

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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Pros & Cons of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Electric Cooperatives



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Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming industries worldwide, and electric cooperatives are no exception. With the demand for more efficient, reliable, and sustainable energy systems, AI presents an opportunity for electric cooperatives to modernize their operations. However, with this potential comes several challenges that need careful consideration. In this article, we explore the pros and cons of AI for electric cooperatives.

Pros:

1. Improved Energy Efficiency

AI can optimize grid operations by analyzing real-time data from smart meters, sensors, and substations to predict demand and adjust the energy supply accordingly.

2. Predictive Maintenance

One of the most significant advantages of AI is its ability to perform predictive maintenance. AI systems can monitor infrastructure, including transformers and power lines, and detect potential issues before they escalate.

3. Enhanced Member Service

AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can handle routine customer inquiries such as billing, outage reports, or new service requests, allowing member service representatives to focus on more complex issues.

4. Fraud Detection and Loss Prevention

AI algorithms can detect irregularities in energy consumption patterns that might indicate fraud, such as meter tampering or unauthorized connections.

5. Demand Response and Load Management

AI can analyze historical and real-time data to predict periods of high energy demand. This enables cooperatives to implement demand response strategies.

Cons:

1. High Initial Implementation Costs

While AI promises long-term cost savings, the upfront investment can be significant. Electric cooperatives may need to upgrade existing systems, purchase new hardware, and invest in AI software solutions.

2. Job Displacement and Reskilling

Automation and AI could lead to the displacement of certain jobs, particularly in roles that involve routine tasks like data entry, equipment monitoring, or member service.

3. Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Concerns

AI systems require vast amounts of data to function effectively. This includes member consumption patterns, which raise concerns about data privacy.

4. Technical Complexity

Implementing AI is not a simple plug-and-play solution. Many electric cooperatives, particularly smaller ones, may lack the necessary technical expertise to integrate AI with their existing systems.

5. Dependence on Data Quality

The accuracy of AI systems is directly linked to the quality of the data they process. If the data collected is incomplete, outdated, or inaccurate, the AI's predictions and insights may be flawed, leading to poor decision-making.

AI presents electric cooperatives with a wide range of opportunities to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance member service. However, the implementation of AI comes with its own set of challenges. Cooperatives must weigh these factors carefully and develop a strategic approach to AI adoption that maximizes benefits while minimizing risks.

In the spirit of transparency, I'd like to share that this article was created with the assistance of AI. Our commitment remains to provide you with relevant & insightful information. We will do our best to keep you informed on the latest developments in AI and how it could impact your cooperative.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC

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Accepting Scholarship Applications

Black Hills Electric Cooperative is excited to offer scholarships to graduating high school seniors. Basin Electric Power Cooperative is providing a \$1,000 scholarship, while Rushmore Electric will accept applications for a \$500 runner-up scholarship.

Additionally, scholarships will be awarded during the Annual Meeting scheduled for May 29, 2025, in Rapid City.

Interested students can find the application online at www.bhec.coop or request a physical or emailed application. Completed applications, along with all supporting documents, must be submitted to BHEC by Friday, February 7, 2025.

For any questions or concerns, please reach out to Michelle Fischer at 800-742-0085 or 605-673-4461.

AVAILABLE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR DEPENDENTS OF BHEC MEMBERS:

- \$1,000 Basin Electric
- \$500 Rushmore Electric

REQUIREMENTS:

- Be a U.S. citizen
- Be a dependent of a BHEC member
- The graduating senior must be planning to enroll at an accredited college, university, or technical school.

THE RECIPIENTS WILL BE CHOSEN BASED ON:

- A combination of SAT or ACT scores
- Overall grade-point average
- Personal statement of career goals
- One-page essay
- An adult appraisal

DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 7, 2025

WINNER WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN APRIL



ENJOY A SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON

From late November to mid-January, when families gather, parties are scheduled and travel spikes, safety should be top of mind. Following is tried-and-true advice to ensure your family remains safe and injury-free throughout the season.

Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared

If you're traveling this year, be sure your vehicle is in good running condition, get plenty of rest and be prepared for any emergency. Traveling by car during the holidays has the highest fatality rate of any major form of transportation based on fatalities per passenger mile. Hundreds of people die every year in crashes on New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, according to Injury Facts. Alcohol impairment is involved in about a third of these fatalities.

Stay safe on the roads over the holidays – and every day:

- Prepare your car for winter and keep an emergency kit with you.
- Get a good night's sleep before departing and avoid drowsy driving.
- Leave early, planning ahead for heavy traffic.
- Make sure every person in the vehicle is properly buckled up no matter how long or short the distance traveled.
- Put that cell phone away; many distractions occur while driving, but cell phones are the main culprit.
- Practice defensive driving.
- Designate a sober driver to ensure guests make it home safely after a holiday party; alcohol or over-the-counter, prescription and illegal drugs can cause impairment.

Decorate Safely

Decorating is one of the best ways to get in a holiday mood, but emergency departments see thousands of injuries involving holiday decorating every season.

When decorating follow these tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Keep potentially poisonous plants – mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis – away from children.
- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled “fire resistant.”
- If using a live tree, cut off about two inches of the trunk to

expose fresh wood for better water absorption, remember to water it, and remove it from your home when it is dry.

- Place your tree at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources, making certain not to block doorways.
- Avoid placing breakable ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower tree branches where small children can reach them.
- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors, and choose the right ladder for the task when hanging lights.
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections.
- Follow the package directions on the number of light sets that can be plugged into one socket.
- Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights, and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow.
- Turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house.

Source: National Safety Council



“Don’t Spill Water on Electronics... It Could Start a FIRE!”

Bethany Langworthy, Age 9

Bethany Langworthy warns readers to be careful with water around electronics. Thank you for your picture, Bethany! Bethany's parents are Kristina and Edward Langworthy, members of West River Electric.

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

Family FAVORITES

CREAM CHEESE AND CUCUMBER SPREAD DIP

Ingredients:

1 large cucumber, grated
1 tsp. onion, grated
8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
3/4-1 cup mayonnaise
Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Grate cucumber and onion on several thicknesses of paper towels, squeeze out all the water. Place in a bowl. Blend other ingredients, adding enough mayonnaise to make it a spreading consistency. Serve with crackers or chips.

Mary Ann Klarenbeek
Harrisburg, S.D.

GRANDMA GRACE'S FROZEN FRUIT SALAD

Ingredients:

8 oz. Cool Whip
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1 cup sour cream
3/4 cup sugar
Dash of salt

*Mix all thoroughly until
sugar is dissolved.*

9 oz. can pineapple, crushed
and drained
Small jar maraschino cherries
(halve or chopped if desired)
2 sliced bananas (halve or
quarter slices if desired)
1/4 cup chopped walnuts

Method

Mix thoroughly. Pour into 8x8 or 9x9 container. Cover and freeze. Thaw 10-15 minutes to allow cutting into serving portions.

My mother, Grace Alley, first made this salad for holiday meals. It has become a family favorite, and we always have it for one of our holidays.

Mary Harris
Glad Valley, S.D.

LEMON ROSEMARY GLAZED HAM

Ingredients:

1 bone-in spiral-cut ham,
about 10 lbs.
1 1/4 cups honey, divided
2 tsp. lemon extract
1 1/4 tsp. whole rosemary
leaves, crushed, divided

Method

Preheat oven to 325°F. Place the ham on its side in roasting pan. Mix 1 cup of the honey, 1 1/2 tsp. of the extract and 1 tsp. of the rosemary in small bowl until well blended. Brush 1/2 of the honey mixture over ham, gently separating the slices so mixture can reach middle of ham. Cover loosely with foil.

Bake 1 hour, basting occasionally with pan drippings. Remove foil. Brush with remaining honey mixture. Bake 45 minutes longer.

Meanwhile, mix remaining 1/4 cup honey, 1/2 tsp. extract and 1/4 tsp. rosemary in small bowl. Serve with ham along with the pan drippings.

McCormick.com

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

Simple Ways to Save in the Kitchen



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Q: How can I save in the kitchen during the most expensive time of the year?

A: The holiday season brings opportunities to enjoy meals with friends and family, leading to spending more time in the kitchen. Whether hosting a few or a crowd, consider making new energy efficiency traditions this year with these tips to manage your energy use.

Let's start with cooking your meal. Your electric oven is typically the highest-wattage appliance in the kitchen. Yet, people usually don't turn their ovens on for long periods of time. Assuming an average oven wattage of 3,000 and an average cost of \$0.16 per kilowatt-hour, according to the United States Energy Information Administration, it costs \$0.48 an hour. Let's say you use your oven for four hours to make a special meal. That's less than \$2 of electricity. While that may not seem like a big deal now, operating your oven for four hours every day is \$700 a year.

Using smaller appliances instead of your oven can help you save. A slow cooker uses between 100 and 450 watts, which is significantly less than an electric oven at 2,000 to 5,000 watts. That means you can use a slow cooker for a longer period and still use less energy.

Opt for your microwave or toaster oven to reheat or cook smaller items. The microwave uses significantly less energy than the oven. A toaster oven uses about half the energy of a conventional oven, according to Energy Star®.

You also want to avoid turning on your oven and leaving the door open to heat your home. This can break your oven and be a safety hazard, especially with gas ovens that can cause carbon monoxide buildup.

When cooking on the stovetop, match the pot or pan size to the burner. Lids help your pots retain heat, which cooks food faster and wastes less heat. Keep your stovetop clean to ensure the appliance heats evenly.

If you're looking to upgrade your stovetop, consider switching to an induction cooktop. It uses an electromagnetic field below the surface to heat pots and pans directly. This provides more precise heat, faster cook times and higher efficiency. It can also

improve the air quality in your home when compared to a gas cooktop.

In my experience, people like to gather in the kitchen during parties. To avoid overheating your guests in a room that has a hot oven, turn your thermostat down a few degrees before guests arrive.

Next, let's look for refrigerator savings. The gaskets on your refrigerator doors should make a tight seal to keep in cold air. Make sure you clean and maintain them or replace them if necessary. Don't let frost build up in the freezer, which can decrease efficiency and make your freezer work harder to maintain a balanced temperature.

Wait until food cools before putting leftovers in the fridge. Putting hot food in the refrigerator results in more energy used to cool it down. Aim for about 30 minutes of cool time. Perishable food should be refrigerated within two hours after it is cooked, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

Setting your refrigerator colder than needed wastes energy. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends 37 degrees for the refrigerator and 0 degrees for the freezer. Use an appliance thermometer to monitor the temperature.

When it comes to cleanup, run full loads of dishes in the dishwasher – being careful not to block any moving parts. Use eco mode if your dishwasher has that setting. If you are in the market for new appliances, select Energy Star® models.

Whatever you choose to cook or how you cook it, keep in mind these simple tips to make your kitchen more efficient and save energy this holiday season.





Don and Maxine Knapp
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Don Knapp Remembers When Electricity Came to Hermosa

Jacob Boyko

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In 1947, 17-year-old Don Knapp was working as a ranch hand outside the small western South Dakota town of Hermosa.

It was still somewhat of a primitive time in South Dakota's history; While at night the cities glowed on the horizon, rural folk worked in shadowy barns and shops lit by the dim flicker of a kerosene lantern.

"We milked a lot of the time early in the morning with a lantern, and you didn't think of it as hard or odd because that's the only thing you had those days," Don recalled.

Today, the 95 year old Don and his wife, Maxine, 92, admit they sometimes take for granted the modern amenities electricity brought to rural life – from refrigeration, to lights, to easier labor on their ranch.

Even so, nearly 80 years after Black Hills Electric Cooperative ran lines to Maxine's parents' ranch where her high school friend Don worked, the couple says they still think about the life-changing impact of electricity from time to time.

"Today, we have two refrigerators and

two deep-freezers," Don said, pausing at that realization. "You sometimes don't think about it, but we didn't have that before. Nowadays we butcher beef and it's all frozen – we don't can food anymore like we used to."

Before electricity, Don explained, refrigeration on the ranch was anything but simple.

To cool the milk and keep it fresh, a gasoline-fueled pump would draw cold groundwater from the well to flow around the large milk jugs before being picked up for delivery. Household amenities like butter and cream were sometimes lowered into the well to keep them from spoiling. If you wanted to keep food in the house, a block of ice harvested in the winter was carried in from the sawdust-filled ice house and placed into a boxy cooler, dripping slowly into a puddle.

Maxine also remembers the labor-intensive chores she'd help her mother with as Don worked with her father in the field.

"It was a lot of work!" Maxine said about washing clothes. "The washing machine – it was called a Maytag – was just a round tank with a wringer on it, and you'd run the

clothes through the wringer to get the water out. Then in the winter, the clothes would freeze outside on the line – stiff as a board!"

In September, as Don left the ranch to join the navy, he recalled seeing the co-op linemen near the ranch climbing atop poles and running brand-new power lines – miles out of town.

"I remember seeing them build the lines that summer and I thought, 'My gosh, those guys are climbing clear to the top of some of the poles. How do they do that?'" Don chuckled. "Then they'd come in and wire some of these old homes built 40 or 50 years prior. It had to be an awful challenge, but people knew it had to be done and they stepped up to the plate and got it done."

Maxine remembers being in disbelief when the lightbulb in the kitchen flickered on just a few weeks later.

"You just couldn't believe it," Maxine laughed. "You had this little bulb hanging down, and it was just such a great feeling to think you could see."

The ranch house was zapped into the modern age; It wasn't long before her dad purchased a cooler and milking machine and her mom picked out an electric clothes iron.

"It really relieved a lot of manual labor when the electricity came on," Don said.

It was that deep appreciation that led Don to run for a director seat in 1987. He served 24 years on the co-op board before retiring in 2011.

"Serving on the board made me realize the value of the co-op and the need to have a system like the co-ops serve the rural communities," Don said. "It's just so hard to believe how life was so tough."

Now, close to eight decades later, having in-home electricity is just as natural to the Knapps as it is to their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

"People who were here when the lights first came on, there are not many of them around anymore," Don said. "All the people around now, lights and electricity are just part of life."

"You don't even stop to think, you just plug it in." Maxine chuckled, as their kitchen refrigerator's ice maker rumbled in the background.



HURRICANE AID

Linemen Help Restore Power After Hurricane Helene

Jacob Boyko

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Linemen from five of South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives traveled to the Southeastern U.S. in October to help restore power along Hurricane Helene's path of destruction.

The 18 linemen left Oct. 2 for Pickens, South Carolina, where Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative faced over 64,000 meter outages and more than 800 broken poles in Helene's aftermath.

Zach Hansen, a lineman from West River Electric Association, didn't think twice before he volunteered to go along.

"It's just the co-op way," he said. "There are people in need down there who lost their houses – lost their lives – and this is something we know we can do to help. It's kind of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The linemen stayed at a crowded base camp with dozens of other utility workers from all across the country. They slept on cots in a large, open army-sized tent, but with their busy schedules, they didn't spend

much time there anyway. Most days, the linemen woke at 5:30 a.m. for breakfast and worked in the field until supper at 8 p.m.

The work also presented unfamiliar challenges for the linemen; each time the crew needed to repair damaged infrastructure, they'd first have to start the labor-intensive process of clearing through debris and trees toppled by Helene's heavy wind gusts.

"When we have blizzards and ice storms in South Dakota, it's hard work – and you're trying to stay warm," Hansen explained. "But out here, there's a lot more chainsaw work and fixing wire breaks. It's not just straight miles of line lying down like we're used to at home."

By Oct. 9, fewer than 1,000 meters in Blue Ridge Electric territory remained offline, and the South





Dakota crews were dismissed to begin the 1,200-plus mile journey home.

But as the South Dakota convoy – which included bucket trucks, skid steers and ATVs – moved north, another call came in.

Jefferson Energy Cooperative in Wrens, Georgia, also faced catastrophic damage to their distribution lines, with 100% of their service territory without power after the storm. On Oct. 9, as South Dakota's linemen were driving home from South Carolina to reunite with their families, still over 10,000 homes and businesses remained without power.

Just like before, South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives answered the call.

"When our line superintendent called me that morning and asked me how we felt about going to Georgia, I said, 'well, we're right here, so we might as well go in and help,'" Bon Homme Yankton lineman Gunnar Dally said. "If they need help, we're more than willing to come."

The stop in Wrens delayed the linemen's return home by about a week, but the appreciation from the communities helped keep spirits high.

"When we were on breaks, there were people stopping to thank us for helping," Dally said. "A lot of them were very surprised when we said we were from South Dakota."

Hansen recognized another subset

of heroes: the families.

"The unsung heroes of storm jobs are the people we leave behind," he said. "My wife is at home with six kids taking care of the ranch while I'm gone. If we didn't have those people, we couldn't go out and do the things we needed to do. They are the real heroes."

SDREA General Manager Steve Barnett thanked the linemen for volunteering to help with the storm restoration efforts and for embodying

the values of South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives.

"These 18 linemen gave up time at home with their families to help people in need they've never met in a place they've never been," Barnett said. "Their selfless actions reflect what we stand for as a family of cooperatives, as South Dakotans, and as fellow Americans. We thank them for their work, their spirit and their dedication to keeping the lights on – at home, and in South Carolina and Georgia."



ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Enter to win a
**FREE Trip to
Washington, D.C.**
June 15-21, 2025



DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 7, 2025

Who is Eligible? All area high school students whose parents or guardians are members of Black Hills Electric Cooperative and at least **16 years** of age at the time of the tour.

What Does It Cost? Airfare, hotel, and meals are **FREE!** Students are required to provide their own spending money for snacks and souvenirs.

When is it Held? The weeklong trip will take place from June 15-21, 2025. Participants will meet for an orientation meeting on Sunday, June 15 at the Brandon Golf Course. The group will bus to Minneapolis and then fly the next morning to D.C. on Monday, June 16, and return to South Dakota on Saturday, June 21. A commercial bus will be used for transportation while in D.C.

How do I Qualify? Each applicant must submit an essay, not to exceed 500 words, on the following topic: ***“As technology evolves, electric cooperatives face new opportunities and challenges. How do you see technology shaping the future of energy?”*** All essays must be typed and include a cover sheet that states the title of the essay, the applicant’s name and address, name of parent or guardian, and the name of your school.

**Contact Michelle Fischer at 605-673-4461
email: michellef@bhec.coop
or visit www.bhec.coop for more information**

AREA MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR 2025

Black Hills Electric Cooperative (BHEC) is in full preparation mode for the upcoming 2025 area meetings. We are excited to gather with our members to share a warm bowl of soup, delicious desserts, and great conversations. For over 35 years, our directors and employees have looked forward to these area meetings, which are more than just gatherings—they're a celebration of communities and our way of showing gratitude to our members.

Each year, BHEC proudly partners with local civic organizations to co-host these area meetings. The cooperative provides a monetary donation to support the event, while our civic partners prepare the meal. Any donations collected during the meeting go directly to the co-hosting organization, helping to fund valuable projects and initiatives within the community. It's a tradition that reflects our cooperative values and strengthens the bonds we share with the towns and people we serve.

It's a wonderful opportunity to enjoy a free meal, catch up with friends and neighbors, and get to know the BHEC team. Together, let's celebrate our cooperative values, share ideas, and foster a sense of unity that makes our community unique.

Bring your appetite and join us at one of the locations listed below. We look forward to seeing you there, sharing a meal, and connecting with the people who make our cooperative strong!



The 2024 Rockerville Area Meeting was well attended! The community enjoyed a variety of different meal and dessert options.



The Hermosa community gathered together at the 2024 Hermosa Area Meeting.



Meal will be served from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. at all meetings.

AREA MEETING	DATE	LOCATION	CO-SPONSOR
Oelrichs	February 13th	Oelrichs Community Hall	Oelrichs Rodeo Association
Whispering Pines	February 17th	Whispering Pines VFD	Whispering Pines VFD
Rockerville	February 21st	Rockerville Community Hall	Rockerville Community Hall
Johnson Siding	February 27th	Rimrock Community Hall	Rimrock Community Club
Hermosa	March 7th	Hermosa Elementary School	Battle Creek Fire District
Rochford	April 11th	Rochford Community Hall	Rochford Community Club



STAYING SAFE

First responders put out a fire near Belle Fourche.
Photo submitted by Butte Electric Cooperative.

Butte Electric Cooperative Connects With First Responders

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

October marks First Responders Month, a time to honor the dedication and courage of those who rush toward danger to keep their communities safe. This fall, electric cooperatives across the country expressed their gratitude to these everyday heroes who are always prepared to protect lives and the essential infrastructure that supports local neighborhoods.

Day or night, regardless of the weather, first responders answer the call, whether it's battling a blaze or responding to a medical emergency. When it comes to keeping the community safe, their collaboration with local electric co-ops is key for both local residents and the first responders themselves. Together, they work to ensure that emergencies are managed quickly, effectively and, most importantly, safely.

In September, Butte Electric further strengthened its ties and

communications with local first responders following an eventful summer by hosting a series of safety demonstrations for emergency crews in Meade and Butte Counties and the U.S. Forest Service.

"Earlier this year we faced several incidents that resulted in exposed power lines near first responders," said Matt Sleep, chief executive officer of Butte Electric. "In one case, we had a situation west of Spearfish where strong winds brought down a billboard, exposing lines that sparked and started a fire."

Both Butte Electric and the local fire department responded to the emergency, de-energizing the lines and containing the small grass fire. In a separate incident, a driver suffered a medical emergency and crashed into an electrical pedestal. Although the driver died in the accident, the actions of first responders and the electric cooperative prevented further injuries. The incident, among others, prompted Butte Electric to take proactive steps in preparation for the next possible emergency.

"We wanted to both educate responders and build some rapport, so when they see a power line, they know who to call and that they are comfortable getting in contact with us," said Sleep.

Butte Electric employees organized and led a hands-on safety training using the South Dakota Rural Electric Association's high voltage demonstration trailer, a specialized tool



that highlights the very real dangers of electricity. During the session, linemen demonstrated how electricity can arc, or jump, from one connection to another, always seeking the easiest path to the ground.

The training is one that linemen across the state have facilitated, which includes a memorable demonstration involving a grapefruit to show how contact with electricity impacts organic material. On the outside, the grapefruit appears undamaged after contact with an electrified line but cutting it open reveals it's been cooked from the inside.

The training left an impression with Trevor Papenfuss, an assistant fire management fire officer who has served with the U.S. Forest Service in the Spearfish area for more than 30 years. Papenfuss was just one of roughly 30 U.S. Forest Service members who attended the demonstration.

"We deal with incidents involving electricity at least once a year, if not more," Papenfuss said. "Butte

Electric provided us with a lot of valuable information and a powerful demonstration. Seeing a grapefruit burn from the inside out makes a big impact and impression of just how dangerous live electricity can be. Several of our new wildland firefighters attended and they took away information that will stay with them for a long time."

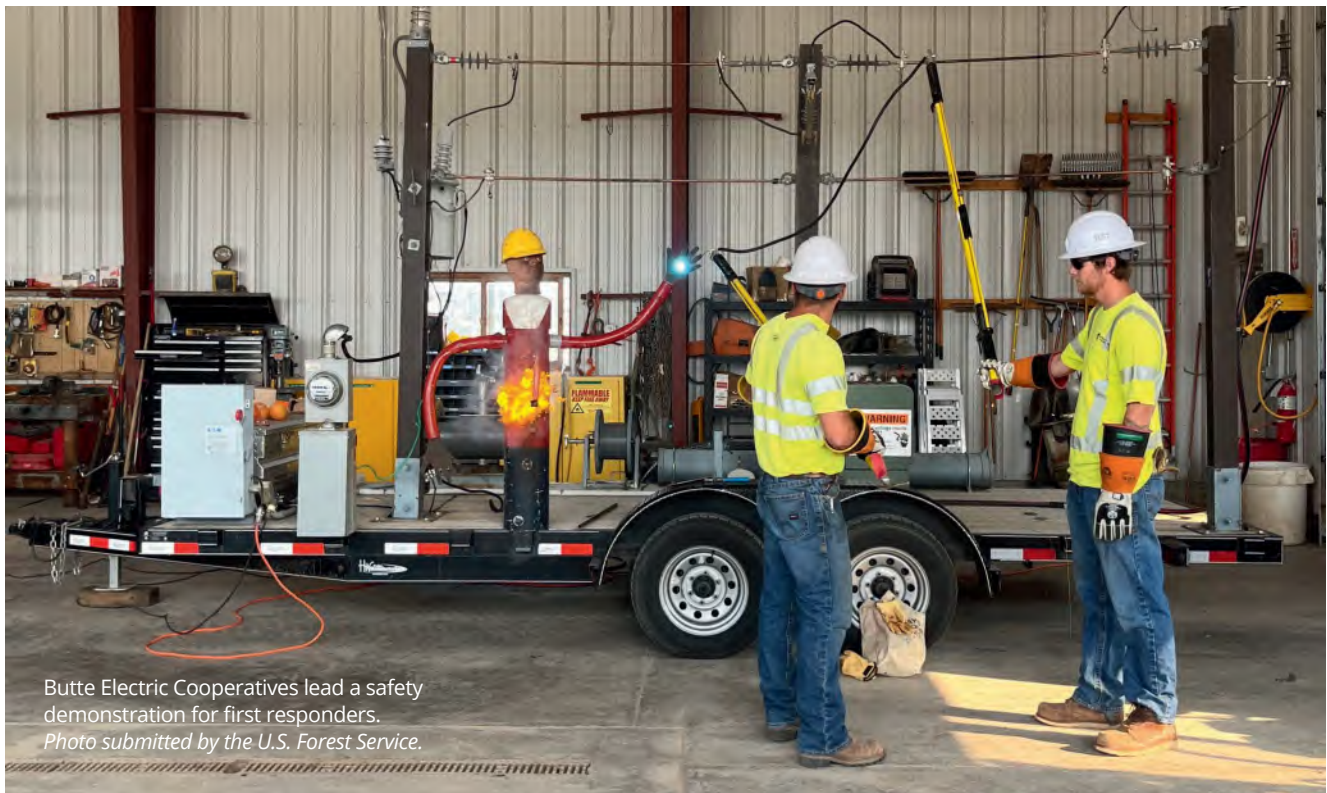
In a separate training tailored to the Sturgis Fire Department, Volunteer Fire Chief of the Sturgis Fire Department Scott Lensegrav said the training was impactful for his fellow volunteers. In addition to noting the value of the demonstration, Lensegrav highlighted the importance of maintaining a strong line of communication between electric service providers like Butte Electric and the fire department, especially during an emergency.

"In a situation involving power lines or electricity, the first thing we do is communicate with dispatch to try and figure out whose power line is involved in the emergency," said Lensegrav.

"The training was just another step in building good communication between our department and utilities. It was also great to have the refresher for our volunteers who have been with us for years and a good learning tool for the new volunteers that are coming into the service."

Looking forward, Sleep plans to continue strengthening the relationship between local first responders and Butte Electric for a safer future in their service area.

"It's all about building relationships and familiarity so that first responders know who to talk to and don't hesitate to call," said Sleep. "We deeply appreciate our first responders and want to help them however we can. These emergency personnel and volunteers are what make our communities great, and we just want to play our part in keeping them and our neighborhoods safe."



Butte Electric Cooperatives lead a safety demonstration for first responders.
Photo submitted by the U.S. Forest Service.



DRY FORK STATION

Michelle Fischer
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On September 10th, thirty-five members and employees of Black Hills Electric Cooperative visited the Dry Fork Station, located seven miles north of Gillette, WY. This coal-fired power plant is owned by Basin Electric Power Cooperative, a consumer-owned regional cooperative based in Bismarck. Basin Electric generates and transmits electricity to 141 rural electric systems across nine states, including Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, serving about three million member-owners.

Since its inception in 2011, Dry Fork Station has achieved notable milestones, including a remarkable safety record during construction, which boasted over six million man-hours worked without a lost-time accident. The facility was constructed at a cost of \$1.35 billion.

The station is fueled by sub-bituminous coal sourced from the nearby Dry Fork Mine, connected by a one-mile conveyor system. Utilizing pulverized coal technology along with state-of-the-art pollution control measures, Dry Fork Station operates with minimal emissions.

Additionally, the facility houses the Wyoming Integrated Test Center

and the Wyoming CarbonSAFE project, both dedicated to advancing carbon capture technologies.

Electricity generation at the Dry Fork Station involves heating water to create steam, which spins a turbine linked to a generator. This process is consistent across various energy sources, including coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear fission, although power plants themselves can differ significantly in design and operation.

The Dry Fork Station features a closed-loop water-to-steam cycle, with makeup water added as necessary to ensure water quality and quantity. Notably, it is a zero-discharge facility, employing dry cooling technology to conserve water resources. Most of the electricity produced is transmitted through 125 miles of 230,000-volt transmission lines to substations in northeast Wyoming, integrating into the broader transmission grid.

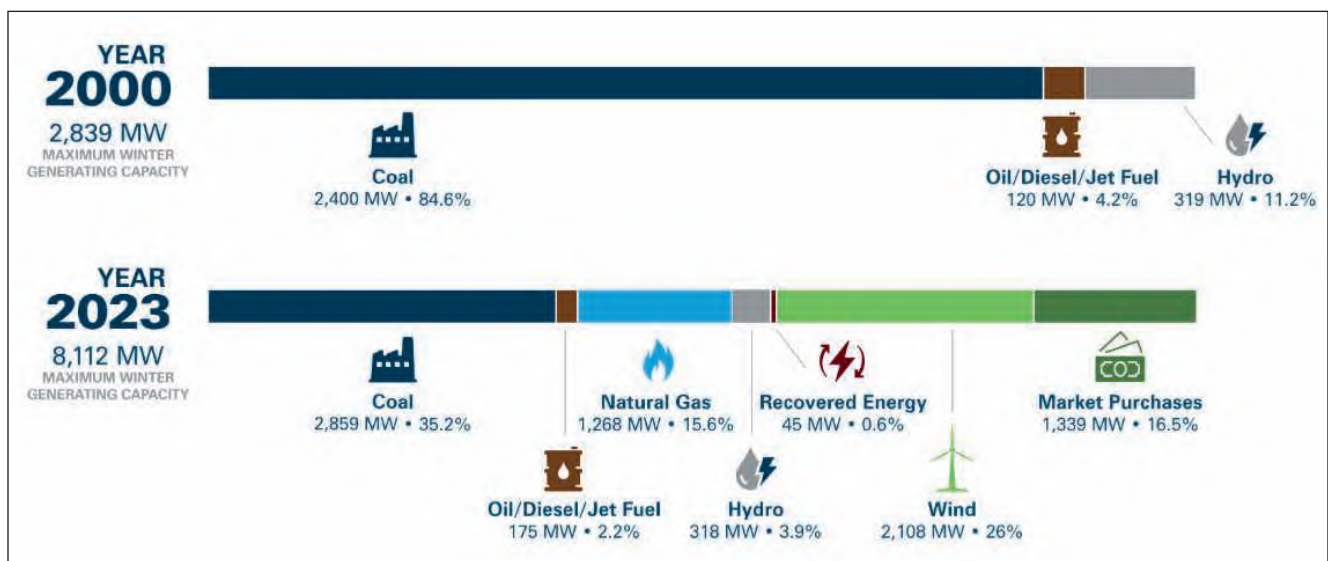


During the tour, participants had the opportunity to explore both the coal mine and the power station. Minus a malfunction with the A/C on the charter bus, feedback from attendees indicated that everyone enjoyed the experience and gained valuable insights into their energy sources. Refer to the image below to see the current breakdown of energy sources in Basin's portfolio compared to 2020.

We plan to offer this tour again in 2025. Please let us know if you're interested in being added to the attendee list!



**2025 BUS TOUR DATE:
SEPTEMBER 10TH, 2025**





DEC. 7
Santa at the Zoo
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Great Plains Zoo
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-7003

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.

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

NOV. 29-DEC. 29 (WEEKENDS)
1880 Train Holiday Express (Spiked! 21+)
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2222
 1880train.com

NOV. 29-DEC. 29 (WEEKENDS)
1880 Train Holiday Express (First Class)
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2222
 1880train.com

DEC. 1-31
Olde Tyme Christmas at participating businesses, Lane of Lights Viewing
 Hill City, SD

DEC. 5
Christmas on the Prairie
 4 p.m.
 Main Street
 Miller, SD

DEC. 7
KJAM Parade of Lights
 5:30 p.m.
 Madison, SD
 605-256-4514

DEC. 7
Holiday Open House
 ArtForms Gallery
 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-4894

DEC. 8
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

DEC. 14
Hermosa Parade & Chili Cookoff
 2 p.m. – Ice Skating
 3 p.m.-5 p.m. – Santa, Hay Rides, Chili Cookoff
 5 p.m.-5:30 p.m. – Hot Chocolate & Cookies
 5:30 p.m. – Tree Lighting
 6 p.m. – Parade
 Hermosa, SD
 605-209-0907

JAN. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
Granite Sports Fantastic Friday
 3 p.m.-6 p.m.
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2121

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

JAN. 14
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 14
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 16
Approach to Inflammation Class
 6:30-7:30 p.m.
 The Wellness Way
 Hill City, SD

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

JAN. 22
Hill City Garden Club 'Gardening With Children'
 Janessa Bixel, Ed.D
 1 p.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 23, 25
A Trip to Chile
 6:30 p.m. Thursday
 5:30 p.m. Saturday
 Mangiamo Pizzeria
 Reservations Required
 Hill City, SD

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