

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Caring for Caregivers

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Caregiving Services
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Emergency Training
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Preparing for a 2026 Rate Adjustment



Tim O'Leary
General Manager

The cooperative continues to learn more about wholesale rate costs for 2026. Preliminary figures from our wholesale power provider have indicated that wholesale power costs for Lyon-Lincoln Electric will go up by 11.6%. This will lead us to adjusting local rates in 2026. Nothing has been set to date, but this change will most likely go into effect in January and will be noticed on your February electric bill. While no one welcomes higher bills, these adjustments are necessary to ensure

that our cooperative continues to provide reliable service today while investing in the system that will carry us into the future.

Why Wholesale Power Costs Are Rising

The largest portion of your electric bill is the cost of wholesale power. Across the country, utilities are investing heavily in new transmission lines and electric generation to meet growing demand, strengthen the grid, and comply with reliability standards. These wholesale investments are not short-term spikes but part of a long-term trend. As our wholesale power provider passes those costs on, our cooperative has no choice but to incorporate them into member rates. We have worked with other distribution cooperatives in the Basin Electric, our power supply provider, network to lessen the impact of the 2026 adjustment by getting them to implement their increase over two years instead of all at once. With the increase being phased in, members should expect additional rate adjustments moving forward.

Local Investments and Rising Expenses

In addition to wholesale power, local factors play a role in rate adjustments. Our cooperative continues to invest in the distribution system that delivers electricity to your home or business. These investments are critical for maintaining reliability, modernizing aging equipment, and meeting member needs. Inflation has played a large role in the cost of updating and maintaining the local distribution system and these costs are reflected in higher depreciation and interest costs.

Other local expenses have also risen. Like many businesses, we face higher education and training costs, insurance premiums and increased employee costs. These expenses are necessary to protect our assets, attract and retain skilled employees and directors, and keep our system running safely and efficiently.

Steps to Lessen the Impact

Even with these pressures, we continue to take steps to control costs and reduce the impact on members. We work to manage expenses responsibly and find efficiencies wherever possible.

We also offer several programs to help members manage their bills:

- **Budget Billing** - Spreads energy costs evenly over 12 months to avoid seasonal spikes.
- **Conservation Programs** - Offers tools and guidance to reduce energy use and save money over time. These options are available to help members plan ahead and take control of their energy costs.

Investing for the Future

Rate adjustments are never easy, but they are necessary. By making these investments now, both in wholesale generation and transmission and in our local distribution system, we are building a stronger, more reliable grid that can serve members today and the future.

As a cooperative, we are owned by you, our member-owners. The dollars collected are used in maintaining the system, keeping the lights on, and ensuring that your family and business have the reliable electricity you depend on.

Our Commitment

We understand that rate adjustments are difficult, and we do not take these decisions lightly. Every increase is carefully reviewed by staff and our board of directors, who are fellow members elected to represent you. Their responsibility is to balance affordability today with the long-term reliability and modernization our system requires.

We remain committed to transparency and we will continue to use our newsletter and our district and annual meetings to explain the reasons behind the rate adjustment. While costs are rising, our mission has not changed: to provide reliable electricity and services to enhance the quality of life in our rural communities. Please continue to read your monthly newsletter as we work through the timing and size of the rate adjustment for 2026.



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LYON-LINCOLN ELECTRIC

(ISSN 1540-6989)

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Dale Fier, Taunton – President
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

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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
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Assistant
Alan Fischer – Work Order Clerk/
Warehouse Coordinator
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Dan Tutt – Journeyman Linemen
Tyler Blomme – Journeyman Linemen
Tyler Sand – Journeyman Linemen
Nathan Pavek – Journeyman Linemen
Trent Skjefte – Journeyman Linemen
Sam Rohde – Journeyman Linemen

www.llec.coop

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Jessica Gums, Editor

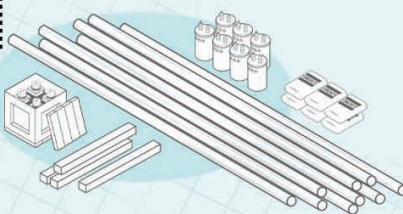
Infrastructure Costs

The past five years have been a period of exploding costs for the electric utility industry and broadband providers, pushed by a soaring demand, supply chain challenges, raw materials shortages, increased labor costs and tariffs. The impact has been rapid increases in the cost of producing power, longer and more unpredictable project timelines and the need for more financing, all of which have driven electric rates up for residences, businesses and other end-users. Here's a look at what's contributing to the trend.

Percent increase since 2020:

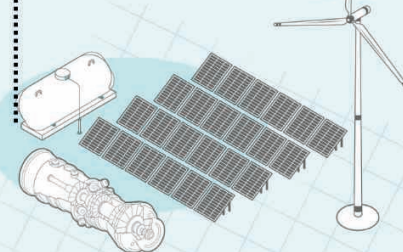
Infrastructure

Utility poles (wood, steel, composite)	+25-40%
Crossarms & braces (steel/wood)	+20-35%
Conductor wire (aluminum/copper)	+30-50%
Transformers	+70-100%
Grain-oriented electrical steel	+80-100%
Oil/dielectric fluids	+25-40%
Copper wiring	+50%
Concrete	+25-35%
Smart meters	+20-35%
Pad-mounted switchgear	+25-40%
Circuit breakers/reclosers	+20-35%



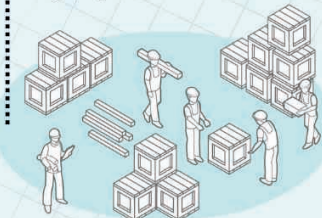
Generation

Diesel gensets	+20-40%
Gas turbines	+20-30%
Solar PV systems	+25-35%
Wind turbines	+25-35%
Hydropower components	+20-30%
Battery storage	+25-40%
SCADA/EMS systems	+20-30%
Inverters	+20-30%
Relays & switch gear	+25-40%
Natural gas	+20-30%
Coal	+30-40%
Diesel/fuel oil	+40-70%



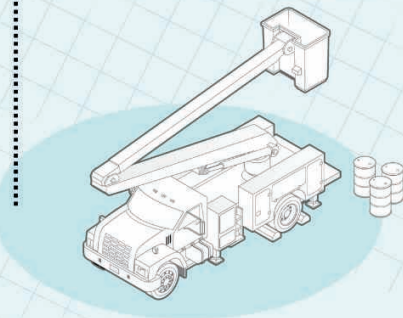
Build-Outs

Utility construction labor	+20-40%
Freight/logistics	+30-60%



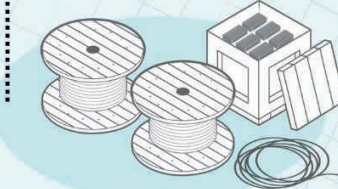
Fleet

Light trucks	+25-40%
Bucket trucks, digger derricks	+20-50%
Fuel costs (especially diesel)	+20-30%
Maintenance	+15-25%
Insurance premiums	+20%



Broadband

Fiber-optic cable	+25-40%
Splicing & telecom gear	+20-30%



Sources: BLS; energynews.com; Reuters; Wood Mackenzie; NREL; IEA

Stay Safe This Holiday Season:

Tips for a Merry and Accident-Free Celebration

The holidays bring families together with twinkling lights, festive meals and cozy traditions. But they also bring seasonal risks that can turn celebrations into emergencies if precautions aren't taken. Local safety officials are reminding residents to keep safety in mind when cooking, decorating, and entertaining this year.

Extension Cords

With more lights and electronics plugged in during the holidays, extension cords are often stretched to their limits. Experts urge homeowners not to overload outlets and to replace any cords that are frayed or damaged. Only outdoor-rated cords should be used outside, especially in snowy or wet conditions.

Families should avoid running cords under rugs or across doorways where they can overheat or become tripping hazards.

Turkey Fryers

Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners have grown to include deep-fried turkeys, but safety must come first. Fryers should only be used outdoors, on a flat surface and far away from buildings, garages or wooden decks. Fire officials caution that a partially frozen or wet turkey can cause oil to boil over and ignite, leading to severe burns or home fires.

A fire extinguisher rated for grease fires should always be kept nearby, and fryers should never be left unattended while in use. One distracted moment can cause a disaster.

Ladders

From hanging lights to topping off the tree, ladders are part of the holiday routine. Falls are among the most common seasonal injuries, so ladders should be set on level ground and never leaned against unstable surfaces. Having another person hold the ladder is strongly advised.

Candles and Fireplaces

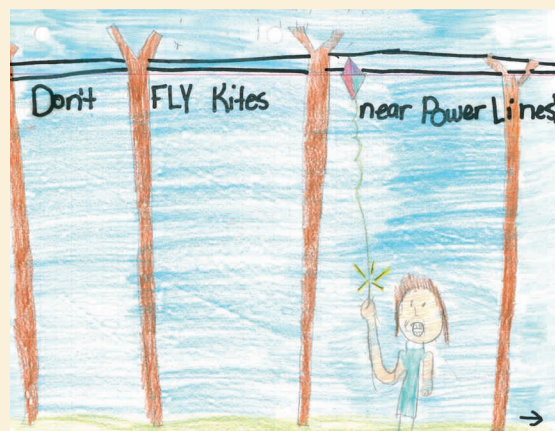
Candles and fireplaces are popular during the holiday season, but they also raise the risk of home fires, especially when combined with the extra decorations and greenery that fill many homes in December. According to the National Fire Protection Association, candles cause an average of

46% of fires in December each year. Never leaving a flame unattended and incorporating a few safety rules can prevent a devastating fire.

Lights and Decorations

Before hanging holiday lights, inspect strands for cracked socket, frayed wires or loose connections, and replace any damaged sets. Outdoor lights should always be weather-rated, and lights should be turned off before bedtime or when leaving the house. Timers and smart plugs can help make this easier.

Decorations should be securely fastened to prevent them from tipping or falling, especially in homes with children or pets. Heavy ornaments should be placed higher on the tree, out of reach of small hands and wagging tails. Fire officials also recommend choosing flame-resistant or non-combustible decor whenever possible and keeping all decorations away from heaters, fireplaces or open flames.



"Don't fly kites near power lines!"

Kristen Vanden Berg, Age 11

Kristen cautions readers on the dangers of flying kites near power lines. Great picture, Kristen! Kristen's parents are Andy and Geraldine Vanden Berg from Corsica, 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.

Holiday SIDE DISHES

CORN CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

2 15 oz. cans whole kernel corn, drained
15 oz. can cream corn
1/2 cup butter, melted
1 box Jiffy cornbread mix
1/2 pt. whipped cream

Method

Combine whole kernel corn, cream corn, butter, Jiffy cornbread mix and whipping cream. Mix thoroughly. Pour into greased 8.5"x11" pan and bake at 350° F for 40-45 minutes.

Sharon Houchin
Central Electric

BETTER THAN STUFFING

Ingredients:

1 box chicken/turkey stuffing mix
Chicken broth
Celery
Carrots
Onions
1 stick herbed butter (or make your own)
2 cups chicken/turkey gravy

Method

Prepare stuffing according to directions but substitute water with broth. Dice and sauté celery, carrots (total of two cups) and onions in herbed butter. Fold into stuffing. Put into baking pan and top with gravy. Poke gravy into stuffing – just a little bit. Don't completely mix. Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes and broil briefly at the end.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

RAW VEGETABLE SALSA

Ingredients:

2-4 medium cucumbers, cubed
2-4 medium tomatoes, cubed
1 small onion or 1/2 of a white or yellow onion sliced
1 tsp. salt
1 tbsp. sugar
2 tbsps. apple cider vinegar
Additions: black pepper to taste, chopped basil, or chopped green bell pepper.

Method

Place cubed tomatoes and peeled cucumbers into a bowl. Add sliced onion.

Mix in remaining ingredients and stir. Marinate for several hours or overnight.

This salad keeps for 3-4 days refrigerated.

Raw Vegetable salads full of electrolytes, vitamin C and fiber.

Laurie Wernke
Southeastern 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.

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative was held on Monday, August 25, 2025. The following directors were present: Scott Johnson, James Rokeh, Kathy Schreurs, Mary Gunnink, Jared Dritz, Mike Longtin, Galen Grant, and Joel Buyck. The following director was absent: Dale Fier. 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. Vice-President, Scott Johnson, then called the meeting to order and conducted routine business including approval of the July, 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 June 31, 2025. Ms. Jensen reviewed a letter that had been received from the CEO of NRTC and a statement concerning member equities with NRTC for Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc. General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, and Kristi Jensen, Finance Manager, reviewed with the Board the 2024 Key Ratio Trend Analysis (KRTA) that concerned the years of 2020 through 2024 involving 145 ratios for cooperatives in the United States.

Lyle Lamote, Line Superintendent, gave the outage report for July, 2025. He also advised the Board that there was a Safety Meeting held on July 30, 2025 concerning the topic of Forklift and Skid Steer Safety which was conducted by Terry Ehli, MREA's Safety Instructor. Mr. Lamote indicated the linemen were doing the following work: working on underground cable installation and changing out poles.

General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, reviewed the report with the Board that had

AUGUST 2025 BOARD MEETING MINUTES SUMMARY

been completed by Brian Jeremiason, Manager of Marketing and External Relations. Said report was as follows: It was indicated that Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc. is seeing a flurry of activity with the Solar Tax Credits set to expire at the end of the year and gave a report on his attendance at Basin Electric's Annual meeting.

General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, gave his General Manager's Report and was as follows: reviewed the July 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, which included an update on Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.'s draft financial forecast, and reviewed upcoming meetings and notices.

General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, reviewed with the Board what will be viewed by the Compensation Committee concerning employee's compensation, healthcare and retirement for said employees.

Cooperative Building Solutions will be meeting with the Board in the month of September to review remodeling options for the headquarters building in Tyler, Minnesota.

The Board reviewed the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s Cyber Report for July, 2025 which was prepared by East River Cyber Security Department.

The Board then reviewed the need to have a delegate appointed for the Region 6 Meeting of Subscribers of Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange and the CFC District 6 Meeting. Director, James Rokeh, was named as the delegate for both meetings.

The Board recessed for lunch at 11:55 a.m. and reconvened at 12:20 p.m. During the lunch break the Board viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. video which included their monthly meeting and the Basin Summary.

The Board reviewed Policy 604 - Line Extensions and after review a motion was made by Mr. Rokeh, seconded by Mr. Buyck, and carried to approve Policy 604 - Line Extensions.

The Board was advised that Policy 606 - Interconnection of Distributed Generation will be reviewed in the future.

The Board reviewed Policy 607 - Safety, Reliability and Service Quality; Policy 608 - Records Management; Policy 609 - Neutral to Earth Investigation Guidelines; and Policy 610 - AMI OPT - OUT Program. There were no changes to be made to these policies.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Vice-President, Scott Johnson, adjourned the meeting at 12:40pm.



A DIRECTOR'S KEY TO SUCCESS

Dale Fier, Lyon-Lincoln Electric's Board Chair, recently received the Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

The first part of NRECA's three-part Director Education Program, the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program consists of five courses that focus on basic governance knowledge and the essential skills required of cooperative directors.

The CCD prepares directors to fulfill their fiduciary duty as elected officials serving on behalf of their membership. Upon completion of all five CCD courses, directors are awarded a Certificate by NRECA. **Congratulations and thank you, Dale!**

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

Each year, as part of maintaining our periodicals mailing privileges, Lyon-Lincoln Electric must file a completed copy of the Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (PS Form 3526) with our local

U.S. Postmaster by October 1st. We also publish this form in the first issue of our Co-op Connections after the October 1st deadline, which is why you are seeing it in our November issue.

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Jessica Gums, Executive Assistant
Date: 09/30/2025

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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, Terrence Lacek and Debra Bruns 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

With the holiday season approaching and more time spent in the kitchen, consider ways to save energy in the heart of your home. When possible, cook meals with smaller, energy efficient appliances, such as toaster ovens, slow cookers and air fryers. When using the range, match the size of the pan to the heating element. Keep range-top burners and reflectors clean so they reflect heat more efficiently. After your holiday meals are complete, load the dishwasher fully before starting the wash cycle. Steven Weber - 862101

Source: energy.gov

YEAR-TO-DATE COMPARISON JULY 2025

	July - 2024	July - 2025
Total Revenue	\$6,207,904	\$6,981,268
Cost of Power	\$3,574,352	\$4,021,067
Operating Expenses	\$2,822,250	\$3,065,954
Operating Margins	\$(188,698)	\$(105,753)
KWH's Purchased	55,289,461	59,385,783
KWH's Sold	52,472,006	56,305,070
Members	3,953	3,954
Miles of Line	1,671	1,670
Revenue per Mile	2.37	2.37



CARING FOR CAREGIVERS

Exploring Structured Family Caregiving Services for South Dakota's Caregivers

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

November is recognized nationally as Family Caregivers Month, a time to honor the essential role of caregivers and highlight the resources available to them and the loved ones they support.

Yet, families face a growing challenge: how to care for aging loved ones when services are often far from home. Nursing homes or assisted living centers may be located hours away, and even when they are nearby, the cost or availability of space can present real barriers.

One answer has been the Structured Family Caregiving program, launched by the South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) in 2019.

According to Heather Krzmarzick, Director of the Division of Long-Term Services and Supports within DHS, the program is one of many resources at DHS that are

Several resources are available for caregivers in South Dakota through the Department of Human Services.

Photos by Homecare Services.

available to help older adults and their caregivers. It provides training, coaching, ongoing support and even a modest stipend to those offering significant care for an older adult in the home.

“Structured Family Caregiving serves caregivers who live with their family member and provide substantial care for them, including personal care, supervision, medication management and other things, such as managing finances and transportation for necessary appointments and community activities,” Krzmarzick said.

In many ways, the program echoes the electric cooperative story. Just as co-ops once brought electricity to rural areas that were otherwise overlooked, the program helps families meet a need that might otherwise go unserved. In places where nursing homes or assisted living centers are many miles away, the program gives families a practical way to continue care at home, often the place where people feel most comfortable.

“Structured Family Caregiving is important because it

supports the vital work of family caregivers, strengthens families and improves outcomes, especially in underserved or isolated regions,” she said. “The program honors South Dakota’s values of strong families, independence and community.”

In addition to expanding community-based care options to rural areas, the program allows families to potentially prevent or delay the move to a nursing home and reduce the economic burden that often comes with that transition. Krzmarzick said DHS also offers other programs for those that may need a little extra assistance to remain safely in their homes but don’t require the intensive services of a nursing facility.

“Each caregiver has unique needs and preferences,” she said. “As such, the services and supports are designed to meet the varying needs of each caregiver and help care for a person at home as long as possible.”

To be eligible for the program, the care recipient must be 65 or older or

18 or older with a qualifying disability and meet both functional and financial criteria to qualify for the program.

Since its creation, the program has grown steadily, giving more families the tools to succeed. Krzmarzick said it has allowed many older adults and adults with disabilities to remain in their homes while supporting family caregivers with knowledge, training and a small amount of financial assistance.

Agency Director Steven Novotny with Homecare Services of South Dakota, Inc., one of many in-home care providers in the state, said that few other programs reach and serve those who need care quite like the program.

“Structured Family Caregiving has the unique ability to serve consumers in every community across our state, large or small. Under this program, individuals can receive care from a trusted family member or friend, which allows them to remain independent and living in their community,” he said. “Our caring staff at Homecare Services of South Dakota have seen

firsthand the positive impact on families when we are able to provide support and training to the caregivers that are stepping into what is often a challenging role caring for a loved one.”

Krzmarzick said the Structured Family Caregiving program is just one of many support options that DHS offers individuals and their caregivers in South Dakota. Resources are available online at dhs.sd.gov or through Dakota at Home, South Dakota’s Aging and Disability Resource Center, at 1-833-663-9673.

“All caregivers, not just those utilizing the Structured Family Caregiving Program, may access free training and resources to help improve confidence in their caregiving abilities, reduce stress and prevent burnout,” Krzmarzick said. “Caregivers may also be eligible for other programs that offer respite options. Our Dakota at Home specialists are dedicated to helping you find services and supports to meet your specific needs or the needs of a family member.”



THE SEASON OF GIVING

As the holiday season approaches and the air turns crisp, we're reminded that this truly is the season of giving. It's a time for gratitude, generosity and looking out for one another and at Lyon-Lincoln Electric, that's something we take to heart year-round.

You've probably heard us talk about our concern for community. It's not just a nice phrase, it's one of the core principles that makes electric cooperatives like ours different from other utilities. We're not just here to keep the lights on (though of course, we're always working hard to do that). We're here to make life better for the people we serve - our members, our neighbors and our friends.

Over the years, we've faced challenges together, and every time, our co-op family has stepped up. We've come together to support those in need, to keep our community strong and to build something better for the future. That spirit of generosity is never more evident than during the holiday season.

Take our Operation Round-Up program, for example. Thanks to the generosity of members like you who round up their electric bills to the nearest dollar, we're able to provide to help fund community projects and charities. Every little bit adds up, and it makes a big difference.

And because we care deeply about safety, we also spend time visiting schools throughout the communities we serve, holding demonstrations and teaching folks of all ages how to stay safe around electricity. We believe knowledge is a gift too and we love sharing it.

You'll also find our team out in the community beyond work - coaching youth

sports, volunteering at local events, serving on non-profit boards, and partnering with our communities to keep our local economy strong. Because when you're part of a co-op, giving back isn't a requirement - it's just what you do.

While the holiday season is a festive time, we understand these can be tough times for many. If you need advice on saving energy to reduce your energy bills, want to explore payment plan options, or you simply have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. We're here to help, not just during the holiday season, but all year long.

"We're here to help, not just during the holiday season, but all year long."



At Lyon-Lincoln Electric, we believe concern for community is more than a value, it's the heart of who we are. And during this season of giving, we're especially grateful to be part of such a caring, generous community.

From all of us at Lyon-Lincoln Electric, we wish you and your loved ones a joyful, safe and bright holiday season.

OPERATION ROUNDUP

Turning Coins into CHANGE



HOW OPERATION ROUNDUP WORKS

Operation RoundUp® is a program made possible by Lyon-Lincoln Electric members who round up their monthly electric bill to the next dollar. The extra cents go directly into a Trust that is administered quarterly in grants to community organizations. A board of trustees adheres to specific guidelines to ensure your dollars are spent wisely.

SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Trust, Inc. was held September 8th, 2025. An election of officers was held and the results were as follows by unanimous ballot: President, Michelle Williams; Vice-President, Deb Belean; Secretary-Treasurer, Ann Longtin. The board then reviewed applications and grant requests were approved. Thank you notes and final reports from grant recipients were also reviewed. The next meeting will be held in March, 2026.

Do you know a nonprofit organization in our service territory that would benefit from a grant from Operation RoundUp? Community organizations and nonprofit groups may apply by completing and returning an application form.

Applications for grants can be found at www.llec.coop under the "Your Cooperative" tab.

Operation RoundUp Board Of Directors

- Michelle Williams, President
- Jane Steffes, Director
- Deb Belean, Vice President
- Glenda Werkman, Director
- Ann Longtin, Sec./Treas.
- Kayla Werkman, Director
- Greg Kohler, Director
- Katy Vos, Director
- Ken Schiller, Director

SEPTEMBER 2025 GRANTEES

Lynd Fire Department

Hand-Held Radio
Upgrades- \$2,160

Tracy Area Medical Foundation

Sanford Tracy Medical
Clinic- Surgery Dept.
Equipment Purchase- \$500

United Way of SWMN

Student Emergency Funds-
\$1,000





LINEMENS' TRAINING READYED CREW FOR CHAINSAW ACCIDENT

(From left) When Brandon Schmiege cut his forearm, fellow linemen Tristan Hall, Luke Koval and Brian Davis knew exactly how to respond.
Photo submitted by Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative.

When a Routine Day of Trimming Trees Turned Critical, Cooperative Employees Were Prepared to Help

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Perched within the manlift on a bucket truck, Brandon Schmiege methodically sawed away large tree branches near overhead power lines, dropping them to the ground more than 50 feet below.

It's nothing out of the ordinary, explained the 19-year veteran lineman from Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative in Milbank, South Dakota. After a while, you become accustomed to the work – and its hazards.

From the bucket he was standing in, Brandon reached with

his chainsaw for one of the last few cuts he'd need to make. But as he began the cut, the chainsaw kicked up and he lost control. Steadying himself and throwing the brake on the saw, Brandon looked down at his left arm. He'd been badly cut.

"I saw quite a bit of blood right away," Brandon said. "My first thought was that I needed to get down fast."

Gathering his strength and trying his best to stay calm, Brandon maneuvered his bucket down through the tree limbs back to the ground where linemen Brian Davis, Luke Koval and Tristan Hall noticed something wasn't right.

"I think we all sensed something happened," Brian explained. "The way he was coming down like that, and he'd just fueled up the saw, so we were wondering what had happened."

Luke ran to go shut off the woodchipper, which was drowning out Brandon's yelling. As the engine died, they finally heard Brandon yell, "Call for help!"

Brian raced to the truck to radio back to the office in Milbank, calling in a “Mayday” along with the crew’s location.

With a first-aid and tourniquet kit in hand, Brian sprinted toward Brandon, where Tristan and Luke had removed Brandon’s safety harness and wrapped a towel over the wound on Brandon’s forearm and applied pressure to slow the bleeding.

As the team secured a tourniquet tightly around Brandon’s upper arm, the crew kept in touch with the office by cell phone. The office staff, having called 911 as soon as they heard ‘Mayday,’ worked together to relay the street address and details of the injury to emergency dispatchers.

Seeing the urgency of the situation, the team placed Brandon in the service pickup and Tristan began driving him to the hospital. As the linemen were driving back into town, the ambulance met them and took Brandon to the hospital in Milbank where they stabilized him and discovered he’d severed two arteries in his forearm. He was then transferred to

Sioux Falls and underwent surgery.

Luckily, Whetstone Valley Electric and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association had conducted first-aid training for linemen just several weeks before. The instruction included CPR, AEDs, tourniquets and wound care.

“Regular first-aid training and keeping first-aid supplies on hand is so important because our linemen are often out somewhere rural,” explained Joe Denison, SDREA’s loss control professional and certified paramedic for the Arlington and Lake Norden ambulances. “If we have to wait 30 minutes for an ambulance, that can be too late.”

Whetstone Valley Electric General Manager Dave Page says despite the incident, he finds it encouraging that the employees followed procedure — maintaining clear communication with each other and with 911, administering first aid on site, and knowing exactly what to do each step of the way.

“It wasn’t only the training that was provided, but it was the attention that

these guys gave to that training - where it stuck, and their response was automatic,” Dave said. “In addition, the Mayday training that we do here at Whetstone went a long way to help us all stick to the plan and see a successful outcome.”

Now back on the job, Brandon credits his safe outcome to the co-op’s focus on regular safety training and having first aid supplies in the vehicles.

“I don’t think the makeshift towel tourniquet would have stopped the bleeding,” Brandon said, looking down at the scar on his forearm.

Brian added, “I don’t want to think about the outcome if we didn’t have a plan in place.”

To help prevent those worst case scenarios, electric cooperatives continually scrutinize safety training and workplace incidents. Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative is sharing this story with its members-owners and fellow cooperatives to promote preparedness for unexpected incidents like this one, and overall encourage a culture of safety awareness.

3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

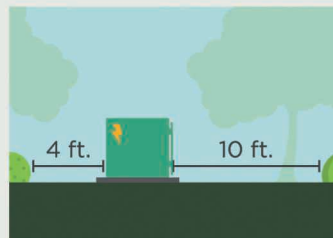
Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them.

Here’s how you can help:

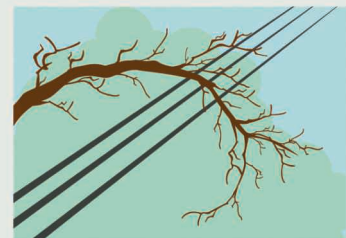
1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



2. Don’t block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



Trimming improves safety for all.

Let’s work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.

OUTAGE REPORT

AUGUST 2025

10 OR MORE CONSUMERS

8/03/25 - 112 consumers were off 2 hours and 25 minutes in Hope, Lake Benton and Marshfield Townships. The cause was an underground fault.

8/09/25 - 13 consumers were off 4 hours and 10 minutes in Ash Lake Township. The cause was an underground fault.

8/16/25 - 68 consumers were off 2 hours and 55 minutes in Lake Marshall. The cause was broken insulators for wind storm.

HEAT PUMP REMINDER

Heating season is just around the corner. If you have a heat meter, you can start getting heat credit with your October reading. Be sure the breaker to the heat meter is on. We encourage you to leave these breakers on year-round. Without power, the automatic meter reading can't detect trouble or report readings.



PREPARING FOR THE BIG HUNT

As hunting season approaches, excitement builds for time outdoors. But before you head into the woods, make sure electrical safety is part of your preparation checklist.

BEFORE YOU CLIMB THAT TREE STAND, LOOK OUT FOR POWER LINES.

Never install a tree stand near a power line or on a utility pole. Electricity can arc through the air up to 10 feet from high-voltage lines. This means you don't even have to touch a wire to be at risk of electrocution.

Never shoot near or toward power lines, utility poles, transformers or substations. Stray bullets or pellets could damage equipment, possibly interrupting electric service. Even more concerning, they could drop a power line to the ground, causing a hazardous scenario: those who get within 50 feet of a downed line could be shocked or electrocuted.

KEEP THESE TIPS IN MIND TO STAY SAFE:

SCOUT THE AREA. Before hunting, scout your area during daylight. Look for power lines, poles and electrical equipment. Note their locations to avoid them later.

POWER SAFELY. If you're using a portable electrical generator, don't use it inside a cabin or RV, or in a confined area. Make sure it's used outside with plenty of ventilation.

AVOID AIMING TOWARD POWER LINES OR EQUIPMENT.

A stray bullet could knock down a line, interrupt power or create a deadly hazard. Jennie Popowski - 1144600.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE. Stay at least 10 feet away from overhead lines, poles and other electrical infrastructure when setting up or taking down tree stands.

NEVER CLIMB A UTILITY POLE. Even if it looks like the perfect vantage point, don't do it. Poles carry high voltage lines, and climbing them can be deadly. Don't use utility poles for support. Tree stands or blinds should never be attached to or supported by power poles or electrical equipment.

WATCH FOR DOWNED LINES: Stay at least 50 feet away from downed power lines or damaged electrical equipment. Call 911 or your utility immediately.

Safe Learn more at:
Electricity.org®



DON'T LET ENERGY SLIP THROUGH THE CEILING:

A QUICK GUIDE TO INSULATION

Upgrading your attic insulation is one of the easiest and most effective ways to lower your energy bills, make your home more comfortable and boost energy efficiency year-round. Older homes can save as much as 15% on energy costs by improving attic insulation.

STEP 1: SEAL AIR LEAKS

Before adding insulation, take care of air leaks. Common trouble spots include:

- Recessed lighting
- Chimneys
- Attic hatches or pull-down stairs
- Pipes, ductwork and wiring

Seal these gaps with caulk, expanding foam or weather stripping. This helps keep warm air in during winter and hot air out during the summer.

STEP 2: UNDERSTAND R-VALUES

R-value measures how well insulation resists heat flow based on its type, thickness and density — the higher the number, the better. How much you need depends on your climate:

- Mild climates: R-30 to R-38 (10-14 inches)
- Cold climates: R-49 or higher (16-18 inches)

Quick check: If you can see the ceiling joists, you probably need more insulation.

You don't need to remove existing insulation unless it's wet, moldy or contaminated. Otherwise, it's safe to leave in place and add new insulation on top.

STEP 3: PICK THE RIGHT TYPE

There are two main types of attic insulation:

Batt or roll insulation:

- Easier to install for DIYers.
- Must be cut precisely to avoid gaps, especially around obstructions like pipes and vents.

Blown-in or loose fill insulation:

- Installed with a machine that "blows" insulation into place.
- Fills gaps more evenly; great for hard-to-reach areas.
- Blown-in cellulose is the top pick for attics due to its high R-value, good coverage and air-sealing benefits.

STEP 4: PLAN FOR STORAGE

It's tempting to use the attic for storage, especially for those holiday decorations, but if you're looking to maximize efficiency, store them elsewhere.

If you store items in your attic, don't flatten the insulation. Build a raised platform high enough to keep insulation at the recommended depth.

STEP 5: CHECK OLD WIRING

If your home is older, inspect attic wiring before insulating. Cracked or brittle wire insulation can be a fire hazard — have a professional electrician replace it if needed.

STEP 6: INSULATE THE ATTIC HATCH

Whether you have an attic hatch or a dropdown ladder, this opening can leak lots of air if it's not sealed properly.

For standard hatches:

- Add insulation to match your attic's R-value.
- Upgrade to a pre-insulated panel or ¾-inch plywood.
- Install weather stripping and a dam to prevent loose-fill from spilling.

For dropdown ladders:

- Add an insulated cover box in the attic.
- Seal the frame with foam or weather stripping.
- Be sure to leave room for the folded ladder.

YOU'LL FEEL THE DIFFERENCE

A well-insulated attic means lower energy bills and a more comfortable home, whether it's blazing hot or freezing cold outside. Start by sealing leaks, checking your R-value needs and picking the right insulation for your space — your future self (and wallet) will thank you!

EFFICIENCY TIPS

It's tempting to use the attic for storage, but if you're looking to maximize efficiency, store them elsewhere. If you store items in your attic, don't flatten the insulation. Build a raised platform high enough to keep insulation at the recommended depth.



NOV 22, 26, 28-29

Christmas Tree Sales

Nov. 22: 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Nov. 26: 5-8 p.m.

Nov. 28-29: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

6B Seed And Supplies

Alpena, SD

www.6Bseedandsupplies.com

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

NOV. 1

Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show

10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Dakota Christian School

Corsica, SD

605-366-7940

NOV. 1

Scandinavian Buffet & Annual Bazaar

9 a.m.-3 p.m.

First Lutheran Church

12th Street & Dakota Ave.

Sioux Falls, SD

605-336-3735

NOV. 1

Black Hills Meat Fest

2-4 p.m.

Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall

Rapid City, SD

NOV. 1-2

The Black Market/ Formerly Benson's Flea Market

Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m..

Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.

Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 1-2

Tour of Homes

12-4 p.m.

Benefitting Mitchell Tennis Assoc.

mitchelltourofhomes.com

NOV. 3

American Legion Pancake Breakfast

8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

1600 W. Russell St.

Sioux Falls, SD

605-336-3470

NOV. 7-8

Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show

Fri. 12 p.m.-8 p.m.

Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Handmade-Only Show

W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.

Sioux Falls, SD

605-332-6004

NOV. 8

Lutefisk Supper

4:30 p.m., 5:45 p.m., 7 p.m.

Call for Reservations

Lake Campbell Lutheran Church

Volga, SD

605-690-4868 - Cheryl

605-693-4325 - Charlotte

NOV. 14-15

Junkin' Market Days

Fri. 4-7 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Ramkota Exhibit Hall

Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 15

Club 14 Craft + Vendor Fair

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Hendricks Public School

Hendricks, MN

605-690-5586

NOV. 16

Good Samaritan Society Fall Vendor Fair

2-6 p.m.

411 Calumet Ave. NW

De Smet, SD

NOV. 16

An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving

2 p.m.

Gayville Music Hall

Gayville, SD

605-760-5799

NOV. 29

How the Grinch Stole Christmas Holiday Parade

6 p.m.

Flandreau, SD

605-864-1200

DEC. 5-7, 12-14

Mighty Corson Art Players: Humbug

Dec. 5-6, 12-13: 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 7, 14: 2:30 p.m.

Corson, SD

www.mightycorson.com

DEC. 13

Cookie Walk

9 a.m.

Lake Campbell Lutheran Church

Volga, SD

605-864-9907

DEC. 31

American to the Heart New Year's Eve Bash

Doors Open at 5:30 p.m.

American Legion

Sioux Falls, SD

Tickets: 605-336-3470

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.