

Cooperative Connections



**New Solar
Coming to S.D.**

Page 8

**Saving Lives:
Grain Bin
Safety**

Page 12

Sunshine Can Make A Lot Of Things In Life Better

The Power of the Sun



Ben Dunsmoor

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Basin Electric has announced that it will be purchasing solar energy from the largest solar farm to be constructed in the state.

There is just something about sunshine that makes everything better.

I think we appreciate the sun more in the Upper Midwest because we must survive the cold and dark months of winter before we can bask in its warm glow during the summer. And, whether it is a scientific fact or just the anecdotal evidence I've collected over my lifetime, it seems like moods are better and spirits are lifted when the sun is shining.

When the sun is shining, we tend to pack as much fun into those few months out of the year as we can. Most of those activities are outdoors, and there are some safety precautions we need to take when we head outside. For instance, if you are out in a boat on the lake it is a good idea to wear a life jacket. But, what about safety tips for other summertime activities that could involve electrical hazards? In this month's issue of *Cooperative Connections*, we have summer safety tips on **pages 6-7** to help you have fun in the sun. These basic tips will make sure you and your family stay safe while you enjoy the sunshine and the second half of summer.

Sunshine can also be full of power. I am talking about solar power. The development of solar power has continued to grow over the last several years as it becomes more economical and efficient. A few electric cooperatives in South Dakota began exploring the potential of the renewable resource within the last five years by installing small solar arrays to test the output and operation of solar energy in our state. And, earlier this year, there was a major announcement regarding solar energy from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which supplies wholesale electricity to Northern Electric Cooperative and the rest of the co-ops in South Dakota. Basin Electric has announced that it will be purchasing solar energy from the largest solar farm to be constructed in the state. The Wild Springs Solar Project will be a 128-megawatt solar farm built near New Underwood in western South Dakota. The project is being constructed by Geronimo Energy and is scheduled to start delivering solar power to co-ops in the state and region in 2022. Basin Electric also announced in June that it will purchase power from the 150-megawatt Cabin Creek Solar Project in Montana. That project is expected to be complete by 2023. You can read more about the South Dakota project on **pages 8-9** of this issue.

The sun can be powerful, and it can make a lot of things in life better. Utilizing its energy safely can lead to family fun during the long sun-soaked days of summer. Harnessing its energy with photovoltaic panels can bring renewable and sustainable solar electricity to homes across the region. So, let's make the most of the sunny days we have left in South Dakota before the sun sets on another summer season.



(USPS 396-040)

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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

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Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held June 18, 2020, via teleconference at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the May 21, 2020, minutes and May expenditures. The Board reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Mark Sumption reported on actions taken by the East River Board at the June 4, 2020, meeting, held via WebEx. General Manager Char Hager reported on the June 2, 2020, East River MAC meeting, held via WebEx. The next South Dakota Rural Electric Association Board Meeting will be June 25-26, 2020, in Pierre.

Manager's Report

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

- Update on development projects.
- Reminded the board that nominating petitions are due July 24, 2020.
- Informed directors that they will need to choose a representative from each district for the Election and Credential Committee by the July board meeting.
- Informed directors of the NRECA Online Regional Week to be held October 12-16, 2020.
- Calendar review of upcoming meetings and events.

Board Report

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 A.M. on Thursday, July 23, 2020.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$1,222.09.
3. Approved 21 estate requests for out-of-order capital credit retirements totaling \$37,846.74.
4. Approved Work Order Inventories #20-05 for \$188,205.78 and #20-05MC for \$60,452.93 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
5. Authorized board attendance to the East River Annual Meeting, September 9, 2020, in Sioux Falls.
6. Authorized board attendance to the SDREA Co-op Board Leadership Summit, July 27-28, 2020, in Pierre.
7. Authorized board attendance to the 33rd American Coalition for Ethanol Conference, August 25, 2020, in Omaha, Nebraska.

If you have questions, or would like more details on any of these matters, please ask your cooperative manager, staff member or director.

Financial Report		May 2020	May 2019
kWh Sales		21,947,622 kWh	20,224,556 kWh
Electric Revenues		\$2,014,257	\$2,043,168
Total Cost of Service		\$2,039,877	\$2,063,327
Operating Margins		(-\$25,620)	(-\$20,159)
Year To Date Margins		\$226,569	\$485,123
Residential Average Monthly Usage and Bill			
May 2020	1,891 kWh	\$205.41	.1086 per kWh
May 2019	1,575 kWh	\$181.84	.1155 per kWh
Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation accounted for 81.9% of NEC's total cost of service.			

Focus on These Safe Practices Away From the Workplace

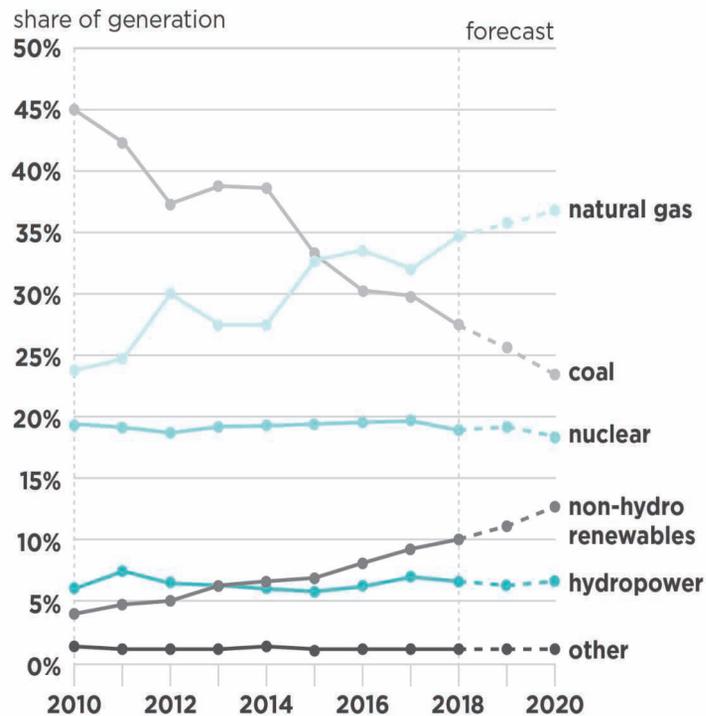
While your local electric cooperative often focuses on electrical safety and provides reminders to keep you free from harm, there are many other dangers lurking out there that don't necessarily pertain to electrical power.

Read on to see the National Safety Council's list of the top causes of preventable injuries and death away from the workplace. Keep these in mind and help protect you and your family from danger.

- **Poisoning.** In 2011, accidental poisonings overtook car crashes for the first time as the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for all ages combined. Poisoning deaths are caused by gases, chemicals and other substances, but prescription drug overdose is by far the leading cause.
- **Vehicle crashes.** Roadway crashes are the second-leading cause of unintentional injury-related death overall in the U.S. Impaired driving, distracted driving, exceeding the speed limit and inexperience can often cause a life to be cut tragically short in the blink of an eye.
- **Falls.** Falling is the third-leading cause of unintentional injury-related death over all age groups across the country, but it's the No. 1 cause of death for those who are 65 and older who sometimes have health complications and problems with balancing.
- **Choking and suffocation.** Choking on food or other objects is a primary cause. Suffocation and choking rank higher among the elderly and infants.
- **Drowning.** This is the No. 1 cause of death for children ages 1-4, mostly due to children falling into pools or being left alone unattended in bathtubs.
- **Fires and burns.** Fires often start at night, when families are asleep and most vulnerable. A working smoke alarm will cut in half the chances of dying in a fire.
- **Natural and environmental incidents.** Weather-related disasters claim hundreds of lives per year. You should learn all you can about emergency preparedness and always have an emergency kit on hand.

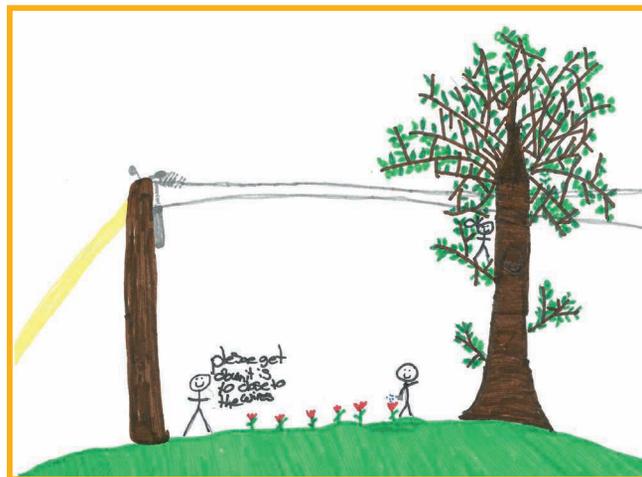
Source: National Safety Council

U.S. ELECTRICITY GENERATION BY ENERGY SOURCE (2010-2020)



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Short-Term Energy Outlook*, January 2019
 Note: Confidence interval derived from NYMEX options market information

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Please get down - it is too close to the wires!"

Forrest Hawk, 9 years old

Forrest Hawk is the grandson of Steve and Pru Hawk. They are members of Lacreek Electric Association, Inc., Martin, S.D.

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



Protein-Packed Salads

Ranch, Bacon, Parmesan Salad

1 16 oz. Farfalle (bowtie) pasta	½ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
1 cup prepared ranch dressing	1 carrot, peeled and diced
6 slices bacon	1 stalk celery, diced
	1 red onion, diced

Fill large pot with lightly salted water, bring to rolling boil over high heat. Once water is boiling, stir in bow tie pasta and return to boil. Cook pasta uncovered, stirring occasionally, until pasta has cooked through, but still firm to the bite, about 12 mins. Drain well in a colander set in the sink. Transfer to a bowl, refrigerate until cool, at least 30 mins. Place bacon in a large, deep skillet, cook over med.-high heat, turning occasionally, until evenly browned, about 10 mins. Drain bacon slices on a paper towel-lined plate, let cool, and chop. In a large salad bowl, stir together the ranch dressing, bacon, Parmesan cheese, carrot, celery, and red onion. Lightly stir in cooled pasta to coat with dressing, and refrigerate 2 hours.

Cortney Reedy, Tea, SD

Rotini Salad

1 box rotini	sliced turkey, deli style
celery, green pepper, radishes, cucumber, onion, carrots	mushrooms, chopped
	cheddar cheese, shredded

Cook rotini as directed on package. Chop vegetables. Put all ingredients into a large bowl. Add 1 bottle zesty Italian dressing. Let chill, enjoy. Can add almost any fresh vegetable.

Mary Jessen, Holabird, SD

Broccoli Bacon Salad

Dressing:	2 T. vinegar
1 cup real mayo	Brown 1 pkg. bacon, break into pieces
¼ cup sugar	

Wash two fresh heads of broccoli and cut into bite size pieces. Add ½ cup raisins, ¼ cup purple onion, 1 cup shredded cheese, pepper to taste. Mix well.

Karen Jacobs, Tolstoy, SD

Ring Tuna Salad

1 pkg. ring macaroni cooked and drained	1 cup green olives sliced
4 green onions chopped	2 6 oz. cans Albacore tuna
1 cup frozen peas cooked and drained	2 T. salad dressing mixed with 1 tsp. olive oil

Cook, drain and cool macaroni. Mix first 5 ingredients then add salad dressing and olive oil, which has been whipped together. Store in refrigerator.

Darlene Price, Prairie City, SD

Chicken, Onion, Quinoa Salad

Dressing:	1 tsp. canola oil
¼ cup apple cider vinegar	1 white onion, sliced
2 T. olive oil	3 cups baby kale
1 T. lemon juice	1 red skinned apple, chopped
1 tsp. honey	2 cups cooked chicken, chopped
1 tsp. Dijon mustard	½ tsp. salt
1-½ cups red quinoa, rinsed	¼ tsp. pepper
2-½ cups vegetable broth	

To make the dressing: In a large bowl, whisk vinegar, olive oil, lemon juice, honey and Dijon mustard until well combined. Set aside. In a saucepan, bring quinoa and broth to boil. Simmer, covered, for 12-15 minutes, or until all of the broth has been absorbed. Let cool completely. In a medium skillet, heat canola oil over medium-high heat. Saute onion for 3-5 minutes, or until it is softened and translucent. Remove from heat; let cool completely. In a large bowl, toss onion, kale, apple, chicken, salt and pepper with dressing. Stir in cooled quinoa. www.onions-usa.org.

Please send your favorite vegetarian, garden produce and pasta 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 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.



SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

Safety Tips To Share With Kids When They Are Playing Outdoors This Summer

When the weather is nice, many children enjoy going outdoors to fly kites, climb trees, and play with their friends. While playing outdoors is a great activity for kids during the summer months, there are electrical hazards that children need to be aware of to keep them safe.

Watch Out For Pad-Mounted Transformers (Green Boxes)

Stay away from pad-mounted transformers. Pad-mounted transformers are green metal boxes that contain the above ground portion of an underground electrical installation. These cabinets carry high voltages and are safe when locked, but they can be deadly if someone reaches inside. If you see one in your neighborhood that is open, call authorities and Northern Electric Cooperative immediately.

Stay Away From Substations

Never enter an electrical substation for any reason. If a ball or other toy enters the fence surrounding the substation, call Northern Electric Cooperative for help. Deadly amounts of high-voltage electricity are contained inside substations and should only be entered by professionals.



Be Aware of Overhead Power Lines

Always be aware of overhead power lines. Do not fly kites or model planes near power lines or electrical substations. A kite string can conduct electricity from an overhead line directly to the person on the ground.

Keep Conductive Balloons Away From Electricity

Be careful when using Mylar balloons for a party. These metallic coated balloons conduct electricity, so never tie one to a child. If the balloon comes into contact with electricity, the child could receive a fatal shock.

Keep Ladders And Poles Clear Of Power Lines

Ensure your children are protected from the electrical service connection to your home. Keep ladders or long poles stowed and away from youngsters who might be tempted to use them to reach the wires connected to your house. Also be aware of

these lines around pools. Pool skimmers can be long enough to reach service connection lines.

Under no circumstances should anyone climb trees near power lines. If branches are touching the wires, the tree could be energized.

Look Up Before Climbing Trees

Under no circumstance should anyone climb trees near power lines. If branches are touching the wires, the tree could be energized. Even branches not touching power lines could become energized if a child's weight is added.

'When The Thunder Roars, Go Indoors'

Finally, storm fronts can move rapidly, and lightning can strike 10 miles in advance of a storm. Remember the rule of thumb from the National Weather Service, "when thunder roars, go indoors." Make sure kids know that it is not safe to be outside during a storm.

This article and the safety tips contained in the article were provided by [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org). Visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org) for more tips and information about electrical safety.

Kites should be flown in a clear and open area outdoors. Getting a kite caught in a power line can be extremely dangerous. If a kite is caught in a power line it is important to call Northern Electric Cooperative to get it untangled.





Wild Springs Solar Farm will capture the sun's rays to produce electrical power for South Dakota homes, farms and businesses.

CATCHING RAYS

Wild Springs Solar Farm to Produce Renewable Power

Billy Gibson

Contributing Writer

Business leaders know that diversification is the key to containing costs and surviving sharp economic slumps over the long haul.

That's especially true when it comes to producing the power that keeps South Dakotans supplied with the juice they need to run their homes, farms, irrigation pumps, offices and shops.

Those utilities tasked with keeping the power flowing day and night look for diversification when determining the raw materials they'll use to generate electricity.

The ability to draw from a variety of available resources – coal, natural gas, solar, wind, hydro, biomass, etc. – stabilizes the production process and helps to levelize costs as market rates for any or all of these resources rise and fall over time. This “all-of-the-above” strategy, in turn, makes it easier for producers to engage in long-range forecasting, planning and purchasing for the ultimate benefit of consumers.

That's why it made perfect financial sense for Basin Electric to strike a power purchase agreement with Geronimo Energy, a renewable power generation developer based in Minnesota.

Geronimo Energy is in the early phases of constructing a solar farm called Wild Springs that is expected to generate 128 megawatts (MW) of clean renewable power. When construction is completed in 2022, the \$190 million facility will be the largest grid-scale solar installation in South Dakota.

According to Basin Electric officials, the not-for-profit wholesale power provider jumped at the opportunity to join forces with Geronimo Energy and expand its renewable power portfolio.

“We are excited about adding large-scale solar to our already



Vic Simmons, CEO of Rushmore Electric, delivers a presentation on the Wild Springs Solar Farm.

diverse generation mix,” said Basin CEO and General Manager Paul Sukut. “The board’s decision to add solar to our resource portfolio is to continue with our all-of-the-above strategy, as well as solar generation becoming a more economic energy source.”

Basin Electric transmits electricity to 141 member co-op distribution systems in nine states. It also transmits wholesale power to two South Dakota generation and transmission (G&T) co-ops: Rushmore Electric and East River Electric. Those two G&Ts then transmit the power supply to their respective distribution cooperatives. Rushmore Electric is the power provider for West River Electric, which is the closest distribution co-op in proximity to the solar farm. West River Electric owns more than 2,500 miles of power lines and poles in western South Dakota.

Wild Springs will be built on more than 1,000 acres within West River’s service area near the town of New Underwood in Pennington County and will help stabilize costs for thousands of

ratepayers throughout the region.

West River CEO/General Manager Dick Johnson said he's happy to have a new neighbor and that the project has garnered the support of community leaders as it will create roughly 150 construction jobs. But he said he's even happier for the members who will benefit from the renewable power generated by the solar farm.

The facility is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 85,000 metric tons annually, which is the equivalent of taking 18,000 cars off the road every year.

"We're excited that West River's service area will be home to the Wild Springs Solar Project," said Johnson. "This solar energy project will benefit our cooperative family, as well as our local communities. As not-for-profit co-ops that are owned by our members, everything we do goes back to the people we serve."

Johnson pointed out that the project is expected to produce \$17 million in economic benefits through its first 20 years in terms of tax revenue, job creation and contributions to charitable funds. The list of benefits also includes an education fund that plans to donate \$500,000 to local school districts.

Officials at Rushmore Electric said the power purchase agreement is a perfect fit in line with the cooperative's mission and long-term strategy.

"Our cooperative network is always looking to ensure we have a mix of power resources to meet the needs of our membership and renewable energy is an important part of that strategy," said General Manager Vic Simmons. "This project is an important strategic step as we look to the future in continuing our strong history of providing safe, affordable and reliable power."

Geronimo Energy recently completed the 200 MW Crocker Wind Farm in Clark County and also developed the Pierre Solar Project, a joint effort with the City of Pierre and Missouri River Energy Services in Hughes County.

Geronimo Energy President David Reamer said industry analysts often tend to doubt the viability of solar power in the region, but he said the Wild Springs project shows that consumers in more northern climates can also benefit from the renewable resource.

7 Efficient Home Improvement Projects to Help Save Money

The best home upgrades make spaces more livable and energy-efficient and are also cost-effective. Making energy-efficient improvements is a savvy way to save money on utility bills, curb energy consumption and add to the house's value. Consider a variety of home improvement projects, both big and small, that can reduce the financial burden of maintaining your home throughout the year and improve energy efficiency.

Add Insulation - A cost-effective way to save on heating and cooling bills is adding a layer of insulation in the attic where heat loss is typically greatest due to hot air rising. While many newer homes are adequately insulated, those that are several decades old (or older) may benefit from an upgrade in not only the attic but other common problem areas where air can escape such as basements, crawl spaces, fireplaces and ductwork.

Seal Doors and Windows - Windows and doors are common culprits for energy loss. While a complete replacement of doors and windows can be pricey, adding exterior caulk and weather stripping to fill in gaps where air can escape around these openings can make a noticeable difference for a fraction of the cost and make it cheaper to heat and cool your home.

Install Skylights - Skylights are a cost-effective option for transforming any room with natural light while also saving energy. For example, Sun Tunnel Skylights can be installed in 90 minutes and funnel natural light from the roof through the attic and into the room below with an aesthetic that resembles recessed lighting. Customizable with six diffuser film styles to complement interior design, the skylights can make a home more energy-efficient by reducing reliance on artificial lighting.



Reflective Window Film - When the sun shines through windows, it can heat up the home's interior quickly and trigger the air conditioner to turn on. Window coverings, such as blackout curtains, can help, but adding low-e reflective window film to your windowpanes, particularly southern-facing ones, can provide an additional shield from the sun and reduce energy costs.

Install a Programmable Thermostat - A programmable thermostat is an efficient way to control the climate inside your home. Today's smart thermostats not only let homeowners control temperatures from their smart devices but can also learn daily habits and adjust the temperature accordingly with no other manual adjustments necessary.

Replace Appliances - Because appliances like refrigerators and ovens are major energy users, investing in more efficient models provides both cost and energy savings. Additionally, homes more than 15 years old could benefit from updates to the air conditioner or heater as systems 15-20 years old or older may be candidates for replacement.

Ceiling Fans - In comparison to running your air conditioner consistently, the cost of running a ceiling fan (or several) is significantly less. Particularly on days that may not require cooling the entire house completely, fans can provide a gentle breeze and circulate air in the spaces you use most often. Simply adjust the switch to the counterclockwise position to ensure it's pushing air downward during warmer months.

For more information and home improvement ideas, visit whyskylights.com/livlighter.



Members Have Several Convenient Ways To Pay Monthly Bills

Pay Your Way

Northern Electric Cooperative members have several options to choose from when they pay their electric bill every month. Many of these methods have been added within the last few years to make it easier and more convenient to pay monthly statements. These options have been useful as the COVID-19 pandemic continues across the region and the main co-op lobbies at the Bath and Redfield offices remain closed.

Drive-Through and Drop Boxes

Members who want to pay their bill in person at a co-op office can use the drive-through window at the Bath location to pay their statement and visit with co-op employees. The drive-through window in Bath has been a great way for members to interact with their co-op while still keeping their distance during the coronavirus pandemic. A drive-through drop box is also available at the Northern Electric office in Redfield.

Walk-up drop boxes are available for members at the main entrance of the Bath office, at the Redfield office, and at Ken's SuperFair Foods in Aberdeen near the BankNorth ATM inside the store.

Automatic Withdrawal

Northern Electric Cooperative has an automatic withdrawal option for members who want a worry-free way to pay their bill. Automatic withdrawal can be set up from a checking or savings account. An automatic withdrawal form and a void check blank need to be provided to the

co-op to set up this option. The form can be found on the co-op's website at northernelectric.coop. Once the form and check are submitted the monthly bill amount will be withdrawn from that account on the 21st of the month.

Pay Online Without Setting Up an Account

Online payments can be made by visiting the Northern Electric website at northernelectric.coop and clicking on the 'Pay Now' button at the top of the screen. This easy and convenient online payment method allows members to make a one-time payment without creating a password or setting up an account. Members simply need to provide their account number and last name to access their bill using 'Pay Now.'

Pay with SmartHub

SmartHub is Northern Electric's online account management and payment tool. Members can sign up for SmartHub by visiting northernelectric.coop or downloading the SmartHub app for their Apple or Android device. SmartHub allows members to make online payments and set up recurring credit card payments every month.

SmartHub also gives members insights into their electric use. Members can view their daily, monthly, or yearly electric use and compare it to previous billing cycles. SmartHub also allows members to manage their accounts by saving credit

card information and signing up for text message or email alerts from the co-op.

Secure Pay-By-Phone System

Northern Electric's secure pay-by-phone system gives members an easy way to make payments over the phone with a credit card or checking account. Members can call **1-844-834-4454** and use the automated menu to make a one-time payment or set up a recurring payment every month using a credit card or a checking account.

PrePaid Billing

PrePaid billing is a new way for members to consume and pay for electricity. Members can 'load' their account with money by making a payment using SmartHub or the secure pay-by-phone system. Northern Electric will withdraw money from the account every day based on that member's electric use. Members will receive daily phone calls, emails, or text messages if the account drops below \$25. If the account falls below \$0 the electricity will be shut off until more money is loaded onto the account.

Pay by Mail

Members can also simply write a check, put it in an envelope with their statement stub and mail it to the Northern Electric offices. All payments need to be received by the 21st of the month and mailed to:

Northern Electric Cooperative
PO Box 457
Bath, SD 57427



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Due to recent unusual weather patterns, grain bin safety is more important than ever.

GRAIN BIN SAFETY

Unusually wet year makes grain bin safety on the farm more important than ever

Susan Smith

Contributing Writer

Wet conditions during last year's harvest meant grain went into bins under conditions that aren't ideal.

Wet grain can cause crusting or bridging in bins. Producers try to scrape the crust away from the side, causing a landslide of grain sucking the producer in as it falls. Or they could be working in a bin not realizing they are standing on a bridge of grain that when it falls has nothing beneath it but air. This can also cause entrapment.

Many of these accidents happen in winter and early spring, said Beth Locken, director of safety and environmental at Agtegra Cooperative in Aberdeen. She calls that time period the second harvest when farmers are cleaning out bins for the coming year's crops. While South Dakota and North Dakota don't see the number of entrapment accidents as corn-belt states like Iowa and Illinois, grain bin entrapments are not picky, Locken said.

"We've already seen one (death in South Dakota) in 2020 already and that's too many," she said.

During the third week in February 2020, decreed by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue as National Grain Bin Safety Week, Christopher Bauman died at his farm near Elkton while emptying corn. Bauman had a wife and three children.

After Bauman died, Locken and Scott Wheelhouse, safety director of the Agfirst Farmers Cooperative in Aurora, began



Training is an important element in responding to grain bin accidents on the farm.

talking about creating a local day-long seminar on grain bin safety. The morning would focus on a refresher course for first responders who already are trained to rescue someone trapped in a grain bin but maybe haven't had hands-on experience recently, Wheelhouse said. In the afternoon, producers from the area would get information on general grain bin safety and use of rescue equipment.

"We really want to emphasize we don't just want your business, we want your friendship," Wheelhouse said. "We want you alive."

AgTegra sold grain bin entry kits at cost to local producers this year, a service Wheelhouse would like to offer his customers as well. The kits sell for \$460 and include resources on how to use them.

"Mostly the benefit we get out of it is hoping we can educate the family and keep them safe," Locken said.

Purdue University releases an annual report on entrapment injuries and fatalities. The number increased by 9.8 percent in 2019. From 2017 to 2018 the number jumped 23 percent. In the last decade, 370 people died in grain bin accidents.

The number of grain bin accidents increased nearly 10 percent in 2019.



About 10 years ago, Agtegra donated to fire departments in its coverage area grain bin rescue tubes that fit around a submerged person. That includes about 70 departments in northeast and northwest North Dakota and areas along Highways 12 and 281 and I-90. Agtegra deployed a technical rescue team for the last 10 years.

Training paid off during a March grain entrapment.

The team membership and training is widespread for Agtegra employees and first responders.

"Immediate response is of the essence," Locken said. "If something happens on a farmer's bin site, they're not going to call AgTegra, they're going to call the fire department," Locken said.

That widespread training paid off during a March grain entrapment near Pierre.

"We were there providing guidance and additional equipment. We were inside the bin with the fire department just trying to get the victim out of there," she said. "We worked for about five hours and that was a successful response. Not all of them are like that, unfortunately."

The first rule of grain bin safety is not to go into the bin in the first place.

"We always say any time someone needs to go into a bin, stop and talk about it," Locken said. "Have absolutely more than one person there. Make sure the person has a harness and rope attached to the harness and to something attached to the bin that's not going to move."

Locken said turning off equipment like an auger is another good rule of thumb. That way grain isn't being pulled out of the bin as a person works in it.

John Keimig, SDSU Extension Youth Safety Field Specialist, conducts safety programs for 4-H youth. He educates children of producers so they know the rules and can keep an eye on their parents. Most producers know the risks of working around grain bins, he said, but might not consider them during the high pressure of a typical farm day.

"Adults know better," he said. "We get in a hurry. We don't always think and particularly in grain storage that can become very bad very quickly. By working together, we can help each other out if we have to go into a bin and we can save lives."



The risks of working around grain bins may be forgotten during the high pressure of an average work day on the farm.



State officials say the problem of meth addiction disproportionately affects women and Native American populations.

METH. WE TREAT IT.

Front Line Treatment Providers Stay Focused on Their Goal

By Billy Gibson

Contributing Writer

To a public growing desensitized to increasingly sensational news accounts, one particular police report stood out.

Probably because of the cattle prod.

Back in June, Sioux Falls police arrested a couple accused of using a cattle prod to discipline their four children, ages 11 to 17. The astonishing accusations also included the couple giving methamphetamine and marijuana to the youngsters in their charge.

It was another in a steady stream of stories serving as an indication of the widespread use of methamphetamine and the deleterious effects of drug abuse in the state.

Meth, especially, is a social and public health menace that has not mysteriously disappeared since the coronavirus outbreak, although it has morphed a bit as the pandemic has spread.

State and federal officials report that the impact of the virus has brought both good news and bad news.

On one hand, the curtailing of international and national travel, the economic downturn and the tightening of borders have all combined to reduce the supply of the powerful drug on city and rural streets.

On the other hand, the street price for the drug is escalating due to increased demand and shortened supply. As those hooked on the drug seek any means of securing it and as general anxiety levels rise, officials fear that a jump in criminal activity is inevitable.

In Los Angeles, for example, meth prices doubled recently as narcotic traffic from Mexican cartels slowed down significantly.



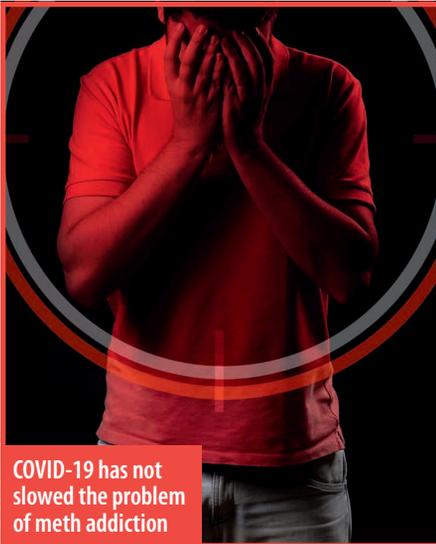
Price increases were also seen in states like Virginia, West Virginia, New Mexico, Kentucky, Tennessee and many others.

While the world turned its attention to the coronavirus earlier this year and now braces for a second wave, others dedicated to battling meth abuse over the long haul have never steered their focus away from their goals.

A statewide campaign to raise awareness of the meth problem was launched last fall as officials began recognizing that the manufacture, distribution and consumption of meth was becoming a plague for far too many South Dakotans. The troubling trend was placing both rural towns and the larger population centers at risk.

The campaign was in response to disturbing figures that painted the picture of a national and international progression that was finally at the point of breaching the state's borders in record numbers.

For instance, officials reported that in 2018 more than 3,600 individuals were arrested in the state for possessing, transporting or



COVID-19 has not slowed the problem of meth addiction

distributing a collective 100 lbs. of methamphetamine. The Centers for Disease Control proclaimed that meth was taking the lives of more South Dakotans than any other illegal drug and that twice as many teens from 12 to 17 years old were using meth compared to the national average.

Additionally, 83 percent of court admissions for controlled substances in 2019 involved meth, as the state saw a 200 percent increase in people seeking treatment with the primary diagnosis of meth addiction between 2014 and 2018.

Meanwhile, law enforcement seized 24 lbs. of meth in the Rapid City area in 2018, over 20 lbs. in Sioux Falls, and almost 1 lb. in Pierre. It takes just .0003 lb. of the drug to cause a fatal overdose. From January to August of 2019, there were 2,243 meth-related arrests across 50 counties. In 2002, that number was just 467.

More recently, figures show that meth is impacting Native American and female populations at a disproportionate level.

For instance, officials report that more than 90 percent of inmates at the South Dakota Women's Prison in Pierre are substance abusers. Overall, roughly



“Don't think you can't get help, because there are many options out there.”

Carol Regier

one-third of those inmates incarcerated in the state prison system are there because of some form of drug addiction.

Recently, the female inmates have campaigned to push for more programs to help addicts within the system.

Inmate Heather Shooter, who belongs to the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe, is one of several convicts who have been instrumental in an initiative called Sober is Sacred, in which inspirational speakers, performers and other guests call for additional counseling and treatment programs to help those hooked on meth. The program follows a similar one launched at the Mike Durfee State Prison for men in Springfield called Fathers Against Meth.

Shooter said that when her time is served this fall she plans to enter the Full Circle Substance Abuse Center in Rapid City and spread the message of a drug-free life.

Dave Flute, the state's Secretary of Tribal Affairs and former Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribal chairman, has described the meth plague as having reached epidemic proportions on the state's reservations. He spoke last fall at the second State-Tribal Meth Summit in Mission and assured the audience that the governor's administration is working closely with Native American tribes to combat the problem.

Carol Regier, CEO of the Keystone Treatment Center with facilities in Canton and Sioux Falls, said her program often works with tribal communities in South Dakota and surrounding states. She echoed Flute's comments that the governor's office has been deeply engaged.

“We've had discussions with the governor and the state has been very supportive of our work, going back to the Rounds administration,” she said, noting, “But we did make up our own catch phrase: ‘Meth. We Treat It.’”

She pegged meth abuse as “by far” the most toxic culprit when it comes to addiction and the social maladies that

spring from it.

“Besides alcohol, meth is our number one problem. It's very addictive and caustic and people who get hooked rarely defeat it without qualified help,” she said.

Regier said the in-patient program offered at Keystone typically lasts a month to 45 days and includes components of the 12-step Narcotics Anonymous plan. It also



focuses on spiritual, physical and mental health, she said. After therapy, patients are supported and encouraged to participate in after-care and continued counseling.

Keystone has 126 beds, and Regier said there is a steady stream of patients seeking treatment for their addiction. The pace hasn't slowed with the coronavirus.

“There was a period where it seemed people were afraid to come in, but they've started to come in now,” she said. “We've seen an escalation in alcohol and drug abuse during the pandemic as people are having to deal with loneliness, joblessness, personal relationships and other drastic changes in their lives and in the country.”

From her vantage point standing on the front lines of the drug addiction battle, Regier strikes a positive tone. She encourages those who feel they need treatment to get it. She assures that most treatment plans are covered by medical insurance and that grants and other resources are available to help addicts break free from the grip of addictions.

“Don't think you can't get help, because there are many options out there. We hear heartbreaking stories, but on the good side we see people who have turned their lives around,” she said. “For all of us committed to helping drug addicts get well, we have the same commitment: getting people back to normal so they can live healthier, more fulfilling lives. Treatment works.”

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September 3-5

South Dakota State Fair:
Perfect Vision of Fun,
1060 3rd St. SW, Huron, SD
800-529-0900
www.sdstatefair.com

July 21-25

98th Annual Days of '76 PRCA
Rodeo, Arena, Deadwood,
SD, 1-888-838-BULL,
www.DAYSOF76.com

July 26

15th Annual Car Show
Langford, SD, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
605-493-6597

July 31-August 1

Senior Games, Yankton,
SD, Contact Kristi Hauer at
605-665-4685

July 31-August 1

Plein Air & Arts in the Garden,
Wessington Springs, SD,
605-354-3826

August 1

Rockin' Ribfest BBQ
Competition, Wessington
Springs, SD, 605-505-1135

August 1

Foothills Classic, Wessington
Springs, SD, 605-350-1687

August 1, 22

The Murder of Miss Kitty
Comedy Mystery Dinner
Theatre, Holiday Inn Express
& Suites, Deadwood, SD,
605-580-5799

August 8-9

Threshing Show, Twin Brooks,
SD, www.threshingshow.com



August 8-10:
Red Power Round Up
Fairgrounds, Huron, SD
605-460-0197

Photo courtesy: South Dakota Department of Agriculture

August 8-10

Red Power Round Up,
Fairgrounds, Huron, SD,
605-460-0197

August 9

Online Only Bechyn Czech
Festival, Online Concert,
7 p.m., Bechyn,
Minn., 320-522-1218
www.facebook.com/Bechyn-
MinnesotaWorld

August 14-16

Astronomy Festival, Badlands
National Park, Wall, SD,
605-433-5241

August 21-22

Harvest Festival, Elkton, SD,
605-524-2681

August 22

World of Outlaw Sprint Car
Races plus Wissota MWM,
Dakota State Fair Speedway,
Huron, SD, 605-352-4848

September 7

Hidewood Valley Steam
Threshing Show, 1 p.m.,
47326 183rd Ave., Clear Lake,
SD, 605-881-8405

September 12-13

Fall Harvest Festival,
Delmont, SD, 605-928-3792,
www.twinriversoldiron.org

September 13

20th Annual Antique Tractor
and Car Parade, 1 p.m.,
Farmer, SD, 605-239-4498

September 25-27

Coal Springs Threshing
Bee Featuring Massy Harris
Tractors, Meadow, SD,
605-788-2229

September 26

10th Annual ROCS Fall
Festival, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.,
Springfield, SD,
605-464-7379

September 26

Wheelin' to Wall, Wall
Community Center, Wall, SD

October 7-8

Energize! Explore Innovative
Rural Communities
Conference, Milbank, SD,
<https://extension.sdstate.edu>

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.