

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Co-ops Power Next Generation

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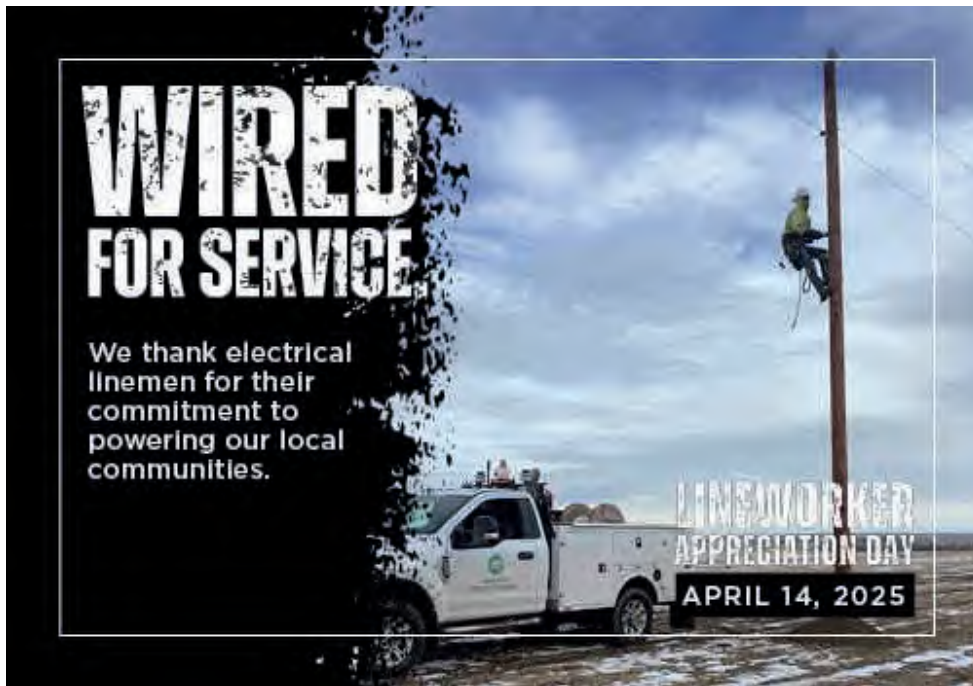
Photo by Amanda Haugen

Keeping the Lights On: Honoring Our Linemen's Dedication

Each day before dawn, our linemen are up preparing for the work day. Dressed in fire-retardant gear, they tackle their daily tasks while staying ready to respond at a moment's notice to any unexpected challenges the day may bring.

As we recognize Lineman Appreciation Day on April 14, it's an opportunity to reflect on the essential role they play in our daily lives. Their work goes beyond climbing poles and repairing lines. Whether they're responding to outages during a Black Hills winter storm, fixing equipment in a remote ranch setting, or maintaining the system on a hot summer day, their resilience and dedication ensure we have reliable power when we need it most.

Black Hills Electric Cooperative linemen cover vast stretches of our six-county service territory, building, maintaining, and repairing our local electric system. Their expertise keeps the lights on, businesses running, and critical services operating. In times of crisis, when storms unleash their fury, our linemen are the first to step up.



They endure long hours in treacherous conditions, facing wind, rain, or snow as they work to restore electricity. Their efforts bring not only power but also reassurance and a sense of normalcy for our members.

Their commitment doesn't stop at our service lines, it reaches deep into the fabric of our community and beyond. Our linemen are volunteers at heart, giving their time and skills to local causes, from supporting youth programs to pitching in at community events. Their concern for neighbors shines through in every

task they take on. And when duty calls, they are there. Whether aiding fellow co-ops across South Dakota or tackling massive outages in neighboring states after disasters strike. This spirit embodies one of the core cooperative principles: Cooperation Among Cooperatives.

This month, we encourage our members to take a moment to appreciate these hardworking employees who ensure safe, reliable electricity every day. The next time you flip a switch, remember the linemen who make it possible. They are truly wired for service and dedicated to illuminating life.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC

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YOUTH TOUR WINNER

Holly Nielsen has been selected as this year's recipient of Black Hills Electric Cooperative's all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. for the 2025 Youth Tour. This incredible opportunity will allow her to immerse herself in the rich history of our nation, explore the inner workings of the U.S. government, and gain a deeper understanding of the vital role electric cooperatives play in communities across the country. From visiting iconic landmarks like the Lincoln Memorial and Capitol Hill to engaging in educational

sessions with peers from around the nation, Holly's journey promises to be both inspiring and transformative.

We are incredibly proud to support the next generation of leaders through initiatives like the Youth Tour, and Holly's selection is a testament to her potential and dedication. We're thrilled to send her on this adventure and can't wait to hear all about her experiences when she returns from our nation's capital.

Congratulations, Holly - enjoy this well-deserved trip!!

SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Lauren Knapp, daughter of Suzy and Chad Knapp, has been awarded the Black Hills Electric/Basin \$1,000 scholarship in recognition of her outstanding achievements and future potential. A student at Stevens High School, Lauren has distinguished herself through both academic excellence and extracurricular involvement.

Throughout high school, she has been a dedicated athlete, competing in multiple volleyball and golf seasons and demonstrating strong teamwork and perseverance. Beyond athletics, she has actively engaged in various extracurricular activities, further showcasing her well-rounded character and commitment to personal growth.

Lauren will continue her academic and athletic journey at Chadron State College, where she plans to major in Chemistry with pre-pharmacy focus. She will also bring her competitive drive to the college's golf team, proudly representing Chadron State while honing her skills on the course. Her dedication to both academics and athletics reflects her ambition and determination as she embarks on this next chapter. Congratulations, Lauren!



Distracted Driving

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Distracted driving is any activity that diverts attention from driving, including talking or texting on your phone, eating and drinking, talking to people in your vehicle, fiddling with the stereo, entertainment or navigation system – anything that takes your attention away from the task of safe driving.

Texting is the most alarming distraction. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for five seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

You cannot drive safely unless the task of driving has your full attention. Any non-driving activity you engage in is a potential distraction and increases your risk of crashing.

Consequences

Using a cell phone while driving creates enormous potential for deaths and injuries on U.S. roads. In 2022, 3,308 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.

Get Involved

We can all play a part in the fight to save lives by ending distracted driving.



Teens

Teens can be the best messengers with their peers, so we encourage them to speak up when they see a friend driving while distracted, to have their friends sign a pledge to never drive distracted, to become involved in their local Students Against Destructive Decisions chapter, and to share messages on social media that remind their friends, family and neighbors not to make the deadly choice to drive distracted.

Parents

Parents first must lead by example – by never driving distracted – as well as have a talk with their young driver about distraction and all of the responsibilities that come with driving. Have everyone in the family sign the pledge to commit to distraction-free driving. Remind your teen driver that in states with graduated driver licensing (GDL), a violation of distracted-driving laws could mean a delayed or suspended license.

Educators and Employers

Educators and employers can play a part, too. Spread the word at your school or workplace about the dangers of distracted driving. Ask your students to commit to distraction-free driving or set a company policy on distracted driving.



"Do not climb trees near power lines."

Naomi Krcil, Age 7

Naomi cautions readers about the dangers of climbing trees near power lines. Thank you for your picture, Naomi! Naomi's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil, members of Charles Mix Electric Association.

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.

Let's Have BRUNCH

EASY BREAKFAST MUFFIN

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 tsps. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
2 eggs (beaten)
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup milk

Method

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a 12 cup muffin tin with paper liners or spray each cup with cooking spray. In a mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt.

Add in eggs, oil and milk and mix only until combined, don't beat or over mix or they will be dry! Fold in 1/2 cup mix-ins if desired.

Scoop into prepared muffin tin and bake for 15 to 18 minutes or just until golden and a toothpick comes clean. Serve with butter and jam.

Lyon-Lincoln Electric Member

UMM BRUNCH

Ingredients:

Scallops
English Muffin
Eggs

Method

Soak scallops in cold water in fridge for two hours, pat dry, sauté in butter and garlic until opaque (approx. 4 min). Put on toasted English muffin. Cook poached eggs in 10-inch skillet with 1 tbsp. vinegar (3-5 mins.) Remove with slotted spoon and drain on paper towel. Add to the scallops and top with Hollandaise Sauce.

Hollandaise Sauce:

Cut 1/2 stick butter into thirds. In double boiler, combine 1 piece of butter and 3 egg yolks, 1 tbsp. lemon juice and 1 tbsp. water. Place it over boiling water and cook while whisking rapidly. Add remaining butter one at a time, continue to cook. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Kari Reder
Northern Electric Member

SAUSAGE AND EGG TACOS

Ingredients:

4 oz. breakfast sausage, casings removed
1 tbsp. perfect pinch roasted garlic bell pepper seasoning
6 eggs
2 tbsps. milk
1 tbsp. butter
6 small flour tortillas, warmed
1/4 cup shredded Mexican cheese blend
1 med. ripe avocado, peeled, pitted and sliced

Method

Heat medium skillet on medium-high heat. Add sausage and Seasoning; cook and stir until sausage is browned and crumbled. Remove sausage from pan; keep warm. Drain fat from pan.

Beat eggs and milk in medium bowl with wire whisk. Melt butter in same skillet on medium heat. Add egg mixture; cook and stir until eggs are firm.

For each taco, place one tortilla on plate. Top with eggs, sausage, cheese and avocado. Sprinkle with additional seasoning, if desired.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Prep Now for Summer Savings



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Q: How can I prepare my home for lower energy bills this summer?

A: Spring is in the air, and before you know it, summer will be here. There are many ways to get a jump-start on preventing summertime high bills and energy waste.

Add your cooling equipment to the spring-cleaning checklist. An annual tune-up by a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) professional should include refrigerant charge, airflow adjustment and condenser and evaporator fan coil cleaning. This helps maximize your system's efficiency and the lifespan of your equipment, reducing wasted energy and costs.

Some HVAC companies offer discounts for cleaning equipment during the months when they are less busy. Once high temperatures hit, they are more likely to be swamped with calls to repair or replace broken equipment. Signing up for an annual maintenance plan may provide additional savings.

A dirty furnace filter can waste energy by causing your system to work harder. Make sure you have a stack of replacement filters ready to go so you are more likely to replace them as needed. Filters tend to be less expensive if you buy them in bulk. When I recently shopped for filters for my home,

the per-filter price was about half as much for a 12-pack as it was for a two-pack.

Ductless heat pumps, also known as mini-splits, have a filter in the indoor unit, or head, which should be cleaned. If you clean the indoor filter yourself, be sure to turn the unit off before removing the filter and let it dry completely before putting it back.

As we transition from cool to warm weather, keep an eye on your thermostat settings. The Department of Energy recommends setting cooling temperatures to 78 degrees when you are home and higher when you are away. You can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day.

One way to feel cooler is using fans in the room you're in during the day or when you're sleeping. Using a fan can make a warm room feel cooler without having to adjust the thermostat. Remember: fans cool people, not rooms. Turn fans off in unoccupied rooms.

If your ceiling fan has a reverse function, make sure you flip the switch so it blows air down into the living space. The reverse function is great at circulating warm air in the winter, and you can maximize the comfort benefit of a fan by switching the flow of air seasonally.

Another consideration before summer hits is your home's impact on peak load—when demand for electricity is highest. This typically occurs in the morning when people are getting ready for work and school, and in the evening when they return home. Your electric cooperative must manage the energy use of all its consumers, which can be a challenge. Consider starting the dishwasher before you go to sleep or starting a load of laundry outside of your utility's peak times.

If you have a photovoltaic solar system, run your dishwasher or do laundry when your system produces the most electricity, which is typically during the sunny mid-day.

Cooking outdoors in summer is a great way to save energy. Using the stove or oven heats your kitchen, which requires more energy for cooling. Get the grill cleaned now so that you are ready to enjoy outdoor cooking.

Incorporate these tips into your summer prep to save energy and lower your bills.



From Dell Rapids to Nashville

Julie Eddy Remembers South Dakota Roots

Jacob Boyko

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Amid the hustle and bustle of Nashville's legendary music scene, where neon lights shine over the iconic clubs of "Honky Tonk highway," a rising star from South Dakota is making her mark.

Known for songs including "On My Way to You" and "Two Truths & a Lie," Julie Eddy captivates the music scene with her distinctive voice, heartfelt songwriting and energizing performances.

But before the glamour of Music City came years of hard work, dedication and an unshakeable desire for doing what she loved.

Years ago, in the small eastern South Dakota town of Dell Rapids, 10-year old Julie Eddy discovered her love of music.

"My sister had come home after learning how to sing the national anthem at school, and she was singing it for me," Julie recalled. "And of course, as a big sister, I told her, 'You're doing it wrong, this is how you do it.' My mom came around the corner and asked which one of us was singing, and I told her it was me. She said, 'wait a second, that's actually pretty good!'"

With a little encouragement, Julie signed up to sing the national anthem at Dell Rapids high school basketball games.

"That was the first time I had ever sang in front of an audience," she said. "I just loved it – the adrenaline of it, the feeling of it."

It came as no surprise to Julie's mom, Teri, who says her daughter was never shy about performing, regularly enthralling the family living room with performances of Disney movie scenes.

Watching Julie's singing progress from basketball games, to church, to charities, then to weddings, Teri realized that Julie's performances weren't just a hobby anymore.

"That was when we really knew that she had kind of an amazing talent, and really the ability to get up in front of people and perform," Teri explained.

When Julie turned 21, she started singing in bars and restaurants across South Dakota a couple of weekends each month. In 2018, looking for more venues, she moved to Minneapolis.

"I was at every bar, every place that I knew that had music, like begging somebody to get me shows," Julie chuckled. "I was playing four, sometimes five nights a week on top of my day job."

Julie's lucky break came at a songwriting workshop when she entered a writing contest. As a winner, she was invited to Nashville to write with some of the industry's top writers.

In Music City, Julie knew she was home, and in 2021, she



moved to pursue her singing career full time.

"I know it sounds corny, but I feel like I wasn't really given a choice," Julie added. "It was just in me, and I fell in love with it."

Since then, Julie has recorded an album, numerous singles, and has become a regular performer in the Nashville music scene.

But diving headfirst into the music industry wasn't without difficulty, Julie found.

"Where I grew up, everyone helps everyone," she explained. "Dell Rapids almost felt familial and you could trust everyone. The world outside Dell Rapids is not like that and sometimes you learn that the hard way."

Julie continued, "In this industry, they say you're going to hear 'no' 100 times before you hear one 'yes,' and you're going to get the door slammed in your face and the rug pulled out from underneath you. I took it with a grain of salt, but it's absolutely true. Those stories you hear about somebody making it overnight or being discovered in a bar have at least 10 or 15 years of work behind them."

But beyond all of the perks of Nashville's music industry, Julie's motivation to sing is a little bit closer to home. It's thinking back to when she was a little girl, driving with her dad in his red Chevy Trailblazer across the plains of eastern South Dakota listening to her old favorites – Shania Twain, Trisha Yearwood and Sarah Evans, for example – as she sang every word, feeling inexplicably happy in those precious moments.

"People will send me videos of my song playing through their car radio, and it's like the most surreal feeling in the world," Julie said. "And I wonder, what if there's a little girl doing that to my song, the same way I fell in love with music?"

There's also some surreality for Teri at times; moments like watching hometown neighbors load onto a bus to watch Julie perform on tour, or when a new single releases and she learns every word, singing along to a voice she cherishes so deeply.

"Julie inspires me, because no matter what anyone says, she has followed her heart and that has led her to the success she has," Teri said. "She's always believed in herself, even at hard moments in her life, but you just knew she would figure it out. That's a pretty amazing thing to see in your kid."

FROM CELEBRATION TO INSPIRATION

Megawatt welcomes members to the football tailgate party hosted by West River Electric.
Photo by Amanda Haugen

How Electric Co-ops Are Powering the Next Generation

Frank Turner

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April marks Lineman Appreciation Month, the perfect time to spotlight the essential role that electric cooperative employees play in their communities. In line with their commitment to education and community involvement, electric cooperatives are celebrating lineworkers through youth engagement initiatives, and it all stems from one of the electric cooperatives' seven cooperative principles: concern for community. For years, programs such as Cooperatives in the Classroom have provided schoolchildren with innovative, hands-on learning opportunities, demonstrating the critical work electric cooperatives perform in their communities.

Whether it's engaging youth through a Neon Leon safety demonstration or taking students to explore Basin Electric's energy infrastructure during the SDREA Youth Excursion, electric cooperatives across the state are constantly finding new and exciting ways to engage the youth within their communities and inspire the next generation. Below are two new avenues for spurring youth engagement in cooperatives across the state:

Megawatt Mascot

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Megawatt, Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative's newest lineman mascot. This summer, select electric cooperatives in western South Dakota are suiting up to introduce Megawatt – a friendly-faced lineman adorned with a hard hat, safety gloves and

bright red cape – to their members.

"The goal is to get younger kids to start thinking about linemen in a certain way – almost larger than life and the backbone of the electric cooperative," said Rushmore Electric Chief Marketing Officer Matt Brunner. "The hope is that it translates into them considering the lineman profession when they get older."

Megawatt has already made his debut at several member appreciation events, bringing high-energy fun to parades and tailgates as a true champion of the cooperative spirit. So far, Brunner said the mascot has left a big impression.

"The kids and adults have loved it, and the interactions have been great," Brunner said. "If nothing else, it's unique. People are constantly asking, 'Who is that?' The costume does a great job of starting the conversation: what is a lineman, and what do they do?"

Beyond lineworkers, cooperatives offer a diverse range of career paths.

From engineers to accountants, the cooperative world is full of exciting roles that include opportunities in communications, where professionals share the cooperative's achievements and member services, where employees work directly with the community to meet their needs.

Brunner said he expects the idea to continue gaining momentum over the coming months with new avenues of appreciation for linemen and a better understanding of the day in the life of a lineman, as well as other exciting careers in the electric cooperative industry.

STEM Gains Steam

Jennifer Gross, education and outreach coordinator at East River Electric Power Cooperative, has inspired classrooms for years with a variety of engaging demonstrations, covering everything from science to safety. Last year, Gross introduced a new activity to spark curiosity while incorporating STEM – an approach to education that integrates science, technology, engineering and mathematics into learning. The result led to a crafting activity where kids use simple materials to fashion their own wind turbine.

"We are always trying to come up with new ideas for students," Gross said. "Incorporating STEM into this project seemed like a natural fit because both teachers and students are very receptive to it."

The idea is straightforward. Students construct a small-scale turbine from wooden dowels, fins, and a motor capable of generating power. Once completed, they connect their tiny turbine to a multimeter, which measures the energy generated. Instead of relying on natural wind, students use a fan to simulate a windy day. By altering their model turbines, students can find the optimal design for the best output of energy. And just like that, students can step into the role of engineers.



Megawatt is joined by U.S. Air Force personnel enjoying the Annual Base Picnic.
Photo by Amanda Haugen

Gross said the students and the project have a lot in common. Once the building begins, the students' minds begin to whirl – just like a turbine. The activity prompts question after question: Why does the wind blow? How does a wind turbine work? How does the shape and weight of the blade influence the experiment?

"The students enjoy being engineers for this project," Gross said. "They enjoy having the freedom to choose their materials and design. There's no right or wrong way to do it, and they enjoy that. I mention to the students that careers in wind energy are in high demand and some are 4-year degrees and others are fewer years, but the push for renewable energy sources is growing and our state produces plenty of wind."

Whether it's through a hands-on activity or an engaging mascot, cooperatives aim to not only educate but inspire, ensuring that today's students can become tomorrow's linemen, engineers, communicators or member service representatives. By

sparking curiosity and introducing young people to the world of cooperatives early on, they're opening the door to careers that keep communities powered and connected.



This is just one example of how students create wind turbines using materials such as balsa wood, foam, card stock, cardboard and paper cups.
Photo by Jennifer Gross



Manager of Operations

Bill Brisk - 35 years

VETERANS OF VOLTAGE: OVER 300 YEARS OF COMBINED EXPERIENCE



System Coordinator

Jesse Sorenson - 22 years



Foreman

Dean Whitney - 37 years



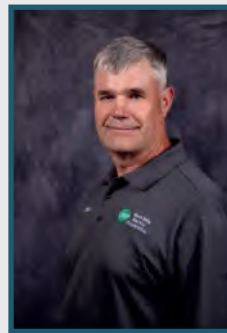
Staking Technician

Lonnie Schryvers - 30 years



Journeyman Lineman

Mark Svoboda - 25 years



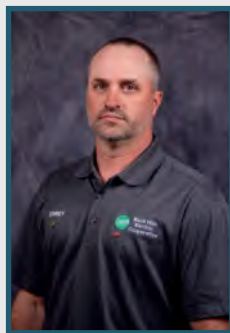
Journeyman Lineman

Travis Carlin - 25 years



Staking Technician

Rory Halverson - 23 years



Journeyman Lineman

Corey Scott - 20 years



Foreman

Beau Bradeen - 18 years



Journeyman Lineman

Casey Ellerton - 18 years



Journeyman Lineman

Kenny Parker - 17 years



Journeyman Lineman

Danny Dooley - 9 years



Meter Technician

Jeremiah Keller - 7 years



ROW Technician

Scott Schramm - 7 years



Journeyman Lineman

Carlos Rodriguez - 6 years



Journeyman Lineman

Dominick Schooler - 2 years



Apprentice Lineman

Tate Skaare - 1 year

Streamlining for You: Annual Meeting Report Joins Cooperative Connections

This year, we are excited to announce a small but impactful change in how we share our Annual Meeting report with you. Traditionally, we have distributed this information through a standalone mailing or separate publication. However, starting in 2025, the full Annual Meeting report, including the CEO/General Manager's report, the President's report, financials, annual meeting minutes, and other key annual meeting news, will be included in the June edition of the Cooperative Connections.

Why the change? It's all about efficiency and stewardship. By consolidating the report into our existing newsletter, we're reducing printing and postage costs without sacrificing the transparency and engagement you expect from us. This move reflects our ongoing commitment to managing resources wisely while keeping you informed about the cooperative's performance, plans, and priorities. You'll still get all the details you need, delivered right to your mailbox alongside the stories and updates you already enjoy.

We're proud to adapt in ways that strengthen BHEC's financial health and sustainability, all while staying true to our mission of serving you, our members. Look for the Annual Meeting report in the June 2025 Cooperative Connection. As always, feel free to reach out with any questions or feedback. Together, we're keeping BHEC strong and connected.

ANNUAL MEETING SAVE THE DATE: MAY 29TH, 2025

We are excited to invite you to the 80th Annual Meeting of Black Hills Electric Cooperative, a milestone event celebrating eight decades of delivering reliable power and strengthening our community. Join us on Thursday, May 29, 2025, at the Ramkota Convention Center in Rapid City, South Dakota, for an evening filled with updates, connection, and cooperative spirit.

This special gathering is your opportunity to hear directly from your board of directors and leadership team about your cooperative. We'll also hold our board election, ensuring members continue to have a voice in their cooperative.

Stay tuned for more details, including the schedule and registration information, in upcoming issues of Cooperative Connections. Whether you're a longtime attendee or joining us for the first time, we'd love to celebrate 80 years of powering life's moments with you.

Mark your calendars for May 29th at the Ramkota Convention Center. We look forward to seeing you there!





DIGGING SAFELY

**Call 811 Before You Dig
Every Dig. Every Time.**

Jocelyn Johnson

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Every year, underground utility lines are damaged by homeowners and contractors who dig without calling 811. This single call is a crucial step in any project. Striking a water, gas or power line can cause serious injuries, costly repairs and service outages for an entire neighborhood. Whether you're beginning construction on a major project or are simply planting a tree, calling 811 before you dig is a free and simple solution to what could potentially be considerable damage.

What is 811?

The South Dakota One-Call System, or 811, is a mandatory statewide

one-call notification system that was established by South Dakota Statute in 1993. 811 is now recognized as the national "Call Before You Dig" number in the U.S., designed to safeguard people and protect underground utilities. It's a free service that coordinates with your utility providers to help locate and mark underground lines.

Codi Gregg, executive director for South Dakota 811, said, "The main purpose of the program is to avoid digging into any utility and potentially causing a loss of life, loss of property, or any infrastructure buried in the ground."

"We are fully funded by the utilities who want to protect the services they provide," Gregg continued. "It is



South Dakota state law that you contact 811 two business days before you dig.”

South Dakota has underground utility lines for electricity, gas, water, sewage and telecommunications. Inadvertently hitting one of these lines could cause power outages, property damage, water contamination, gas leaks, legal liabilities and injury.

Gregg explained that when an excavator makes the 811 call before they dig, utilities receive the locate and have 48 hours to mark all lines in the designated area with color-coded flags or paint.

“If you happen to dig into a utility or find one that was not located while excavating, you have to report that to 811. If you happen to dig into a gas line or anything toxic, you must call 911 first, then 811.”

How It Works

Contractors, homeowners, ranchers and farmers can easily make a request for underground utility lines to be marked by

following these steps before every project.

1. Call 811 or submit an online request at least 48 hours prior to your project.
 - Information can be found online at www.sdonecall.com.
2. Wait for utility markings.
 - Utility companies will send professionals to mark buried lines using color-coded paint or flags.
3. Get locates on secondary or privately-owned lines if needed.
4. Check markings.
 - Confirm all utility companies listed on your ticket have responded to the request after the two-business days have passed.
5. Dig safely.

Real-Life Examples of Hitting Underground Utility Lines

Contractor Hits Unmarked Secondary Line

Tom Lundberg, member services manager from H-D Electric Cooperative in Clear Lake, S.D., gives the following account of a contact made to a secondary line:

“Normal situations start out like this – South Dakota 811 calls are made from an excavator or member (persons doing the work), and flags and paint go on the ground marking the underground services. This is a normal occurrence. However, some digs are more complicated, and there may be what we call secondary wires, pipes, sewer lines, etc. located in the dig area as well. The words primary and secondary are confusing to some people and they assume that all is well after the 811 call is made. Primary lines are owned and operated by the utility. Secondary lines are member-owned lines that are not marked by any utility. They must be marked by the member-owner of the property.

Unfortunately, we have had many of these lines hit during a dig, which makes it an emergency service call. One example is when we had a 600-amp service for a member that was damaged by a contractor. The call came in to us, and we responded to the site. We realized it could have been a very dangerous situation if the contractor would have entered the dig. Luckily, they guarded the hole until we arrived. The underground wires were extremely damaged, and the contact did not take out the transformer fuse or any kind of overcurrent protection. When I arrived, there was water in the hole, and I could hear the muddy water boiling. At that time, I assumed it was still energized. The first thing I did was turn the power off and assess the extent of the damage. The mud and water were so hot that I had to wait for a while for it to cool off. Repairs were made and everything was put back together. I double checked my work, then turned the power back on. This happened because secondary locates were not completed – resulting

in a three-hour delay for the business and a costly repair.

We have had many of these calls over the years, and we want to communicate that anyone digging for a project must ensure all the dig area is marked for primary and secondary functions (wire, pipe, gas, telephone, sewer).

Long story short, the impact of not marking all the dig area can cost you time, loss of production, money and even worse – injury or death.”

Out-of-State Contractor Hits Underground Power Line

Mike Stadler, manager of electric operations from Grand Electric Cooperative in Bison, S.D., gives the following account of a contact made by company digging gravel:

“We had a dig-in a couple of years ago at a gravel pit. The county contracted a crushing company out of state to mine more gravel from an existing pit they had rights to. The crushing company started by digging test holes with a bulldozer. They would take the bulldozer and dig a hole about eight feet deep, just one dozer width wide, to see how good the gravel was before they committed to mining the whole area. We had underground cable around the pit. When they were exploring new areas to mine, they dug right through our cable and didn’t know it (keep in mind the test holes are 8 feet deep, and our cable is four feet deep). They dug the hole, went in and looked at the gravel, decided it wasn’t worth it, and covered the hole back up. Meanwhile, we had an outage.

When our crew began searching for the cause of the outage, they discovered the fresh dirt which was moved and had to dig it back up to fix it. When I asked the contractor why he didn’t call a locate, he stated the county superintendent said he didn’t have to because there was nothing there. They were very reluctant to pay the bill and thought the county should be liable. When I explained to them it was the law that all contractors are required to call 811, and it didn’t matter what the county told them, they paid the bill. We have since educated the county on 811 laws.”



A Greenhouse Tunnel at Cedar Creek Garden. Photo courtesy of Cedar Creek Gardens.

POWERING LOCAL FOOD

Reliable Energy Keeps Greenhouses Growing

Jacob Boyko

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For agricultural producers in tumultuous climates like South Dakota's, a little bit of electricity goes a long way.

Across rural areas of the state, some producers are using greenhouses as a way to extend their growing season, protect their crops from wind and hail, and provide their communities with fresh produce throughout the year.

Cedar Creek Gardens, co-owned by Cherry-Todd Electric members Bud Manke and Peggy Martin, is one such producer utilizing season-extending greenhouse structures. At the site in Mellette County, Martin is able to grow a

variety of vegetables throughout much of the year by utilizing greenhouse tunnels.

"We're in growing zone 4, but our tunnels add another zone of warmth," Martin explained. "With the thermal mass of the ground, plus with vegetables like cabbage being very cold resistant, we've sometimes harvested after December 1."

Cedar Creek Gardens wasn't always the green prairie oasis it is today, with its dozen greenhouses and more than 1,000 free-range chickens. The operation started off small – just enough to feed the family, but as they discovered their passion for gardening, its scale kept creeping up.

"The demand was there, so the operation just kept getting bigger and

bigger," Martin said.

Local greenhouses like Cedar Creek Gardens play an integral role in communities across South Dakota, ensuring food security for rural communities by providing locally-sourced produce for grocery stores, hospitals and restaurants.

"Local food and direct-to-consumer sales have seen a significant surge in popularity here in South Dakota," Martin added. "There's a clear trend of consumers wanting to know where their food comes from."

But without the extensive systems of grow lights, heating, irrigation – and the electricity that powers all of that – Martin says her operation wouldn't be sustainable.

Cedar Creek Gardens relies on electricity for several key aspects of the operation: irrigation to ensure crops get consistent water, grow lights to create optimal growing environment for transplants in the spring, and cooling

systems and storage facilities for the harvest.

“Reliable electricity from our rural electric cooperative is absolutely essential for Cedar Creek Gardens,” Martin said.

With electricity being so critical in every operation at the greenhouse, so too is the reliability. Any outage – summer or winter – risks an entire season of work.

“Cherry-Todd Electric is very aware of the amount of produce that we have, and they don’t think of us as ‘the middle of nowhere,’” Martin explained. “Cherry-Todd Electric is really good about calling us and saying they’re going to be working and let us know when the power will be off so we know to get stuff in the cooler and not open and close the doors.”

Cherry-Todd Electric’s manager, Tim Grablander, recognizes his members’ need for reliable and continuous energy, noting the co-op’s stringent practices including line patrolling, hazard recognition and line maintenance procedures to avert potential future problems.

“Cherry-Todd Electric’s mission is to not only assure that our power is available to each member, but that we are delivering power at the highest level of reliability as is physically possible,” Grablander said. “Our members depend on a consistent and reliable source of energy when and where it is needed. We also recognize the critical nature of power reliability for our healthcare providers, business owners, and our members with assistive medical needs. Reliability is our mission.”

But not every outage comes with the luxury of an advanced notice. When severe weather strikes, unexpected outages require quick thinking.

“When we had a blizzard and we lost electricity, we put the cows in with the plants to produce enough body heat so the plants didn’t freeze,” Martin recalled. “If we lose power on our electric heaters, we could lose all of our plants and not have anything to put into production. Power outages are also a significant risk to our cold storage facilities in the summer, any disruption can cause

the produce to spoil, which is a financial loss.”

Luckily, those outages are rare; Cherry-Todd Electric and its generation and transmission cooperative, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, emphasize reliable energy generation while other areas of the United States face strain on their electric grid, resorting to costly measures like rolling brown-outs.

“At Basin Electric, our all-of-the-above energy strategy ensures members have reliable, affordable power when they need it most by prioritizing dispatchable resources like coal and natural gas, alongside wind and solar,” said Chris Baumgartner, senior vice president of Member and External Relations for Basin Electric Power Cooperative. “We continue to invest in new generation while maintaining and optimizing our existing resources to meet demand, even during extreme weather conditions. These investments provide the baseload power and stability that businesses like Cedar Creek Gardens depend on – helping to sustain local economies and keep food on tables across the region.”

For greenhouses like Cedar Creek Gardens, energy rates directly impact the wholesale cost of her products that businesses and communities rely on. Utilizing efficient LED lighting, temperature sensors, timers and energy-efficient cooling methods help Cedar Creek Gardens further reduce their operational costs, passing the savings onto hungry diners.

By continuing to supply low-cost, reliable energy to producers like Cedar Creek Gardens, co-ops aren’t just powering rural America, but helping ensure food availability for communities across the region.

“People don’t realize we can grow for so long and so early,” Martin said. “We have tomatoes by the Fourth of July and people are shocked because they’re used to getting their tomatoes in August. The greenhouses allow us to do that.”





APRIL 11-12
Forks, Corks & Kegs
Food, Wine & Beer Festival
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

*Photo courtesy of
 Travel South Dakota*

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.

MARCH 26
Hill City Garden Club
Trip to Central Asia
 1 p.m.
 Kathryn Cleveland
 Hill City Super 8
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 29
Ready. Set. Grow!
 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Couteau Prairie Master Gardeners
 Codington CTY Extension Complex
 Watertown, SD
 605-838-7098

APRIL 4
Mitchell Technical College
2025 Alumni Gathering
Cornhole Tournament
 5 p.m. Social
 6:30 p.m. Tournament
 The World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD
 605-995-7342

APRIL 4-5
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Heritage Celebration
 748 S Main St.
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237

APRIL 5-6
Youth & Family Kids Fair
 Sat. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Sun. 12-4 p.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD
 605-342-4195

APRIL 11-12
Junkin' Market Days Spring Market
 Fri. 4-7 p.m.
 Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD
 www.junkinmarketdays.com

APRIL 11
Rochford Area Meeting
 5:30 p.m.
 Rochford Community Hall
 Rochford, SD

APRIL 23
Hill City Garden Club
Fun Day of Garden Bingo
Master Gardeners
 1 p.m.
 Hill City Super 8
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 24-26
HuntSAFE Course
 Davison County Fairgrounds &
 Mitchell Trap Club
 Mitchell, SD
 605-770-5555
 gfp.sd.gov/hunter-education

MAY 10
1880 Train Opening Day
 Hill City, SD

MAY 10
**National Train Day/
 Hobo Stew Feed**
 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

MAY 10
Brent Morris
 6-9 p.m.
 Chute Rooster
 Hill City, SD

MAY 11
Hill City Senior
Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

MAY 24
Daily Cultural Performances
Begin at Crazy Horse Memorial

MAY 28
Hill City Garden Club
Gardening With Children
 Janessa Bixel, Ed. D.
 1 p.m.
 Hill City Super 8
 Hill City, SD

MAY 30
Brent Morris
 6-9 p.m.
 Chute Rooster
 Hill City, SD

MAY 3-4
Prairie Village Events
 Sat. Consignment Auction
 Sun. Season Opening
 Madison, SD
 www.prairievillage.org

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