

Cooperative Connections

Getting the
DIRT on
Underground
Damages

Page 8

A Day
with a
Lineworker

Page 12



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

New Youth Program Open To Area High School Students

Empower Your Summer



Ben Dunsmoor

bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

Empower Youth is focused on helping students develop lifelong career and leadership skills.

There are roughly 40 days of school left before summer vacation for most of the students in the area. Admit it, many teens are counting down the days until they can turn in their books, zip up their backpacks, and get on with their plans for the summer of 2018.

As students count down the final days of the school year and make summer plans I hope they consider registering for the brand new Empower Youth program. Empower Youth is a summer leadership program that is being launched by the electric co-ops in North Dakota and South Dakota for students who are in grades 9-12. This free program will help teens discover their strengths, learn about careers, and build college and career readiness skills.

Sioux Valley Energy, the electric co-op which serves areas around Sioux Falls and southwest Minnesota, started its EmPOWER Youth program four years ago. The program has been so successful it is now being expanded to other electric co-ops in the region this summer.

The first session of the 2018 program will be on May 31 at Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell. The one-day session will focus on discovering the strengths of the participating students and interacting with national youth speaker Craig Hillier.

The second Empower Youth session will be a four-day trip to North Dakota to tour the power plants, mines, and generation facilities that power rural electric cooperatives. This session will be held from July 23-26. Students will stay at Bismarck State College and learn about various energy careers and participate in several fun and interactive group activities.

The final Empower Youth session will be a one-day session on August 7 at Mitchell Tech in Mitchell. The final session will focus on the development of resume writing and job interview skills. All of the sessions are completely paid for by the participating electric cooperatives and are free to the students who register. Students will have an opportunity to earn scholarships ranging from \$250 - \$1,000 at the completion of the program.

Empower Youth is focused on helping students develop lifelong career and leadership skills. Please, encourage any high school teen you know to go to www.empoweryouth.coop and register before the **April 18 deadline**. I know that I am counting down the days to this new program which promises to empower their summer and their future.



(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Donna Sharp

Board of Directors

- Randy Kienow – Vice President
- Glen Larson – Secretary
- Wayne Holt – Treasurer
- Fran Esser
- Victor Fischbach
- Josh Larson
- Mark Sumption
- Nolan Wipf

CEO/General Manager: Char Hager – info@northernelectric.coop

Chief Financial Officer: Cathi Podoll

Operations Manager: Mike Kelly

Manager of Member Services: Russel Ulmer

Manager of Information Technology: Derek Gorecki

Communications Director: Ben Dunsmoor - bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

Executive Secretary: Kay Albrecht

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.

Subscription information: Northern Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals postage paid at Bath, SD 57427.

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

www.northernelectric.coop

facebook.com/NorthernElectricCooperative



Northern Electric Cooperative's February board meeting was held March 2, 2018, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present except for Randy Kienow and Victor Fischbach. As the first order of business, the board approved the January 23, 2018, minutes and January expenditures. The Board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management including details on financial, operations, member services, safety, communications and IT.

Directors viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative video report. East River Director Mark Sumption reported on actions taken by the East River Board at the February 1, 2018, meeting. General Manager Char Hager reported on the MAC meeting which she attended January 31, 2018, in Sioux Falls. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported that the next SDREA board meeting will be held March 28-29, 2018, in Rapid City. Directors Glen Larson, Nolan Wipf, Francis Esser, Mark Sumption and General Manager Char Hager reported on the East River Electric Energize Forum which they attended on January 31-February 1, 2018, in Sioux Falls. Directors Nolan Wipf, Donna Sharp, General Manager Char Hager, and Manager of Information Technology Derek Gorecki reported on the 2018 NRECA Annual Meeting which they attended February 25-28, in Nashville, TN.

Manager's Report

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

- Update and discussion on new and progressing development projects and activities taking place in the community and our service area.
- Discussion of final plans for the 2018 NRECA Legislative Conference, April 8-10, in Washington, D.C.
- Informed the board of the American Coalition for Ethanol Conference, August 15-17, 2018, Minneapolis, MN.
- Calendar review of upcoming meetings and events.

Board Report

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 9:00 A.M. on Friday, March 23, 2018.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$1,881.82.
3. Authorized board attendance to the 2018 CFC Forum, June 10-13, in Indianapolis, IN.
4. Approved resolution for RD Apply Authorized Representative.

Questions or more details on any of these matters? Please ask your cooperative manager, staff member or director.

Financial Report		January 2018	January 2017
kWh Sales		33,569,989 kWh	33,369,625 kWh
Electric Revenues		\$2,784,637	\$2,677,995
Total Cost of Service		\$2,621,595	\$2,590,144
Operating Margins		\$163,042	\$87,851
Year To Date Margins		\$172,856	\$89,875

Residential Average Monthly Usage and Bill			
January 2018	3,627 kWh	\$295.99	.0816 per kWh
January 2017	3,584 kWh	\$285.08	.0795 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation accounted for 86.3% of NEC's total cost of service.

Power Tools and Equipment Safety

Many do-it-yourself projects involve the use of power tools. Working with power tools requires skilled instruction and training. They can be deadly if not properly used or maintained.

The most common scenario for power tool-related electrocutions is when the equipment comes in contact with live electrical wires while it is being used.

Facts and Statistics:

- According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), there are nearly 400 electrocutions in the United States each year.
- Approximately 15 percent of electrocutions are related to consumer products.
- 8 percent of consumer product-related electrocutions each year are attributed to electrical accidents with power drills, saws, sanders, hedge trimmers and other electric power tools.
- 9 percent of consumer product-related electrocutions each year are caused by accidents involving the use of lawn and garden equipment and ladders, which come into contact with overhead power lines.

Power Tool Safety Tips:

- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) with every power tool to protect against electric shocks.
- Do not use power tools with an extension cord that exceeds 100 feet in length.
- Never use power tools near live electrical wires or water pipes.
- Use extreme caution when cutting or drilling into walls where electrical wires or water pipes could be accidentally touched or penetrated.
- If a power tool trips a safety device while in use, take the tool to a manufacturer-authorized repair center for service.
- When working with electricity, use tools with insulated grips.
- Appropriate personal protective gear should be worn when using power tools.
- Do not use power tools without the proper guards.
- When using a wet-dry vacuum cleaner or a pressure washer, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid electric shock.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

- Safeguards on outdoor electric tools are there for a reason. Make sure that they are always in place before operating.
- Invest in the safety goggles, hearing protection, dust masks, gloves and other safety gear as recommended for each tool. A few dollars now are well worth the lifetime of good sight and hearing that they are protecting.
- Wear the appropriate clothes for the job. Wearing sandals while mowing the lawn is just asking for trouble.

Source: safeelectricity.org

Five Easy Ways to

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

Every Day

1. Conserve water by taking showers instead of baths.
2. Turn off all lights when you leave a room.
3. Bring your reusable bags to the market and other stores when shopping.
4. Go paperless. Pay as many bills as possible online.
5. Ditch the car and walk when possible.

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Spring is coming! Don't fly kites near power lines."

Taylor Brooks, 7 years old

Taylor is the daughter of Tyson Brooks, Lake Andes, S.D. He receives his internet service through Charles Mix Electric Association, Lake Andes.

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.

Appetizers and Beverages

Jalapeno Poppers

18 fresh jalapenos cut in half (stems intact if possible), seeds and membrane cleaned out (wear gloves)
 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese
 2/3 cup grated Cheddar cheese
 2 green onions, chopped

18 slices thin bacon, cut in halves
 Bottled barbecue sauce
 Toothpicks
 Rubber gloves or plastic bags for working with the jalapenos

In a bowl, combine cream cheese, cheddar cheese and chopped green onion mixing gently. Stuff the pepper halves with the cheese mixture. Wrap bacon slices around each pepper half, covering as much of the surface as possible and do not stretch the bacon. Secure the bacon with a toothpick and then brush the surface of the bacon with barbecue sauce. Place on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake at 275°F. for 1 hour or until bacon is done. Serve hot or room temperature.

Note: These can be assembled a day in advance, kept refrigerated and then baked or baked, frozen and reheated prior to serving. Experiment with different cheeses or jellies instead of barbecue sauce.

Judy Mendel, Doland

Mocha Freeze

2 cups vanilla ice cream, softened
 1/4 cup cold strong coffee

1 T. chocolate syrup
 1/2 cup crushed ice

Combine ingredients in blender; blend well. Makes 4 servings.

Becki Hauser, Tripp

Triple Berry Special

1 cup frozen strawberries
 1 cup raspberries
 1 cup blueberries
 1 cup milk

1/2 cup buttermilk
 1-1/2 cups strawberry yogurt
 2 T. honey
 2 T. flax meal

Combine ingredients in blender; blend well.

Hannah Schoenfelder, Cavour

Southwest Chili Cups

1/2 lb. lean ground beef
 1 (15 oz.) can black beans, drained and rinsed
 1 (8 oz.) can tomato sauce
 4 tsp. McCormick® Chili Powder
 2 tsp. McCormick® Oregano Leaves, finely crushed, divided

1 tsp. McCormick® Garlic Powder
 2 (8 oz. each) pkgs. corn muffin mix
 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
 3/4 cup sour cream
 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions

Brown beef in large skillet on medium-high heat. Drain fat. Add beans, tomato sauce, chili powder, 1 tsp. oregano and garlic powder; mix well. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Prepare corn muffin mix as directed on package, adding remaining 1 tsp. oregano. Spoon batter into 12 greased and floured or paper-lined muffin cups, filling each cup 2/3 full. Spoon beef mixture into each cup, gently pressing into batter. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 400°F. for 12 minutes or until edges of muffin cups are golden. Cool 5 minutes in pan on wire rack. Top each cup with sour cream and green onions. Makes 12 servings.

Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 317, Total Fat 13g, Sodium 659mg, Cholesterol 67mg, Carbohydrates 38g, Protein 12g, Dietary Fiber 3g

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Orange Julius

1/2 cup water
 1/2 cup milk
 1/3 cup frozen orange juice

1 T. sugar
 1/4 tsp. vanilla
 6 ice cubes

Combine ingredients in blender; blend well.

Fay Swenson, Rapid City

Please send your favorite casserole, dairy and dessert recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2018. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.



PLANT SAFE THIS SPRING

Plan On Safety While You Plant Your Seeds

Spring planting is upon us and Northern Electric-Cooperative would like to remind local farmers to stay safe this season. Overhead and underground power lines can be easily overlooked, and deadly if ignored.

Last spring, Northern Electric responded to more than a dozen contacts with cooperative power lines and underground infrastructure during the planting season.

“Machinery contacting power lines was an issue last spring,” Northern Electric Operations Manager Mike Kelly said. “As larger farm equipment is manufactured it is more important than ever to look up and look around for overhead lines and underground equipment near fields, approaches, and roads.”

While you focus on putting those seeds in the ground, Northern Electric urges you to review these important safety tips.

Northern Electric crews were called to fix this damaged underground infrastructure following a farm accident near Hitchcock in May 2017.



BE ALERT

Awareness doesn't spread as fast as an electrical current, but a little goes a long way. Remember to look up and look out for power lines this planting season. Follow these four steps to stay safe.

1 STAY ALERT

Avoid distractions when operating farm equipment. While spring planting days can run long, failure to be aware of your surroundings can lead to power line contacts and other accidents.

2 SLOW DOWN

Cold weather often delays spring planting in our region. If you get in the fields later than you had hoped, avoid the temptation to rush through your work. Slow down and stay safe.

3 STUDY

Educate yourself on any new equipment you may have purchased recently. New equipment has higher antennas and attachments than ever before. What cleared power lines in previous years may not in your new machinery. Know what you're working with.

4 SEARCH

Sometimes trees or brush can make power lines difficult to see. Don't just glance up, really take a minute to search your surroundings when moving equipment.

BE PREPARED

Hitting a power line can be scary. In certain situations, there may be a lot of noise, which may spur your instinct to run—you've got seconds to understand what is happening and respond appropriately. Do you know what to do if you come in contact with a power line?

1 STAY PUT

Unless there is a fire, you need to stay calm and stay in the vehicle. Touching the ground and the vehicle at the same time (i.e. stepping out of the equipment) can be deadly. Don't risk becoming a conduit for the electricity to move from the vehicle to the ground through you. Stay put.

2 CALL FOR HELP

Call for help from the vehicle if possible. 911 is a good place to start, especially if you don't know your local electric cooperative's number. If you don't have your phone, try radioing for help. If someone comes to assist you, they need to stay at least 40 feet away from the vehicle until professional help has arrived.

3 JUMP CLEAR

If there is a fire forcing you to leave, jump clear of the equipment. Jump with your feet together, as far away from the vehicle as possible. Be sure that no part of your body touches the equipment and the ground at the same time. Then, shuffle

(tiny, quick steps) or hop with your feet together at least 40 feet away. Electricity spreads through the ground in ripples. Keeping your feet together prevents one foot from stepping into a higher voltage zone than the other foot, which could cause electrocution. Stay away from the equipment and keep others away until the authorities tell you it's safe to return.

"As larger farm equipment is manufactured it is more important than ever to look up and look around for overhead lines and underground equipment near fields, approaches, and roads."



Farm machinery broke this pole near Ferney in April 2017. It was one of the more than a dozen contacts that caused damage to Northern Electric power lines and infrastructure during the 2017 planting season.

Know what's below Call **811** before you dig.



April is set aside as National Safe Digging Month, designed to raise awareness of safe digging practices and the need to call 8-1-1 before any digging projects.

Underground Excavation Damages Cost **\$1.5 BILLION**

Common Ground Alliance

www.cga-dirt.com

Damage to underground utilities from digging activities carries a hefty price tag.

Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the stakeholder-run organization dedicated to protecting underground utility lines, people who dig near them, and their communities, released its comprehensive 2016 Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report in 2017.

The report, which is the sum of all 2016 data submitted anonymously and voluntarily by facility operators, utility locating companies, one call centers, contractors, regulators, and others, estimates that the total number of underground excavation damages in the U.S. last year rose 20 percent from the year prior, to approximately 379,000, and conservatively cost direct stakeholders at least \$1.5 billion. The 2016 DIRT Report benefited from a record-high number of event record submissions as well as a record-high Data Quality Index score (a measurement of the completeness of data submissions), yielding the most comprehensive analysis of damages to buried facilities ever compiled.

Data from 2016 informed CGA's first-ever estimate of the societal costs associated with underground



Know what's below. Call before you dig.

facility damages in the U.S. As estimated by a very conservative model accounting only for stakeholders' direct costs related to a damage, 2016 damages alone cost approximately \$1.5 billion in the U.S. This estimate does not include property damage to excavating equipment or the surrounding area, evacuations of residences and businesses, road closures and/or traffic delays, environmental impacts, legal costs, injuries or deaths. Customers and users of underground facilities were most impacted, shouldering just over 30 percent of the total societal costs, and emergency responders absorbed more than 23 percent.

While the 2016 damage ratio, which measures damages per 1,000 one call transmissions, increased 14 percent from 2015, construction spending has risen such that the ratio of damages to construction spending has dramatically declined since 2004 (the first year the DIRT Report was issued), and estimated damages have stabilized into the 300,000-400,000 range since 2010 despite increased construction activity in the interim.

"The substantial estimated economic impacts of damages to underground facilities across the U.S. likely do not come as a big surprise to damage prevention advocates who are dedicated to reducing that figure – along with the very human impacts these damages can have – on a daily basis. Nevertheless, we hope that the 2016 DIRT Report's analysis of the \$1.5 billion in societal impact is eye-opening to both the industry and the public at large, and provides clear evidence that reducing damages is solidly in the public interest," said Sarah K. Magruder Lyle, president

and CEO of CGA. "The latest DIRT Report also examines damage prevention paradigms in other countries for the first time, which is an opportunity to consider how this information can help us work toward our goal of zero damages."

Other significant findings from the 2016 DIRT Report include that damages caused by a failure to call 811 prior to digging have fallen to a record-low 16 percent, part of an encouraging long-term trend.

2016 damages alone cost \$1.5 billion in the United States.

Once again, CGA has made an interactive DIRT Dashboard accessible to the public through its website, allowing users to view and manipulate the data through the lens of a specific element, e.g., damages by state, root cause analysis, etc. It contains a series of dashboard visualizations that allow users to sort information through additional filters, giving damage prevention stakeholders a powerful tool for drilling down into the areas where they feel they can have the biggest positive impact. Added this year are the capabilities to filter several dashboards by state or year (inclusive of 2015 and 2016 data), as well as a new dashboard that centers around the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) determinations on the adequacy of state damage prevention programs.

"CGA's Data Reporting and Evaluation

Committee has worked tirelessly to recruit quality data submissions and explore new areas of analysis to inform the 2016 DIRT Report as part of its pursuit to provide damage prevention advocates and the public with comprehensive, relevant information," said Bob Terjesen, Data Committee co-chair from National Grid. "DIRT data is more accessible than ever with the interactive DIRT Dashboard hosted on the CGA website, making it possible for any stakeholder to explore the unique ways each of us can have an impact on the staggering \$1.5 billion in societal costs caused by damages to buried utilities, and on protecting the people who work near them."

The complete DIRT Annual Report for 2016 is available for download at www.commongroundalliance.com, and stakeholders interested in submitting data to the 2017 report or establishing a Virtual Private Dirt account should visit the DIRT site at www.cga-dirt.com.

About CGA

CGA is a member-driven association of nearly 1,700 individuals, organizations and sponsors in every facet of the underground utility industry. Established in 2000, CGA is committed to saving lives and preventing damage to North American underground infrastructure by promoting effective damage prevention practices. CGA has established itself as the leading organization in an effort to reduce damages to underground facilities in North America through shared responsibility among all stakeholders. For more information, visit CGA on the web at <http://www.commongroundalliance.com>.

Key Takeaways

This year's DIRT Report highlights several key takeaways that demonstrate that despite the increase in damages submitted to DIRT, the industry continues to make progress in several key areas:

- Estimated total U.S. damages increased 20 percent, from 317,000 to 379,000.
- Since 2010, damages have stabilized into the 300,000-400,000 range despite there being a rebound in construction spending.
- Damages per 1000 transmissions increased 14 percent, from 1.54 in 2015 to 1.76.
- However, the rate is lower than the 2013 and 2014 rates of 2.07 and 1.84 respectively, indicating a long-term trend of

improvement.

- The ratio of damages to construction spending has declined dramatically from 0.63 damages per million dollars of construction spending in 2004 to 0.41 in 2016.
- Call before you dig awareness remains consistent with historical findings at 45 percent (survey taken June 2017).
- The societal costs associated with underground facility damages in the U.S. in 2016 are estimated at \$1.5 billion. This is a minimum estimate based on routine costs for stakeholders directly connected to a damaged facility. It does not include costs such as property damage, evacuations, road closures, environmental impacts, lawsuits, injuries, and fatalities

The Power Behind Your Power

National Lineworker Appreciation Day Is April 9

Anne Prince

National Rural Electric Cooperative
Association (NRECA)

As April arrives, it brings with it the showers that produce spring flowers. It also heralds the beginning of a potentially stormy season that can inherently include power outages. While Northern Electric Cooperative strives to provide reliable electricity to our members, there are times when Mother Nature has other plans. Most of us can ride out a storm from the comfort and convenience of our homes. However, there is a group of professionals that spring into action when the weather takes a turn for the worst – co-op lineworkers.

During the month of April, if you see a lineworker, please pause to say thank you to the power behind your power.

One of the most dangerous jobs

Braving stormy weather and other challenging conditions, lineworkers often must climb several feet in the air, carrying heaving equipment to restore power. Listed as one of the ten most dangerous jobs in the United States, lineworkers must perform detailed tasks next to high voltage power lines. To help keep them safe,



Journeyman Lineman Steve Beck (left) observes Journeyman Lineman Chris Piehl (right) as he climbs a pole during a training exercise.

lineworkers wear specialized protective clothing and equipment at all times when on the job. This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Insulated and rubber gloves are worn in tandem to protect them from electrical shock. While the gear performs a critical function, it also adds additional weight and bulk, making the job more complex.

In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today goes far beyond climbing to the top of a pole to repair a wire. They are also information experts that can pinpoint an outage from miles away and restore power remotely. Line crews use their laptops and cell phones to map outages, take pictures of the work they have done and troubleshoot problems. In our



A member of the Redfield line crew works to repair a line following a storm near Cottonwood Lake in July 2017.

NORTHERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LINE CREW

#ThankaLineworker day is April 9



Terry Lundberg
Line Foreman
36 Years



Darvin Dickhaut
Journeyman Lineman
35 Years



Jerry Weber
Line Foreman
34 Years



David Appel
Line Foreman
34 Years



Kenny Swanson
Journeyman Lineman
31 Years



Tyler Marken
Journeyman Lineman
27 Years



Marty Newman
Journeyman Lineman
26 Years



Shawn Evans
Journeyman Lineman
18 Years



Ben Peterson
Journeyman Lineman
12 Years



Chris Piehl
Journeyman Lineman
7 Years



Lance Dennert
Journeyman Lineman
6 Years



Steve Beck
Journeyman Lineman
5 Years



Sean Schwartz
Apprentice Lineman
2 Years



Brian Hansen
Apprentice Lineman
2 Years

community, Northern Electric lineworkers are responsible for keeping more than 2,600 miles of lines across northeast South Dakota operating, in order to bring power to your home and our local community 24/7, regardless of the weather, holidays or personal considerations.

While some of the tools that lineworkers use have changed over the years, namely the use of technology, the dedication to the job has not. Being a lineworker is not

a glamorous profession. At its essence, it is inherently dangerous, requiring them to work near high voltage lines in the worst of conditions, at any time of the day or night. While April is known for spring showers, there is also a day set aside to “thank a lineworker.”

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 9. So during the month of April, if you see a lineworker, please pause to say thank you to the power behind your power. Let them

know you appreciate the hard work they do to keep the lights on, regardless of the conditions. ■

Anne Prince writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.



A DAY WITH A LINEWORKER

Cooperatives' Dependable Problem Solvers

Paul Wesslund

NRECA Contributing Writer

Larry's typical day as an electric co-op lineworker actually started the night before. He was getting ready for bed when a woman reported her power was out. It was Larry's weekly overnight to be on call, so the co-op truck was already in his driveway. He drove it to the woman's house, ID'd a problem in the base of the meter, installed a temporary fix until an electrician could get out the next day and returned home two hours later. He would report for work at the co-op office by 7:30 the next morning.

"I like hunting down problems," said Larry. "I know I'm doing something the members can't do themselves. They depend on us."

Larry's like a lot of electric utility lineworkers, said Mark Patterson, director of safety and loss control for the South Dakota Rural Electric Association.

"There are more people who can't do this work than can do it," said Patterson. "It takes specific skills and intestinal fortitude. They're a 'get it done' type of personality."

Larry isn't like a lot of lineworkers, he is a lot of lineworkers. He's actually not a real person, but a combination of the real people interviewed for this story about a typical day for a lineworker.



Following procedure

Larry started his day in a room with the rest of the lineworkers, leafing through stacks of paper – checklists, maps, work orders – planning the day’s work. They compared notes, asked who was familiar with the area they were headed to and analyzed last night’s college ball game.

In addition to taking time to coordinate the plans and paperwork, these guys (there are a few women among the more than 15,000 co-op lineworkers around the country) need to keep track of a lot of equipment. Neatly organized shelves in the warehouse hold saws, drills, climbing hooks, insulated work poles, trash cans and binoculars. They need to be wearing safety gear or have it close at hand – hard hat, safety glasses, fire-retardant uniforms, steel-toed shoes, regular work gloves, hot-line safety gloves.

One more delay kept the crews from driving off to their first jobs, and it was probably the most important reason of all – the weekly safety meeting.

The co-op’s safety coordinator opened the meeting. He said that while catastrophic contact with electric current is always top concern, today’s meeting would focus on avoiding “slips, trips and falls that can cause very big issues.” A safety specialist from the state co-op association told the group that he disagreed with the common idea that a lineworker’s job is dangerous: “It’s hazardous and unforgiving, but it doesn’t have to be dangerous if you follow

the right procedures. We have the tools, the rules and the knowledge that can keep it from being dangerous.”

By mid-morning, the convoy was ready. Three lineworkers drove three trucks: a service truck, a bucket truck pulling a trailer with a large spool of wire and a digger truck with a huge auger on top and pulling a trailer carrying a backhoe. They headed across the county for the day’s job – moving a ground-mounted transformer 500 feet up a hill, closer to an underground connection to a new barn.

“It’s going to be muddy out there after the rain we’ve had,” said Larry. “When you’re working on underground connections, mud is not your friend.”

They’re a ‘get ‘er done’ type of personality.

We neared the site by late morning. To avoid interrupting the field work, the team stopped for an early lunch. Over burgers, I asked Larry about his training and his typical day.

We don’t say ‘hurry up’

“There’s nothing routine,” he said. A work plan might get changed because someone crashed their car into a utility pole. Tomorrow he would be presenting a safety demonstration to a group of elementary school students. He told about the satisfac-

tion of traveling out of state to help repair hurricane damage.

When the caravan arrived at the work site, the trucks drove up the packed, crushed-rock driveway, avoiding the soft ground on either side.

The three lineworkers gathered near the front of one of the trucks for what a lot of co-ops call a “tailgate meeting” and this co-op calls a “job briefing.” They read through forms, noting the address, cross street, job and account number. All three men signed the form.

They broke their huddle and de-energized the lines they would be working on, calling to let the office know the power had been cut. The next step was to use the backhoe to dig around the new connection pipes sticking out of the ground, making room for a ground-mounted transformer.

When the backhoe finished digging around the new transformer location, it drove down to the old transformer site. The crew unhooked the electric connections then chained the transformer to the backhoe’s loader bucket to be carried up the hill. But to keep the backhoe from getting stuck in the mud on the trip up the hill, the trucks had to be backed down the driveway to clear the way for the backhoe to drive up on firmer ground.

Two of the crew pulled new wire underground, then cut and spliced the two-inch diameter wires into the transformer box. They secured the connections before cleaning up the work site.

On the return trip, the convoy visited the truck stop to top off the gas tanks. Back at the co-op, they checked the paperwork for the next day’s jobs, then stocked the trucks with the equipment they would need for an early start.

Before we said goodbye, I asked Larry what thought of the time it took to follow all the procedures of their work day.

“We don’t think, ‘this is taking a long time,’” he said. “We just think, ‘this is how you do it. We don’t say, ‘hurry up.’ We look out for each other.”

Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

**National Lineworker Appreciation Day
April 9, 2018**

More than 15,000 electric cooperative lineworkers serve on the front lines of our nation’s energy needs, maintaining 42 percent of electric distribution lines.

Lineworkers perform intricate work, often in dangerous conditions, to ensure we receive the safe, reliable power we depend on.



Co-op Scholarships Awarded

Matthew Sperry Awarded \$1,000, Sadie Vander Wal Receives \$500

Ben Dunsmoor

bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

Two area students will be receiving scholarships next fall from Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Northern Electric Cooperative.

Matthew Sperry of Bath will receive the \$1,000 scholarship awarded by Northern Electric's power supplier Basin Electric Cooperative, and Sadie Vander Wal of Brentford will receive the \$500 scholarship awarded by Northern Electric.

Sperry is currently a senior at Aberdeen Roncalli High School where he has a grade point average of 4.035. Sperry also participates in numerous activities including 4-H, band, and student council. Sperry plans on attending South Dakota State University in the fall to pursue a major in Precision Agriculture with a minor in Agronomy and Soil Science.



Matthew Sperry from Aberdeen Roncalli High School is the 2018 recipient of the \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship.

business which is a Northern Electric Cooperative member.”

Vander Wal is a senior at Northwestern Area High School in Mellette and has a 4.089-grade point average. Vander Wal is also the student body president and involved in several extracurricular activities.

Vander Wal will be attending South Dakota State University in the fall and plans on majoring in Animal Science with Journalism and Biotechnology minors.

“As I complete my undergraduate degree, I may pursue a graduate program,” Vander Wal said. “Therefore, this scholarship is helping me to achieve my goals upon the completion of my education, which will include a career in livestock reproduction research and communicating similar research to the agricultural community.”

A panel of Northern Electric employees judged the applications in February and selected the 2018 recipients.



Sadie Vander Wal is the 2018 recipient of the Northern Electric Cooperative \$500 scholarship.

“It will allow me to integrate the knowledge I gain into my family farm business which is a Northern Electric Cooperative member.”

“The Northern Electric scholarship will help me further my education in precision agriculture without having to worry about some of the expenses of college,” Sperry said. “It will allow me to integrate the knowledge I gain into my family farm

Service Can Help Residents With Issues From Heating Assistance To Suicide Prevention

211 Helpline Center Available In Brown County

Ben Dunsmoor

bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

Do you need help paying a utility bill? Do you know where to get a marriage license? Do you want to know when the Brown County landfill is open? The new 211 Helpline Center service is now available to all Brown County residents and can assist in answering all those questions.

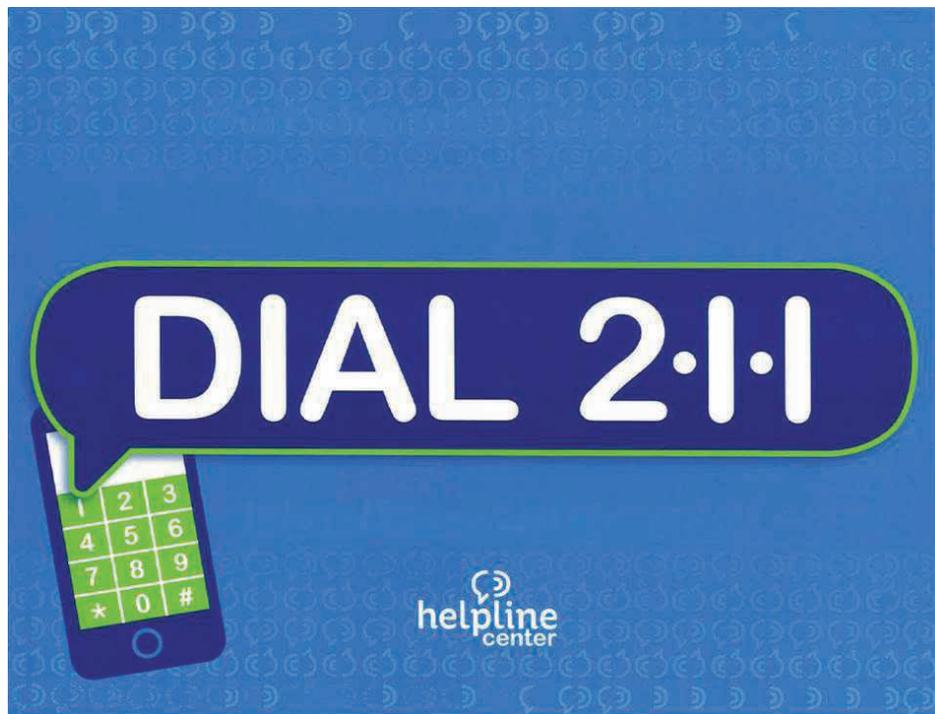
Brown County is the latest county to partner with the Helpline Center to provide answers to the questions area residents ask often. The service was launched on February 11 (or 2-11). Brown County officials are employing the assistance of the Helpline Center because emergency personnel in the county were receiving several non-emergency questions.

“It covers everything,” Brown County Emergency Manager Scott Meints said. “We got a lot of calls into our 911 center looking for information. Our offices get a lot of calls looking for this, that, or the other, and this is the one stop shop.”

Brown County residents can get help by simply dialing 2-1-1 on their phone, visiting www.helplinecenter.org, or texting their zip code to 898211 to get answers.

The Helpline Center also offers critical help to those who are considering suicide or experiencing a crisis situation. A county resident in a crisis can pick up the phone and dial 2-1-1 and be directed straight to a counselor who is trained to help them through their difficult situation.

“They have specially trained suicide folks and they’re going to get you help,” Meints



said.

The new service can also help someone who is looking for financial assistance, searching for child care, or taking the first step toward seeking treatment for an addiction.

The Helpline Center is free to anyone who is calling from a mobile phone or landline within Brown County. With the addition of Brown County, services from the Helpline Center are now available to more than 60 percent of South Dakotans. The 211 Helpline is also available in the counties surrounding Sioux Falls and Rapid City and in Yankton, Bon Homme, Brookings, Beadle, Lake, and Clay counties.

“Our offices get a lot of calls looking for this, that, or the other, and this is the one stop shop.”

March 24

Spring Craft Fair/Flea Market,
American Legion Hall,
Wagner, SD, 605-384-3543

March 24

Milltones Spring Show, 7 p.m.,
High School Theatre, Milbank,
SD

April 5

McCrossan's Wildest Banquet
Auction in the Midwest
featuring A Night Out with
the PBR, 5:30 p.m., Arena,
Sioux Falls, SD, Tickets:
\$75 each, 605-339-1203,
www.mccrossan.org

April 6

SPURS Spring Dance, Dakota
Events Center, Aberdeen, SD,
Tickets available at the Hitch
'N Post or by calling
605-226-1099

April 6-7

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

April 6-8

Professional Bull Riders Built
Ford Tough Series, Sioux Falls,
SD, 605-367-7288

April 7-8

Spring Zonta Vendor and
Craft Show, Northridge Plaza,
Pierre, SD, 605-222-1403,
bkstand@pie.midco.net

April 7-8

Hats Off to the Artists Art
Show, Faulkton, SD,
605-598-4160

April 25-29

Black Hills Film Festival, Hill
City, SD, 605-574-9454

April 28-29

Bike Show, Ramkota
Convention Center,
Aberdeen, SD, 605-290-0908



May 5

Consignment Auction,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

May 6

Opening Day, Prairie Village,
Madison, SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

May 13

1880 Train Mother's Day
Express, Hill City, SD,
605-574-2222

May 18

Turkey Races, Huron, SD,
605-352-0000

May 18-19

Sioux Empire Film Festival,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

May 18-20

State Parks Open House and
Free Fishing Weekend, Pierre,
SD, 605-773-3391

May 18-20

Tesla Road Trip Rally, Custer,
SD, 605-673-2244

June 3

Prairie Village Pageant,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

June 7-9

Senior Games, Sioux Falls,
SD, Contact Nicole Tietgen at
605-665-8222

June 8

Northern Bull Riding Tour,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

June 8-9

Senior Games, Spearfish, SD,
Contact Brett Rauterhaus at
605-772-1430

June 15-16

Czech Days, Tabor, SD,
www.taborczechdays.com,
taborczechdays@yahoo.com

June 16

Holy Rocka Rollaz concert,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

July 7

Hedahls Auto Value Car Show,
Hav-A-Rest Campground,
Redfield, SD, 605-380-9985

July 10-15

4th Annual 3 Wheeler Rally,
Deadwood, SD, 605-717-7174,
www.d3wr.com

July 28

Make-A-Wish South Dakota
Poker Run, On the Road
to Wishes, Aberdeen, SD,
Contact Lorren and Jan
Weber at 605-225-7262,
www.facebook.com/bieglers

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.