

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



Matt Sleep
CEO

January is a time of goodwill and cheer. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We at Butte Electric Cooperative hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable holiday season with family and friends.

Late December and early January are good times of the year to reflect on the past and look forward to the coming year. There are several random reflections on the past and the future that I would like to cover for you in this month's column.

The first is being grateful. We are grateful to have you as a member. We exist because you are a member. We are grateful for our team's focus on a "culture of safety" at Butte Electric. Working around electricity is dangerous. Because it is dangerous we have a lot of safety protocols to follow, and we must make sure our teams have the training and the tools to do their job efficiently and safely.

The second is business. We are in the business of providing safe, reliable electricity to you, the members, at a competitive price. Last year, we had to make some price adjustments due to inflationary pressures that we had been experiencing over the prior years. This year we have had additional pricing pressures from our power providers Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative (Rushmore), Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin), and the Western Area Power Authority (WAPA). Basin and WAPA had informed us earlier in the fall that they would increase prices in 2025 with Basin increasing rates by approximately 6.5% and WAPA increasing rates approximately 7.5%. They have also indicated that they will increase their rates again in 2026 by approximately the same amount. These price increases are passed down to us through Rushmore via our monthly power bill.

The 2025 price increases prompted us to pass these increases on by raising our 2025 rates by 3 mills per kilowatt hour. For those who don't know, a mill is a tenth of a cent and a kilowatt hour is the amount of energy used by a device over the course

of an hour. In percentage terms this will lead to an increase in the average household's monthly electric bill of approximately 2.74%. This increase comes from inflationary pressures at the generation level. Please keep in mind that everyone's situation is a little different and the percentage change for everyone will not be the same.

The increases also will have an impact on the demand charge that is applicable to commercial accounts and a few residential accounts that utilize demand response technology. The demand charge represents the capacity cost to provide electricity. The demand increased by \$1.12 per kW. This represented an increase of 6.33% on the Demand kW charge. For those who don't know a kW is a kilowatt. A kilowatt reflects the rate of electricity you use, and Demand is the overall capacity of that rate that the kilowatts are used. These increases come from the pressures on the capacity of the systems at the generation level. Even here, everyone's usage of electricity and system will not be the same.

The third is more business. We were fortunate to have a nice fall in 2023 and a nice spring, summer, and fall in 2024 to continue our power line and right of way maintenance. These conditions allowed us to be proactive in our tree cutting and maintenance. We don't always have conditions that allow us to stay focused for that extended period. Please keep in mind that tree limbs can be a nuisance to the power line, but the trees themselves pose a real danger to our communities. Please call us at 605-456-2494 if you have any trees that pose a risk to the power line.

Lastly, more business, we are the recipient of two grants. The first is part of the Grid Resilience and Innovations Partnership One Program focused on wildfire mitigation. The second is part of the Grid Resilience and Innovations Partnership two Program focused on Electrical Grid hardening. Both Programs will strengthen our systems reliability, flexibility, and wildfire readiness. Thank you and Be Safe!

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BUTTE ELECTRIC

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Butte Electric Beacon Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

Subscription information: 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 City, SD 57427.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Butte Electric Beacon, PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760; telephone (605) 456-2494; fax (605) 456-2496; email butte@butteelectric.com

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Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Scholarship Program Application

How much is the Butte Electric Cooperative Scholarship?

Butte Electric Cooperative will award four scholarships in the amount of \$1000. The scholarship checks will be made payable to the school and will be distributed by Butte Electric Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

Who is eligible to receive the Scholarship?

Butte Electric members or dependents of members are eligible to apply for this scholarship. The applicant must be a student enrolled or planning to enroll in a full time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two- or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school. The applicant must also be a U.S. citizen. The scholarship will be awarded without regard to other awards, loans, or financial assistance the applicant may have obtained.

How is the recipient selected?

Applications are judged primarily based on work experience, community involvement, future plans, and an essay question. The Scholarship Committee that determines recipients includes three BEC Board Members and three BEC employees.

How Can I Apply?

1. Complete the application (attach additional sheets if necessary). Please include name and address should be on all attachments. Completeness and neatness ensure your application will be evaluated appropriately. You can find the application online, from your Guidance Counselor at your school or contact Butte Electric at 605-456-2494.
2. Submit an essay answering the following question: "How does the electricity provided by your electric cooperative improve the quality of life in your community?"
3. Request a letter of recommendation have it sent on your behalf to PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760 or to butte@butteelectric.com
4. Send this application and all supporting documentation to Butte Electric Cooperative by February 1, 2025. Butte Electric Cooperative, PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760

Please contact Angie Alexander at angie@butteelectric.com or (605)456-2494 or contact the Guidance Counselor at your school for more information.

Snow Safety

There is no end to the terms for “really big snowstorm,” and those terms come in handy, particularly in America’s snowiest cities. Just check out these average annual snowfall totals in towns of at least 10,000 residents, according to the Farmer’s Almanac:

Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan – 119.3 inches
Syracuse, New York – 114.3 inches
Juneau, Alaska – 93.6 inches
Flagstaff, Arizona – 87.6 inches
Duluth, Minnesota – 83.5 inches
Erie, Pennsylvania – 80.9 inches
Burlington, Vermont – 80.2 inches
Muskegon, Michigan – 79.3 inches
Casper, Wyoming – 77 inches
Portland, Maine – 70 inches

But with really big snow storms – and even everyday, run-of-the-mill snowfalls – comes a risk of death by shoveling. Nationwide, snow shoveling is responsible for thousands of injuries and as many as 100 deaths each year.

So, why so many deaths? Shoveling snow is just another household chore, right?

Not really, says the American Heart Association. While most people won’t have a problem, shoveling snow can put some people at risk of heart attack. Sudden exertion, like moving hundreds of pounds of snow after being sedentary for several months, can put a big strain on the heart. Pushing a heavy snow blower also can cause injury.

And, there’s the cold factor. Cold weather can increase heart rate and blood pressure. It can make blood clot more easily and constrict arteries, which decreases blood supply. This is true even in healthy people. Individuals over the age of 40 or who are relatively inactive should be particularly careful.

National Safety Council recommends the following tips to shovel safely:

- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Take it slow and stretch out before you begin.
- Shovel only fresh, powdery snow; it’s lighter.
- Push the snow rather than lifting it.
- If you do lift it, use a small shovel or only partially fill the shovel.

- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion.
- Know the signs of a heart attack, stop immediately and call 911 if you’re experiencing any of them; every minute counts.

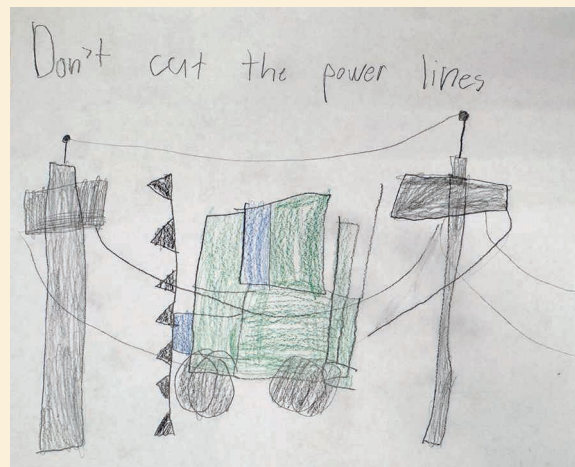
Don’t pick up that shovel without a doctor’s permission if you have a history of heart disease. A clear driveway is not worth your life.

Snow Blower Safety

In addition to possible heart strain from pushing a heavy snow blower, stay safe with these tips:

- If the blower jams, turn it off.
- Keep your hands away from the moving parts.
- Be aware of the carbon monoxide risk of running a snow blower in an enclosed space.
- Add fuel outdoors, before starting, and never add fuel when it is running.
- Never leave it unattended when it is running.

Source: National Safety Council



“Don’t Cut the Power Lines!”

David Raak, Age 7 ½

David Raak cautions readers to be careful when working around power lines. Thank you for your picture, David! David’s parents are Nathaniel and Katie Raak, members of Central 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.

Crockpot GREATNESS

CROCKPOT CORN

Ingredients:

3 16-oz. packages frozen corn
8 oz. cream cheese
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
2 tbsps. sugar
2 tbsps. water

Method

Place corn in crockpot. Cut cream cheese and butter into small cubes. Add cream cheese, butter, sugar and water to corn. Stir. Cook on high for 45 minutes. Stir. Turn to low and cook for three more hours, stirring occasionally.

Elaine Rieck
Harrisburg, S.D.

CROCKPOT BAKED BEANS

Ingredients:

2 cans black beans
2 cans red beans (drained)
2 cans great northern
1 can baked beans with brown sugar
1 lb. diced ham
1 heaping tsp. mustard (regular)
2 full tbsps. ketchup
Garlic powder (optional)
1 small onion (chopped)

Method

Mix all ingredients in crockpot except ham. Cook 2 hours on high. Mix in ham and cook another hour on high. Enjoy!

Rose Tucker
Hot Springs, S.D.

CHICKEN FIESTA SLOW COOKER RECIPE

Ingredients:

2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts
1 package slow cooker fiesta chicken seasoning mix
2 cans (14 1/2 oz. each) diced tomatoes, undrained
1 can (15 3/4 oz.) whole kernel corn, drained
1 can (15 oz.) black beans, drained and rinsed

Method

Place chicken in slow cooker. Mix seasoning, tomatoes, corn and beans until blended. Pour over chicken. Cover. Cook eight hours on LOW or four hours on HIGH. Remove chicken from slow cooker. Shred chicken, using two forks. Return chicken to slow cooker; mix well. Serve over cooked rice with assorted toppings, 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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Uncover Savings With a DIY Energy Audit



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Q: How do I perform an energy audit on my home?

A: A home energy audit may sound daunting, but it can be as easy as creating a checklist of improvements based on what you see around your home.

Here's what you'll need to find opportunities to save energy and money: a flashlight, dust mask, tape measure and cooking thermometer. I recommend taking notes on your phone or a notepad.

First, check the heating and cooling equipment. Determine the age and efficiency of the equipment by looking up the model number on the nameplate. The average lifespan of HVAC equipment is 10 to 30 years, depending on the type of equipment and how well it's maintained. If your equipment is older, it may be time to budget for an upgrade. Check the filter and replace it if needed.

Then, check the envelope of your home, which separates the heated or cooled areas from the exterior, for drafts and air leakage. Feel around windows and trim for any drafts. Pay special attention to spots where different building materials come together. Check under sinks for gaps around pipes. Seal with weatherstripping, caulk or expanding foam as needed.

Make sure to replace incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs with LEDs. LEDs use significantly less energy and last longer than traditional incandescent bulbs.

Check for leaking faucets and make sure aerators and showerheads are high-efficiency models in good condition. The gallons-per-minute (GPM) ratings should be etched onto them. To reduce wasted energy from using more hot water than needed, aerators should be 0.5 to 1.5 GPM, and showerheads should be no more than 2 GPM.

Next, look in the attic, while wearing a dust mask, to make sure it's insulated. You may be able to see

enough from the access area using a cellphone with the flash on to take pictures. Use the tape measure to check the depth of the insulation. It should be a minimum of 12 inches deep. This can vary depending on the type of insulation used and your geography.

Insulation can become compacted over time. It should be evenly distributed throughout the attic. Loose fill or blown-in insulation should be fluffy and evenly dispersed. Rolled batt insulation should fit tightly together without gaps.

Also, exterior walls should be insulated. If your home is older than the 1960s, the walls are probably not insulated. Homes from the 1960s or 1970s likely need more insulation. Sometimes you can see wall insulation by removing an outlet cover or switch plate and using a flashlight to look for insulation inside the wall cavity. Turn off the power at the electrical panel to avoid the risk of electric shock. Wall insulation can be blown in from the inside or the outside of the home. This is a job for a professional.

If you have a basement or crawlspace, head there next. Unfinished basements should have insulation on the rim joists, at minimum. This is the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the home's first-story floor. Use closed-cell spray foam or a combination of rigid foam and spray foam to insulate rim joists. Crawlspace should have insulation on the underside of the floor between the floor joists. Insulation should be properly supported in contact with the floor with no air gaps. Water pipes and ductwork should also be insulated.

Lastly, check the temperature of your water by running it for three minutes at the faucet closest to your water heater. Then fill a cup and measure with a cooking thermometer. Hot water should be between 120 and 140 degrees. You can reduce the temperature on your water heater to reduce energy waste and prevent scalding.

Once your home energy audit is finished, review your findings and start prioritizing home energy efficiency projects. For step-by-step instructions, visit www.energy.gov/save.



A historic photo shows a man standing in front of an auger used to dig holes for utility poles.
Photo submitted by Moreau-Grand Electric



Janet Gesinger
Photo by Frank Turner

When the Lights Turned On: Janet Gesinger Remembers the Days Before Power

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Memory is a fickle thing. It's funny how a certain smell or simple photo can evoke vivid memories of an age long past. After all, how can a memory be lost when we can't even remember losing it?

At the age of 89, Janet Gesinger doesn't remember the exact moment when Cam Wal Electric, her local rural electric cooperative, introduced electricity to her childhood farm and ranch 13 miles west of Gettysburg, but she does remember the days without it.

"It's amazing that I can remember some things from my childhood so vividly, but I couldn't tell you what I had for lunch last week," Gesinger laughed.

Gesinger remembers growing up on the farm during a time when the glow of kerosene lamps helped her family navigate the dark and a cistern well kept their food cool.

"I don't know how we could see with the little lamps, but we did," she said. "People were careful because they knew

what the risks were, carrying around those lamps."

At the age of 9, Gesinger and her three older siblings lost their mother. The profound loss meant that Gesinger had to step up to help her siblings and father keep the farm and ranch going.

"I ended up helping my dad outside more than I did anything inside the house," she said. "We lived in such a remote place. There weren't even gravel roads back then. If I ever wanted to leave the farm, I had to help my brother milk cows and do chores so he would take me into town."

In high school, Gesinger's horizons broadened past the farm, and she began working as a waitress at the Medicine Rock Café where she met her late husband, Robert Gesinger. A year later the couple married and moved to Robert's family farm and ranch just a few miles north of Ridgeview in 1954. The Ridgeview community gained power just one year earlier in 1953, and Janet continues to live there now as a member of Moreau-Grand Electric.

When Janet moved to Ridgeview it was a bustling, small town with a grain elevator, a grocery store with a post office in it, a liquor store, a school, and electricity. Today, nearly all those amenities are a distant memory, but the rural electricity that continues to power the homes of the roughly 25 residents of Ridgeview, including Janet, remains.

"Ridgeview had gotten electricity just before we got married," she said.

Once she lived in a home with electricity, Janet found it hard to imagine life without it. One winter storm in 2010 wreaked havoc on the rural landscape and broke more than 200 utility poles, leaving Robert and Janet without power for 21 days.

"By day three of the outage, we ended up getting a PTO driven generator that could hook up to the tractor," Janet said. "Robert was sure glad when the power came back on, because that way we didn't have to fuel the tractor twice a day to run it – and the cost of diesel to run it."

Reflecting on her experiences, Janet acknowledges the transformative impact of electricity on rural life and finds it hard to imagine a world without electricity.

"It's an amazing convenience that we rely on," Janet said. "People today couldn't live without it because what in the world would ever replace it? We have a lot of technology in this world, but there is nothing that can replace electricity."

PLANNING AHEAD



An aerial view of the Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV near Williston, N.D. Photo submitted by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

Basin Electric's Vision for Reliable Energy

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Keeping the lights on in a dynamic world isn't as simple as flipping a switch. It requires a forward-thinking approach, almost like gazing into a crystal ball, to anticipate future energy demand. Energy infrastructure projects begin long before the first shovel breaks ground, and it's a challenge that Basin Electric Power Cooperative confronts every day to ensure consistent and

reliable power amid an ever-changing landscape of new technologies and growing membership.

A new plant or transmission line can take years of planning and coordination by Basin Electric and its member cooperatives. The process is similar to predicting the weather; it all begins with a forecast to determine what energy demand is brewing on the horizon.

Basin Electric works with the members and other stakeholders to

develop highly accurate load forecasts. Those load forecasts are then compared against our existing resource portfolio. If any gaps are identified, resource alternatives are identified and reviewed against each other to arrive at the best resource portfolio outcome.

"Once a need for a new generation project or transmission project has been identified, Basin Electric assembles a project team," explained Matt Ehrman, vice president of engineering and construction at Basin Electric.

"Developing and defining project scope is vital to project success as it's really the foundation for the project," Ehrman continued. "Good upfront planning minimizes project execution

risks later, so Basin places a lot of emphasis on the development work that happens before any detailed engineering design can begin.”

Basin Electric is currently undertaking one of its largest single-site electric generation projects in the last 40 years near Williston, North Dakota, known as Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. Once completed, this project will add 580 megawatts of natural gas generation capacity to Basin Electric’s energy portfolio. Although the project broke ground in March 2023, planning for the project began in 2021, standing as a testament to the cooperative’s long-term mindset and commitment to meeting its load forecast.

So what goes into the planning of such a major project? Ehrman says everything from identifying project objectives to permitting and contracting strategies to engineering studies all take place within the years leading up to new infrastructure.

“In the case of a generation project, the project site, fuel, water, and transmission sources are identified during the project development phase,” Ehrman said. “After the development phase is complete, the more detailed engineering design work can begin. This is when the engineers really begin to dig into the details of how to arrange and interconnect all of the many different types of equipment



The first gas turbine delivery for Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. Photo submitted by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

required for a given project. Eventually, those design details are used to develop construction specifications, contractors are selected and construction begins.”

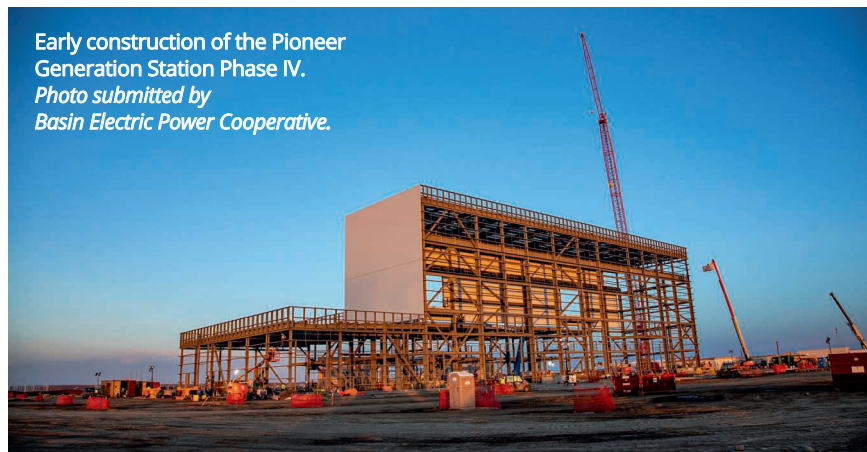
Beyond the demanding complexity of the project itself, Basin Electric’s project team must also navigate regulatory matters and policy. While many projects share similarities, no two are identical when navigating federal, state, and local permitting requirements.

“Large generation and transmission projects can take years to permit, and the permitting duration depends on the project,” Ehrman said. “Basin’s

teams have successfully permitted and executed many projects over the years and as a result have learned a lot about those processes in our service territory.”

Slated to be operational in 2025, Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV will come on board during a time when electricity demand is increasing significantly. The completion of the project will expand Basin Electric’s resource portfolio, which uses a vast diversity of generation resources to serve its member cooperatives. Even still, Ehrman said it still takes a massive effort to stay prepared for what the future may bring.

“Planning and building energy infrastructure is a massive team effort that involves teams from Basin and its membership,” he said. “These are complex projects, and there are challenges involved in all phases of the projects. Basin has extremely talented, dedicated and hard-working teams developing these projects that really enjoy working out all the technical and non-technical details while mitigating risks to achieve success and deliver the best possible outcome for the membership.”



Early construction of the Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. Photo submitted by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.



“YOUR Partners in Power Since 1940”

2025 Rate Schedule

Residential

Service Charge: \$45.00/month
 Demand Charge: \$0 per KW/mo.
 KWH: \$0.1126 per KWH/mo.

Residential - All-Electric

Service Charge: \$45.00/month
 Demand Charge: \$0 per KW/mo.
 KWH: \$0.1126 per KWH/mo.
 Metered Heat: \$0.067 per KWH/mo.

Residential - Demand

Service Charge: \$45.00/month
 Demand Charge: \$9.50 per KW/mo.
 Energy Charge: \$0.052 per KWH/mo.

Seasonal /Residential

Service Charge: \$45.00/month
 Demand Charge: \$0 per KW/mo.
 KWH: \$0.1126 per KWH/mo.

Small Commercial

Service Charge: \$45.00/month
 Demand Charge: \$0 per KW/mo.
 750 KWH: \$0.1575 per KWH/mo.
 Excess KWH: \$0.1210 per KWH/mo.
 Metered Heat: \$0.067 per KWH/mo.

Large Commercial

Demand Charge: \$18.94 per KW/mo.
 KWH/100 per KW: \$0.0905 per KWH/mo
 Excess KWH: \$0.0865 per KWH/mo.
 Metered Heat Credit: \$0.019 per KWH/mo.

Irrigation /Pumping Services

Service Charge: \$12.00/HP/season
 Demand Charge: \$18.94 per KW/mo.
 Energy Charge: \$0.0506 per KWH/mo.
 Idle Facilities Chg: \$6.00/HP/season
 Load Control Credit: \$4.00/KW/mo.

Grain System

Service Charge: \$45.00/month
 Demand Charge: \$18.94 per KW/mo.
 Energy Charge: \$0.1126 per KWH/mo.

Residential- Electric Vehicle Charging

On Peak Energy (7 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
 \$0.1126 per KWH/mo.
 Off Peak Energy (9 p.m. to 7 a.m.)
 \$0.068 per KWH/mo.

Effective – 01-01-2025

The Butte Electric Board of Directors have approved the 2025 budget and set the rate schedules for the coming year.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc., Newell, S.D.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. is to continually improve customer services; provide safe, reliable, and competitively priced electricity; and continue to lead in developing our communities for the benefit of our members.

We provide service to Butte, Lawrence and Meade counties.

**If you have an outage Call:
 605-456-2494 or
 1-800-928-8839**

Attention High School Juniors and Seniors: Win a Trip to Washington D.C.

Butte Electric Cooperative will once again sponsor high school juniors and seniors on an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. Each June, over 1,800 high school juniors and seniors travel to Washington, D.C., to participate in the Rural Electric Youth Tour. Throughout the week, participants will explore about Washington, D.C., learning about government, cooperative philosophy and rural electrification. The students are selected and sponsored by their local rural electric cooperatives with the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) coordinating the trip for South Dakota students.

Tour highlights include the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, U.S. Capitol, Ford's Theatre, Arlington National Cemetery, Mount Vernon, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Iwo Jima Statue, National Archives, U.S Supreme Court, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial among other exciting sites. Students will also participate in a briefing with the South Dakota Congressional Delegation and a river boat cruise across the Potomac River.

Who is Eligible?

All area high school juniors and seniors whose parents are members of Butte Electric Cooperative.

What Does It Cost?

Butte Electric Cooperative, along with the other participating local electric cooperatives fully fund the tour. The tour covers each participant's transportation, accommodations, meals, entertainment, and sightseeing events. Students are required to provide their spending money (for snacks, souvenirs, etc.).

SD YOUTH TOUR

2025

Join students from across South Dakota for a free, once-in-a-lifetime trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by your rural electric cooperative. Contact your local cooperative for more details and application information!

June 15-21



When is it Held?

The weeklong trip will take place from June 15-21, 2025. Participants will meet for an orientation meeting on Sunday, June 15 at the Brandon Golf Course. The group will bus to Minneapolis and then fly the next morning to D.C. on Monday, June 16, and return to South Dakota on

Saturday, June 21. A commercial bus will be used for transportation while in D.C.

How Can I Apply?

Contact the Butte Electric Cooperative office at 605-456-2494 for more information.



LOOKING AHEAD

An aerial view of the Wild Springs Solar Project near New Underwood, S.D. Photo submitted by East River Electric

Wind Energy Association Changes Name, Advocates For All Renewables

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

The South Dakota Wind Energy Association is getting a fresh coat of paint this year with a rebrand that will expand the association’s advocacy mission to include more forms of renewable energy.

As solar energy generation in the state increases with new and upcoming projects, expanding the association — now called the South Dakota Renewable Energy Association — to include other forms of renewable energy and battery storage was the clear way forward according to association president and Sioux Valley Energy Director Gary Fish.

“The association started out as being very wind oriented, and that’s our legacy,” Fish explained. “But we also have somewhat migrated to having an energy portfolio where wind coexists

with coal, natural gas and solar, and that was the driver behind changing our name.”

The change comes in the wake of South Dakota’s first large-scale solar farm near New Underwood, which began commercial operation in March 2024. Basin Electric Power Cooperative will purchase 114 megawatts of the 128-megawatt renewable project.

The association began with the

leadership of East River Electric Power Cooperative in the mid-2000s as the generation and transmission co-op looked for ways to develop wind generation in the state to serve its growing member utilities and bring economic development and job opportunities to the state.

“Wind energy was at that time starting to become a more viable utility-scale source of power generation,” said Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer at East River Electric.

A look on the ground as crews prepare the Wild Springs Solar Project for power generation. Photo submitted by East River Electric



“East River led an effort to build an association of stakeholders in South Dakota that can help advocate for the wind industry.”

It’s a mission that’s propelled South Dakota to being the state with the third highest renewable energy makeup, with more than 54% of in-state power generated from renewable wind and solar resources.

“We’ve gone from essentially zero wind energy to more than 3,000 megawatts of installed capacity in the state,” Studer said. “We have far surpassed what our original goal was.”

In the South Dakota Wind Energy Association’s initial stages, the board was composed mostly of utilities and developers focused on studying potential economic benefits and the infrastructure needs that come with increasing generation.

“I think everyone knew we had a great wind resource, but the real issue was having additional transmission to get the power out,” Fish said. “Could we build

the towers? Yes. Could we get the power to market? That was the challenge.”

As the association successfully made the case for wind energy, the membership grew to include other G&Ts and investor-owned utilities, landowner groups, turbine manufacturers, servicing companies and others from the wind energy supply chain.

One of the first large-scale renewable energy wins for the South Dakota Wind Energy Association and rural electric cooperatives was the 2011 commissioning of the 172-megawatt Crow Lake Project north of White Lake, South Dakota. The association membership helped support the launch of South Dakota Wind Partners to bring local residents an opportunity to invest in and own several turbines in the project.

According to East River Electric, the program generated about \$16 million worth of local investment.

“It was a very unique and successful

project that the South Dakota Wind Energy Association had involvement in and advocated for,” Studer said. “The people that invested got tax equity benefits over time, and after about 10 years they sold it back to Basin Electric and got their investments back.”

Moving forward, the association will continue to advocate for a renewable energy-friendly business environment to propel South Dakota energy projects forward.

“South Dakota Renewable Energy Association is here to make sure our state’s tax policies are fair, that developers still want to come here and develop renewable energy projects, and that there’s a market for all of the supply chain that’s needed for wind energy and now for solar, as well as the necessary transmission,” Studer continued.

A new South Dakota Renewable Energy Association website and promotional material will debut within the next several months.



The Crow Lake Wind Project near White Lake, S.D., is the largest wind project owned solely by a cooperative in the United States. The \$363 million wind project went into operation in 2011.

Photo submitted by East River Electric



RENEWABLE ENERGY

Purchasing Credits Means Renewable Energy Anywhere

Jacob Boyko

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Did you know there's a way your home or business can operate with 100% renewable energy?

With renewable energy credits, or RECs, electric cooperative members can purchase the renewable aspects of their utility's energy and run on 100% green energy without needing to install on-site solar panels or wind generation.

"A REC is a renewable attribute of a megawatt hour of electricity," explained

Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations at Sioux Valley Energy. "One megawatt hour produced by any renewable generator provides one REC."

Basin Electric Power Cooperative – the generation and transmission cooperative that sells electricity to South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives – reported about 21% of its energy sales in 2023 was renewable energy. Since it's impossible to pinpoint the exact generation origin of each individual electron moving along a distribution line and entering a home or business, there's no way to tell what

is actually being powered by renewable energy and what isn't.

However, by having a renewable energy credit program where members can claim rights to the renewable energy generated, members who participate can affirm they are being powered by renewable energy. It's kind of like "calling dibs" on something; everybody is purchasing reliable power, but the members who "call dibs" are purchasing the renewable power.

One Sioux Valley Energy member that makes use of the renewable energy credit program is Marmen Energy in Brandon, South Dakota. Through the program, the wind tower manufacturer's operations are powered 100% by renewable energy.

"We get all renewable energy to power our facility," Marmen Energy Plant Manager Danny Lueders said. "We build renewable energy wind towers – how

could we not get the renewable energy credit program?”

At a scale like Marmen’s, which produces between 300 and 400 wind towers annually, being 100% renewable is a statistic that not only makes a statement, but increases demand for more renewable energy.

“It makes sense for us to have it and support that industry all the way through,” Lueders continued. “It’s an industry we’re heavily involved with and we want to do everything we can to support and promote that industry.”

Support for renewable energy through the REC program has other benefits; the extra funds Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative generated from selling allocated RECs made it possible to purchase a solar demonstration trailer to educate the public about the benefits and drawbacks of solar energy and the need for a diversified mix of energy resources.

“We sell the RECs on the open market so others can satisfy their renewable mandates and so we can fund future renewable energy projects,” Rushmore Electric CFO Mark Miller added.

On the market, RECs vary in price, usually between \$1 and \$3. The generation source – wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, waste heat recovery – as well as the year the REC’s production year affect the commodity’s value.

“They have a shelf life,” Miller explained. “They’re valuable in the first year because some states mandate RECs that are current.”

States like Minnesota with renewable energy standards require utilities to retire their RECs to meet the energy standards, or buy

credits on the market to reach the mandated renewable energy percentage of their energy mix.

In South Dakota, a state without renewable energy mandates but with more than 54% of in-state power generated by renewable resources, the Marmen Energy CEO simply believes continuing to support renewable energy is the right thing to do.

“South Dakota is a strong proponent of renewable energy,” Lueders said. “The amount of industry renewables are supporting throughout the state of South Dakota is a strong issue, from an economic footprint and continuing to grow South Dakota’s self-reliance on homemade energy.”

(Right) Jay Buchholz, Key Account & Community Relations Executive for Sioux Valley Energy, presents Marmen Energy employees Vincent Trudel, Chief Operating Officer, Yannick Laroche, Fabrication Manager, with renewable energy credit certificates.



(Below) Marmen Energy’s Brandon, S.D., manufacturing plant purchases renewable energy credits to cover 100% of its operations, meaning all wind towers produced here are built using 100% renewable energy. *Images submitted by Sioux Valley Energy*



REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a Blackstone electric grill!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



JAN. 11
Snow Queen Coronation
7 p.m.
Aberdeen Civic Theater
Aberdeen, SD
SDSnowQueen.com

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Snow Queen Festival

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.

UNTIL DEC. 26
Christmas at the Capitol
8 a.m.-10 p.m.
Pierre, SD
605-773-3178

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

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

UNTIL DEC. 31
Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens
5-9 p.m.
Brookings, SD

UNTIL DEC. 31
Hall of Trees
12-4 p.m. Mon.-Sat.
The Mead Museum
Yankton, SD

DEC. 31
American Legion Post 15 Save the Last Dance 2024
8 p.m.-12:30 a.m.
El Riad Shrine
Sioux Falls, SD
605-336-3470

DEC. 31-JAN. 1
New Year's Eve in Deadwood
Deadwood, SD
800-999-1876

JAN. 5, FEB. 2
American Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
1600 W. Russel St.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-336-3470

JAN. 7-9
Dakota Farm Show
Tue. & Wed. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Thurs. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
USD DakotaDome
Vermillion, SD

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

JAN. 15
46th Ranchers Workshop
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Community Events Center
White River, SD
605-259-3252 ext. 3

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

JAN. 26
Souper Supper Fundraiser Rapid Valley United Methodist Church
5:30-7:30 p.m.
Tickets \$6
5103 Longview Dr.
Rapid City, SD

JAN. 31-FEB. 8
Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo
Central States Fairground
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

FEB. 14-17
11th Annual Frost Fest
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Brookings, SD
605-692-7444

FEB. 22
Bellator Titans Charter Casino Night Fundraiser
6-11 p.m.
316 2nd St.
Aberdeen, SD

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