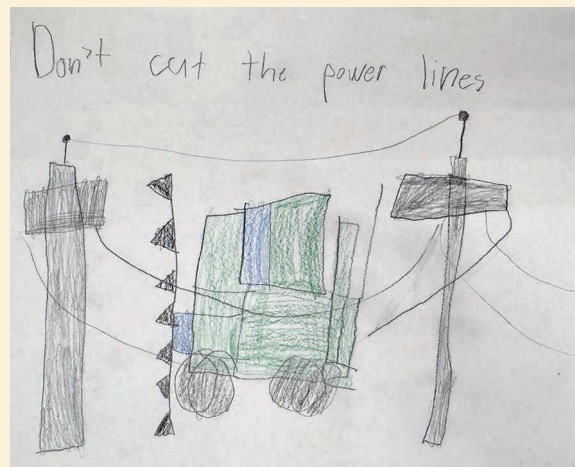
Don’t pick up that shovel without a doctor’s permission if you have a history of heart disease. A clear driveway is not worth your life.

Snow Blower Safety

In addition to possible heart strain from pushing a heavy snow blower, stay safe with these tips:

- If the blower jams, turn it off.
- Keep your hands away from the moving parts.
- Be aware of the carbon monoxide risk of running a snow blower in an enclosed space.
- Add fuel outdoors, before starting, and never add fuel when it is running.
- Never leave it unattended when it is running.

Source: National Safety Council



“Don’t Cut the Power Lines!”

David Raak, Age 7 ½

David Raak cautions readers to be careful when working around power lines. Thank you for your picture, David! David’s parents are Nathaniel and Katie Raak, members of Central 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.

Crockpot GREATNESS

CROCKPOT CORN

Ingredients:

3 16-oz. packages frozen corn
8 oz. cream cheese
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
2 tbsps. sugar
2 tbsps. water

Method

Place corn in crockpot. Cut cream cheese and butter into small cubes. Add cream cheese, butter, sugar and water to corn. Stir. Cook on high for 45 minutes. Stir. Turn to low and cook for three more hours, stirring occasionally.

Elaine Rieck
Harrisburg, S.D.

CROCKPOT BAKED BEANS

Ingredients:

2 cans black beans
2 cans red beans (drained)
2 cans great northern
1 can baked beans with brown sugar
1 lb. diced ham
1 heaping tsp. mustard (regular)
2 full tbsps. ketchup
Garlic powder (optional)
1 small onion (chopped)

Method

Mix all ingredients in crockpot except ham. Cook 2 hours on high. Mix in ham and cook another hour on high. Enjoy!

Rose Tucker
Hot Springs, S.D.

CHICKEN FIESTA SLOW COOKER RECIPE

Ingredients:

2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts
1 package slow cooker fiesta chicken seasoning mix
2 cans (14 1/2 oz. each) diced tomatoes, undrained
1 can (15 3/4 oz.) whole kernel corn, drained
1 can (15 oz.) black beans, drained and rinsed

Method

Place chicken in slow cooker. Mix seasoning, tomatoes, corn and beans until blended. Pour over chicken. Cover. Cook eight hours on LOW or four hours on HIGH. Remove chicken from slow cooker. Shred chicken, using two forks. Return chicken to slow cooker; mix well. Serve over cooked rice with assorted toppings, if desired.

McCormick.com

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



We're committed to bringing our local farmers, manufacturers, communities and families the tools, technology and economic support to realize our region's full potential.

Together we are
RE-ENERGIZING RURAL



SCHOLAR OF THE WEEK

Northern Electric Cooperative and Dakota News Now are pleased to announce that Bryson Hanson, of Aberdeen, was selected as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week and will receive a \$250 scholarship. His story was featured on Dakota News Now on Monday, November 18 and again on Tuesday, November 19.

In 2002, Touchstone Energy Cooperatives joined with Dakota News Now to recognize area high school seniors for their academic and community achievements. Seniors who are selected for scholarships often excel in the classroom and are heavily involved in extracurricular activities within their school and their community.

Bryson is a senior at Aberdeen Central with a 4.32 GPA. He is a member of the National Honor Society and extremely involved in music groups at school as well as orchestra extracurriculars and oral interp. Some of his achievements include 4-year All-State Choir member, 2-year senior honor choir member, 2-year junior honor choir member, many superior rated performances at State One-Act, Orchestra Solo 110%

Performer Award for Eagle Express Show Choir 2022-2023, the President's Award for Educational Excellence, and a Nominee of the DAR Good Citizens Award Ranked 4 of 352.

Bryson is planning on majoring in Mechanical Engineering with an emphasis in Aerospace Engineering.

Northern Electric would like to congratulate Bryson Hanson for winning Touchstone Energy's Scholar of the Week!





APPLY FOR 2025 SCHOLARSHIPS

Students Can Apply Now For \$1,000 and \$500 Co-op Scholarships

Students of Northern Electric Cooperative members who are currently enrolled in a post-secondary school - or plan to enroll in the fall of 2025 - can now apply for two co-op-sponsored scholarships.

Bismarck-based Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which generates electricity for Northern Electric Cooperative, is awarding a \$1,000 scholarship to a student within the Northern Electric service territory. Northern Electric is also awarding a \$500 scholarship to a student of a co-op member. Students can apply for both scholarships by filling out one Basin Electric 2025 scholarship application which can be found on the Northern Electric website at northernelectric.coop/scholarships. Applications can also be picked up at the Northern Electric office.

In 2024, Morgan Sumption of Frederick was awarded the \$1,000 Basin Electric scholarship and Garrett Crawford of Aberdeen was the recipient of the \$500 Northern

Electric scholarship. Sumption enrolled at Black Hills State University in Spearfish and Crawford enrolled at Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown.

The scholarship application includes information about the student's academic record, work experience, an applicant appraisal from an advisor or supervisor, and a one-page essay on the topic: *'How does the electricity provided by your electric cooperative improve the quality of life in your community?'*

The entire application must be completed and turned into the Northern Electric Cooperative office in Bath by **February 10, 2025**.

A committee of cooperative employees will evaluate the applications and award both the \$1,000 and \$500 scholarships from the pool of applicants. Scholarships will be directly paid to the institution where the recipient is enrolled in the fall of 2025.

How to Apply

- **SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY**

Applicants must be U.S. citizens under the age of 25, and natural or adopted children of Northern Electric Cooperative consumers/members. Any applicant must be a student who is enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school.

- **THE SELECTION PROCESS**

All applications are critically evaluated by a committee of cooperative employees using a combination of several criteria including: a written essay, participation in school and community activities, grade-point average, SAT/ACT scores, a statement by the student explaining his/her educational and career goals, financial need, and a written recommendation from a third party. The winning \$1,000 entry will be sent to Basin Electric for scholarship distribution. The committee will also select the winning entry for the \$500 Northern Electric scholarship.

- **APPLICATION**

Applications are available from local high school guidance counselors, on the Northern Electric Cooperative website at northernelectric.coop/scholarships or directly from the Northern Electric office in Bath.

COMPLETED APPLICATIONS MUST BE RETURNED BY FEBRUARY 10, 2025 TO:

Northern Electric Cooperative
Attention: Scholarship
PO Box 457
Bath, SD 57427

PLANNING AHEAD



An aerial view of the Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV near Williston, N.D. Photo submitted by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

Basin Electric's Vision for Reliable Energy

Frank Turner

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Keeping the lights on in a dynamic world isn't as simple as flipping a switch. It requires a forward-thinking approach, almost like gazing into a crystal ball, to anticipate future energy demand. Energy infrastructure projects begin long before the first shovel breaks ground, and it's a challenge that Basin Electric Power Cooperative confronts every day to ensure consistent and

reliable power amid an ever-changing landscape of new technologies and growing membership.

A new plant or transmission line can take years of planning and coordination by Basin Electric and its member cooperatives. The process is similar to predicting the weather; it all begins with a forecast to determine what energy demand is brewing on the horizon.

Basin Electric works with the members and other stakeholders to

develop highly accurate load forecasts. Those load forecasts are then compared against our existing resource portfolio. If any gaps are identified, resource alternatives are identified and reviewed against each other to arrive at the best resource portfolio outcome.

"Once a need for a new generation project or transmission project has been identified, Basin Electric assembles a project team," explained Matt Ehrman, vice president of engineering and construction at Basin Electric.

"Developing and defining project scope is vital to project success as it's really the foundation for the project," Ehrman continued. "Good upfront planning minimizes project execution

risks later, so Basin places a lot of emphasis on the development work that happens before any detailed engineering design can begin.”

Basin Electric is currently undertaking one of its largest single-site electric generation projects in the last 40 years near Williston, North Dakota, known as Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. Once completed, this project will add 580 megawatts of natural gas generation capacity to Basin Electric’s energy portfolio. Although the project broke ground in March 2023, planning for the project began in 2021, standing as a testament to the cooperative’s long-term mindset and commitment to meeting its load forecast.

So what goes into the planning of such a major project? Ehrman says everything from identifying project objectives to permitting and contracting strategies to engineering studies all take place within the years leading up to new infrastructure.

“In the case of a generation project, the project site, fuel, water, and transmission sources are identified during the project development phase,” Ehrman said. “After the development phase is complete, the more detailed engineering design work can begin. This is when the engineers really begin to dig into the details of how to arrange and interconnect all of the many different types of equipment



The first gas turbine delivery for Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. Photo submitted by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

required for a given project. Eventually, those design details are used to develop construction specifications, contractors are selected and construction begins.”

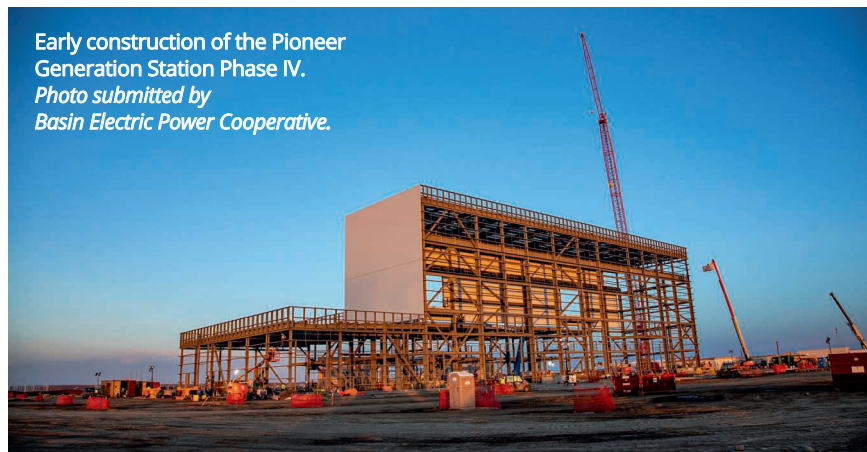
Beyond the demanding complexity of the project itself, Basin Electric’s project team must also navigate regulatory matters and policy. While many projects share similarities, no two are identical when navigating federal, state, and local permitting requirements.

“Large generation and transmission projects can take years to permit, and the permitting duration depends on the project,” Ehrman said. “Basin’s

teams have successfully permitted and executed many projects over the years and as a result have learned a lot about those processes in our service territory.”

Slated to be operational in 2025, Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV will come on board during a time when electricity demand is increasing significantly. The completion of the project will expand Basin Electric’s resource portfolio, which uses a vast diversity of generation resources to serve its member cooperatives. Even still, Ehrman said it still takes a massive effort to stay prepared for what the future may bring.

“Planning and building energy infrastructure is a massive team effort that involves teams from Basin and its membership,” he said. “These are complex projects, and there are challenges involved in all phases of the projects. Basin has extremely talented, dedicated and hard-working teams developing these projects that really enjoy working out all the technical and non-technical details while mitigating risks to achieve success and deliver the best possible outcome for the membership.”



Early construction of the Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. Photo submitted by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.



Northern Electric Cooperative employees donated more than 200 items to the Salvation Army in Aberdeen for the organization's annual Christmas food distribution. Chief Financial Officer Lorisa Rudolph (left), Communication Specialist Emily Johnson (middle) and Senior Accountant Ben Krueger (right) pose with the donated items.



Northern Electric Cooperative employees donated more than 75 items to Toys for Tots. Journeyman Lineman Brian Hansen (left), General Plant Maintenance Robert Bernhardt (middle) and Apprentice Lineman Dylan Grimes (right) show off the dozens of toys donated by employees.

HOLIDAY DONATIONS

Northern Electric Cooperative employees donate food and toys for families in need

Emily Johnson

ejohnson@northernelectric.coop

Northern Electric Cooperative employees displayed their generosity during this holiday season by donating hundreds of items to local charities.

Employees collected nearly 200 canned goods and non-perishable food items for the Salvation Army in Aberdeen and the Tri-County Good Samaritan Center in Redfield.

More than 100 cans of vegetables, fruit, soup, and pasta sauce were collected along with dozens of boxes of macaroni and cheese, pasta, mashed potatoes, and rice for the Salvation Army's Christmas food distribution program. The food will be given to families in need in the Aberdeen area during the week of Christmas so they have groceries for meals over the holidays.

Northern Electric employees in Redfield also collected dozens of canned goods and toys for the

Tri-County Good Samaritan Center in Redfield. The center helps individuals and families in Spink, Faulk, and Hand counties.

Dozens of toys were also donated by employees at the Bath headquarters office for the annual 'Toys for Tots' drive. The local 'Toys for Tots' program distributes more than 4,000 toys to over 1,000 children throughout northeastern South Dakota including the communities of Aberdeen, Redfield, and Mobridge. The toys are distributed through local agencies such as the Salvation Army, Safe Harbor, New Beginnings, Child Protective Services and many local church and youth programs.

LEGISLATIVE FORUM

Electric Cooperatives meet with local legislators ahead of 2025 session

Representatives from five northeastern South Dakota electric cooperatives met with local legislators on November 22 to discuss the upcoming 2025 legislative session. Board members and staff members from Lake Region Electric Cooperative, Northern Electric Cooperative, FEM Electric Cooperative, Cam-Wal Electric Cooperative, and Traverse Electric Cooperative were in attendance at the 2024 Northeast Rural Utilities Legislative Issues Forum held at Moccasin Creek Country Club.

This annual event allows cooperatives to highlight the issues that are important to electric cooperatives, their members and their rural communities.

South Dakota Rural Electric Association General Manager, Steve Barnett, provided an overview of electric cooperatives in South Dakota. East River Electric Cooperative Chief Member and Public Relations Officer, Chris Studer, discussed various topics co-ops will be following during the 2025 session.

Representative-elect Al Novstrup of Aberdeen, Senator-elect Carl Perry of Aberdeen, Representative Brandei Schaeffbauer of Aberdeen, and Senator-elect Mark Lapka of Leola attended the event.

The forum is an annual event hosted by local electric cooperatives across the state, East River Electric Cooperative and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA).





**THE COUNTRY
COOKIN'**
cookbook

RECIPES NEEDED
Help us create another great cookbook by submitting your favorite recipes.

Your recipe could be featured in the 41st volume of East River Electric's Country Cookin' cookbook!



Submit to be entered into a drawing for 1 of 2 \$100 Visa gift cards

Submit recipes to graphics@eastriver.coop or contact your local co-op for more information.





LOOKING AHEAD

An aerial view of the Wild Springs Solar Project near New Underwood, S.D. Photo submitted by East River Electric

Wind Energy Association Changes Name, Advocates For All Renewables

Jacob Boyko
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The South Dakota Wind Energy Association is getting a fresh coat of paint this year with a rebrand that will expand the association’s advocacy mission to include more forms of renewable energy.

As solar energy generation in the state increases with new and upcoming projects, expanding the association — now called the South Dakota Renewable Energy Association — to include other forms of renewable energy and battery storage was the clear way forward according to association president and Sioux Valley Energy Director Gary Fish.

“The association started out as being very wind oriented, and that’s our legacy,” Fish explained. “But we also have somewhat migrated to having an energy portfolio where wind coexists

with coal, natural gas and solar, and that was the driver behind changing our name.”

The change comes in the wake of South Dakota’s first large-scale solar farm near New Underwood, which began commercial operation in March 2024. Basin Electric Power Cooperative will purchase 114 megawatts of the 128-megawatt renewable project.

The association began with the

leadership of East River Electric Power Cooperative in the mid-2000s as the generation and transmission co-op looked for ways to develop wind generation in the state to serve its growing member utilities and bring economic development and job opportunities to the state.

“Wind energy was at that time starting to become a more viable utility-scale source of power generation,” said Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer at East River Electric.

A look on the ground as crews prepare the Wild Springs Solar Project for power generation. Photo submitted by East River Electric



“East River led an effort to build an association of stakeholders in South Dakota that can help advocate for the wind industry.”

It’s a mission that’s propelled South Dakota to being the state with the third highest renewable energy makeup, with more than 54% of in-state power generated from renewable wind and solar resources.

“We’ve gone from essentially zero wind energy to more than 3,000 megawatts of installed capacity in the state,” Studer said. “We have far surpassed what our original goal was.”

In the South Dakota Wind Energy Association’s initial stages, the board was composed mostly of utilities and developers focused on studying potential economic benefits and the infrastructure needs that come with increasing generation.

“I think everyone knew we had a great wind resource, but the real issue was having additional transmission to get the power out,” Fish said. “Could we build

the towers? Yes. Could we get the power to market? That was the challenge.”

As the association successfully made the case for wind energy, the membership grew to include other G&Ts and investor-owned utilities, landowner groups, turbine manufacturers, servicing companies and others from the wind energy supply chain.

One of the first large-scale renewable energy wins for the South Dakota Wind Energy Association and rural electric cooperatives was the 2011 commissioning of the 172-megawatt Crow Lake Project north of White Lake, South Dakota. The association membership helped support the launch of South Dakota Wind Partners to bring local residents an opportunity to invest in and own several turbines in the project.

According to East River Electric, the program generated about \$16 million worth of local investment.

“It was a very unique and successful

project that the South Dakota Wind Energy Association had involvement in and advocated for,” Studer said. “The people that invested got tax equity benefits over time, and after about 10 years they sold it back to Basin Electric and got their investments back.”

Moving forward, the association will continue to advocate for a renewable energy-friendly business environment to propel South Dakota energy projects forward.

“South Dakota Renewable Energy Association is here to make sure our state’s tax policies are fair, that developers still want to come here and develop renewable energy projects, and that there’s a market for all of the supply chain that’s needed for wind energy and now for solar, as well as the necessary transmission,” Studer continued.

A new South Dakota Renewable Energy Association website and promotional material will debut within the next several months.



The Crow Lake Wind Project near White Lake, S.D., is the largest wind project owned solely by a cooperative in the United States. The \$363 million wind project went into operation in 2011.

Photo submitted by East River Electric



RENEWABLE ENERGY

Purchasing Credits Means Renewable Energy Anywhere

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Did you know there's a way your home or business can operate with 100% renewable energy?

With renewable energy credits, or RECs, electric cooperative members can purchase the renewable aspects of their utility's energy and run on 100% green energy without needing to install on-site solar panels or wind generation.

"A REC is a renewable attribute of a megawatt hour of electricity," explained

Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations at Sioux Valley Energy. "One megawatt hour produced by any renewable generator provides one REC."

Basin Electric Power Cooperative – the generation and transmission cooperative that sells electricity to South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives – reported about 21% of its energy sales in 2023 was renewable energy. Since it's impossible to pinpoint the exact generation origin of each individual electron moving along a distribution line and entering a home or business, there's no way to tell what

is actually being powered by renewable energy and what isn't.

However, by having a renewable energy credit program where members can claim rights to the renewable energy generated, members who participate can affirm they are being powered by renewable energy. It's kind of like "calling dibs" on something; everybody is purchasing reliable power, but the members who "call dibs" are purchasing the renewable power.

One Sioux Valley Energy member that makes use of the renewable energy credit program is Marmen Energy in Brandon, South Dakota. Through the program, the wind tower manufacturer's operations are powered 100% by renewable energy.

"We get all renewable energy to power our facility," Marmen Energy Plant Manager Danny Lueders said. "We build renewable energy wind towers – how

could we not get the renewable energy credit program?”

At a scale like Marmen’s, which produces between 300 and 400 wind towers annually, being 100% renewable is a statistic that not only makes a statement, but increases demand for more renewable energy.

“It makes sense for us to have it and support that industry all the way through,” Lueders continued. “It’s an industry we’re heavily involved with and we want to do everything we can to support and promote that industry.”

Support for renewable energy through the REC program has other benefits; the extra funds Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative generated from selling allocated RECs made it possible to purchase a solar demonstration trailer to educate the public about the benefits and drawbacks of solar energy and the need for a diversified mix of energy resources.

“We sell the RECs on the open market so others can satisfy their renewable mandates and so we can fund future renewable energy projects,” Rushmore Electric CFO Mark Miller added.

On the market, RECs vary in price, usually between \$1 and \$3. The generation source – wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, waste heat recovery – as well as the year the REC’s production year affect the commodity’s value.

“They have a shelf life,” Miller explained. “They’re valuable in the first year because some states mandate RECs that are current.”

States like Minnesota with renewable energy standards require utilities to retire their RECs to meet the energy standards, or buy

credits on the market to reach the mandated renewable energy percentage of their energy mix.

In South Dakota, a state without renewable energy mandates but with more than 54% of in-state power generated by renewable resources, the Marmen Energy CEO simply believes continuing to support renewable energy is the right thing to do.

“South Dakota is a strong proponent of renewable energy,” Lueders said. “The amount of industry renewables are supporting throughout the state of South Dakota is a strong issue, from an economic footprint and continuing to grow South Dakota’s self-reliance on homemade energy.”

(Right) Jay Buchholz, Key Account & Community Relations Executive for Sioux Valley Energy, presents Marmen Energy employees Vincent Trudel, Chief Operating Officer, Yannick Laroche, Fabrication Manager, with renewable energy credit certificates.



(Below) Marmen Energy’s Brandon, S.D., manufacturing plant purchases renewable energy credits to cover 100% of its operations, meaning all wind towers produced here are built using 100% renewable energy. *Images submitted by Sioux Valley Energy*



REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a Blackstone electric grill!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



JAN. 11
Snow Queen Coronation
7 p.m.
Aberdeen Civic Theater
Aberdeen, SD
SDSnowQueen.com

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Snow Queen Festival

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.

UNTIL DEC. 26
Christmas at the Capitol
8 a.m.-10 p.m.
Pierre, SD
605-773-3178

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

UNTIL DEC. 31
Olde Tyme Christmas at participating businesses, Lane of Lights Viewing
Hill City, SD

UNTIL DEC. 31
Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens
5-9 p.m.
Brookings, SD

UNTIL DEC. 31
Hall of Trees
12-4 p.m. Mon.-Sat.
The Mead Museum
Yankton, SD

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

DEC. 31-JAN. 1
New Year's Eve in Deadwood
Deadwood, SD
800-999-1876

JAN. 5, FEB. 2
American Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
1600 W. Russel St.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-336-3470

JAN. 7-9
Dakota Farm Show
Tue. & Wed. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Thurs. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
USD DakotaDome
Vermillion, SD

JAN. 11.
Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament
Meadowood Lanes
Rapid City, SD
605-393-2081

JAN. 15
46th Ranchers Workshop
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Community Events Center
White River, SD
605-259-3252 ext. 3

JAN. 18
Breakin' the Winter Blues Chili Cookoff
Main Street
Hill City, SD

JAN. 26
Souper Supper Fundraiser Rapid Valley United Methodist Church
5:30-7:30 p.m.
Tickets \$6
5103 Longview Dr.
Rapid City, SD

JAN. 31-FEB. 8
Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo
Central States Fairground
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

FEB. 14-17
11th Annual Frost Fest
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Brookings, SD
605-692-7444

FEB. 22
Bellator Titans Charter Casino Night Fundraiser
6-11 p.m.
316 2nd St.
Aberdeen, SD

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