

Cooperative Connections

**Faulkton mural is
turning heads**

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**Co-ops practice
road safety**

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The 110-foot mural that towers over the town of Faulkton has attracted attention from across the country



Several Technological Advances Are On The Horizon

Keeping an Eye on Technology



Ben Dunsmoor

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Electrons travel at the speed of light to deliver reliable electricity to your home every time you flip a switch. Technological advances in the power sector are not moving quite that fast but we are experiencing a lot of changes in the industry and we foresee many more in the next decade and beyond. Your co-op is positioning itself to be your energy advisor as these new technologies emerge.

One of the biggest changes on the horizon for the power industry is electric vehicles -- or EVs. You don't see many EVs driving on the road in South Dakota right now, but the major auto manufacturers are setting goals to produce more electric vehicles in the near future. General Motors announced in January that it will stop making gas-powered vehicles by 2035. Let that sink in. In 15 years, GM is committed to only manufacturing electric cars, trucks, and SUVs. Ford says it will have an all-electric version of its popular F-150 pick-up truck on the road by 2022.

The bottom line is electric vehicles are going to become more common within the next decade and Northern Electric is keeping an eye on this emerging technology. We recently created a webpage at www.northernelectric.coop/ev to answer the basic questions most consumers have about electric vehicles. The webpage includes information about the different types of electric vehicles, electric vehicle range, and EV charging.

Northern Electric has also developed resources to educate members about residential solar. Again, solar panels are not very common in our area right now, however, the price to install panels continues to drop and we are receiving more questions about solar. On page 14 of this issue, we have compiled a list of the '10 Steps to Take Before Installing Solar.' We have also placed similar information on our website at www.northernelectric.coop/solar. The one key thing to keep in mind about residential solar is that most systems will not produce enough energy to power your entire home 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Members who have solar panels will still need to be connected to co-op's grid so they can receive electricity even when their panels are not producing power. The first thing you should do when considering solar is to call Northern Electric Cooperative at 605-225-0310 so you can learn about your electric use and how residential solar panels are interconnected into the grid.

Technology is changing rapidly in many industries in our country. Please know that your cooperative is keeping an eye on the emerging technologies in the power sector. We want to be your energy advisor so we can provide you with the best information that will help you make the best decisions about new technology.

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(USPS 396-040)

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NORTHERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Northern Electric Cooperative, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

Subscription information: Northern Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals postage paid at Bath, SD 57427.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Northern Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427; telephone (605) 225-0310; fax (605) 225-1684

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Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held January 21, 2021, at the Dakota Event Center (DEC) in Aberdeen with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the December 21, 2020, minutes and December expenditures. The board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

Directors viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative video report. East River Director Mark Sumption reported on actions taken by the East River Board at its January 7, 2021 meeting. General Manager Char Hager reported on the East River MAC Meeting held January 5, 2021. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported on the SDREA Board Meeting and Annual Meeting held January 13-15, 2021. Directors Nolan Wipf, Mark Sumption and General Manager Char Hager reported on the SDREA Annual Meeting, which was held January 14-15, 2021, in Pierre.

Manager's Report

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

- Update on development projects.
- Reminder that the 2021 East River Energize Forum will be February 3-4 in Sioux Falls.
- Reminder that the 2021 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association PowerX-change/TechAdvantage Experience Events will be February 23-25 and March 2-4.
- Informed the board of the 2021 CFC Forum, June 14-16, San Antonio, TX.
- Informed the board that effective January 1, 2021, the IRS mileage reimbursement will decrease from 57.5 cents to 56 cents.

Board Report

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:00 A.M. on Thursday, February 25, 2021.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$1,466.51.
3. Approved Work Order Inventories #20-12 for \$442,134.55 and #20-12MC for \$17,838.65 to be submitted to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
4. Authorized limited attendance to Co-op Day at the Capitol, February 16, 2021, Pierre.
5. Authorized attendance to the 2021 NRECA Directors Conference, March 23-24, online conference.
6. Authorized attendance to the 2021 NRECA Legislative Conference, April 18-21, in Washington, DC.
7. Authorized board attendance to the NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) Courses, March 9-11, 2021, in Pierre.
8. Approved the 2021 Operating Budget.
9. Approve management recommendations to specific Electric Tariffs.
10. Approved a donation of \$1,250.00 to be given to Spink County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Center.
11. Held Executive Session.

Please direct questions to your cooperative director, manager, or co-op staff member.

Financial Report		December 2020	December 2019
kWh Sales		30,480,283 kWh	34,474,859 kWh
Electric Revenues		\$2,652,709	\$2,892,223
Total Cost of Service		\$2,585,738	\$2,625,897
Operating Margins		\$66,971	\$266,327
Year To Date Margins		\$611,823	\$2,073,574
Residential Average Monthly Usage and Bill			
December 2020	2,960 kWh	\$262.86	.0888 per kWh
December 2019	3,911 kWh	\$323.53	.0827 per kWh
Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation accounted for 84.1% of NEC's total cost of service.			

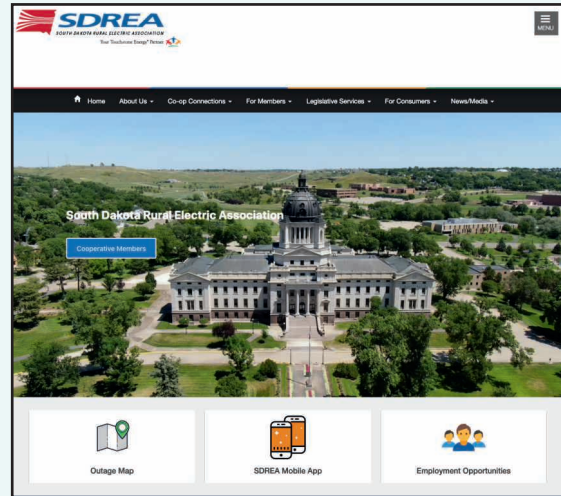
Five Electrical Dangers in Your Home

Of all the hazards that exist around your home, getting shocked by electricity is one that should not be taken lightly. Depending on the level of electrical current, contact with electricity can result in something as innocuous (but still painful) as a mild shock to more severe injuries like nerve damage and burns. In some circumstances, it can even cause cardiac arrest and death. Here's a list of some of the most common shock risks inside a home.

- **Appliances.** Most shocks from appliances occur when people are trying to repair them. It's not enough to just turn off an appliance before attempting to work on it – you also need to unplug it to reduce risk. Large appliances are responsible for 18 percent of consumer product-related electrical accidents; small appliances account for 12 percent. There's also danger if your appliance comes into contact with water. Many of these hazards can be avoided by using a ground-fault circuit interrupter. A GFCI is a protective device installed on electrical outlets, primarily used where water is present.
- **Ladders.** Typically, ladders present a falling hazard, but 8 percent of consumer product-related electrical shocks were also related to ladders. Electrocutation typically happens when the ladder makes contact with electrical wires. Before you use a ladder, make sure you can clearly see all power lines in the area, including those that may be hidden by tree branches. Ensure that the ladder is at least 10 feet away from them.
- **Power tools.** Power tools account for 9 percent of consumer product-related shocks. When you use power tools that are not double-insulated, are damaged or have damaged cords, you increase your chances of being injured. The chance of danger also increases when you use incompatible cords with power tools, use power tools incorrectly or use them in wet conditions. This is another situation in which GFCIs can help.
- **Electrical outlets and extension cords.** Inserting anything that doesn't belong – screwdrivers, knives, fingers or toy cars - into an electrical outlet can result in a dangerous electrical contact. Use cover plates that fit properly and safety covers on all outlets. By installing tamper-resistant receptacles, outlets will have permanent security against foreign objects being inserted into the slots. Any broken, loose or worn-out plugs, switches and light fixtures should be replaced immediately.

Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at www.sdrea.coop. You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Don't hit the pole! Be safe!"

Monroe Steiner, 6 years old

Monroe is the daughter of Brandon and Jen Steiner of Lake City, SD. They are members of Lake Region 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.

Super Seafood Recipes

Sheet Pan Fish and Chips

1/4 cup buttermilk	1 tablespoon oil
5 teaspoons OLD BAY® Seasoning, divided	1/4 cup flour
1 pound cod fillets, cut into 4x2-inch pieces	1 egg
2 large russet potatoes, cut into wedges (about 1-1/2 pounds)	1 cup cornflake crumbs
	McCormick® Tartar Sauce

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Mix buttermilk and 1 teaspoon of the OLD BAY in large resealable plastic bag. Add fish, then seal the bag. Refrigerate for 20 minutes. Toss potatoes and oil into large bowl. Sprinkle with another 2 teaspoons of OLD BAY; toss to coat evenly. Spread potatoes in single layer on foil-lined 15x10x1-inch baking pan that has been sprayed with no-stick cooking spray. Bake 25 minutes, turning potatoes halfway through. Remove pan from oven. Push potatoes to outside edge of the pan. Set aside. Place flour in a shallow dish. Beat egg, another 1 teaspoon of OLD BAY and 1 teaspoon water in a separate shallow dish. Mix cornflake crumbs and remaining 1 teaspoon OLD BAY in another shallow dish. Remove fish from the buttermilk mixture, allowing excess to drip off into bag. Coat fish in flour, shaking off excess flour. Dip in egg mixture, then press into the cornflake mixture until evenly coated. Discard any remaining flour, egg and cornflake mixtures. Place fish on a wire rack in center of pan with the potatoes. Bake 15 minutes or until fish is golden brown and flakes easily with a fork and potatoes are tender. Serve fish with potatoes and tartar sauce, if desired.

www.mccormick.com

Salmon Cheese Balls

1 16 oz. can of salmon	1 T. salt
8 oz. cream cheese	1 T. lemon juice
1 T. chopped onion	1 T. horseradish

Mix all ingredients together and shape into individual balls. Roll balls in chopped pecans and serve with crackers. Chill before and after shaping into a ball.

Denene Miles, Doland, SD

Shrimp Fettuccine with Pesto

15 extra large shrimp	comes in gluten free variety)
6 cloves of garlic	2-6.7 oz. jars of basil pesto
Extra virgin olive oil	Finely shredded parmesan cheese
12 oz. box of fettuccine (also	

Peel and chop garlic until finely diced. In large saute pan, pour a couple of tbsps. of extra virgin olive oil. Add shrimp (shelled and wiped dry with a paper towel). Cook until orange and slightly browned on each side (2-3 minutes per side). Add garlic and cook until light brown (do not over cook or garlic becomes bitter). Put on plate. Fill saute pan 3/4 full with cold water and bring to a rolling boil. Add entire box of pasta and cook 12 minutes. Stir to make sure pasta has separated. Drain in colander. Put the pasta, shrimp and garlic back into the saute pan. Add two jars of pesto sauce. Cook until heated. When serving, add parmesan cheese on top. Serves 4-6. Shrimp & Garlic with Cocktail Sauce: Prepare shrimp and garlic as directed above. Cool. Serve with cocktail sauce.

Sue Nipe, Sioux Falls, SD

Parmesan Baked Salmon

1/4 c mayo	4 salmon fillets
2 T. Parmesan Cheese	2 t. lemon juice
1/8 t. ground red pepper (cayenne)	10 crackers, crushed

Mix the mayo, cheese and pepper. Place salmon on foil on a cooking sheet. Drizzle with lemon juice. Top with cheese mixture. Sprinkle on cracker crumbs. Bake at 400 for 15 minutes. Then enjoy!

Julie and Jared Frank, Sioux Falls, SD

Please send your favorite beverage 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.



SEASONAL RATE CHANGE FOR HEATING AND COOLING

Northern Electric Implementing Rate Changes To Submetered Heating and Cooling April 1

Northern Electric Cooperative is changing its rates for members who have their heating and cooling system on a separate meter. The rates will be adjusted on a seasonal basis starting on April 1, 2021.

Northern Electric members who have a second meter – also known as a submeter – currently pay 4.7 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh) for the energy used exclusively by their heat pump or heating and cooling system. The new rate structure will adjust ‘winter’ rates and ‘summer’ rates for all members who have a submeter. The rate adjustments are being implemented following a cost-of-service study that was recently completed by a third-party independent engineering firm.

The new ‘winter’ rate will remain at 4.7 cents for all members with submetered heating and cooling from November 1 – March 31. The new ‘summer’ rate will be billed at a higher level during the months of April through October.

Electric Heat and Load-Controlled Air Conditioning

The ‘summer’ rate will be 6.6 cents per kWh from April 1 – October 31 for members who participate in the air conditioning load control program. Those



Seasonal adjustments will be made to rates beginning April 1, 2021, for members who have submetered heating and cooling.

New Seasonal Rate Adjustments

members voluntarily allow Northern Electric to cycle their air conditioning unit on and off at 15-minute intervals when the grid is experiencing high demand during the summer. Members with a load control unit installed on their air conditioning system fall under rate classes BR10, BR11, and BR17. Members can verify their rate class by looking under the 'rate' column which is located in the middle of their billing statement near their account number and location number.

Electric Heat and Uncontrolled Air Conditioning

The new 'summer' rate for members who have submetered electric heat but do not participate in the air conditioning load control program will be 9.3 cents per kWh during the 'summer' months. This is the existing normal kWh rate for all other energy used in the average home. The 'summer' months have been adjusted to include April through October. These members will still get the benefit of the 4.7 cents per kWh heat rate from November 1 – March 31 but any heating and cooling costs recorded on the submeter during the other months of the year will be billed at the normal 9.3 cents per kWh level. The co-op rate class for these members is BR12.

Demand Rate with Electric Heat and Air Conditioning

Members who are billed both a monthly demand charge and an energy charge will also see a change to their seasonal submetered heating and cooling rate. Members who fall into this class will pay the current 4.7 cents per kWh heat rate from November 1 – March 31 and then pay the normal 5.7 cents per kWh energy charge the rest of the year. Members in this rate class already pay 5.7 cents per kWh for all other energy use on their main meter. This change still gives members the benefit of the heat rate in the winter but their submeter will now be billed at the same level as the rest of their energy use from April 1 – October 31. However, the co-op will still subtract any electric heat use during the months of April and October from a member's demand charge. The co-op rate class for these members is BR18.

These rate changes will take effect on Thursday, April 1, 2021. If you have any questions about these changes please call the Northern Electric office at 605-225-0310.

New seasonal rate changes will be implemented for all Northern Electric members with submetered heating and cooling beginning on April 1, 2021.

Members will still pay 4.7 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for electric heat during the winter months, however, adjustments are being made to the rates for the 'summer' months.

Electric Heat and Load-Controlled Air Conditioning (Rate Class BR10, BR11, BR17)

■ 'Summer' Submeter Rate

- April 1 - October 31 - .066 cents per kWh

■ 'Winter' Submeter Rate

- November 1 - March 31 - .047 cents per kWh

Electric Heat and Uncontrolled Air Conditioning (Rate Class BR12)

■ 'Summer' Submeter Rate

- April 1 - October 31 - .093 cents per kWh

■ 'Winter' Submeter Rate

- November 1 - March 31 - .047 cents per kWh

Demand Rate with Electric Heat (Rate Class BR18)

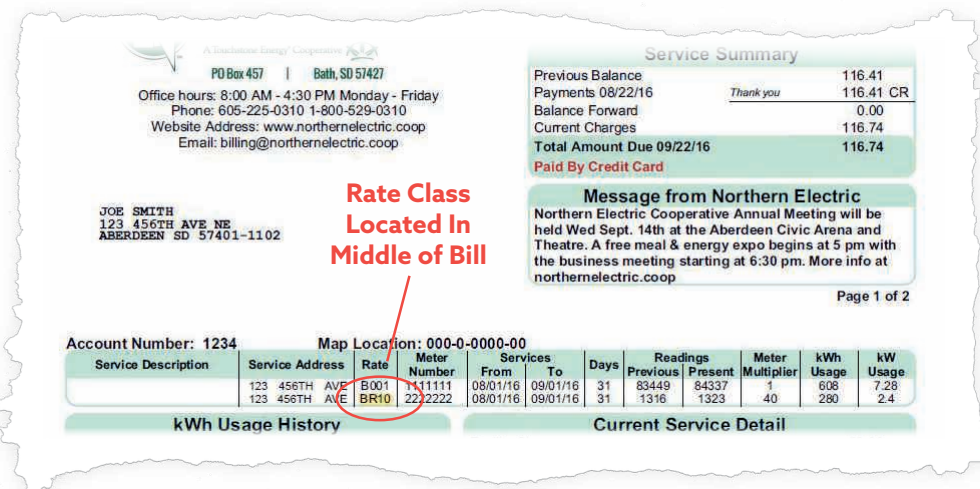
■ 'Summer' Submeter Rate

- April 1 - October 31 - .057 cents per kWh

■ 'Winter' Submeter Rate

- November 1 - March 31 - .047 cents per kWh

***Electric heat use will still be subtracted from the demand charge for rate class BR18 during the months of April and October.





The mural in Faulkton is a prominent feature in the town. Aerial photography by Billy Gibson.

EYE-POPPING APPEAL

Faulkton Mural Attracts Attention from Far and Near

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@srea.coop

The story of how the small town of Faulkton became an attraction for art aficionados far and near actually begins on another continent many years ago.

Today, Faulkton is home to an imposing 110-foot mural displayed on three sides of an Agtegra grain elevator, the town's most prominent structure. Visible from long distances on Hwy. 212, the mural depicts a boy and girl and several wide-brimmed hats blowing between them in the prairie wind. While the meaning of the mural is open to as many interpretations as there are viewers, the intriguing story of how the artwork came into existence is a "10 beer tale," according to Dave Hedt, the community leader who initiated the project.

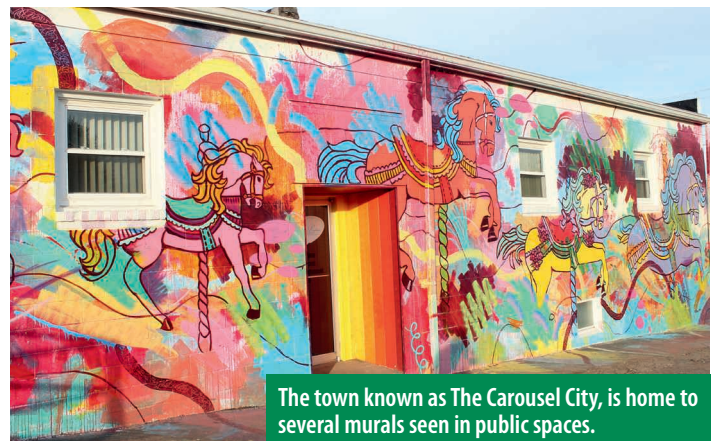
A native of Australia, the mate known among the locals as "Aussie Dave" was nursing a "frothy" in a bar in Melbourne when he encountered a chap from Faulkton who happened to be in Melbourne on business. He and Craig Mutsch struck up a conversation during that chance encounter in 1998 and kept in regular contact until 2013 when Hedt decided to relocate to South Dakota on a permanent basis.

Hedt went to work for Mutsch in the beginning before eventually setting down roots in Faulkton. He later married a gal from Harrold, became a regular at Lakeside Golf Club, built a retail strip center along the highway across from the Agtegra elevator and established several businesses in the quiet town.

The idea of creating the mural is actually credited to Hedt's father, who was visiting his son one day in 2015: "He was here and we were driving into town and he saw the grain elevator. He said, 'Hey, why don't you call Guido about painting a mural on that.' Right away I thought it was a great idea," Aussie Dave recalled.

In this case, Guido is the internationally renowned photographer and visual artist Guido Van Helten, who had painted a highly acclaimed mural on the side of a set of grain silos in Brim, Australia, not far from Hedt's home town of Dimboola.

"That mural had such a positive impact on the community, I knew it would get the same kind of response here and create the



The town known as The Carousel City, is home to several murals seen in public spaces.

Faulkton Mural Fast Facts

- The mural stands 110 feet high
- The project took seven weeks to complete
- Artist Guido Van Helton has done similar projects all around the world
- Local residents donated their time and labor to prepare the grain elevator for painting

same kind of excitement, for the town,” Hedt said.

He got in touch with the artist, who didn’t hesitate to take on the project. Van Helten visited Faulkton several times conducting preliminary work before taking his brushes in hand. As he’d done with previous similar projects, Van Helten spent time getting involved in community events and getting to know the residents of The Carousel City. He was hosted by a local family and tried to capture the ambiance of the town to inspire the visual and thematic elements of his work.

He received tremendous support from the community as folks chipped in to help the project financially and also contributed some “sweat equity” by scraping, cleaning and pressure-washing the elevator’s concrete surface in preparation for Van Helten’s artistic touch.

Grant funding was received from the South Dakota Arts Council and other non-profit groups, while the balance of the funds were raised privately through sponsorships and contributions from local businesses. Hedt is quick to point out no taxpayer money was used. For its part, Agtegra was quickly sold on the idea as plans were to eventually take the elevator out of service and move the operation to another site east of town.

As for what would ultimately appear on the side of the elevator, the residents were lending their support without knowing how the project would actually turn out. They figured they could always paint over it if they felt the mural’s theme wasn’t congruent with the town’s self-image.



Artist Guido Van Helton spent several weeks in Faulkton getting to know the local residents and getting a sense of the town’s spirit before he started painting.

“Guido kind of kept that a secret,” Hedt said. “He wanted it to be a surprise, but knew from the other things he’d done that it would be spectacular and something that we would all be proud of. He always paints what he feels is reflective of the town and the people.”

After the surface was prepared, it took several weeks for Van Helten to complete the painting while working suspended beside the large concrete canvas. The painting was unveiled on Sept. 1, 2018. Hedt said the result of the project has brought more positive results than anyone in the town could have anticipated.

“In terms of the financial impact, it’s just unbelievable the traffic we get through the town,” he said. “We had a woman from Washington state fly all the way here just to see it.”

Dawn Melius is owner of a local insurance agency and has been involved in the project since the beginning. She said the mural has brought a unique and welcomed vibrancy to the community.

“It’s such a great work of art, and people can interpret it however they want. That’s part of the fun of it and the attraction of it. It’s such an amazing project and it has brought a lot of interest to the town. Of course, once people are drawn here by the mural and they stop and spend some time around town, they like what they see and they have a real positive experience.”

Find an aerial video of the mural by visiting the Cooperative Connections Plus YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/n2gEDAltHMk>. Find out more about Van Helten at www.guidovanhelten.com.



Have an idea for a business or development story?

Submit your ideas to editor Ben Dunsmoor at bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop or call 605-225-0310.

Golden Ticket Cinemas Debuts Renovated Theater



Golden Ticket Cinemas reopened a renovated theater at Uptown Aberdeen on December 18.

The theater is not currently allowing full capacity at any of its showings due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Golden Ticket Cinemas is following the Cinema-Safe health and safety guidelines that have been put in place by the movie industry. Masks are required in the theater and only half the capacity is being allowed during each showing so there can be plenty of room for social distancing.

Golden Ticket Cinemas is still seeing good crowds even with the pandemic policies in place.

“You’re getting comparable crowds (to the old theater) and they are happier,” Simpson said about moviegoers who are enjoying the new upgrades.

Golden Ticket Cinemas is also offering private shows for groups that would like to reserve an entire theater. A minimum of ten people and \$100 is required to reserve a private show. The cost is \$10 for each additional person above the ten-person limit. The new theater also has discounted movies on Tuesday nights with all tickets priced at \$5.50.

Visit the Golden Ticket Cinemas Aberdeen website at aberdeen.gtcinemas.com for show times and to purchase tickets online.

Ben Dunsmoor

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A new movie-going experience debuted in northeast South Dakota shortly before Christmas as Golden Ticket Cinemas opened a renovated theater in Uptown Aberdeen; formerly known as the Aberdeen Mall. The renovations include an updated interior and new luxury reclining seats in all theaters.

“You just don’t see smaller towns get a lot of attention. Golden Ticket came in and said Aberdeen deserves to get some reclining seats and get some of that attention,” Golden Ticket Cinemas Aberdeen General Manager Bryan Simpson said.

The theater was shut down due to COVID-19 last spring. In August, Golden Ticket Cinemas announced that it had taken over operation of the theater and was going to make several improvements.

Golden Ticket Cinemas owns nearly a dozen theaters in eight states including Montana, Nebraska, and Minnesota. Northern Electric Cooperative provides power to the Aberdeen theater.

“The existing theater (in Aberdeen) has entertained many for years, but an upgrade to a luxury experience is long overdue,” Golden Ticket Cinemas President John Bloemeke said in a press release in August announcing the changes.

Golden Ticket Cinemas has renovated five of the nine theaters in Aberdeen with luxury seating. Plans are in the works to complete the other four theaters and add a new food and beverage menu in 2021.



Golden Ticket Cinemas has upgraded the theaters in Aberdeen with luxury reclining seats.



Co-op Connections Card Offers Prescription Discounts

Northern Electric Cooperative members can save up to 85 percent on their prescription drugs by using the Co-op Connections Card. The Co-op Connections Card is available to all Northern Electric members and is a free benefit of being a member of the cooperative.

Members can save money on their medications simply by showing their card to their local pharmacist. The information on the back of the card is used to reduce the price of many prescription drugs. Members who use the card save an average of 46 percent on their prescriptions.

Many local pharmacies accept the card. Those pharmacies include:

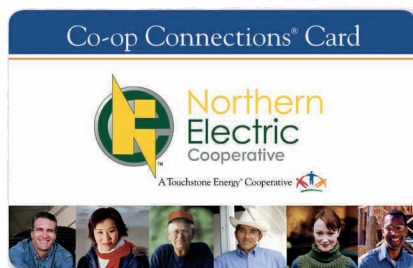
- DT Pharmacy in Aberdeen
- State Street Pharmacy in Aberdeen
- Jones Drug in Aberdeen
- Walmart Pharmacy in Aberdeen
- Kessler's Pharmacy in Aberdeen
- Plaza Pharmacy in Aberdeen
- United Clinic Pharmacy in Aberdeen
- Lori's Pharmacy in Groton

- Randall Pharmacy in Redfield
- SD Developmental Center Pharmacy in Redfield

Members who wish to compare prices can visit rxpricequotes.com to enter the name of their prescription and view the discounted price available at local pharmacies.

Co-op Connections Card pharmacy discounts are not insurance and are not intended to replace insurance. To request a free Co-op Connections Card email info@northernelectric.coop or call the office at 605-225-0310.

The Co-op Connections Card can also be used for discounts at the local businesses listed on the right side of this page.



Show The Card & Save at These Local Businesses

Restaurants - Food

- **Airport Travel Center:** HALF OFF fountain drinks and coffee with restaurant purchase
- **Economy Meat Market:** Buy 10 pounds of ground beef, get one FREE
- **Millstone Family Restaurant:** 5% off total bill
- **Papa Murphy's:** FREE cheese bread with any pizza purchase
- **Perkins:** 15% off total bill
- **Stir Fry 88:** FREE combo meal after 10th visit (ask for punch card)
- **Subway (Redfield):** Purchase six-inch sub and a 30 oz. drink and receive a free six-inch sub

Retail

- **Dunham's Sports:** 10% off merchandise (some exclusions apply)
- **Mainstream Boutique:** 15% off two items in the store
- **Shoe Science:** 15% off apparel purchases (some exclusions apply)
- **Spink County Mercantile:** 10% discount on regularly priced purchase of \$20 or more

Services

- **Hardin's Photography:** \$25 off session fee for families, couples, or individuals
- **Quality Quick Print:** Standard 8.5x11 color copies for 20 cents (limit 100)
- **Redfield Computer Services:** \$10 off phone or tablet repair - FREE computer recycling - FREE data transfer when you buy a new or used computer

Gas and Auto

- **Appel Oil Company:** 10 cents off per gallon cash discount on all grades
- **Airport Travel Center:** 5 cents off per gallon cash discount

Health and Wellness

- **Fisher Grove Country Club:** FREE 9 holes of golf with the purchase of 9 holes (valid once a season)
- **Profile by Sanford:** HALF OFF startup costs and 20% off products
- **Snap Fitness:** FREE enrollment when you show card



Troy Ziebart, line foreman at Douglas Electric in Armour, loads up his vehicle before hitting the road to perform maintenance work on the co-op's system. Photo by Billy Gibson.

On the Road Again

Cooperative crews log millions of safe miles each year

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Some people follow their instincts to run away from emergency situations, others are obligated to steer towards them.

South Dakota's electric cooperative linemen often find themselves headed toward the site of potentially hazardous predicaments, whether it's simply answering an emergency outage call or engaging in rebuilding many miles of poles and lines in the most austere conditions in the aftermath of a major storm.

In any event, the first task for linemen is to arrive at the scene and make the return trip to co-op headquarters with themselves and their vehicles all in one piece. Many cooperative consumers are unaware of the fact that co-op linemen in South Dakota collectively log more than 8 million miles on the road each year taking care of maintenance projects, installing equipment, performing public service work, answering outage calls or other daily duties.

That figure includes those instances when linemen are called upon to drive long

distances across state lines to assist other fellow cooperatives restore power after a natural disaster, which raises the potential risk for accidents.

Compared to the amount of time and number of miles they travel on a routine basis, cooperative linemen have an impressive track record of operating their vehicles without incident and without harm to either themselves or the motoring public.

According to Mark Patterson, manager of loss control services at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) in Pierre, safe operating practices do much more than just save lives and property; they also keep insurance premiums down and help control the cost of fleet maintenance.

"Safety is such an important aspect of what we do as electric cooperatives, and it takes on many dimensions," Patterson said. "We often think of safety as adopting prudent practices when it comes to working in close proximity to different equipment such as power lines, transformers and substations. But it also includes other aspects such as safety in the workplace,

emergency preparedness, handling hazardous materials and knowing how important it is to be safe out on the road every time we leave the back shop and pull out of the gate."

As with many aspects of their operations, South Dakota's electric cooperatives are using the power of computer software and advanced technology to promote safety on the road. Many co-ops use software programs such as NexTraq, which processes and provides a wealth of information to help maintenance managers keep records on vehicle tracking and telemetry, fuel use and efficiency, service scheduling, driver performance, job completion and more.

These systems deliver real-time data not only on vehicle speed, heading, location, etc., but they also indicate where each vehicle is positioned at any given moment within the service territory so that supervisors can more effectively and efficiently coordinate movements of various crews throughout the system and throughout the work day.

"Linemen from the old days would be amazed at the advanced technology we



Cooperative linemen log thousands of hours on the road but sometimes find themselves having to take their vehicles off the paved surfaces. *Aerial photography by Billy Gibson.*

now have at our disposal,” Patterson said. “And it’s not just things like hydraulics and buckets and all the equipment we use today, but also the computer-based tools we have to help us do our jobs better. It all adds up to making the best use of the members’ resources and ultimately making sure the electricity we deliver is as affordable as possible. Members can count on the fact that cooperatives are trusted stewards of their resources and we’re doing everything we can to keep costs low.”

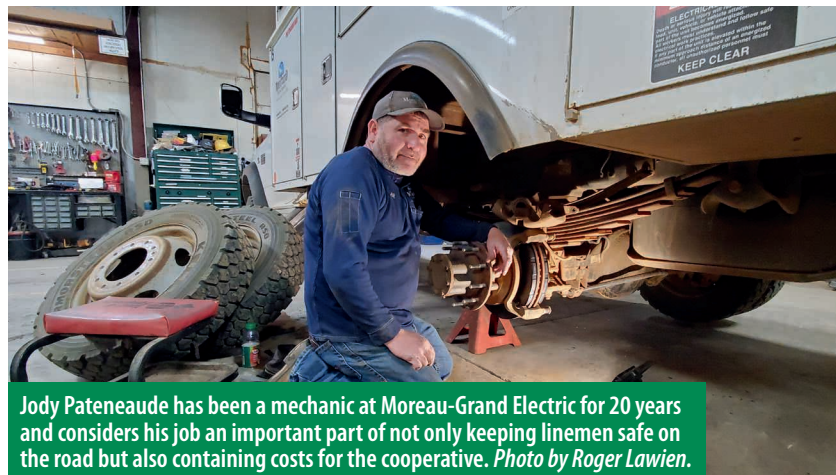
One of those mechanics who remembers the “old days” is Jody Pateneau, who has kept watch over the vehicle fleet at Moreau-Grand Electric for the past 20 years. Pateneau, who notes that linemen are required to carry a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and that he has one himself, said fleet maintenance was more of an art in the past.

“We kept records as well as we could, but we would just kind of know when parts or brakes or oil needed to be changed

and what needed to be done,” he said. “But with the new technology, we know what needs to be taken care of a long time before the guys driving the vehicle know. Our job is to make sure there are no break-downs when our guys get out there and that no one is in danger, and the computer helps us accomplish that goal.”

Patterson pointed out that the public also plays a role in making sure cooperative linemen and their vehicles stay accident-free. He said every year linemen and other utility workers across the country are severely injured or killed either in their vehicles or in their work sites.

“We should all be more aware of emergency workers who perform their jobs along roadsides or other places where traffic is present,” Patterson said. “We always remind the public to ‘slow down and move over’ when they see a work area or utility vehicle nearby. It’s not only good, sound advice, but it’s also the law in the state of South Dakota.”



Jody Pateneau has been a mechanic at Moreau-Grand Electric for 20 years and considers his job an important part of not only keeping linemen safe on the road but also containing costs for the cooperative. *Photo by Roger Lawien.*

Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for “Co-op Connections Plus” and you’ll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to “like” and “subscribe.”



10 Steps to Take Before Installing Solar

Interested in solar power, but not sure where to begin? There are several steps that you can take before installing solar to help you determine if it's the right fit for you. These steps can also minimize your costs if you decide that solar is a good option for your property.

1. Make your home more energy efficient before installing solar.

By adding insulation, sealing air leaks and completing other energy efficiency upgrades, you can cut your energy costs immediately. For a low price, smart home thermostats and similar devices can bring immediate and significant energy and cost savings. If you decide to install solar, energy efficiency improvements may also reduce the size of solar system that you require.

2. Learn what will happen to your solar system during power outages.

Most grid-connected solar systems shut down during power outages to prevent back-feeding electricity into de-energized power lines that may have fallen or that line crews may be repairing. This shut-down feature is needed to prevent injuries, and even death, to those working on the line.

3. Understand how a solar system works with Northern Electric Cooperative's system.

Most solar systems are designed to provide you with a portion of the electricity needed, but won't provide 100 percent of your needs. At night and on cloudy days, and possibly at other high-energy-use

times, you'll need more power than your solar system can produce. That means you'll still be connected to Northern Electric's power lines and energy can flow both ways. Contact Northern Electric at 605-225-0310 to obtain more information about rate structures, solar grid interconnection, safety precautions and other connection-related details.

4. Review your energy use to determine what size solar system to install.

Contact the cooperative to learn more about your past energy use so that you can best determine which size solar system to install and to learn why choosing the right size system is so important.

5. Tally upfront costs.

Figure out all of the expenses you'll be responsible for during the life of the solar system. These may include: installation (in addition to the price of the system), interconnection costs, insurance, taxes and more. Compare the costs of purchasing and maintaining the system to the expected life of the system and your expected payback period based on your past energy use to help determine if solar is a good investment for you.

6. Research your options before investing in a solar system.

Details to research before moving forward with solar include comparing contractors/installers, learning about the different types of solar panels that are available, comparing the costs of different systems and more. Northern Electric Cooperative

should be one of your first contacts to obtain information about solar grid interconnection, energy use details and more.

7. Assess the condition of your roof.

Assess your roof's current condition and look ahead to when it will most likely need to be replaced. It can be challenging and costly to remove and reinstall solar panels for roof work, so repair or replace the roof, if needed, before installing the solar array.

8. Consider your location.

The amount of electricity that you can generate from a private solar system will depend, in large part, on your location. If you have a shade-free area from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., you'll be able to collect more sun and produce more energy than if your site is shaded.

9. Research warranties.

If something happens to your solar panels, having a warranty helps keep the manufacturer accountable without additional costs to you. When comparing solar options, learn more about differences in warranties.

10. Search for incentives, rebates and tax credits.

Any financial incentives available will help reduce your solar investment costs. Be aware that incentives and their associated details can vary from year to year.

Contact Northern Electric Cooperative at 605-225-0310 to discuss your past energy use, to learn about energy efficiency upgrades, and obtain more details about solar grid interconnection to decide if solar is the right fit for your property.



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

February 18-25

Twelfth Annual Black Hills Film Festival, Virtual
605-574-9454

February 20

Family Gras, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-6000

February 20-27

SD State High School Wrestling Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

February 25

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood Live: Neighbor Day, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-6000

February 27

Nemo 500 Outhouse Races Nemo Guest Ranch, Nemo, SD
605-578-2708

March 5-6

SD High School State Debate & IE Tournament, Central High School, Aberdeen, SD

March 5-7

BH Rapid's President's Cup 2021, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Rushmore Hall, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 11-14

Team 8-Ball Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Rushmore Hall, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 12-13

St. Patrick's Day Weekend, Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976



St. Patrick's Day Weekend, Mar. 12-13, 2021

March 13

28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride and Tour, Spearfish Canyon Lodge, Lead, SD
605-641-4963

March 13

St. Patrick's Day Celebration, Knights of Columbus Hall, Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

March 13-14

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun Show, American Legion Hall, Philip, SD
605-859-2280

March 19-20

Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6000

March 23-24

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Fine Arts Theatre, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 25

A Lakota View of the Dead Hills, Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center, Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

March 27

SD State High School All-State Band Concert, Mitchell Fine Arts Center, Mitchell, SD

April 8

The Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest, Sioux Falls Arena/Virtual, Sioux Falls, SD
605-339-1203

April 9-10

Forks, Corks and Kegs Food, Wine and Beer Festival, Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1876

April 9-18

Four Weddings & An Elvis, Mitchell Area Community Theatre, Mitchell, SD
605-996-9137

April 17

Winefest Renaissance, Boys and Girls Club of Aberdeen Area, Aberdeen, SD
605-225-8714

April 23-24

Junkin' Market Days, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD
605-941-4958

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.