

# Cooperative Connections

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Critical Role in  
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# Providing Essential Service During A Pandemic



Char Hager

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**We are doing everything we can to ensure that our employees and crews are healthy and safe so we can continue providing essential service without disruption.**

This has not been fun.

This has not been easy.

We did not sign up for this.

But we did plan for this.

During the course of the last six weeks, our worlds have been turned upside down. Schools have been closed for the year, local businesses have been forced to lock their doors to the public, and unfortunately, hundreds across our state have become sick as a result of the COVID-19 virus.

Electric cooperatives – including Northern Electric - started implementing emergency response plans in mid-March when South Dakota began reporting its first positive cases of COVID-19. Yes, our emergency response plan includes steps to follow during a pandemic. Most of our pandemic preparedness plan was written back in 2006 as concerns over Avian Influenza, or bird flu, were on the rise across the world. While bird flu never had the impact on the United States that COVID-19 is having right now, reading through this plan is like an eerie prophecy of what we are experiencing today.

We know how critical electricity is during this time of uncertainty. We are doing everything we can to ensure that our employees and crews are healthy and safe so we can continue providing this essential service without disruption. So, how has Northern Electric responded to the COVID-19 pandemic? We are following our plan.

## Employees Have Been Segregated

One of the first steps Northern Electric took to protect the health and safety of our employees was to segregate our workforce into separate teams. The office staff and the line crew have all been segregated into multiple teams so if one of the employees tests positive for COVID-19 it does not affect the entire workforce. This action was implemented to ensure employees will still be available to serve our members, especially if an emergency or an outage occurs during this pandemic.

## Offices Closed to Walk-In Traffic

Northern Electric also took the step to close our offices in Bath and Redfield to walk-in traffic. This was done to protect the public and our employees from any possible exposure to this novel coronavirus. While it is difficult to close the physical doors at the co-op, we are fortunate to have many other avenues to serve the membership. We offer members many different ways to manage their accounts and pay their bills online or through the mail. We also have physical drop boxes at both the Bath and Redfield offices and a payment drop box at Ken's SuperFair Foods in Aberdeen. Please, log on to [www.northernelectric.coop/paybill](http://www.northernelectric.coop/paybill) for a listing of all these options.

## Limiting Face-to-Face Meetings

We also began limiting face-to-face meetings and restricting travel as this pandemic spread across South Dakota. We have also instructed employees in the field to limit contact with members and avoid entering the homes of members unless it is absolutely necessary. We are not trying to be unfriendly; we are simply trying to protect the health and safety of our members and our employees. We have also decided to cancel our VIP Tour trip to North Dakota in June. We love taking members on this trip so they can see where the co-op's electricity is generated but we thought it was best to cancel the tour this year and focus on bringing it back in 2021.

Northern Electric Cooperative may have to take more actions as we navigate the twists and turns of this pandemic. However, we have a plan and we continue to focus on the number one mission of the cooperative: providing our members with safe and reliable electricity. It is something you can be certain of during this uncertain time.



(USPS 396-040)

**Board President:** Donna Sharp

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**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.

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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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Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held March 26, 2020, via teleconference at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the February 20, 2020, minutes and February expenditures. The board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Mark Sumption reported on actions taken by the East River Board at its March 6, 2020 meeting. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported that the SDREA Board Meeting will be held March 26, 2020, via teleconference. The next South Dakota Rural Electric Association board meeting will be June 25-26, 2020, in Pierre, SD. Directors Ronald Kaaz, Mark Sumption, Francis Esser and General Manager Char Hager reported on the 2020 NRECA Annual Meeting which they attended February 27-March 4, 2020, in New Orleans, LA. Directors Todd Hettich and Josh Larson reported on the 2020 NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) certificate courses which they attended March 9-11, in Pierre. Director Ronald Kaaz reported that South Dakota Wind Energy Association Annual Meeting is scheduled to be held April 30, 2020, in Watertown.

**Manager's Report**

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

- Update on development projects.
- Legal and Legislative report.
- Reported that the Basin VIP Tour will be June 23 & 24, 2020.
- Reminded the board of the CFC Forum, June 15-17, 2020, in Salt Lake City, UT.
- Calendar review of upcoming meetings and events.

**MARCH BOARD REPORT**

**Board Report**

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 A.M. on Thursday, April 23, 2020.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$1,267.35.
3. Approved Work Order Inventory #20-02 for \$423,935.86 to be submitted to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
4. Approved 18 estate requests for out of order capital credit retirements totaling \$22,606.46.
5. Approved updates to existing policies.
6. Approved implementation of the Renewable Energy Credits (REC) Program.
7. Approved REED, Inc. Loan application by Odyssey Entertainment, Inc.
8. Approved a donation of \$500.00 to the Boys and Girls Club of Aberdeen to be matched by East River Electric and Basin Electric.
9. Denied the request for financial support from Aberdeen Development Corporation.
10. Authorized Director attendance to the 2020 Summer School for Directors, June 5-9, in Charleston, SC and July 24-28, in Salt Lake City, UT.

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

Financial Report	February 2020	February 2019
kWh Sales	29,699,315 kWh	32,876,709 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$2,534,016	\$2,671,902
Total Cost of Service	\$2,465,370	\$2,441,932
Operating Margins	\$68,646	\$229,970
Year To Date Margins	\$195,436	\$482,538

**Residential Average Monthly Usage and Bill**

February 2020	3,174 kWh	\$272.14	.0857 per kWh
February 2019	3,700 kWh	\$298.19	.0806 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation accounted for 84.4% of NEC's total cost of service.

## 10 Steps to Avoid Scams

There are thousands of new scams every year and you can't keep up with all of them (we know, we try!). But if you can just remember these 10 things, you can avoid most scams and help protect yourself and your family.

- 1) Never send money to someone you have never met face-to-face.** Seriously, just don't ever do it. And really, really don't do it if they ask you to use wire transfer, a prepaid debit card or a gift card (those cannot be traced and are as good as cash).
- 2) Don't click on links or open attachments in unsolicited email.** Links can download malware onto your computer and/or steal your identity. Be cautious even with email that looks familiar; it could be fake.
- 3) Don't believe everything you see.** Scammers are great at mimicking official seals, fonts and other details. Just because a website or email looks official does not mean that it is. Even Caller ID can be faked.
- 4) Don't buy online unless the transaction is secure.** Make sure the website has "https" in the URL (the extra s is for "secure") and a small lock icon on the address bar. Even then, the site could be shady. Check out the company first at BBB.org. Read reviews about the quality of the merchandise and make sure you are not buying cheap and/or counterfeit goods.
- 5) Be extremely cautious when dealing with anyone you've met online.** Scammers use dating websites, Craigslist, social media and many other sites to reach potential targets. They can quickly feel like a friend or even a romantic partner, but that is part of the con to get you to trust them.
- 6) Never share personally identifiable information with someone who has contacted you unsolicited, whether it's over the phone, by email, on social media, even at your front door.** This includes banking and credit card information, your birthdate and Social Security/Social Insurance numbers.
- 7) Don't be pressured to act immediately.** Scammers typically try to make you think something is scarce or a limited time offer. They want to push you into action before you have time to think or to discuss it with a family member, friend or financial advisor. High-pressure sales tactics are also used by some legitimate businesses, but it's never a good idea to make an important decision quickly.
- 8) Use secure, traceable transactions when making payments for goods, services, taxes and debts.** Do not pay by wire transfer, prepaid money card, gift card or other non-traditional payment method. Say no to cash-only deals, high pressure sales tactics, high upfront payments, overpayments and handshake deals without a contract.
- 9) Whenever possible, work with local businesses that have proper identification, licensing and insurance, especially contractors who will be coming into your home or anyone dealing with your money or sensitive information.** Check them out at BBB.org to see what other consumers have experienced.
- 10) Be cautious about what you share on social media and consider only connecting with people you already know.** Be sure to use privacy settings on all social media and online accounts. Imposters often get information about their targets from their online interactions and can make themselves sound like a friend or family member because they know so much about you.

Source: [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)



**Utility service has never been more important.**

If you're planning landscaping or any other digging projects, contact 811 first – the kids telelearning and adults telecommuting will thank you.

Call 811 or go to your state 811 center's website before digging.

Call811.com/811-your-state




Stay safe during social distancing by calling 811 before starting any new project, so you can stay connected to the internet and utility services you rely on.

Call 811 or go to your state 811 center's website before digging.

Call811.com/811-your-state



## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



**"Do not play around electrical boxes."**

Kayla Engelbrecht, 9 years old

Kayla is the grand-daughter of Alan and JoAnn Engelbrecht, Brandon, S.D. They are members of Sioux Valley Energy, Colman, 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.

# Comforting Casseroles

## Chicken-Broccoli-Rice Casserole

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 lb. chicken tenders or boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch strips | 2 tsp. onion powder                     |
| 1 cup long grain rice  | 1-1/2 tsp. rosemary leaves, crushed     |
| 1-1/2 cups Kitchen Basics® Original Chicken Stock                                  | 1/2 tsp. pepper                         |
| 1 cup milk   | 1/2 tsp. salt                           |
| 2 tsp. garlic powder   | 2 cups fresh or frozen broccoli florets |
|  | 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese           |

Spread chicken and rice in greased 2-quart baking dish. Mix stock, milk and seasonings in medium bowl with wire whisk until well blended. Slowly pour over chicken and rice. Cover with foil. Bake at 400°F. for 45 minutes. Remove foil. Stir in broccoli. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered, 15 minutes longer or until rice has absorbed all the liquid and broccoli is tender. Makes 6 (1 cup) servings.

*Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 317, Total Fat 9g, Cholesterol 69mg, Sodium 492mg, Carbohydrates 31g, Fiber 1g, Protein 28g*

**Pictured, Cooperative Connections**

## Ham and Rye Casserole

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 cup chopped onion                                      | 1 (8 oz) pkg. American cheese, cubed |
| 1/2 cup chopped celery                                   | 2-1/2 cups milk                      |
| 1/4 cup butter   | 3 eggs                               |
| 4 cups cubed rye bread                                   | 1-1/2 tsp. prepared mustard          |
| 1 (8 oz.) pkg. ham, cut into strips or may use cubed ham | Salt and pepper, to taste            |

In a saucepan, saute onion and celery in butter until tender. In a 2-quart buttered baking dish, combine onion, celery, bread, ham and half the cheese. In a bowl, beat together milk, eggs, mustard, salt and pepper until well blended. Pour over all; top with remaining cheese. Bake at 350°F. for 1 hour or until golden brown and puffed.

**Martha Mehlhaff, Aberdeen, SD**

## Corn Casserole

- |                                  |                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 cup broken spaghetti, uncooked | 1/2 cup milk             |
| 1 can cream-style corn           | 1 can whole kernel corn  |
| 1 cup cubed processed cheese     | Diced onions, optional   |
|                                  | Salt and pepper to taste |

Combine all ingredients in a 1.5-quart casserole. Bake at 350°F. for 1 hour, stirring after the first 30 minutes.

**Emily Luikens, Tea, SD**

## Cheesy Potato Beef Bake

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1 lb. ground beef                                      | 2 tsp. butter                 |
| 2 (4 oz. each) cans mushroom stems and pieces, drained | 1 tsp. salt                   |
| 2 (5-1/4 oz. each) pkgs. au gratin potatoes            | 1/2 tsp. seasoned salt        |
| 4 cups boiling water                                   | 1/2 tsp. pepper               |
| 1-1/3 cups milk  | 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese |

In a skillet over medium heat, cook beef until no longer pink; drain. Place in a greased 9x13-inch baking pan. Top with mushrooms. Combine potatoes and contents of sauce mix packets, water, milk, butter, salt, seasoned salt and pepper. Pour over beef and mushrooms. Cover and bake at 400°F. for 30 minutes or until heated through. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered, for 5 minutes longer or until cheese is melted. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

**Stephanie Fossum, Hudson, SD**

Please send your favorite dairy, dessert or vegetarian 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 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

# Call 811 To Avoid Disruptions During Pandemic

## Calling 811 Before Digging Projects Is Key To Keeping Communities Connected

**Ben Dunsmoor**

[bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop](mailto:bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop)

As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads across the state, South Dakotans are being asked to remain vigilant when it comes to washing their hands and practicing safe social distancing. The Public Utilities Commission is also asking South Dakotans to be vigilant when it comes to calling 811 before they start a digging project this spring.

“Underground utilities are always essential to the health and safety of South Dakota citizens, but with the COVID-19 pandemic, these utility services are more important than ever,” PUC Chairman Gary Hanson said. “Hospitals and their staffs rely on electricity and broadband networks to provide the best care for those in need. Our health care systems are already being

stretched thin and damage to these utilities would only cause further strain on those on the front lines.”

South Dakotans need to call 811 at least two business days before any digging project so utilities can mark buried underground lines. This includes any homeowner or excavator who is landscaping, starting a home construction project, or building a new fence.

Avoiding utility outages is especially important with more adults working from home and students participating in distance learning.

“Each of us has been asked to do our part to flatten the curve of COVID-19 by practicing social distancing and making major changes to our daily routines. These necessary changes have made access to quality broadband more essential now than ever before,” PUC Vice Chairman

Chris Nelson said.

Calling 811 is free. The South Dakota 811 center will contact all the affected utilities once a call is placed and a ticket is opened. Representatives from local utilities will be contacted by the center and the utilities will send a representative to mark all buried lines. Homeowners and excavators should use extreme caution digging within 18 inches of either side of the markings and should only use hand tools to avoid coming in contact with a buried line.

Calling 811 is a simple step to staying safe, avoiding injury, and limiting disruptions during the current pandemic.

“Coronavirus has caused a lot of uncertainty but one thing you can be certain of is calling 811 will help ensure you remain safe and connected,” PUC Commissioner Kristie Fiegen said.



# CALL OR CLICK BEFORE YOU DIG

Call 811 or visit [call811.com](http://call811.com) at least two to three business days before you start digging. Professional locators will mark underground utility lines so you can work safely—and save you from possible injury or property damage.

Together we're

**RE-ENERGIZING FARM SAFETY**



Northern  
Electric  
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# A DEADLY MISTAKE

## Family Shares Grief to Teach Others

**Shayla Ebsen**

sebsen@eastriver.coop

June 7, 2016, is a day that will be forever imprinted in Greg McCann's mind. It began as a normal June day on his farm in southeastern South Dakota. The crops had been planted and, like every year in June, they were needing to be sprayed. Greg's 35-year-old son, Grant, helped out on the farm and planned to spray the fields that day.

"He went and got the sprayer filled and ready. After he got the sprayer ready and conditions were right, well, then, he went to spray," said Greg. "He called me to see if I could move an irrigator for him and that was the last time I talked to him. He entered the field and the driveway to the field went under a power line."

Unfortunately, Grant didn't drive far enough into the field. He stopped at an angle close to the power lines. As he began unfolding the 90-foot sprayer booms, they touched the energized power line, which instantly electrified the tractor.

"He tried to call Wayne, the young man who runs my farm, but he wasn't able to get through because there was so much static, so we don't know what happened after that," said Greg.

The sprayer was caught in a Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative distribution power line. Co-op Electrician Kevin Meyer was just a few miles away when he and his apprentice received an outage call.

"A radio call came across that another neighbor farmer was out of power as it started out as an individual outage," said Meyer. "We packed up our tools and stuff and left the yard. As we were leaving the yard, I received another call from a supervisor saying that we got a call that there's a



Thirty-five-year-old Grant McCann was involved in a fatal accident involving a sprayer and a power line in 2016.

sprayer that looks like it might have made contact with a line that's probably the first place to go and it's looking like we have more consumers out."

Meyer and his apprentice didn't know what they might discover but knew they had to move fast.

"As we're rolling up on scene, one neighbor was there sitting on the road on his four-wheeler and he just said someone is down in front of the tractor," said Meyer. "It was very tough to see other than you could see someone was there but didn't know who it was and at that particular time, I knew that it could be Greg, Grant or my cousin, Wayne. So, in all that, you're mentally preparing yourself for what you're about to discover."

What they would discover is that Grant made a mistake that would end his life. Rather than staying in the cab and waiting for help, he had stepped out of the sprayer.

"The consequences of that mistake took my only son," said Greg. "He was my friend, my partner, my confidant. Now every day I remember that terrible morning and I see Grant lying dead on the ground. There's no fix. There's no second chances."

No one can know what was going through Grant's head at the moment he left the cab. But Greg wants others to learn from that mistake, so it doesn't happen to anyone else.

"If Grant would've stayed in the tractor and not touched anything, I think he'd be here today. But he didn't," said Greg. "I don't want anyone to have to experience the sadness and the emptiness that I and Grant's family and friends are experiencing and will be experiencing for a long, long time."

## The consequences of that mistake took my only son.

Do you know what to do if a vehicle you're in contacts a power line? First, stay in the vehicle and call 911 for help. If you must exit the vehicle because of a fire, tuck your arms across your body and jump clear of any wires with your feet together, never touching the equipment and ground at the same time. Then shuffle or hop at least 40 feet away with your feet together. Stay away

from the equipment until the authorities tell you it is safe.

"People get in a hurry and they don't regard the risk as a risk and one mistake and it's too late," said Greg. "The consequences are so grim and terrible, that there's no good reason not to be really careful and be aware of where you're at and the machinery you're using and where it's located. Once it's done, there's no turning back."

With the spread of COVID-19 into our region as well as the pandemic's financial impacts, everyone has a lot on their mind this year. Letting distractions take your mind away from work in the fields significantly increases the likelihood of farming accidents. Minimize distractions and stay focused in the fields. If you notice your mind wandering at any point, bring it back to the task at hand.

As we enter this year's planting and spraying seasons, remain aware of where electrical equipment is located when you're working on the farm and remember the steps to take if your equipment contacts a power line. You could save your life, or the life of someone you love. Visit [poweringyoursafety.com](http://poweringyoursafety.com) to learn more.



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives



# PoweringYourSafety.com

KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU HIT A POWER LINE

## STAY PUT



If your equipment contacts a power line, stay inside.  
**DO NOT EXIT. Call 911.**

## JUMP CLEAR



If you must exit due to a fire, jump from the equipment so that no part of your body touches the equipment and ground at the same time. Hop or shuffle with your feet together at least 40 feet away.

## STAY AWAY



When you are clear of the area, call for help and keep others away. **DO NOT** approach your vehicle again until utility crews and emergency responders tell you it is safe.

# Co-op Members Can Be 100% Renewable With New Program

## Northern Electric Introduces REC Program

Business owners and homeowners who receive electricity from Northern Electric Cooperative can purchase 100 percent renewable energy through the co-op's new REC program.

REC stands for Renewable Energy Credits (REC) which are sometimes known as 'green tags.'

"RECs come from several different wind and solar farms in our generation portfolio," Northern Electric Cooperative CEO/General Manager Char Hager said. "We are making them available to our members so they can show their support for renewable energy."

One megawatt hour (MWh) of electricity produced by a renewable energy source, such as a wind turbine, equals one REC. The voluntary Northern Electric program will sell members one REC for \$1.

"Business owners or homeowners will be able to utilize the REC Program to offset their monthly use with renewable power," Hager said.

For example, if a Northern Electric member uses 1,200 kilowatt hours of electricity in one month, an extra \$1.20 will be added to their bill to provide them with 100 percent renewable power. Businesses can also add value to their products



by enrolling in the program and using renewable electric generation to power their business.

The RECs can be traced back to several wind, solar, and renewable projects in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, and Montana. The RECs come from eight different wind projects in North Dakota. In South Dakota, the RECs are generated by the Crow Lake Wind Farm, the Chamberlain turbines, the Day County Wind Energy Center, the South Dakota Wind Energy Center, and the Campbell County Wind Farm.

The RECs also come from one wind project and two solar projects in Minnesota, two wind projects in Iowa, and several recovered heat projects in South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, and Minnesota.

The REC program is a voluntary program and members can enroll at different levels and price points:

**"Business owners or homeowners will be able to utilize the REC program to offset their monthly use with renewable power."**

- 100% participation= \$0.0010 per kWh used
- 75% participation = \$0.00075 per kWh used
- 50% participation = \$0.0005 per kWh used
- 25% participation = \$0.00025 per kWh used

Members are asked to call a Northern Electric Member Services Representative at 605-225-0310 to enroll in the REC Program. The cost of the RECs will be added to the monthly bill of the member who enrolls in the program. Marketing and promotional materials are available for members to promote their use of 100% renewable energy.

The Wilton Wind Energy Center north of Bismarck, ND is one of the wind farms which generates power and renewable energy credits for the Northern Electric REC Program.



# 2020 YOUTH EXCURSION

## YOU WILL TOUR:

Basin Electric Headquarters

Antelope Valley Station

Great Plains Synfuels  
Plant

Freedom Mine

Bismarck State College

## 2020 Youth Excursion to Bismarck, ND July 27-30

### **2020 YOUTH EXCURSION**

South Dakota rural electric cooperatives and Northern Electric Cooperative are proud to sponsor high school students on a **FREE** four-day trip to North Dakota.

During the South Dakota Rural Electric Youth Excursion students will stay at Bismarck State College and learn about electric generation, cooperatives, and energy careers.

Students will tour Basin Electric Power Cooperative power plants and electric-generation resources.

Youth Excursion attendees will also spend their evenings swimming, shopping, and cruising down the Missouri River on the Lewis and Clark Riverboat.

**APPLY ONLINE**  
@

[www.northernelectric.coop/youthexcursion](http://www.northernelectric.coop/youthexcursion)



# 3M ABERDEEN PLAYING CRITICAL ROLE IN COVID-19 RESPONSE

Plant Is Producing Millions of N95 Respirators

**Ben Dunsmoor**

[bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop](mailto:bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop)

Standing outside the 430,000-square-foot 3M plant in Aberdeen, S.D., you can hear the whirl of productivity. The Aberdeen plant makes N95 masks which have been one of the most crucial pieces of personal protective equipment for frontline personnel responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Andrew Rehder, the manager of the 3M Aberdeen plant, told *Bloomberg Businessweek*, in a story published in March, that the Aberdeen plant has been operating at ‘surge capacity’ since the end of January.

“I just think as we’ve continued to see things spread across the world, it’s put more responsibility on us to make sure that every day and every minute we’re making every mask we can,” Rehder told Bloomberg.

It has also put a responsibility on Northern Electric Cooperative to ensure the 3M plant has a consistent and reliable source of power. Northern Electric has served the plant with electricity since it was constructed in 1974.



N95 respirators are loaded onto a jet at the Aberdeen Regional Airport in April. The masks produced at the 3M Aberdeen plant are being shipped directly to areas of the country that need them the most. (Photo Courtesy: 3M Twitter account / [twitter.com/3M](https://twitter.com/3M))

“We know the 3M plant in Aberdeen is playing a critical role in the response to this global pandemic,” Northern Electric Cooperative CEO/General Manager Char Hager said. “Northern Electric also recognizes that our co-op plays a crucial role in supplying 3M with reliable electricity and we take that responsibility seriously.”

The masks being produced in Aberdeen are being shipped across the country just as fast as they are being manufactured. A jet has been sitting at the Aberdeen Regional Airport during April to transport N95 respirators from the Aberdeen plant directly to areas of the country that need them most.

3M CEO Mike Roman said in a blog post on the company’s website that 500,000 masks were shipped from the Aberdeen plant at the end of March to New York and Seattle. Both of those cities have recorded some of the largest number of COVID-19 cases in the country. 3M expects a total global output of 1.1 billion masks this year and they are planning investments in the next 60 to 90 days that will double that capacity to 2 billion masks globally within the next 12 months.

“We continue to act with urgency to address this crisis from every angle and do all we can to protect our heroic nurses,

doctors and first responders,” Roman said in a statement on the company’s website.

This isn’t the first time the Aberdeen plant has been called upon to increase production during an emergency. The plant has also played a critical role in making masks for the SARS, bird-flu and H1N1 outbreaks, as well as the Mount Saint Helens’ eruption, Hurricane Katrina and numerous forest fires.

**“We know the 3M plant in Aberdeen is playing a critical role in the response to this global pandemic.”**

– Char Hager, Northern Electric CEO/General Manager

Northern Electric Cooperative has been in contact with local and corporate 3M managers and executives to ensure the Aberdeen plant has the power supply it needs as the company responds to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We have communicated our response plans to 3M officials and have assured them that our crews will be ready and

available to respond to any emergency or outage,” Hager said. “We have also been in contact with our wholesale power supplier, East River Electric Power Cooperative, and we have told 3M that supplying their plant in Aberdeen with reliable electricity is the top priority for our cooperatives.”

The Aberdeen 3M plant is the city’s second-largest employer with 650 employees. But, Rehder told *Bloomberg Businessweek* that the plant now has more than 700 employees who are working around the clock to make sure health care workers and first responders across the country have the masks they need to protect them from COVID-19.

“People are very proud to work in a place that is making respirators, especially with the need that is out there now,” Rehder said.

Hager said the increased production at the plant in Aberdeen and the hard work of 3M employees is a perfect example of rural America stepping up to help the country during this time of uncertainty.

“We are proud of the work they do at the plant and we are proud of our co-op employees who are dedicated to keeping the lights on for 3M and for all our co-op members,” Hager said.



Northern Electric Cooperative is the power supplier for the 3M plant in Aberdeen which has been operating at ‘surge capacity’ since January in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



# Understanding OPIOID ADDICTION

Jocelyn Romey

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One in four people who are prescribed opioids struggle with addiction. This is only one statistic from the South Dakota Department of Health that resonates how powerful and potentially dangerous opioids can be.

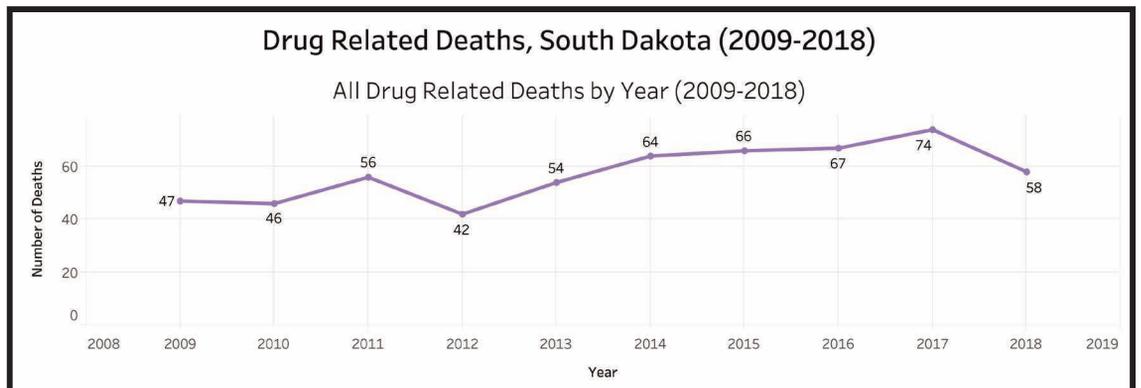
Opioids are a strong narcotic commonly prescribed for chronic pain after injury or surgery. Many know of the extreme addiction and destructive use of heroin – an unlawful opioid, but other opioid addictions may not be as visible if prescribed. A dependency can begin before anyone is aware of an addiction. Unintentional misuse or overdose of prescription opioids are also risks for anyone who takes them.

“My addiction started out very innocently. I had a back issue and so I was prescribed some Vicodin for it...and then I couldn’t stop, I couldn’t turn back. I felt hopeless,” said one woman from Pierre in an Avoid Opioid Prescription Addiction video. “Opioids deserve to be treated with respect. I think the seriousness of it isn’t always understood by people until it’s too late. People do recover and they can recover.”

An opioid addiction is actually considered a disorder and the National Institute on Drug Abuse has labeled drug addiction and opioid use disorder as a chronic disease characterized by drug use that is difficult to control despite harmful consequences. Many people mistakenly think that

## Prescription Opioid Side Effects

- Increased sensitivity to pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Constipation
- Sleepiness and dizziness
- Dry mouth, itching and sweating
- Confusion
- Low energy and depression
- Low levels of testosterone which can result in lower sex drive



those who use drugs lack willpower or moral principles and that they could stop their drug use simply by choosing to. In reality, quitting usually takes more than good intentions or a strong will.

Due to the harmful nature of these drugs, there are risks associated with taking opioids – addiction, long-term health problems, paralysis and death. In South Dakota, opioid-related deaths are lower than the national average, but the numbers have been on a steady rise since 2012.

Research shows that drug overdose deaths tend to overly impact rural communities despite having lower drug use rates than urban communities. In 2009, deaths from drug overdose surpassed deaths from motor vehicle accidents in the U.S. Sixty percent of these drug overdose deaths in rural areas are due to injection-related HIV, hepatitis C and other bloodborne infections while using illicit prescription opioids and heroin.

More in-depth statistics on opioid vulnerability assessments by county are available through South Dakota’s Department of Health website or via <https://doh.sd.gov/statistics/VulnerabilityAssessment.aspx>.

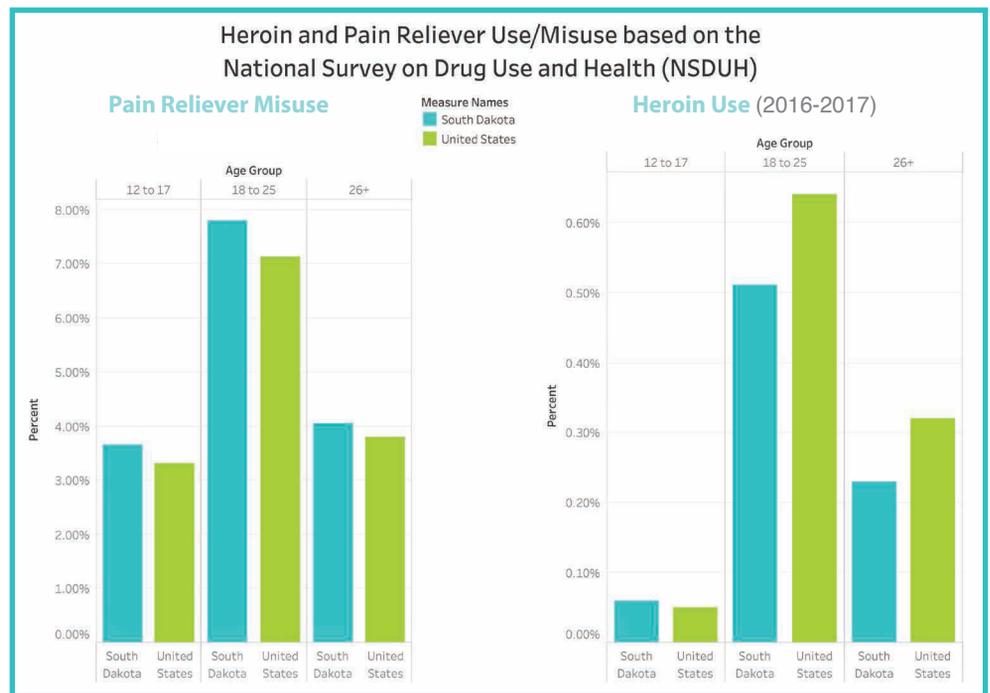
People who are addicted to opioids may seek and use them compulsively despite harmful consequences. The following are common warning signs of misuse, abuse or addiction to opioids given by South Dakota’s Department of Health.

- Neglecting responsibilities at work, school or home because of drug use.
- Using drugs under dangerous conditions or taking risks such as driving while on drugs.
- Drug use that results in legal trouble such as stealing to support a drug habit.
- Drug use that causes problems in relationships such as arguments with family members and loss of friends.
- People affected by drug addiction may stop participating in activities they once enjoyed and may use drugs even when they realize the drugs could be causing problems.

Source: South Dakota Department of Health

## Commonly Prescribed Opioids

- Actiq
- Astramorph
- Codeine
- Conzip
- Demerol
- DepoDur
- Dilaudid
- Duragesic
- Duramorph
- Endocet
- Exalgo
- Hydrocodone (Vicodin)
- Hydromorphone
- Fentanyl
- Lorcet
- Lortab
- Meperidine
- Methadone
- Morphine
- MS-Contin
- Norco
- Oxycodone (Oxycontin/Oxecta)
- Percocet
- Roxicet
- Roxicodone
- Tramadol
- Ultram
- Ventura



### Resource Hotline

Call **1-800-920-4343**. Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It's free and confidential.

Our trained specialists can connect you with **Opioid Care Coordination**, social support, counseling, treatment options, and services in your area.

Find out **what happens when you call the Resource Hotline**, and how we can help you or a loved one.

### Opioid Texting Support

Text **OPIOID** to **898211** to connect with local resources that best fit your needs. Answer a few questions and get help for yourself or a loved one who is struggling.



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

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### May 2-3

Quilt Guild Show, Brookings, SD, 605-690-3246

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### May 8-9

Craft Beer Fest: Hops and Hogs, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

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### May 9

Art Wine and Food Truck Festival, Spearfish, SD, 605-644-6585

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### May 15-17

Sound of Silence Tesla Rally, Custer, SD, 605-673-2244

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### May 15-17

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

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### May 23-24

Annual SDRA Foothills Rodeo, Wessington Springs, SD, 605-770-4370

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### May 29-30

South Dakota Regional Senior Games, Sioux Falls, SD, Contact Nick Brady at 605-978-6924

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### June 4-6

Annual Black Hills Quilt Show & Sale, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

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### June 5-6

Senior Games, Spearfish, SD, Contact Brett Rauterhaus at 605-722-1430

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### June 5-7

Fort Sisseton Historical Festival, Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

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### June 5-7

Fish Days, Lake Andes, SD, 605-487-7694



**May 9:**  
Traditional Wacipi at the Dignity Statue, Chamberlain, SD, 605-234-5472

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### June 5-7

Wheel Jam, Huron, SD, 605-353-7340

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### June 5-7

Regional Qualifying High School Rodeos:  
■ Rodeo Grounds, Wall, SD, 605-529-5868  
■ Rodeo Grounds, Highmore, SD, 605-529-5868  
■ Tipperary Arena, Buffalo, SD, 605-529-5868  
■ Heartland Arena, Huron, SD, 605-529-5868

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### June 6-7

Siouxland Renaissance Festival, Sioux Falls, SD, 866-489-9241

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### June 11, August 13 and October 8

Kids Mystery Dinner Theater, Brookings, SD, 605-692-6700

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### June 12-14

Regional Qualifying High School Rodeos:  
■ Tripp County Fairgrounds, Winner, SD, 605-529-5868  
■ Rodeo Grounds, Sturgis, SD, 605-529-5868  
■ Rodeo Grounds, Dupree, SD, 605-529-5868  
■ Derby Downs Arena, Watertown, SD, 605-529-5868

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### June 16-21

SD State High School Finals Rodeo, Stanley County Fairgrounds, Fort Pierre, SD, 605-529-5868

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### June 25-27

Red Power Round Up, Fairgrounds, Huron, SD, 605-460-0197  
[redpowerroundup2020.com](http://redpowerroundup2020.com)

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### June 26-27

Senior Games, Madison, SD, Contact Bernie Schuurmans at 605-270-3327

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### July 11

6th Annual Auto Value Car Show, Hav-A-Rest Campground, Redfield, SD, 605-450-0332

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### July 25

17th Annual Make-A-Wish 'On the Road to Wishes' Poker Run, Registration 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., C&S Motorsports, Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-4533

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.