

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

## Separating Fact From Fiction

**Energy Myths**

Pages 8-9

**Energy Scams**

Pages 12-13



Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations with Sioux Valley Energy, brings more than 35 years of experience in the electric industry and helps set the record straight on common energy myths.  
*Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy.*

# Thank you to our linemen!



**Kathy Haas**  
Communications  
Specialist

Power linemen work in the extremes. Extreme danger. Extreme weather. Extreme importance. There are approximately 120,000 lineworkers across the nation keeping the electricity flowing. From emergencies and outages to maintenance and upgrades, our linemen are backbone of our energy grid. It's the reason we dedicate a day to honoring linemen.

National Lineworker Appreciation Day started in 2013, when Congress designated April 18 as a day to thank power linemen for all the work they do to keep the lights on. Since then, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) has established the second Monday of April as National Lineworker Appreciation Day.

Lineworker jobs are consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous jobs. There's not a lot of room for errors when working with electricity. Every day your linemen work with high-voltage power lines to ensure you have a source of electricity that is reliable, and most importantly, safe. Apprentice lineworkers must complete 8,000 hours of on-the-job training and three dozen tests over a four-year period to become journeymen linemen. To protect themselves, linemen wear flame-resistant pants and shirts, rubber gloves and sleeves, hard hats, and safety glasses when out in the field. Even with all the safety measures they take, accidents can still happen.

Each season brings its own hazards. Finding stable footings for the bucket trucks can be frustrating in snowy winters and muddy springs. The protective rubber gloves and sleeves are swelteringly hot in the summer and finger-numbingly cold in the winter. When safe, linemen are out in storms, enduring rain, wind, and snow, in order to restore power and keep the

## DEDICATED TO SERVICE



### 26+ YEARS OF SERVICE

Jerry Weber  
Tyler Marken

### 21-25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Sean Evans

### 16-20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Ben Peterson  
Chris Piehl

### 11-15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Lance Dennert  
Steve Beck  
Sean Schwartz

### 6-10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Brian Hansen  
Kyle Miller  
Nick Dean  
Collin Gades  
William Torrence

### 1-5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Riley Whitley  
Quinn Vinger  
Dylan Grimes  
Landon Johnson

members sheltered from the chaos.

Electric cooperatives were built on the principle of neighbors helping neighbors. Northern Electric's linemen embody that spirit every day. Your cooperative linemen are dedicated to serving the members. They put in long hours behind the scenes, building new infrastructure and proactively replacing aging systems. Your linemen complete their work with as little interruption to services as possible.

One day hardly feels like enough to express our gratitude.

**Thank you to our linemen!**



**COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS**

**NORTHERN ELECTRIC**

(USPS 396-040)

**Board President:** Nolan Wipf

**Board of Directors**

- Todd Hettich - Vice President
- Scott Sperry - Secretary
- Josh Larson - Treasurer
- Thomas Lambert
- B.J. Hansen
- Kirk Schaunaman
- Bruce Schumacher, Jr.
- Mike Traxinger

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

**Chief Financial Officer:** Lorisa Rudolph

**Operations Manager:** Jerry Weber

**Manager of Member Services:** Russel Ulmer

**Manager of Information Technology:**  
Derek Gorecki

**Communications Specialist:** Kathy Haas

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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# FEBRUARY BOARD REPORT

Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held Feb. 27, 2026, at the Agtegra Cooperative building with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the Jan. 22, 2026, minutes and expenditures. The board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on actions taken by the East River Board at its Feb. 5, 2026, meeting. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported that the next SDREA board meeting will be held March 26-27, 2026. Director Kirk Schaunaman, General Manager Char Hager, CFO Lorisa Rudolph and Member Services Manager Russ Ulmer reported on the East River Energize Forum, which was held Feb. 4-5, 2026, in Sioux Falls. Director Todd Hettich reported on the RESCO board meeting which was held on Feb. 5-6, 2026. Director William (B.J.) Hansen reported on the actions taken by the South Dakota Renewable Energy Association Board at the Feb. 19, 2026, board meeting.

**MANAGER'S REPORT**

General Manager Char Hager's report

to the board included the following items:

- Reported on the Rural Electric Development (REED) Board Meeting held on Feb. 3, 2026.
- Reported on the East River MAC Meeting held on Feb 3, 2026.
- Reported on the employee meeting held on Jan 26, 2026.
- Reported on the Basin Electric Member Manager Conference held on Feb. 18-19, 2026.

**BOARD REPORT**

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

- Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 19, 2026.
- Approved Work Order Inventory #26-01 for \$17,075.42 to be submitted to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
- Approved an adjustment to the 2026 Capital Outlay Budget.
- Held Executive Session.

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

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

	January-26	January-25
kWh Sales.....	34,727,645	34,952,134
Electric Revenues .....	\$3,623,527	\$3,098,043
Total Cost of Service .....	\$3,457,070	\$2,997,648
Operating Margins.....	\$166,457	\$100,395
Year to Date Margins.....	\$189,375	\$131,441
<b>RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL</b>		
JANUARY 2026 .....	3,528 kWh.....	\$375.79.....\$0.1065
JANUARY 2025 .....	3,587 kWh.....	\$323.99.....\$0.0903
Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 85.1% of total cost of Service.		

# STAYING FOCUSED BEHIND THE WHEEL: A SIMPLE GUIDE TO SAFER ROADS

Distractions behind the wheel aren't just inconvenient – they're deadly. Each moment you allocate to anything other than driving increases the risk for you and everyone sharing the road. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, distracted driving claimed 3,522 lives in the United States in 2021, underscoring how costly a split-second lapse can be. The good news is that small, deliberate habits behind the wheel can make a big difference. Here are three practical ways to stay focused.

First, minimize phone use. Store your device out of sight before starting the engine. Texting or scrolling through apps draws your eyes from the road, your hands from the wheel and your mind from the task at hand. If you must communicate, pull over safely or use hands-free features only if absolutely necessary and legal in your area. Remember, many places have laws prohibiting texting while driving, with penalties that reflect the risk. Consider enabling “do not disturb” modes that silence notifications while you drive, and set your status to indicate you're driving. This simple barrier can prevent impulsive checks and help you maintain steady attention.

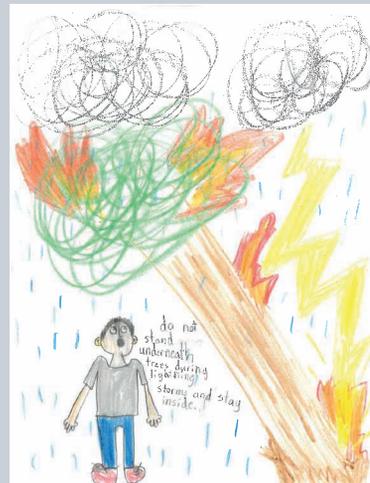
Second, plan your route before you depart. Entering a destination while driving is a dangerous distraction. Take a few minutes to review the route, check traffic conditions, and set your navigation system in advance. With your route loaded, you can keep your attention on driving rather than on-screen instructions during the journey. If possible, choose routes with fewer turns or fewer heavy-traffic segments, and be ready to adjust if conditions change. Having a mental map of the journey can also reduce the need to peek at the screen for updates.

Third, ensure you are well rested. Fatigue can dull reaction times, reduce concentration, and cause your eyes or your vehicle to drift. Prioritize a good night's sleep before long trips, and consider stopping for short breaks on extended drives to refresh your focus. Even brief pauses for stretching and deep breathing can reset your alertness and help you respond more quickly to changing road situations.

Beyond these tips, practice general safe-driving habits: obey speed limits, maintain a safe following distance and stay alert for pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists. If you feel distracted or fatigued, it's wiser to pause and reassess rather than press on. Safe driving is about consistent, proactive choices that protect everyone on the road.



**"Do not stand underneath trees during lightning storms and stay inside."**



**Ramsey Faini,  
Age 8**

Ramsey warns readers about the dangers of lightning storms. Thank you for sharing your picture, Ramsey! Ramsey's mom is Katie Faini from Rapid City, 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.

# MAIN DISHES

## HOMEMADE MAC & CHEESE

### Ingredients:

16 oz. box elbow macaroni noodles  
 Oil  
 1 pkg. bacon  
 3 cups whole milk  
 1/2 cup butter (melted)  
 5 oz. can (about 2/3 cup) evaporated milk  
 16 oz. block Velveeta cheese (cut into cubes)  
 1 tsp. salt  
 Guda cheese  
 Parsley (to taste)  
 1 tsp. garlic powder  
 1/2 tsp. black pepper

### Method

Cook noodles as directed. Drain noodles and pour a small amount of oil on them while in the strainer. Cook bacon and cut into small pieces. Add all of the ingredients into a Crock-Pot and mix. Cover and cook on low for 1.5 hours, stirring once or twice while cooking. Serve and enjoy.

**Cindi Foster**  
 Codington-Clark Electric

## CHEDDAR POTATO SOUP

### Ingredients:

1 medium onion, chopped  
 3/4 cup celery, chopped  
 1/4 cup butter  
 5 cups peeled potatoes, cubed  
 3 cups water  
 3 cups milk, divided  
 4 tps. chicken bouillon granules  
 1/2 tsp. salt  
 1/2 tsp. pepper  
 1/4 cup flour  
 4 cups (16 oz.) cheddar cheese, shredded

### Method

In large Dutch oven or kettle, saute onion and celery in butter for 5 minutes. Add potatoes and water, bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir in 2 cups milk, bouillon, salt and pepper. Combine flour and remaining milk until smooth, gradually stir into soup. Bring to a boil, cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat, add cheese and stir until cheese is melted.

**Sally Florey**  
 Charles Mix Electric

## CARAMELIZED HAM & SWISS SLIDERS

### Ingredients:

12 Hawaiian dinner rolls, split  
 1/4 cup horseradish sauce (optional)  
 12 slices deli ham (or 24 if it's thinly sliced)  
 6 slices Swiss cheese, cut in fourths (so you will have 24 squares of cheese)  
**Sauce**  
 1/2 cup butter  
 1/4 tsp. onion powder  
 2 tbsps. brown sugar  
 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard  
 2 tps. poppy seeds  
 1 1/2 tps. Worcestershire sauce  
 1/4 tsp. garlic powder

### Method

Spray a 9x9 or 9x13 glass dish with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside. Preheat oven to 325°. Spread roll bottoms with horseradish sauce (if using). Fold up pieces of ham to fit the rolls and place them on the bottom halves of the roll. Next, place 2 squares of cheese. Replace tops and place in a single layer in the prepared pan.

### Sauce

In a small skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour over rolls. Cover with foil and bake covered for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake 5 more minutes. These can also be made ahead of time. Just cover with foil and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Bake as instructed.

**Jerald & Virginia Jensen**  
 Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture submitted by zoryanchik via Shutterstock



## DIRECTOR PETITIONS DUE BY APRIL 24

Members will elect Directors for Districts 4, 6, and 7 during Northern Electric Cooperative's 2026 Annual Meeting on Wednesday June 10, 2026. Northern Electric Cooperative uses a petition process to nominate directors. A petition must be circulated for each candidate. To be eligible for nomination, the candidate must be a cooperative member or a designated representative of an entity, and reside in the district they wish to represent. Petitions are available at Northern Electric's temporary headquarters at 2914 Industrial Ave, Aberdeen.

The three incumbent directors are all eligible to run:

Josh Larson, Columbia; District 4, Treasurer

Kirk Schaunaman, Aberdeen; District 6

William (B.J.) Hansen, Turton; District 7

Petitions must be filed at

Northern Electric Cooperative headquarters by close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Friday, April 24, 2026. Director's petitions must be submitted not more than one hundred twenty (120) nor less than forty-five (45) days before the Annual Meeting on June 10, 2026 to have names placed on the official ballot and the Notice of the Meeting.

Each petition must be signed by any ten (10) or more cooperative members, including a designated representative of an entity, in that candidate's specific district. Members may only sign one nominating petition for a director candidate from their district of record. Only one party of a joint membership may sign a petition, but not both.

No petitions filed after April 24, 2026, shall be considered valid. Nominations are not permitted from the floor during the meeting.

For a complete copy of the



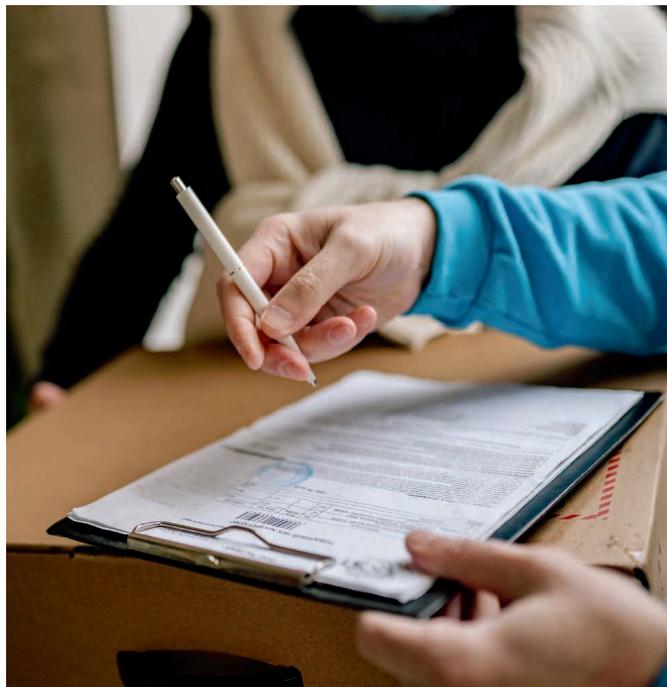
Northern Electric Cooperative Bylaws contact Northern Electric at 605-225-0310 or stop by headquarters. The bylaws are also available online at [northernelectric.coop/cooperative-bylaws](http://northernelectric.coop/cooperative-bylaws).

# BYLAWS FOR NOMINATION

**NORTHERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
BYLAWS ARTICLE IV SECTION 6:**

Any ten or more members including a Designated Representative of an entity, in such District, may file or sign a nominating petition, in the form provided by the Cooperative, with the Secretary placing in nomination any qualified member from such District. Each signatory shall place the date of signing and the member's address on said petition. No member may sign a petition to nominate more than one candidate, and to do so shall invalidate the member's signature on the petition signed on the latest date. This procedure shall be followed in each director district in which the director term shall expire. Upon receipt of such petition and having found the same to be in order, the Secretary shall post such nomination in the principal office of the Cooperative. Candidates so nominated shall be identified in the Notice of the Meeting and shall also be named on the official ballot. Such Petition for Nomination shall be filed with the Cooperative not more than one hundred-twenty (120) nor less than forty-five (45) days before the membership meeting. The order in which the nominees shall appear on the printed ballot shall be determined by lot under the supervision of the Secretary. If any nominee should refuse to become a candidate or is not qualified, in accordance with the requirements of these Bylaws, the Secretary of the Cooperative is authorized and directed to remove the name or names from the list of posted nominees and/or from the ballot.

The Secretary shall be responsible for mailing with the notice of the annual meeting, or separately, but at least ten (10) days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of directors to be elected and the names and addresses of the candidates nominated. No nominations shall be permitted from the floor. Each member of the Cooperative present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote for one candidate from their specific district from which a director is to be elected. Upon establishment of a quorum the annual member meeting shall be deemed convened. Voting may occur in accordance with the procedure established by the Board. The candidate from each district receiving the highest number of votes at the meeting shall be considered elected as a director.



**DIRECTOR REQUIREMENTS**

**Northern Electric Cooperative  
Bylaws Article IV Section 4**

No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director who:

- a. Is an employee of the Cooperative.
- b. Is not a member and bona fide resident of the service area served by the Cooperative located within the particular District provided that if the member is an entity other than a natural person then such person must be the Designated Representative of the entity, and such Designated Representative must reside within the district they represent.
- c. Is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative

or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members of the Cooperative.

- d. Has been previously removed as a director in accordance with the procedures provided for removal in these Bylaws.
- e. Has failed to attend at least 2/3 of all regular board meetings during any consecutive twelve (12) month period.
- f. Has been employed by the Cooperative in the past five (5) years.
- g. Has pled guilty or has been convicted of: a felony, any crime involving dishonesty, or any crime involving moral turpitude.
- h. Does not have the capacity to enter into legally binding contracts.



significantly when conditions allow.

“Although sometimes it seems like it, the wind doesn’t always blow in South Dakota,” Smith said. “And solar only produces during daylight hours.”

Although battery storage has improved in recent years, Smith says storing enough energy to power the grid around the clock is prohibitively expensive at this point in time.

For now, maintaining reliability requires a mix of generation resources so supply remains available regardless of weather or time of day.

**Myth: If my neighbor has power and I do not after a storm, the cooperative skipped me.**

**Smith: That’s not how it works.**

In some cases, the cooperative may not yet know a member is without service. Reporting outages remains important.

Another possibility is that the issue is on the member side of the meter. Crews may restore cooperative equipment and determine that the damage is within the member’s own service.

“When crews see it’s a problem on the member side of the meter, they will call dispatch and have them contact the member,” Smith said.

He also emphasized the importance of keeping current phone numbers on file. Fewer households rely on landlines today, which makes updated cell phone numbers critical during storm response.

**Myth: Burying all power lines would eliminate outages.**

**Smith: No.**

Underground lines are not exposed to wind and ice, but they are not immune to failure. Over time, underground conductors deteriorate. Rodents such as gophers can damage them. Excavation damage is also common when individuals dig without confirming where utilities are buried.

Before digging, members should always contact 811, the national call-before-you-dig number. That service

notifies utility providers so buried lines can be located and marked before excavation begins. Failing to call 811 can be dangerous and increase the risk of damaging underground infrastructure, causing outages.

And even when damage occurs naturally, locating the fault underground can take time.

“With overhead lines, crews can usually see the damage,” Smith said. “Underground, it takes troubleshooting to figure out exactly where the fault is, sometimes leading to longer outage durations.”

He recalled one outage that proved especially difficult to diagnose.

“One time we had an outage that we just could not narrow down,” he said. “When we finally found the damage, we saw that a gopher had chewed the bottom of the wire. You could not see it from the top. We had to dig up about 20 feet of cable and turn it over before we could see the damage.”

Underground systems can reduce certain types of outages, but they do not eliminate them, and repairs often require more time and labor.

**Myth: Wind and solar power are free once installed.**

**Smith: The fuel is free, but that’s the only thing that’s free.**

Wind turbines require ongoing maintenance, including mechanical components that need to be regularly serviced. Solar power relies on inverters and other equipment that must be maintained and eventually replaced.

There are construction costs, financing costs and transmission costs involved in delivering electricity from generation sites to homes and businesses. Those transmission and maintenance assets are accounted for over time and included in the overall cost of electricity.

Free fuel lowers one portion of cost. It does not remove the need to build, maintain and replace infrastructure.

**Myth: Electric cooperatives raise rates to increase profits.**

**Smith: No. Cooperatives are not-for-profit.**

Electric cooperatives are member owned, not investor owned. That means there are no outside shareholders expecting earnings. Instead, cooperatives operate on margins, collecting enough revenue to pay expenses, maintain infrastructure and meet financial obligations.

“The only place we get money is from the people at the end of the line,” Smith said. “We don’t have a printing press in the basement.”

In fact, if revenue exceeds expenses in a given year, a portion of those margins are allocated back to members as capital credits when the board determines it’s financially appropriate. Capital credits represent a member’s share of the cooperative’s financial performance during the years they received service.

However, in recent years, equipment costs have risen significantly. Smith cited bucket trucks that once cost around \$220,000 have since more than doubled in price, and major system components have seen similar increases. Usually, the cost of wholesale power from the cooperative’s power suppliers makes up the largest share of the budget and those costs have been increasing as well.

Rate adjustments reflect those rising operational costs and the need to maintain reliable service, not profit distribution.

Electricity may seem simple at the flip of a switch, but as Smith makes clear, the system behind it involves infrastructure, coordination and constant evaluation. Understanding how it works helps members separate assumption from reality and better appreciate the network that serves them every day.



# FINDING FUREVER

**Kathy Haas**

khaas@northernelectric.coop

Aberdeen Area Humane Society (AAHS) was busy in 2025. With their help, 680 pets found their “fur”ever homes last year. While mostly dogs and cats, a couple other critters, such as guinea pigs, also found homes. In 2025, an astonishing 488 cats were rescued, with 470 finding new homes. In addition, 211 dogs were rescued and 206 were adopted. Three other pets were rescued, and a total of four other critters were adopted.

In addition to the high volume of rescues, the shelter also houses some temporary residents. AAHS handles strays and animals picked up by the city Animal Control Officer. Those pets are kept on temporary hold for 48 hours. After that, the pets are officially considered rescues and will be up for adoption.

The shelter takes a lot of work and dedication. Each week starts with a deep clean. On Mondays, the shelter is closed to the public so that every

room can be thoroughly sanitized. Staff are at the shelter for the majority of every day, rain or shine. If there is a blizzard or threat of weather closing roads, a staff member stays overnight so the animals are still cared for.

“It is a lot of work in the background,” said Jan Hill-Steiner, Aberdeen Area Humane Society treasurer.

AAHS moved into their new building in fall of 2022. The upgraded facility allows the shelter to better care for the animals, which increases their chances of being adopted. At the beginning of the year, almost 70 cats were spread through the four dedicated cat rooms, sorted by temperament and health needs. Each dog has a kennel with access to long outdoor runs, and the new building also has several rooms for meet and greets.

“We don’t let people generally go back in the dog area because then it stirs them all up,” said Jody Stanton, Aberdeen Area Humane Society board member.

Improvements are in the works to make the outdoor area more welcoming. Currently, there is a fenced in agility park that is available during the hours the shelter is open. Soon, there will also be a sitting area for pets and the volunteer dog walkers.

“We have a beautiful pergola that Molly and Kevin Johnson built in memory of their mothers, who passed away. We’re going to add to that outdoor area so people can come and sit with shelter dogs and then let the dogs run in these groomed areas,” said Jan.

## **READY TO GO HOME**

At the beginning of the year, AAHS had about 70 cats and around 25 dogs waiting for their “fur”ever homes. Some of the pets have been waiting over a year to find a new home.

The shelter coordinates with other animal shelters and programs to increase the chances of adoptions. If a rescue specializes in certain breeds, such as Dachshunds or Pitbulls, or groups of animals the shelter is less equipped to handle, like birds, reptiles or horses, the staff will reach out to see if that rescue would be a better fit for the animal. Staff also coordinates with programs for animals with skills to become working animals.

“In the past, we’ve had dogs who showed an aptitude for becoming a search or rescue dogs. So, we found programs for them, and then they lived out their lives being search and rescue dogs,” said Jan.

Every spring, the shelter prepares for an influx of cats. Specifically, litters of kittens. Cats can have litters of one to eight kittens, up to three times per year.

“There is a kitten season. I didn’t know that until I got on the board,” said Anita Brewer, Aberdeen Area Humane Society board member. “It’s a real thing. In the spring, we get all these kittens.”

The kittens will spark a need for more foster homes. Aberdeen Area Humane Society has a foster program, in which volunteers take home a dog or cat to help socialize the animal. This is especially important for pets that might not have ever lived inside or had been running wild for some time. Socialization gets them used to being handled, being on a schedule, and an introduction to some basic training, all of which will increase the chances of being adopted.

“We could use more kitten fosters, probably even for some of our dogs too,” said Anita. “We only have so



Board members Anita Brewer, left, and Jody Stanton, right, pet two of the cats available for adoption in one of the four cat rooms.

many people who foster and I’m sure they’re getting burnt out.”

The foster families keep the cat and her new litter for eight to 12 weeks. At that point, the shelter can start finding homes for the kittens.

“If somebody isn’t handling these kitties and socializing them, it’s harder to find them a home. A cat who will want to sit in your lap and cuddle, and it’s like, oh, sure, but for a cat that’s not as friendly, it’s harder,” said Jan.

### SPAY AND NEUTER

One of Aberdeen Area Humane Society’s goals is to further educate the public on the benefits of spaying and neutering pets. This would

dramatically reduce the number of kittens and puppies dropped off at the shelter each year. A discount program to get your pet spayed and neutered is in the works but is not available yet, said Jody. AAHS would like to be able to offer half off the procedure as a way to incentivize pet owners to get their pets fixed. The shelter would also like to have a catch and release spay and neuter program but the city and county currently do not allow it, said Anita.

“The best thing to do for your pets is to get them spayed and neutered because they can get cancers that kill them when they’re not fixed,” said Jan.

### VOLUNTEER

As a nonprofit, AAHS depends on the community. Volunteers have several avenues open to them if they want to help the shelter. The Humane Society’s board of directors is short a couple of people. The board assists with fundraising events and informational campaigns. They meet the second Tuesday of every month at 6 p.m. Join the board by talking to a current board member or emailing: [aahsboard1200@gmail.com](mailto:aahsboard1200@gmail.com)

If you want to volunteer to walk dogs or socialize kittens, there is a mini training every Wednesday at 2 p.m. at the shelter. They also need help during the semi-annual Second Paw Sale and annual Bow Wow Boogie. Over 1,000 hours of work will go into getting donations ready for sale at the second paw sale. **Visit [ANewLeashOnLife.net](http://ANewLeashOnLife.net) for ways to volunteer or donate.**



Shelter staff now have a room dedicated to veterinary care. The Happy Tails Clinic is in memory of Dr. William Svensen for his years of dedicated service and in appreciation of Northern Plains Animal Health. The room was sponsored by Jerry and Susan Brick.

# ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ENERGY SCAMS

Photo by Frank Turner

### Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

It's no April Fools' joke. Consumers with an electricity connection have long been targets for scams. In today's digital world, those schemes have evolved. As more daily business is conducted online, scammers have shifted their tactics to match. They now use phone calls, texts and emails to create urgency, confusion and fear, hoping consumers will act before taking time to verify the claim.

For victims, these scams can lead to financial loss and identity theft, but understanding how the most common schemes work and what they typically look like is one of the best defenses to staying safe.

### The "Past Due" Disconnection Threat

One of the most common tactics that scammers use is the disconnection threat. They use a fake message claiming a bill is past due and that service will be disconnected immediately unless payment is made on the spot.

The call may sound official. The message may include account numbers

or appear to come from your local cooperative's phone number due to caller ID spoofing. The scammer's goal is simple: create panic so you pay first and question later.

In reality, cooperatives follow clear procedures and provide advance notice before any disconnection. A demand for instant payment, especially with threats attached, is a major red flag.

### The "You Overpaid" Refund Scam

Who would not want a refund? Scammers take advantage of that instinct.

In this scheme, a text, call or email claims a member overpaid an electric bill and is owed money. The message often includes instructions to click a link or provide banking information so the refund can be "processed."

The message can sound especially convincing to cooperative members because electric cooperatives do return margins to members in the form of capital credits. Capital credits represent a member's share of the cooperative's annual margins and are returned over time.

However, capital credits are distributed through established,

official processes. They are not issued through unsolicited texts, surprise phone calls or links requesting personal banking information. When your local cooperative retires capital credits, members are notified through official channels such as billing statements, newsletters, verified mailings or even through Cooperative Connections.

An unexpected refund message that asks for sensitive information is a red flag. When in doubt, pause and contact your local cooperative directly using trusted contact information.

### Gift Card and Cryptocurrency Demands

Scammers often insist on unusual payment methods such as gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency. They may provide detailed instructions on how to purchase gift cards and read the numbers over the phone.

This is a clear warning sign. Legitimate cooperatives do not request payment in gift cards or cryptocurrency. These forms of payment are nearly impossible to trace or recover, which makes them attractive to criminals.

## Spotting a Scam

Regardless of the method, every scam has similar warning signs that members can watch for:

- High-pressure tactics that demand immediate payment
- Requests for payment through gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency
- Emails or text messages with poor grammar, spelling errors or unfamiliar web addresses

Scammers rely on urgency. Taking a few extra minutes to verify a message can prevent lasting financial consequences.

## What Your Local Cooperative Will and Will Not Do

Your local cooperative will not demand immediate payment without prior notice. Cooperatives follow

established procedures and provide advance communication before any service interruption.

Your local cooperative will not ask for Social Security numbers, banking details or other sensitive information through unsolicited phone calls, emails or text messages.

Members have secure payment options available through official cooperative channels, including the cooperative's verified website and approved payment systems. When in doubt, independently locate the cooperative's official contact information rather than using links or phone numbers included in a message.

Text alerts are only sent to members who have enrolled in official notification programs, such as outage updates.

## Avoiding Energy Scams

If you receive a suspicious call, text or email claiming to be from your local cooperative, do not use the contact information provided in that message. Instead, use the phone number printed on your billing statement or listed on the cooperative's verified website.

Also, reporting suspected scams helps protect fellow members. By alerting your local cooperative to fraudulent activity, members help strengthen the community's defense against energy scams and ensure the cooperative network remains secure for everyone.

Have a question about whether something is real or not? Reach out to your local cooperative. Electric cooperatives are owned by the members they serve and powered by the communities around them.

## SIGNS OF AN

# ENERGY SCAM

### High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

### Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

### Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.



# SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Co-op sponsored scholarships are giving a helping hand to an aspiring nurse, a future finance/business professional, and an enterprising law enforcement officer as part of the 2026 scholarship program. Three area students were selected for scholarships from Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Northern Electric.

Aberdeen Central High School senior Kaylee Kiesow was

selected as the \$1500 scholarship from Basin Electric. Claire Crawford, a senior at Aberdeen Roncalli High School, will receive Basin's \$1000 scholarship. Doland High School senior Noah Felderman was selected for Northern's \$500 scholarship.

Kaylee, Claire, and Noah will receive their scholarships when they enroll in classes in the fall. The applications were blind judged by a panel of Northern Electric employees.

## KAYLEE KIESOW: \$1500 BASIN SCHOLARSHIP



Professionals, for which she serves as the secretary. Kaylee captains the soccer team and was awarded Outstanding Senior and Spirit of the Eagle. In addition, she qualified for the 2025 South Dakota High School Activities Association Academic All-State team

Kaylee has already taken steps to achieve her goals. She is a certified nurse assistant and works at Bethesda Home. In addition, Kaylee has completed a nine-week internship at a local hospital.

In the fall, Kaylee will attend Minnesota State University in Moorhead to pursue a degree in nursing and a minor in international relations.

"My travel experiences broadened my perspective on life and deepened my understanding of how societal and cultural norms are influenced by both the presence and absence of reliable resources, like electricity," Kaylee said.

Kaylee has a 4.381 GPA, and plans to become a world clinic medical practitioner. It will combine her two interests: helping others and travel.

"My dad works at the airport. I grew up with opportunity to travel around the world," Kaylee said. "Just being exposed to the world has been really rewarding."

Kaylee is taking dual credit classes, serves as the President of National Honors Society, Secretary of Student Senate, and pioneered the local chapter of HOSA- Future Health

## CLAIRE CRAWFORD: \$1000 BASIN SCHOLARSHIP



Claire has a 4.056 GPA, and plans to pursue a degree in Business Administration with minors in Accounting and Finance at Dakota Wesleyan University. Claire plans to work in finance as a loan officer, or something similar that uses a lot of math.

"I really like numbers," Claire said. "I've always really enjoyed math."

Claire is a math tutor, serves as Student Body Vice President, takes dual credit classes, and is a member of National Honor Society. She received the ACSS President's

Reach Out award, as well as the Dan Wold Cavalier of Character and SDHSAA Excellence in Journalism -Editorial. In 2022-23, she was named the hardest worker on the basketball team and was made team Captain this year. In addition, Claire was part of the state all tournament golf team three times.

Claire will have two internships under her belt before starting college. She already completed an internship with Agtegra under the Chief Financial Officer. Now, she is interning at Health Care Plus Credit union. This way, she experiences both sides of business finance.

"As one of many students who live in a rural area, having a cooperative that services our electricity is vital to completing schoolwork and dual credits, as almost every assignment is online and without the internet students would not be able to do so," Claire said.

## NOAH FELDERMAN: \$500 NORTHERN SCHOLARSHIP



Noah has a 3.84 GPA, and will earn his private pilot license this summer before pursuing an associate degree in Law Enforcement at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown. After graduation, Noah would like to work at South Dakota Highway Patrol as part of the aviation division. While at college, Noah will pursue additional aviation ratings.

Noah's career path is a direct result of his ice cream business, Feldy's Ice Cream, which he started when he was 12 years old. While working at his business, Noah got to know a Sheriff's Deputy in Hamlin County.

"He offered for me to go on a ride along," Noah said. "I never really thought it would be my career, but the ride along changed the way I look at law enforcement."

Noah has already completed an internship with the Spink County Sheriff's Office.

Noah serves as Doland FFA Chapter President and is a member of Student Council. He was named the FFA Chapter Scholar, was the Academic Letter Recipient for all four years and the Academic Achievement Award for the last three years. His ice cream business placed first at the Big Idea Competition in Aberdeen and was a top 10 finalist at the SD Governor's Economic Development Giant Vision Competition.

"The electricity provided by our electric cooperative strengthens our community and makes it a safer, stronger, and better place to live and work," Noah said.

Uncover Your Energy's Roots!



# South Dakota Rural Electric YOUTH EXCURSION July 20-22, 2026



- Learn where South Dakota's electricity comes from!
- Tour the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant!

All area high school freshmen, sophomores and juniors whose parents or guardians are members of Northern Electric Cooperative are eligible to apply.

## For More Information Contact:

Northern Electric Cooperative  
Kathy Haas  
khaas@northernelectric.coop  
605-725-2053

Application Deadline: June 1, 2026

\*Transportation, lodging, meals, entertainment and sightseeing events are provided. Students are required to supply their own personal/shopping money.





**APRIL 9-11**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Festival of  
 Tasting  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237  
[www.schmeckfest.com](http://www.schmeckfest.com)

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 27-29**  
**Special Olympics State Basketball Tournament**  
 DWU Avera Sports Complex  
 Mitchell, SD

**MARCH 27-APRIL 4**  
**The Passion and the Cross**  
 Orpheum Theatre  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-367-6000  
[www.ThePassionMusical.com](http://www.ThePassionMusical.com)

**MARCH 28**  
**Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser**  
 6-11:30 p.m.  
 Legion Post #39  
 Groton, SD

**MARCH 28**  
**Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt**  
 10 a.m.  
 City Park  
 Groton, SD

**MARCH 28**  
**Coteau Prairie Masters Gardeners Ready, Set, Grow**  
 9 a.m.-12 p.m.  
 Codington Cty. Extension Cplx.  
 Watertown, SD

**APRIL 2-4**  
**Yelduz Shrine Glow 2.0 Circus Spectacular**  
 Aberdeen Civic Area  
 Aberdeen, SD  
 Tickets available at Yelduz Shrine, Kessler's & Ken's Kids under 12 free

**APRIL 3**  
**Bachelors of Broadway: Gentlemen of the Theatre**  
 7 p.m.  
 Johnson Fine Arts Center  
 Aberdeen, SD

**APRIL 5**  
**Easter Sunrise Service**  
 7 a.m.  
 Mount Rushmore

**APRIL 9-11**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Heritage Celebration  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237  
[www.schmeckfest.com](http://www.schmeckfest.com)

**APRIL 10-11**  
**Forks Corks & Kegs Food & Wine Festival**  
 Deadwood, SD

**APRIL 18**  
**Brookings Quilt Show XII**  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Admission: \$10  
 Dakota Bank Center  
 Brookings, SD  
 605-690-3246

**APRIL 18**  
**Redfield's Spring Shop**  
 Stroll for Bargains Galore!  
 Raffles & Prizes!  
 Main Street  
 Redfield, SD

**APRIL 18**  
**Groton Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station**  
 7 p.m.-12:30 a.m.  
 Groton, SD

**APRIL 20**  
**The Bronx Wanderers**  
 7 p.m.  
 Johnson Fine Arts Center  
 Aberdeen, SD

**MAY 2**  
**Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale**  
 8 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Groton, SD

**MAY 2**  
**Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**  
 2-8 p.m.  
 Milbank, SD  
 605-432-6656

**MAY 6**  
**Day of Play - Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation**  
 Groton, SD

**MAY 6-7**  
**Energize! Exploring Innovative Rural Communities Conference**  
 Hosted by SDSU Extension  
 Community Vitality  
 Wall Community Center  
 Wall, SD  
[www.extension.sdstate.edu/energize](http://www.extension.sdstate.edu/energize)

**Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**