

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## **Antler Shed Hunting**

**Shed Hunter Kelly  
O'Bryan**

Pages 8-9

**Artificial Intelligence**

Pages 12-13

*Photo submitted by  
Kelly O'Bryan*

# Initial Look at 2026 Power Costs



**Tim O'Leary**  
General Manager

It seems like we talked a lot about purchase power rates last year and throughout our member meetings over the last couple of months. We start to get estimated power supply rates around this time of the year and then we get the final numbers around October.

One of the biggest impacts on our local budget is power costs. Power supply makes up nearly 60% of our costs and they make up the largest part of our uncontrollable costs. What I mean by uncontrollable costs is that these costs are based on the amount of and when power is needed by our members. While we have some control over amount through the load management of water heaters and air conditioners, for the most part our members decide when and how much power they need around their homes and businesses.

A variable that plays a large role in how much electricity is needed by each member is the weather. When it's very hot or very cold, our members need more power to run the equipment that keeps their homes/business cool or warm. A wet or dry year will impact usage as well when it comes to sump pumps or crop dryers.

These variables are taken into to account each year by your electric cooperative when we determine how we will set our purchase power cost and sales budget. This information is shared with East River Electric (East River). East River uses this information to determine how much power is needed by their members and shares it with Basin Electric (Basin). Basin supplies 86% of the power needed for the 25 members of East River and for another 114 members across 9 states. Basin uses the information to create a yearly 10-year financial forecast that looks at costs to build and maintain their transmission and generation system. This information is used to develop rates or estimate rates for future years.

Last year, Basin decided that it would implement a two-year rate increase that would allow them to phase in the necessary rate increase over a two-year period. We appreciated this effort. As a quick reminder, Basin costs were increasing due to member load growth, investments in reliability, decreased sales to non-members, inflation and supply chain issues, and power market volatility.

These drivers haven't changed much as Basin continues to see member growth across the system and the need to invest in its transmission system. Last year, I mentioned that the forecast had \$8B in capital investments. This year's forecast has increased that number to nearly \$13B with the addition of the Bison Generation Station. The Bison Generation Station will be a natural gas generating plant located in North Dakota. The other change was in the cost of commodity prices, which has a large effect on the sales out of their subsidiary, Dakota Gasification Company.

All of these variables have caused a shift in their financial forecast. The forecast from last year identified a need for a 2.7% increase and this year's forecast identified a 18.7% increase. This would have an additional \$1M impact on our local power costs. We are also going to see an increase in hydropower costs from the Western Area Power Administration for the second straight year. Increased prices are hitting all utility sectors. We will continue to work with East River and Basin Electric to identify ways to reduce this impact, but we will need to do something with rates in 2026 to meet our financial requirements.




I really don't like writing articles about rate increases, especially since this is just an estimate at this time, but I want to make sure that we are talking about this well in advance of implementing any change. Please continue to read the newsletter to learn more about future power costs as we work with our power supply partners to limit the size of the increase over the next few months.

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## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### LYON-LINCOLN ELECTRIC

(ISSN 1540-6989)

#### Board of Directors

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Scott Johnson, Tyler – Vice President  
Kathleen Schreurs, Tyler – Sec./Treas.  
Joel Buyck, Garvin  
Jared Dritz, Porter  
Galen Grant, Russell  
Mary Gunnink, Lake Benton  
Mike Longtin, Taunton  
James Rokeh, Minneota

#### Staff and Personnel

Tim O'Leary – General Manager  
Lyle Lamote – Line Superintendent  
Kristi Jensen – Finance Manager  
Brian Jeremiason – Manager of  
Marketing & External  
Relations

Rochelle Borresen – Accountant  
Lisa Hauswedell – Billing Clerk  
Jessica Gums – Executive Assistant

#### Staff and Personnel

Journeyman Linemen:  
Ross Birath  
Dan Tutt  
Tyler Blomme  
Tyler Sand  
Nathan Pavek  
Trent Skjefte  
Sam Rohde  
Wade Thooft – Operations Staff  
Assistant  
Alan Fischer – Work Order Clerk/  
Warehouse Coordinator

**www.llec.coop**

Lyon-Lincoln Electric Summer  
hours are 7:00 AM – 4:30 PM  
Monday thru Friday

LYON-LINCOLN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS is published monthly  
by Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative,  
205 W. Hwy. 14, PO Box 639, Tyler, MN  
56178. Electric co-op members devote  
50 cents from their monthly electric  
payments for a subscription. Non-  
member subscriptions are available for  
\$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at  
Tyler Post Office, Tyler, MN 56178 and at  
additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes  
to: Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative  
Connections, PO Box 639, Tyler, MN  
56178; Telephone (507) 247-5505; Toll  
Free 1-800-927-6276; Fax (507) 247-5508.

**Jessica Gums, Editor**



#### YEAR-TO-DATE COMPARISON

MAY 2025

	May - 2024	May - 2025
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$4,418,138</b>	<b>\$4,964,713</b>
<b>Cost of Power</b>	<b>\$2,540,527</b>	<b>\$2,816,317</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,011,115</b>	<b>\$2,252,495</b>
<b>Operating Margins</b>	<b>\$(133,504)</b>	<b>\$(104,099)</b>
<b>KWH's Purchased</b>	<b>40,852,266</b>	<b>43,952,415</b>
<b>Services in Place</b>	<b>4,125</b>	<b>4,134</b>
<b>Miles of Line</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>1,670</b>
<b>Revenue per Mile</b>	<b>\$2,644</b>	<b>\$2,973</b>

#### OUTAGE REPORT

JUNE 2025

#### 10 OR MORE CONSUMERS

6/20/25- 26 consumers were off 2 hours and 25 minutes in Coon Creek and Lyons Townships. Peter Baerg - 1120400. The cause was a burndown on the primary wire.

6/28/25- 367 consumers were off 5 minutes out of the Marble Substation. The cause was East River's loss of the Marble sub due to a thunderstorm.

6/30/25- 253 consumers were off 45 minutes in the City of Lynd. The cause was an underground wire that got hit by a contractor.

# Emergency Preparedness: Are You Ready for a Disaster?

Source: National Safety Council

National Preparedness Month, sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and held annually in September, is a good reminder that natural and man-made disasters can strike at any time. It's important to have a planned response when you're at work, on vacation or on the road.

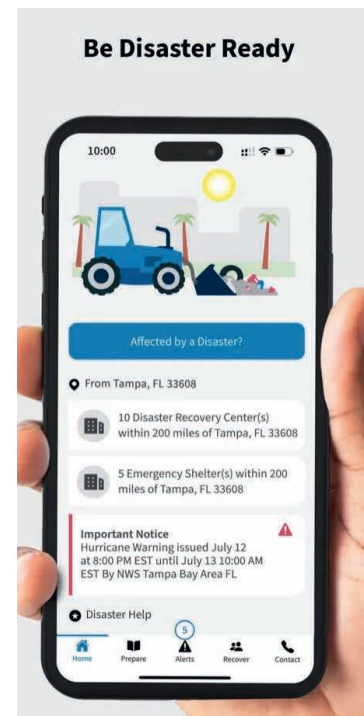
In 2022, 69,473 weather-related events resulted in 813 deaths and 1,718 injuries. Winter weather, heat, floods and hurricanes resulted in the most deaths that year, according to Injury Facts.

The National Safety Council offers safety tips specific on preparing for earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes, and how to minimize fire risks.

Federal agencies, like Ready.gov and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also are valuable resources for emergency preparedness. When you face a natural or man-made emergency, try to stay informed through radio, TV or the Internet. In some cases, however, cable, electric and cell phone service will be disabled, making communication nearly impossible. The National Safety Council recommends the following general precautions that apply to many disaster situations:

- Make sure at least one family member knows first aid and CPR.
- Download the FEMA app for resources, weather alerts and safety tips.
- Have a family communication plan in place; all members of the family should review and practice the plan.
- Have all family members' and other important phone numbers written down or memorized.
- Have an emergency kit in your car and at least three days of food and water at home.
- Be sure to store all important documents – birth certificates, insurance policies, etc. – in a fire-proof safe or safety deposit box.
- Know how to shut off utilities.

The official FEMA mobile app offers critical resources and real-time alerts to help you prepare for emergencies, stay safe during disasters, and navigate recovery afterward. With features like customizable emergency checklists, shelter locations, disaster recovery centers, and direct access to emergency alerts, the app is a comprehensive tool for personal and family safety planning.



**"Don't drive tractors into power lines."**

### Darcy Welsh, Age 9

Darcy cautions readers while driving tractors near power lines. Great picture, Darcy! Darcy's parents are Ryan and Rachel Welsh from Oral, 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.



# Fruit SPECIALS

## FROZEN FRUIT FIESTA

### Ingredients:

- 1 6-oz. frozen orange juice concentrate
- 2 10-oz. frozen strawberries
- 2 cans pineapple with juice (1 tidbits, 1 crushed)
- 3-4 bananas, sliced
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cup cold water

### Method

Mix all together in a large bowl. Freeze in individual cups. Set out at room temperature for 1-2 hours before serving.

Optional: pour sour or 7-Up on top before serving.

**Ginny Jensen**  
Sioux Valley Energy

## PEACH RHUBARB CRISP

### Filling:

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 tbsps. flour
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 3 cups rhubarb (sliced, fresh or frozen)
- 2 1/2 cups chopped fresh or frozen unsweetened peaches

### Topping:

- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup oatmeal
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 5 tbsps. butter (cold)

### Method

Combine the filling ingredients and fruit. Transfer to a greased 11"x7" baking dish. In a small bowl, combine the topping ingredients; cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle over fruit. Bake at 375°F for 30 to 35 minutes until bubbly and browned.

\*Recipe can be cut in half and bake in 8" x 8" pan.

**Sally Florey**  
Charles Mix Electric

## CHERRY ICE CREAM DESSERT

### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cup Rice Krispies, crushed
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 1 cup grated coconut
- 1/4 cup chopped nuts
- 1-quart vanilla ice cream
- 1 cup cherry pie mix

### Method

1. Melt butter in frying pan. Add coconut and toast, stirring constantly as it burns easily. Cool
2. Add nuts, brown sugar and crushed rice Krispies. Mix together.
3. Press 2/3 of crumb mixture into a buttered 9x9 inch pan.
4. Soften ice cream and spread over crumb mixture then top remaining crumbs.
5. Freeze well. Cut in squares and top with cherry pie mix.
6. Can be served with any other toppings. Serves 6-8.

**Rowena A. Wipf**  
Northern Electric

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

# June 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative was held on Monday, June 23, 2025. The following directors were present: James Rokeh, Kathy Schreurs, Mary Gunnink, Scott Johnson, Dale Fier, Jared Dritz, and Joel Buyck. The following directors were absent: Galen Grant and Mike Longtin. Also present at said Board Meeting were General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, Finance Manager, Kristi Jensen, and Attorney, Michael W. Cable.

The Board and others in attendance stood and gave the Pledge of Allegiance. President, Dale Fier, then called the meeting to order.

The following Directors were elected at the Annual Meeting of the Members for the following Districts:

District One for a 3-year term- Kathy Schreurs; District Two for a 3-year term- James Rokeh; District Three for a 3-year term- Mike Longtin;

President, Dale Fier, indicated the first order of business would be the election of officers and turned the meeting over to Attorney, Michael W. Cable, to conduct the election of officers. The Board conducted a ballot vote for the election of officers. After the ballot voting had been taken for the offices of President, Vice-President, and Secretary/Treasurer a motion was made by Mr. Rokeh, seconded by Mr. Dritz, and carried to cast unanimous ballots in favor of the following directors being elected to the following offices until their respective successors shall have been elected and shall have qualified:

President- Dale Fier; Vice-President- Scott Johnson; Secretary/Treasurer- Kathy Schreurs;

President, Dale Fier, indicated to the Board that it was necessary to make appointments for the Operation RoundUp Board and after discussion a motion was made by Ms. Gunnink, seconded by Mr. Buyck, and carried to appoint Glenda

Werkman, for District One; Ken Schiller, for District Two; and Jane Steffes, for District Three, to serve on the Operation RoundUp Board.

President, Dale Fier, then continued routine business: including approval of the May, 2025 meeting minutes, a review of the check schedule, applications for memberships, and shares to be cancelled.

Finance Manager, Kristi Jensen, reviewed the Financial and Statistical Report for the period ending April 30, 2025. Ms. Jensen brought to the Board's attention information that had been received from RESCO concerning RESCO's 2024 Patronage Allocation & Previous Years Capital Credit Retirement and reviewed with the Board Audit Letters that had been received from Eide Bailly concerning engaging the accounting firm to audit the financial statements of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Lyle Lamote, Line Superintendent, gave the outage report for May, 2025. He also advised the Board that there was a Safety Meeting held on April 29, 2025 concerning the topic of Annual Switchman Training. The Safety Meeting was conducted Colton Sanderson from East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. Mr. Lamote indicated that Central Applicators performed spraying of weeds in Lyon-Lincoln's service territory and the linemen were doing the following work: performing pole inspection, completing underground cable installation, and changing out poles.

Brian Jeremiason, Manager of Marketing and External Relations, gave his report as follows: The Board was advised that Mr. Jeremiason worked with Shar Fenske at Marshall Radio, and they developed new ads to put into rotation. Portions of the Cooperative's membership will be contacted by two separate surveys; a nationwide survey conducted by Touchstone Energy Cooperatives and a East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. Member survey conducted by Inside Information.

General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, gave his General Manager's Report and was as follows: reviewed the May power bill and sales to members and compared those figures to budgeted amounts, looked at line loss for the system, reported on the East River MAC Meeting, advised the Board that Jenny Glumack, Director of Legislative Affairs for MREA, will be meeting with the Board at its July Board Meeting to discuss activities at MREA and give an update as to the recent legislative session, and reviewed upcoming meetings and notices.

The Board reviewed the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s Cyber Report for May 2025.

The Board discussed the Annual Meeting that had been conducted by Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc. and it was indicated that the membership had provided good comments to the Board concerning the Annual Meeting.

There was general discussion concerning Policy 604-Line Extensions.

The Board recessed for lunch at 12:15pm and during the lunch recess the Board viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. monthly video report which included the Basin Summary and reconvened at 12:40pm.

The Board considered the Certificate of Delegates for the East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. Annual Meeting and after discussion, it was carried to designate Joel Buyck as the Voting Delegate and Kathy Schreurs to be designated as Alternate Voting Delegate to said meeting.

Kathy Schreurs, Secretary/Treasurer, and President, Dale Fier, gave a report concerning the BLC 974.1-Rate Making Strategies and Policy Decisions for Electric Cooperative Boards that they had attended online. Both indicated that the presentation was good.

There being no further business to come before the Board, President, Dale Fier, adjourned the meeting at 1:00pm.



## Insuring The Power of Community

*O'Leary named Chairman of the Board of Directors for  
**Federated** Rural Electric Insurance Exchange*



Tim O'Leary – Chairman



Brian Hallgren – Vice  
Chairman



Chuck Wagner, Secretary



Mark Kirby – Treasurer

Writing its first policy in 1959, Federated is a member-owned reciprocal insurance exchange headquartered in Shawnee, KS, that proudly serves the cooperative utility industry exclusively. Since founded, Federated has become what their founders envisioned: a steady presence in the market, committed to offering superior insurance programs by providing the best value in products and services for our members. They currently insure over 97% of all electric cooperatives across the continental United States.

Federated's Board of Directors is comprised of ten General Managers/CEOs and ten Board Directors from electric cooperatives across the country.

The new Officers of the Board of Directors were seated at the conclusion of Federated's Annual Meeting in New York City, NY, on June 30, 2025. They are as follows and pictured at left:

- Tim O'Leary, General Manager of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Co-op, Inc. (MN) – Chairman
- Brian Hallgren, Director of Taylor Electric Cooperative (WI) – Vice Chairman
- Chuck Wagner, Director of Central Valley Electric Cooperative (NM) – Secretary
- Mark Kirby, General Manager of Butler Public Power District (NE) – Treasurer

We congratulate Tim on his commitment to our Cooperative values as he shares his passion for serving our members and helping our communities thrive.

## WIN MONEY

FIND YOUR NAME & MEMBER #

The tradition of listing member names and numbers in the newsletter continues in the Co-op Connections. If you find your name and member number, call the office and let us know and you will receive a \$20 energy credit.

In last month's Co-op Connections, Bryan Anderson and Bruce Sheets were listed and will receive an energy credit if they spotted their names and called the office. Once again, there are two new names and numbers hidden in this issue.

Good Luck!

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

Take advantage of "shoulder months," which refer to the transitional periods between peak heating and cooling seasons. During the fall, these milder weeks typically occur between September and November.

Shoulder months offer a great opportunity to reduce home energy consumption as the need for extensive heating or cooling is reduced. Look for simple ways to boost indoor comfort without running your heating and cooling system. Use ceiling fans and open windows on breezy days to ventilate your home. On cooler days, add a layer of clothing and avoid running the heat.

Source: energystar.gov





# SHED

Kelly O'Bryan of Winner shows off his impressive collection of deer and elk sheds alongside his shed-hunting Labrador, Skye. Photos submitted by Kelly O'Bryan

# HUNTING

## Prairie Miles and Antler Piles

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Rosebud Electric member Kelly O'Bryan of Winner regularly hikes mile after mile of open prairie in search of the perfect shed. But he isn't looking for a place to store his garden tools or lawnmower – instead, he's after antlers. Each spring, deer and elk naturally shed their antlers, leaving behind prized treasures for shed hunters like O'Bryan to find.

O'Bryan jumped into the shed hunting hobby in 2020, during the social distancing months of the pandemic, after a friend invited him on a shed hunt in Montana. When O'Bryan found his first deer shed, he uncovered more than just a pair of antlers – he discovered a new passion.

"It was during the time when you couldn't go out and do anything, so you just had to make your own fun and find stuff to do," he laughed. "I just fell in love with covering as many miles as I possibly could each season, trying to pinpoint sheds. It's just like an Easter egg hunt."



O'Bryan lifts an elk shed found in Montana. Submitted Photo

Shortly after, O'Bryan fully committed to the hobby and added the ultimate scavenger to his team: a white lab named Skye. According to O'Bryan, it didn't take long for the dog to become an invaluable shed-hunting partner.

"I got Skye as a puppy, and I knew as soon as I got her, I



would train her to be a shed dog,” he said. “I taught her to sit and stay while I hid sheds all around the house. When she found one, I would give her lots of positive reinforcement. She figured it out just like that.”

Since then, O’Bryan and Skye have become seasoned shed hunters. In 2024 alone, the pair found 152 whitetail sheds, 25 mule deer sheds, nine elk sheds and 16 complete skulls – called “dead heads” – which resemble an English-style mount. Many of their best finds come from long days spent in remote country, often covering 10 to 15 miles in a single outing.

O’Bryan’s collection of sheds has grown into an impressive heap of bone and tines that continues to grow each season. Like many in the shed hunting community, he has found creative ways to showcase his finds with his most festive being an antler-adorned Christmas tree.

Others in the shed hunting community use their collection for art projects, crafting everything from knife handles to chandeliers. Some even trade or sell antlers to crafters, collectors, or pet product makers, giving shed hunting both recreational and economic appeal. Although O’Bryan does not sell his finds, he does cut up broken and damaged antlers for dog chews, gifting them to friends, family and his own favorite shed-hunting friend.

O’Bryan also has a few tips for beginners, drawn from miles of experience.

He says spring is the best time to search – antlers are freshly shed, and the grass is still short enough to give hunters a clear view. A good pair of binoculars is another must-have, helping spot antlers from a distance when the terrain allows for a higher vantage point.

And once you’ve found one shed, don’t assume the hunt is over. Whitetail deer are often in groups and antlers are often dropped in pairs so it’s worth taking the time to thoroughly scan the surroundings.

“You aren’t going to be finding many sheds unless you are willing to put on the miles,” he said. “The more you hike, the more you are likely to find sheds.”

More photos of O’Bryan’s collection and other hunting trophies can be found on his Instagram page: @db\_huntin.



(Above) O’Bryan praises Skye for a lifetime of discovering antlers.  
(Below) O’Bryan and Skye show their white tail antler finds from a winter shed hunt. *Submitted Photo*





# MAKE TIME FOR SAFETY

## This Harvest Season

### SAFETY STARTS WITH PREPARATION

- Be prepared for potential emergencies before the rush of harvest season begins.
- Have a safety plan, and make sure that farm workers and family members are aware of the procedures in it.
- Be sure that you can see well in the areas where you are working. Consider adding extra lighting around grain bins and augers.

### TAKE THE TIME TO LOOK UP AND LOOK OUT FOR ELECTRICAL LINES

Always be aware of where they are in relation to your equipment. Keep a minimum of 10 feet away from all electrical equipment, and lower extensions before moving equipment. If you see a power line that is sagging or low, contact your utility. Also keep an eye out for guy wires. Although these wires are not energized, they can bring down live lines.

In equipment with auto-guidance systems, less focus is needed on steering, which may lead some drivers to think that they do not need to be as aware of navigation issues. However, even while using a GPS with auto-steering, farm workers need to keep safety in mind and stay focused on their surroundings.

Slow down, always stay alert, and take all recommended precautions. To help you do so, recognize when you need to take breaks so that you can be active and engaged in the farm work.

**Remember, while harvest is a busy season on the farm, it's still important to take the time to keep safety first and look out for and stay safely away from potential hazards like overhead power lines.**

### ADDITIONAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS INCLUDE:

- Use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Look up and use care when moving any equipment such as extending augers or raising the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Always set extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads to prevent contact with overhead lines. Grain augers should always be positioned horizontally before being moved.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.

If the machinery you are operating does make contact with a power line, stay on the equipment. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away, and wait for the utility crew to cut the power.

Only on the rare occasion that the machinery catches fire should you leave the vehicle after contact is made.

- If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and machinery at the same time.
- Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area. Never touch anything that is in contact with a power line.



*Feeling stressed this harvest season?*

# WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

Breakdowns. Long hours. Setbacks. There is no way to predict what harvest will bring.

Have your PLAN in place to manage your stress for a safe and healthy harvest.



## Prepare for the season

With preparation, some stress can be avoided. Anticipate the demands of harvest and plan ahead. For example, prep healthy meals, fuel equipment and perform routine maintenance ahead of schedule. **What can you do to prepare?**



## Lean on loved ones

Seeking support from others rather than taking on everything yourself can help reduce stress. Text or call a friend or family member when you need support.

**Whom can you lean on?**



## Activate coping mechanisms

Coping mechanisms can help manage stress. They include engaging in physical activity, finding ways to make yourself laugh and carving out time for hobbies.

**Which coping mechanisms will you use?**



## Nip negative self-talk

Negative self-talk leads to decreased morale and feelings of hopelessness. When your inner critic nags, be kind to yourself and remember thoughts are not reality.

**How will you tell your inner critic to take a hike?**

*Content developed by Josie M. Rudolphi and Courtney Cuthbertson, University of Illinois Extension*



## Need immediate assistance?

Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline:  
1-833-600-2670

Text: FARMSTRESS to 898211

Email: [farmstress@state.mn.us](mailto:farmstress@state.mn.us)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:  
1-800-273-8255

**Safe**  
**Electricity.org®**



# HARNESSING AI

## Electric Cooperatives Explore What's Next for AI

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming an increasingly popular tool for many industries and even in our daily lives. It has the potential to bring many opportunities, and a few challenges, to electric cooperatives. But machine learning takes time, and cooperatives are still in the process of determining how AI can be effectively used.

Like any new technology, AI brings with it a mix of potential and uncertainty. It's a hot topic — sometimes exciting, sometimes a little intimidating. But for electric cooperatives, the focus isn't on the buzz. It's on the basics: What problems can it solve? What efficiencies can it create? And how do cooperatives make sure they are using it safely?

That measured, practical approach is what's guiding East River Electric Power

Cooperative, a wholesale power supply cooperative which serves 25-member distribution systems in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota, as it explores how AI might support the operations of its member cooperatives now and into the future.

Right now, most electric cooperatives in South Dakota have not yet integrated artificial intelligence into their operations or systems. But that doesn't mean the technology is being ignored. Across the state, many co-ops are watching AI developments closely, asking questions, and exploring how these tools might be used in the future. The focus remains on learning first — before implementing anything that could affect system reliability or member service.

At East River Electric Power Cooperative, that learning process is already well underway. According to Jeff May, chief information officer with East River Elec-

tric, the co-op has spent the past several years researching what AI has to offer. Their approach has been to identify practical, secure applications that could help improve efficiency, support employees in their day-to-day work, and ultimately benefit members.

“With the explosion of AI applications and models for both personal and professional uses, we've been exploring ways that East River Electric and our members can harness the power of AI while making sure that our data is secure from a cybersecurity perspective,” said May.

Because AI technology has the potential to interact with both internal systems and external networks, cybersecurity is a top priority. As South Dakota rural electric cooperatives look to adopt tools powered by AI and other tech, they will ensure their systems are safe from potential cyber threats. Strong digital defenses are essential for the safe use of any new technology.



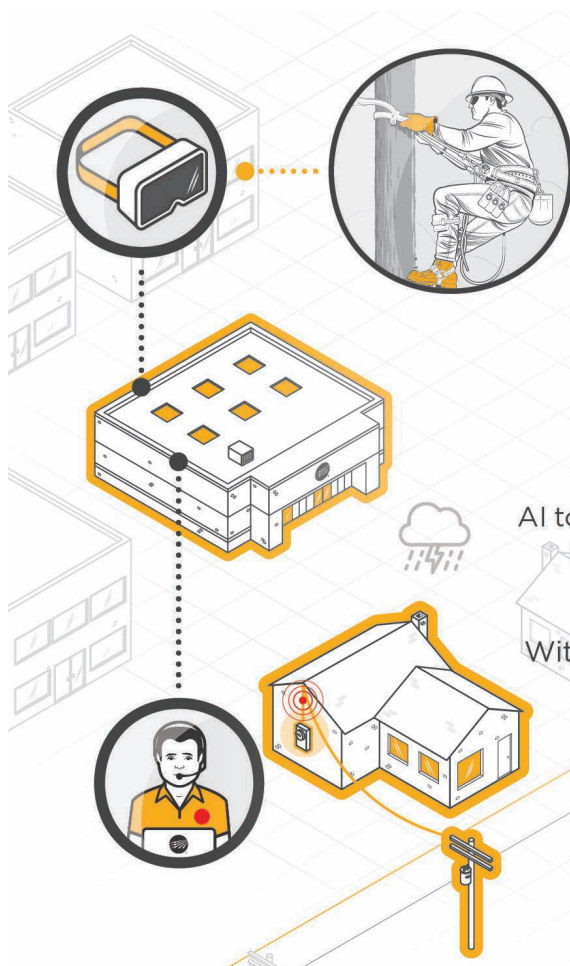
With safety in mind, May said East River Electric is actively partnering with Dakota State University graduate students to see how AI can be safely utilized by electric cooperatives. Together, East River Electric is working with the school to build an AI model that can predict electricity usage based on weather conditions and other factors to support the cooperative's load forecasting and rate forecasting capabilities. Although the technology is still in its infancy, May said he expects that someday AI will play a significant role in an electric cooperative's daily operations, including load forecasting, outage response and maintenance planning.

"It's difficult to predict how AI can be used for different types of jobs, but it will certainly become common throughout the organization as we learn all of the things AI can do," he said. "If it can be used to make our employees more productive and have a positive impact on the organization and our members, we will consider it. In some areas it could become commonplace within the next year, but throughout the cooperative it could take 3 to 5 years or more to be fully integrated in a safe and secure way."

Beyond grid operations, East River Electric is also trying out Microsoft CoPilot, an AI-powered assistant built into programs like Word, Excel, Outlook and Teams. A few employees are currently testing it to see how it might improve productivity and workflow, especially in communications and marketing departments.

Ultimately, if AI can streamline a process, predict an issue or improve service for electric cooperative members, May said it's worth considering. AI can be another tool in the cooperative tool belt that can make energy more reliable, services faster and operations more efficient.

"Over the next 5 to 10 years, AI's role in electric cooperatives is poised to grow significantly, driven by the need for efficiency, grid reliability and sustainability amid rising energy demands and technological advancements," said May. "Just the advancements that have been made in the last three years have been astounding to watch, and as more and more data centers and large language models are built in the coming years, it will become something that cooperatives likely use on a daily basis."



## AI PUT INTO ACTION

Electric cooperatives are already using artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) for key tasks and activities. Looking ahead, co-ops see great potential for AI and AR as helpful tools for improving grid reliability and the services they provide to consumer-members.

### SERVICES FOR MEMBERS

AI tools like chatbots can enhance member interactions and provide a tailored experience based on energy use data.

### WEATHER FORECASTING

With the help of AI, weather forecasts will become more accurate, pinpointing areas to station utility crews.

### EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Through augmented reality, or AR, lineworkers can experience interactive, lifelike trainings, rather than watching a video or webinar.

# Saving Energy During Peak Times Benefits ALL



**Conserving electricity during peak energy use times not only lowers your monthly bill—it can benefit our entire community.**

**“Peak times”** refer to periods of the day when the demand for electricity is highest. Think early mornings when people are getting ready for work or school and evenings when families return home, cook dinner and unwind with electronics. When everyone uses energy at once, it adds pressure on the electric grid.

Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative works around the clock to ensure that electricity flows to your home whenever you need it. Behind the scenes, an enormous and intricate system is at work—one of the most complex machines in the world: the U.S. power grid. The grid is made up of three major interconnections that span the country, each managing supply and demand through regional authorities to keep the lights on and our economy running smoothly.

Electricity comes from a diverse mix of sources—hydropower, natural gas, coal, solar, wind and more. Some power plants can respond quickly to spikes in demand, while others are less flexible. Once energy is generated, it travels through high-voltage transmission lines to local utilities, like Lyon-Lincoln Electric, which then delivers it to your home or business through distribution power lines.

When electricity demand surges during peak times, it's more expensive to generate or purchase power. Daniel Lasnetski - 759901. If supply can't keep up, the risk of outages increases. That's why using less energy during peak hours is more important than ever. It not only eases strain on the grid but also helps you save money.

**So how can you “beat the peak”?** Start by adjusting your thermostat a few degrees during peak hours. Smart thermostats can automate this for you. Delay using energy-hungry appliances like ovens, clothes washers and dishwashers until later in the evening. Charging your electric vehicle overnight instead of right after you get home can also help.

Small actions taken by many households can lead to big results. When we all work together to reduce energy use during peak times, we protect our power grid, help control costs and ensure reliable electricity for our communities.



# KEEP FOOD SAFE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER A STORM

Storm season can bring power outages, putting your food at risk of spoiling. Staying prepared can help you avoid illness, waste and added stress during a storm.

## AT A GLANCE: BENEFITS OF ENERGY STORAGE

Keep appliance thermometers in your fridge and freezer.



Limit the opening of appliance doors.



Use coolers/ice for outages longer than 4 hours.



Never taste food to check safety. When in doubt, throw it out.



## BEFORE THE STORM:

### TAKE A FEW PRECAUTIONS

- **Use appliance thermometers** in your fridge and freezer. Safe temps: 40 F (fridge), 0 F (freezer).
- **Freeze water containers** to help maintain cold temperatures.
- **Keep coolers, ice packs or ice** ready in case of long outages.
- **Consider filling plastic containers with water**, leaving an inch of space inside each one, to help keep food cold if the power goes out.

### STOCK UP ON READY-TO-EAT FOODS THAT DON'T NEED REFRIGERATION INCLUDING:

- Bottled water
- Canned goods such as veggies, fruits, beans and tuna.
- Don't forget a manual can opener
- Instant mashed potatoes or oatmeal for carbs and energy
- Crackers and nuts
- Dry cereal and powdered milk

## DURING AN OUTAGE

In the event of a disaster, it is important to follow a specific sequence for using your available food supply. Start with perishable foods and items from the refrigerator. Following that, turn your attention to the freezer, then begin using nonperishable foods and essential staples.

Losing a fridge full of food is costly, inconvenient and can be dangerous if you're running low on rations. While you may not be able to save everything, here are ways to preserve food as long as possible:

- Keep doors closed. A fridge keeps food safe for up to 4 hours; a full freezer, up to 48 hours.
- Use a cooler if the power is out for more than 4 hours. Layer frozen items with fridge foods and ice for a more consistent temperature.
- If you don't have a cooler, you can use your freezer. Put ice in bowls and place them around the food to prevent melting ice from flooding your freezer. Use blankets to insulate the freezer, but ensure that air vents are unobstructed.
- Monitor temperatures with a thermometer. Food must stay below 40 F to stay safe.
- Never taste food to test safety. If it smells, looks or feels off — throw it out.
- Don't use food that touched floodwater unless it is in waterproof packaging.

## After the power returns

- Frozen food is safe if it still contains ice crystals or has stayed under 40°F.
- Don't refreeze or cook food that got too warm.
- Throw out anything questionable.
- Use the U.S. Department of Agriculture's guide to learn more about foods you can keep or should throw out after a power outage: [www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/food-safety-during-power-outage](http://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/food-safety-during-power-outage).



## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



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 OCT. 31

**Wallace Dow, Prairie Architect Traveling Exhibit**  
Lake County Museum  
Madison, SD  
605-256-5308

### SEPT. 2, OCT. 4

**Davis Indoor/Outdoor Flea Market & Vendor Fair**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Davis American Legion  
Davis, SD  
605-351-3074

### SEPT. 5-7

**James Valley Threshing Show & Tractor Club**  
Threshermen's Park  
Andover, SD  
[www.jamesvalleythreshers.com](http://www.jamesvalleythreshers.com)

### SEPT. 7

**Farmer Tractor Parade**  
1 p.m.  
Tractors, Cars & Food  
Farmer, SD

### SEPT. 7

**Homesteader Day Celebration**  
Pioneer Demonstrations  
1-4 p.m.  
Beaver Creek Nature Area  
Valley Springs, SD

### SEPT. 13-14

**Harvest & Kuchen Festival**  
Delmont, SD  
[www.twinriversoldiron.org](http://www.twinriversoldiron.org)

### SEPT. 13-14

**South Dakota Senior Softball Tournament**  
Huron, SD  
605-295-2039  
[www.southdakotaseniorgames.org](http://www.southdakotaseniorgames.org)

### SEPT. 19

**Veterans Stand Down**  
SD Military Alliance  
8:30-11:30 a.m.  
1600 W. Russell St.  
Sioux Falls, SD

### SEPT. 19-20

**Holiday Arts Fall Craft Show**  
Davison Cty Fairgrounds  
Mitchell, SD  
605-770-8136

### SEPT. 19-20

**SiouxperCon Annual Convention**  
Benefits Make-A-Wish, REACH Literacy, JY6 Foundation  
Sioux Falls Convention Center  
Sioux Falls, SD

### SEPT. 26-28

**Coal Springs Threshing Bee Featuring Horse-Drawn Equipment**  
Meadow, SD  
605-788-2229

### SEPT. 27

**Your Race, Your Pace**  
9:30 a.m.  
Wylie Park  
Aberdeen, SD

### SEPT. 27

**Wheelin' To Wall Cycling Event**  
Wall, SD  
[www.wheelintowall.com](http://www.wheelintowall.com)

### SEPT. 27

**Ag Day**  
Roundup Arena  
Belle Fourche, SD

### OCT. 3

**DSU Architecture Walking Tour**  
3-4 p.m.  
Lake County Museum  
Madison, SD

### OCT. 4

**Pumpkin Train, Vendor Showcase**  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

**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.