

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Fostering Futures

**Mike Rowe Scholarship
Sponsors Co-op Lineman**

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**Understanding the
Southwest Power Pool**

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Dirty Jobs star Mike Rowe with Work Ethic Scholarship
recipient Tayden Wells at Mitchell Technical College
Submitted Photo



Tim O'Leary
General Manager

2026 Budget and Rate Adjustment Approved for January 1, 2026

The board of directors met on December 15 to review the draft 2026 budget with staff. As you've read in the last several newsletters, the board has been discussing the need for a rate adjustment for several months. Those discussions continued during the budget meeting, and the board formally approved the 2026 rate adjustment at its regular meeting on December 22.

A chart outlining the specific changes is included below and individual rate-class letters were mailed to all members in early January. The adjustment includes a modest increase to the monthly access/fixed charge, with the remaining change applied to the energy rate. Accounts billed for demand will also see an increase in the demand charge.

Across all revenue classes, the adjustment results in a 9.07% increase in revenue over 2025. This is lower than the 11.5%-12.5% range discussed last month, reflecting efforts to reduce controllable local costs before finalizing the budget. Members will see the impact of the adjustment on the bill mailed in February for January's electric usage.

Capital Credit Retirement

In addition to approving the 2026 rates, the board authorized a capital credit retirement totaling **\$536,194.92**. This year's retirement includes margins allocated from **2002, 2005, 2006, and 2020**. Current members receive a bill credit on the December bill.

We understand this can be confusing when the January bill arrives and appears higher. The December bill reflects the credit, while the January bill reflects actual usage-along with the colder weather we experienced throughout much of December.

Audit Report

During the November board meeting, representatives from Eide Bailly presented the annual audit report. Kellen Garrison reviewed the findings with the board and answered questions about the

cooperative's financial position.

Eide Bailly issued a clean audit opinion, confirming that the cooperative's financial statements fairly present, in all material respects, the financial position of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative for fiscal years ending August 31, 2024 and 2025, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

A clean audit is never taken for granted. We appreciate the diligence of our employees throughout the year as they help ensure accurate financial reporting and strong internal processes.

Data Centers and Electric Rates

A member recently asked how large data centers impact electric rates and whether the data center being discussed in Nobles County could affect Lyon-Lincoln Electric.

The project in Nobles County plans to use wind, solar, and battery resources located near the facility. Nobles Electric Cooperative will serve the project, and because Nobles Electric is located in the MISO market, any transmission or generation costs not covered by the project would flow into that market.

Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, through our membership in East River Electric and Basin Electric, is in the Southwest Power Pool (SPP). Since we are in a different market, the Nobles County project will have **no impact** on LLEC rates.

However, a data center located within the SPP zone could have cost implications for those within the market footprint. To prepare for these large, non-traditional loads, Basin Electric has created a **Large Load Commercial Program**. The purpose of the program is to ensure that existing cooperative members are not required to shoulder the costs or risks of serving large new loads, while still maintaining reliable, affordable electricity for all members.

In short, Basin Electric and its member cooperatives-including LLEC-are taking proactive steps to protect current members while planning responsibly for future growth.

The table below shows the rate comparison from our current rate and the rates approved for implementation effective January 1st, 2026 for farm and residential single-phase, three-phase, electric heat and controlled air conditioning.

Service Type	Current Base Charge	Current Rate per kWh	2026 Base Charge	2026 Rate per kWh
General Service Single Phase	\$43 Access Charge	\$0.119	\$45 Access Charge	\$0.131
General Service Three Phase	\$86 Access Charge	\$0.108	\$90 Access Charge	\$0.120
Electric Heat Rate- (Oct.-Apr.)	\$2 Sub Meter Charge	\$0.067	\$2 Sub Meter Charge	\$0.072
Controlled Air Conditioning- (May- Sep.)	\$2 Sub Meter Charge	\$0.082	\$2 Sub Meter Charge	\$0.087

The new rates take effect on January 1st, 2026 and will be reflected on billing statements received in February, 2026.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LYON-LINCOLN ELECTRIC

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Board of Directors

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

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
Wade Thooft – Operations Staff
Assistant
Alan Fischer – Work Order Clerk/Ware
house Coordinator
Ross Birath – Journeyman Linemen
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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Toll Free 1-800-927-6276; Fax (507)
247-5508.

Jessica Gums, Editor

Participate in Your Cooperative

At Lyon-Lincoln Electric, you aren't just a customer, you're an owner. That's why democratic member control, Cooperative Principle #2, is at the heart of everything we do. Each year, members across Lyon and Lincoln counties help guide how their cooperative is governed. Your participation shapes the decisions that power our homes, farms, and communities.

Ways to Get Involved

Nominating Committee—A group of fellow members who meet with board applicants and recommend qualified candidates for the election ballot.

Board of Directors—Local members who set rates, guide strategic planning, oversee finances, ensure legal compliance, and establish cooperative policies.

Vote—As a member-owner, your vote decides who represents you and the direction of Lyon-Lincoln Electric's future.

2026 Meeting Dates

District 1:

April 6, 2026
Lyon-Lincoln Headquarters
Tyler, MN

District 2:

April 7, 2026
Russell Community Center
Russell, MN

District 3:

April 9, 2026
Hendricks Golf Course
Hendricks, MN

2026 Board of Director Elections

Lyon-Lincoln Electric's service territory is divided into three districts, each represented by three directors serving staggered three-year terms. This structure ensures continuity and consistent leadership—no more than three of the nine directors are newly elected in any given year.

Director Seats Up for Election in 2026

District 1 – Currently represented by Scott Johnson, Coon Creek Township

District 2 – Currently represented by Galen Grant, Lyons Township

District 3 – Currently represented by Dale Fier, Alta Vista Township

Interested in Serving?

Please contact the office and we will give your name to the Nominating Committee. The District Map and additional information about board responsibilities and the election process will be available at:
www.llec.coop/board-directors

FIVE WAYS TO SAFEGUARD YOUR HOME THIS WINTER

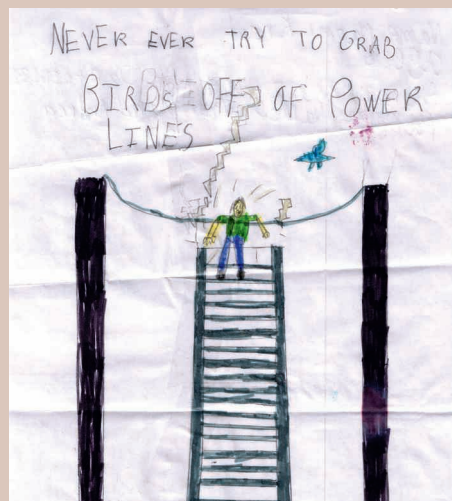
As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months.

Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season.

1. Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.
2. Inspect electrical cords. We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, extension cords or portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least three feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip. Speaking of power strips...
3. Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.
4. Clean the fireplace to improve safety and efficiency. There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning

also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.

5. Practice safety in the kitchen. As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.



Naomi Krcil, Age 8

Naomi warns readers to never, ever grab birds off power lines. Great job, Naomi! Naomi's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil from Dante, 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.

Family Night FAVORITES

SAUERKRAUT BEEF BAKE

Ingredients:

1 lb ground beef
1 can sauerkraut, rinsed and drained
1/2 cup instant rice
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 soup can water
2 tbsps. onion soup mix
1 small can sliced mushrooms (optional)

Method

Brown ground beef, drain excess fat. In large bowl, mix all remaining ingredients. Transfer to a greased 2-quart casserole or baking dish.

Cover and bake at 350°F for one hour or until heated through.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix Electric

MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

2 lbs. ground beef
6 oz. chili sauce
4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
1 1/2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs
2 large eggs
1 tsp. onion powder
1 tsp. seasoned salt
1 tsp. garlic powder
2 tbsps. Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp. yellow mustard
1/2 cup BBQ sauce

Method

Preheat oven to 425°F.

Cook and crumble bacon.

In a mixing bowl, mix together all meatloaf ingredients except the BBQ sauce.

Divide the mixture into 8 round loaves. Press a small depression into the middle of the meatloaves.

Brush BBQ sauce on top of the meatloaves.

Bake for 25 minutes. Turn on broiler and brown the BBQ sauce for 2 to 5 minutes.

Kayla Beaner
Southeastern Electric

SMOKED MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

1 cup panko breadcrumbs
1 cup whipping cream
1.5 lbs. 93% lean ground beef
1 lb. ground pork
1/2 pkg. bacon
2 eggs, beaten
2 tps. Worcestershire sauce
1-2 tps. minced garlic
1/8 cup ketchup
2 tps. Heifer Dust (spice)
1/2 tsp. ground pepper
1/2 sweet onion, chopped
1/2 green pepper, chopped
1-2 carrots, chopped
1-2 celery stalks, chopped
1/2 carton mushrooms, chopped

Basting Sauce

Cookies BBQ Ketchup
Brown sugar Dry mustard
Apple cider vinegar

Method

Turn Traeger to Smoke then set to 225°F and preheat for 15 minutes.

Combine the vegetables, drizzle with olive oil and microwave for about 2 minutes to soften. Cool for 10 minutes. Mix everything in a large bowl with hands. Form into a large loaf on parchment paper. Place bacon strips on grate pan. Gently flip loaf onto the bacon lined grate pan.

Place on grill and smoke for 45 minutes. Increase temperature to 325°F. Preheat for 10 minutes. Return to grill and insert probe. Cook until internal temperature reaches 160°F – about 1-2 more hours depending on size of loaf.

During the last 15-20 minutes, baste heavily with barbeque sauce mixed with brown sugar, ketchup, mustard and a little apple cider vinegar or apple juice.

Deb Prins
Cam Wal 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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

November 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative was held on Monday, November 24, 2025. The following directors were present: Scott Johnson, James Rokeh, Jared Dritz, Kathy Schreurs, Mary Gunnink, Joel Buyck, Galen Grant, Mike Longtin and 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. President, Dale Fier, then called the meeting to order and conducted routine business including approval of the October 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 September 30, 2025. The Board reviewed and approved the 2025 capital credit general retirement, resulting in \$536,194.92 being returned to members in December. This included capital credits from both Lyon-Lincoln Electric and East River Electric Power Cooperative. In addition, the Board approved transferring \$10,000 in unclaimed capital credits to United Community Action Partners (UCAP) to support heating assistance for Cooperative members in need. An annual financial audit conducted by Eide Bailly was reviewed and approved, affirming strong financial reporting and internal controls. The Board also received a report on Operation RoundUp, outlining procedures and findings for the year ending August 31, 2025.

The board viewed the October 2025 Outage and Safety Reports prepared by Lyle Lamote, Line Superintendent.

The Board was informed that there was a Safety Meeting held concerning the topic of Annual Compliance conducted by Brandon Cruz from Star Energy. The Board was informed that the Safety committee met to review and make decisions concerning the 2026 safety meeting curriculum topics. There was also discussion concerning the RESAP Safety Improvement Plan with a three-year safety improvement goal and annual objectives for safety improvement. The Board reviewed and approved a Contribution in Aid of Construction Agreement with Xcel Energy. Mr. Lamote indicated that the linemen were working on the following projects: EIR crews are on-site for approximately three weeks to service oil circuit reclosers and linemen continue to work on and complete underground construction projects.

Brian Jeremiason, Manager of Marketing and External Relations, reviewed his report with the Board and discussion was as follows: advised the Board that several energy efficiency and heating system rebates were processed in 2025 as members took advantage of expiring federal tax credits, gave updates on member solar installation projects, and reported on his attendance at the East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. Member Services/Communicators Meeting. Christopher Nelson - 1147500.

General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, gave his General Manager's Report and was as follows: reviewed the October power bill and sales to members and compared those figures to budgeted amounts, looked at line loss for the system, and reported on the East River MAC Meeting, and reviewed upcoming meetings and notices.

The Board recessed for lunch at 12:02pm and reconvened at 12:28pm.

During the lunch, the Board viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. Monthly Meeting Report including the Summary for Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. and reviewed the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s Cyber Report for October, 2025 which was prepared by East River Cyber Security Department.

The Board reviewed and approved an updated map outlining the Cooperative's three Director Districts and discussed what dates to have the 2026 District and Annual Meetings. After discussion a motion was made by Mr. Rokeh, seconded by Mr. Longtin, to hold the meetings as follows:

District 1 Meeting: April 6, 2026, 7pm, Lyon-Lincoln Headquarters Tyler, MN

District 2 Meeting: April 7, 2026, 7pm, Russell Community Center Russell, MN

District 3 Meeting: April 9, 2026, 7pm, Hendricks Golf Course Hendricks, MN

Annual Meeting: June 3, 2026, 7pm, Lyon-Lincoln Headquarters Tyler, MN

There being no further business to come before the Board, President, Dale Fier, adjourned the meeting at 1:40pm.

OUTAGE REPORT:

10 OR MORE CONSUMERS

NOVEMBER 2025

11/24/25 - 52 Consumers were off 1 hour and 10 minutes in Alta Vista, Limestone and Nordland Townships. The cause was a contractor that dug thru a URD cable.

A Milestone in Leadership Excellence

Director Mary Gunnink Earns Director Gold Credential

Mary Gunnink, director with Lyon-Lincoln Electric, recently earned her Director Gold Credential from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Today's ever-changing business environment places new demands on electric cooperative directors, requiring a deeper understanding of the electric utility industry, enhanced governance skills, and a strong knowledge of cooperative principles and the cooperative business model. Lyon-Lincoln Electric is committed to working with NRECA to strengthen this knowledge for the benefit of its member-consumers.



The Director Gold Credential recognizes directors who are dedicated to continuing their education beyond the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) and Board Leadership Certificate (BLC). This distinction reflects a director's ongoing commitment to professional development and to fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities at the highest level.

Thank you to Mary for her dedication and service to the cooperative and its members.

YEAR-TO-DATE COMPARISON OCTOBER 2025

	October - 2024	October - 2025
Total Revenue	\$9,085,691	\$10,075,868
Cost of Power	\$5,232,087	\$5,765,484
Operating Expenses	\$3,870,481	\$4,140,136
Operating Margins	\$(16,877)	\$170,248
KWH's Purchased	78,835,685	83,816,066
KWH's Sold	74,496,593	79,446,665
Members	3,958	3,953
Miles of Line	1,671	1,670
Members per Mile	2.37	2.37

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, Dallas Stone and Shawn Vanderostyne 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

Mid-winter is a great time to ensure you're making the most of your home heating system. Replace or clean filters to keep your furnace or heat pump running efficiently. Listen for strange noises and check for uneven heating—these signs indicate that the system may need servicing. Ensure vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or rugs as proper airflow helps your system work less and saves energy. A little maintenance along the way can prevent costly repairs and keep your home cozy through winter.

Source: energy.gov

FOSTERING FUTURES

'Mike Rowe Scholarship' Winner Kicks Off Career at Electric Co-op

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

For many high schoolers, figuring out the next steps after graduating is a time for making big decisions and answering tough questions. What do I want to do for a career? Should I go to a university or technical college? Will I be able to pay off all of this college debt?

Tayden Wells' mind was already made up following a great high school internship and a little bit of faith and support from others. Wells was awarded numerous scholarships, but none as prestigious – nor time-consuming – as the Work Ethic Scholarship from 'Dirty Jobs' star Mike Rowe.

Discovering the Passion

Growing up around linemen, Tayden had an early appreciation for their work, unpredictable schedules and the expansive grid of wires and poles that keeps everyone's lights on.

"As a child I'd be sitting in the house and all of a sudden, Dad would up and vanish," Tayden explained. "And I always wondered, what's he doing? Where's he going? Why is he going to work on a Saturday or in the middle of the night? And then finally it occurred to me that we rely on the power grid, and when the power goes out, linemen go to work."

Tayden's dad, Travis, is a lineman at Clay-Union Electric in Vermillion, S.D. Tayden recalls the long car rides on hunting trips with his dad and uncle – also a lineman – where the conversations would drift to the power lines outside the truck windows.

"I'd hear them talking, using linemen slang like 'distro' (distribution lines) and 'T-lines' (transmission lines)," Tayden said. "They really sparked my interest."

When Tayden's high school business teacher told students to think about internships, he knew exactly where he wanted to go.

It All Started With an Internship

Tayden's teacher made the call to Union County Electric Cooperative in Elk Point, S.D. After getting the green light from the board of directors, Tayden was cleared to shadow the crew for about 10 hours a week as he learned the ins and outs of the job.

"He was always looking for something to do, and he also asked a lot of questions and had an eagerness to learn," General Manager Matt Klein said about Tayden's work ethic. "When I saw that, I knew he would fit in well with the rest of our team."

Klein offered the high school senior a full-time summer



internship where he continued to expand his skills before heading to Mitchell, S.D., in the fall.

Mike Rowe's Work Ethic Scholarship and the S.W.E.A.T. Pledge

With his mind made up after the internship, Tayden's next step was to enroll in the power line program at Mitchell Technical College for a formal education – and find scholarships to help pay for it.

A straight-A student involved in athletics and extracurricular activities, Tayden applied for numerous scholarships, including the highly competitive Work Ethic Scholarship.

The scholarship, founded and administered by Mike Rowe and his foundation, offers millions of dollars to kids around the nation interested in pursuing trade careers.

Electricians, linemen, HVAC, nursing, culinary, automotive, even cosmetology – just no four-year bachelor's degrees.

"We promote skilled trades and want to get people into good-paying jobs without them drowning in debt," explained mikeroweWORKS President Mary Sullivan, who oversees the scholarship. "It's just heartbreaking seeing the amount of kids taking on college debt and graduating and aren't able to find jobs in their chosen field. Even more heartbreaking – but less reported – is the number of kids that drop out partway through the program with the debt and no piece of paper."

The scholarship's application process is different too – it's intensive, spanning several months and requires applicants to submit a video, answer questionnaires, gather references and think critically about the scholarship's curriculum.

The scholarship attracts thousands of applicants, but by the end, only the most committed, hardest working remain.

"We want to give scholarships to the kids who are passionate – they show up early, stay late and help others," Sullivan explained. "One of the recipients said he applied for 20 scholarships, and if you put all the other 19 into a bucket, ours still took more

time – but he said there was a level of pride in receiving it. High school kids today need to see 18-20 year olds who are successful, and the scholarship program allows us to meet students we believe are good representatives for the industry.”

Part of the curriculum includes the S.W.E.A.T. Pledge (Skill & Work Ethic Aren't Taboo) video series that walks students through 12 pledges Rowe designed to promote strong work ethic and foster successful careers, which include:

“I do not follow my passion. I bring it with me. I believe that any job can be done with passion and enthusiasm.”

“I deplore debt and do all I can to avoid it. I would rather live in a tent and eat beans than borrow money for a lifestyle I can't afford.”

After completing all of the curriculum and proposing a 13th S.W.E.A.T. pledge for a final project, Tayden was awarded \$16,000 to cover his education.

And when Rowe traveled to MTC in 2024, Tayden got the chance to thank Rowe face-to-face.

“Mike told me, from his mouth, that my scholarship was one of the highest amounts they gave out that year,” Tayden said. “That was very cool to hear.”

Rowe said Tayden stood out among thousands of applicants and embodies the qualities the scholarship promotes.

“Tayden checked all the boxes, and then some,” Rowe said. “His references were great, his attitude was great, his essay was great, and his comments about The SWEAT Pledge were spot on. His willingness to pursue a skill that's in demand, along with his attitude and work ethic, make him a perfect example of the qualities we're trying to encourage with our scholarship program. The country needs thousands more like him.”

Reflecting On the Journey

Tayden graduated from the power line program in 2025. He credits his success in part to his internship, saying the out-of-classroom experience set him up for a good year of training at MTC and a rewarding career with electric cooperatives.

“I kind of had the upper hand going into the program with my internship,” Tayden said. “I was able to see stuff before I went to school, so I kind of had a good understanding of the basics. But for kids coming in, some of them obviously struggle. I'm a very hands-on, visual learner, so because I was able to see it beforehand, the bookwork and the schooling really clicked a lot better with me.”

Today, Tayden is a full-time apprentice lineman at Union County Electric, where he continues to accumulate hours and complete coursework to earn his journeyman lineman certification. He encourages other young people not to overlook a career in the trades – or the Work Ethic Scholarship.

“With all of the talk about AI now, the trade jobs are always going to be there,” Tayden said. “Without oil fields we wouldn't have gas, and without electricity we wouldn't have lights. Mike realizes that the world revolves around the trades, and he wants to see kids strive and succeed because in the trades there are endless opportunities, just like any other job.”

Why is it so important that more young Americans enter the trades, and what does a shortage of skilled workers mean for the country?

For decades, the skills gap has been a tragedy of missed opportunity, both for students who weren't encouraged to consider a lucrative and viable path and the industries that rely on skilled labor. It still is. Today though, it's also a matter of national security. Not a week goes by that MRW doesn't get a call from an industry leader, desperate to hire skilled workers. The US Maritime Industrial Base told me they need 250,000 tradespeople to build nuclear subs. The automotive industry has over 100,000 openings for mechanics and collision repair techs. The energy industry needs half a million electricians, and the construction industry has so many openings they've stopped counting. The skills gap is real, and I can tell you that every CEO and every elected official I know are paying attention like never before.

What's one piece of advice you have for young people who are deciding their career path?

With regard to choosing a career, there's nothing more dangerous than dispensing advice to people you've never met. Same thing with choosing an education. We told an entire generation of kids that a four-year degree was the best path for the most people and then pressured them to borrow whatever it took to buy a degree, regardless of the cost. That kind of cookie-cutter advice was a colossal mistake and a big reason why we have millions of open jobs today that don't require a college diploma and lots of college graduates with a trillion dollars in student debt and no work in their chosen field. The only advice I generically offer to young people is to be very careful about “following your passion.” Just because you're passionate about something doesn't mean you can't suck at it. Obviously, it's important to be passionate about whatever you do, but passion – like work ethic – is a choice, and life is a lot easier when you figure out a way to be passionate about whatever it is you're good at. (People hate hearing that, by the way, but it's the truth.)

What do you see as the single biggest misunderstanding young people have about working in the trades today?

The trades are surrounded by dozens of stigmas, stereotypes, myths and misperceptions that dissuade people from giving them an honest look. I guess if I had to pick one, I'd point to the stubborn belief held by many parents that their kids can't make six figures working with their hands. It's laughably and demonstrably false. And fun to disprove. Also – the simple fact that the road to so many successful small businesses often starts with the mastery of a skill that's in demand. The number of successful entrepreneurs in the skilled trades is enormous, and more people need to understand that.

What can teachers, community leaders and co-ops do to better identify and support young people interested in a trade career?

Start a “Career Reality Day” where local linemen, meter technicians and substation operators come in and talk real numbers. Not feel-good fluff, but actual wages, benefits, and career paths. When kids hear that a journeyman lineman can make \$80,000 a year without student loan debt, that gets their attention.



WORKING OUTDOORS IN THE COLD?

Here's how to protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia this winter

When the temperature drops, so does your body's ability to stay safe. Outdoor workers — and those who enjoy outdoor sports like hunting, fishing or hiking — face added risks and must take extra steps to guard against frostbite and hypothermia. Follow these tips and have a plan to stay safe when working outdoors:

WATCH THE WEATHER

Monitor the temperature and wind chill. Take frequent breaks indoors to help prevent cold stress.

STAY WARM AND DRY

Dress in loose, warm layers. Wear a moisture-wicking base, an insulating mid-layer, & a protective outer layer (flame-resistant/arc-rated if required for your work). Use warm socks and waterproof boots. Remove any wet clothing as quickly as possible.

PROTECT YOUR HEAD AND FACE

Use a hat, hood, or hard-hat liner. When required for your job, choose FR/AR-rated liners or balaclavas. Avoid bulky hats or loose scarves.

KEEP YOUR HANDS SAFE

Wear insulated gloves or mittens to guard against frostbite. If working with electricity, always use voltage-rated protective gloves with approved liners. Never substitute regular winter gloves in place of necessary personal protective equipment (PPE).

FUEL YOUR BODY

Drink warm fluids, stay hydrated & eat high-energy foods.

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

Watch for frostbite (numbness, skin color changes) and hypothermia (shivering, confusion, slurred speech).

BE PREPARED ON THE ROAD

Keep a winter emergency kit in your vehicle with blankets, traction aids, and extra PPE.

RECOGNIZING FROSTBITE

Frostbite happens when skin and tissue lose circulation & freeze, commonly affecting fingers, toes, ears and nose.

SYMPTOMS OF FROSTBITE

- Numbness or tingling in the affected area
- Skin that turns red, white or bluish gray
- Cold, hard or waxy-looking skin
- Stiff muscles and joints

TREATING FROSTBITE

- If possible, move indoors to a warm place.
- Warm the affected area with warm (not hot) water, or place hands under armpits.
- Avoid rubbing or massaging frostbitten skin, as this may cause further damage.
- Seek medical attention for severe frostbite or skin with blisters.

RECOGNIZING HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia occurs when body temperature drops dangerously low.

SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHERMIA

- Shivering
- Confusion or slurred speech
- Drowsiness or exhaustion
- Slow, shallow breathing

TREATING HYPOTHERMIA

- If possible, move indoors to a warm place.
- Call 9-1-1 immediately, especially if the person is unconscious.
- Provide warm fluids, avoid caffeine & alcohol.
- Remove any wet clothing & warm the torso with layers of blankets or clothing.
- Wrap the body & head, leave the face uncovered.
- If layers are not available, add body heat.

UNDERSTANDING WINTER WEATHER



Winter storms can bring bitterly cold temperatures, high winds, and even ice and snow. Such weather can cause hazardous road conditions, downed power lines, and extended power outages. To prepare yourself for winter storms, make sure to pay attention to weather forecasts and understand the difference between the warnings provided by the National Weather Service. For more information on Winter weather safety visit: weather.gov/winter.

WARNINGS: TAKE ACTION!

BLIZZARD WARNING

Advise those in the affected areas to seek refuge immediately due to high levels of snow, strong winds of over 35 mph or more, and resulting near-zero visibility to those traveling on the road. Falling and blowing snow with strong winds and poor visibilities are likely, leading to whiteout conditions making travel extremely difficult. Do not travel. If you must travel, have a winter survival kit with you. If you get stranded, stay with your vehicle and wait for help to arrive.

WINTER STORM WARNING

Issued when hazardous winter weather in the form of heavy snow, freezing rain, or sleet or a combination of these hazards is coming or occurring. The warnings are issued 12 to 24 hours prior to the storm. Those in the range of the warning should be mindful of the impending conditions and consider canceling plans to travel outside of the home as travel may become difficult or impossible in some situations.

ICE STORM WARNING

Are usually issued for ice accumulation of around 1/4 inch or more. This amount of ice accumulation will make travel dangerous or impossible and likely lead to snapped power lines and falling tree branches. Travel is strongly discouraged.

EXTREME COLD WARNING

Are issued for a combination of very cold air and strong winds that will create dangerously low wind chill values. This level of wind chill will result in frostbite and lead to hypothermia if precautions are not taken. Avoid going outdoors and wear warm protective clothing if you must venture outside.

WATCHES: BE PREPARED

WINTER STORM WATCH

Signify that stormy conditions, including heavy snow, freezing rain, or sleet, are likely within the next few days. You should be alert, as this means adverse conditions could begin within the next 12 to 48 hours.

EXTREME COLD WATCH

Are issued when there is the potential for a combination of extremely cold air and strong winds to create dangerously low wind chill values.

ADVISORIES: BE AWARE

WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY

Are issued when snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet, or a combination of these wintry elements is expected but conditions should not be hazardous enough to meet warning criteria. Be prepared for winter driving conditions and possible travel difficulties. Use caution when driving.

COLD WEATHER ADVISORY

Issued when very low wind chills are expected, cold enough to be dangerous, but not severe enough for a full warning. Strong winds and frigid air can cause frostbite or hypothermia, take extra precautions if you need to be outside.



UNDERSTANDING THE SOUTHWEST POWER POOL

Basin Electric's trading floor connects the cooperative to the broader wholesale electricity market.

Submitted Photo

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When looking at the entire electric grid, electric cooperatives are just one component in a much larger system. Understanding how that system works, and how power is planned and shared across the region, provides important context for decisions that affect reliability, long-term infrastructure investments and, ultimately, the cost of electricity.

Southwest Power Pool

Every electric cooperative in South Dakota operates within the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), a regional transmission organization that oversees the grid. Really, electric cooperatives are all essential pieces of a larger,

regional puzzle that keeps the lights on.

SPP manages a wholesale electricity market and operates transmission lines across all or parts of 14 Midwest states, including South Dakota.

In 2015, East River Electric Power Cooperative joined the Southwest Power Pool along with Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the Western Area Power Administration Upper Great Plains Region. This move allowed electricity generators in the state to participate in a larger regional market, making it easier and more efficient to buy and sell energy across the grid.

Electric cooperatives aren't the only utilities operating within this regional system. Investor-owned utilities and

municipal utilities also participate in the SPP, all feeding into the same wholesale electricity market. By sharing transmission lines and following the same market rules, these utilities help create a broader, more flexible grid, allowing power to move long distances to where it's needed most.

"SPP is like a traffic director of electricity, because it doesn't own any assets," said Kristi Fiegen, South Dakota Public Utilities Commissioner and chair of the Southwest Power Pool's Regional State Committee. "They direct traffic and work to make sure the transmission lines and generation are bringing electricity to about 18 million customers on a second-by-second basis. That supply has to equal the demand every single second."

Winter Storm Uri

Another important benefit of participating in SPP is its ability to support the grid during extreme weather or unexpected outages, when regional coordination becomes especially important. Because SPP manages electricity across such a large footprint, the system can draw on resources from far beyond state borders. For example, when a power plant in North Dakota goes offline for routine maintenance, electricity from another state can cover the gap. Likewise, during severe winter weather in the South, generation from the Dakotas can help support the southern part of the grid.

That system maintained regional reliability until Feb. 2021, when it was pushed to its limits by Winter Storm Uri, which caused widespread power outages across Texas. According to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 4.5 million people in Texas lost power during the storm.

“Winter Storm Uri woke up the entire nation, because we didn’t know how vulnerable we were,” said Fiegen.

The storm prompted SPP to reexamine how the grid maintains regional reliability during the winter. Part of that change involved increasing the reserve margin — the extra electric generation capacity kept on hand beyond what is normally needed — to help the system withstand extreme cold and unexpected outages. The goal, according to Fiegen, is to ensure enough power is available across the region, especially on the coldest days of the year.

“Since Winter Storm Uri, we have spent much of our time focused on resource adequacy policies,” Fiegen said, referring to SPP leadership and regulatory committees.

Reserve Margin

One significant change set to take effect in the 2026/2027 winter season is SPP’s adoption of a winter planning reserve margin, which increases the amount of generation required to be available during the winter season. The change will apply across the SPP footprint, including impacts to Basin Electric, which supplies power to cooperatives across South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Minnesota and much of the Midwest.

Through an increased winter reserve margin, the SPP aims to better prepare the entire SPP footprint for extreme weather and periods of unusually high electricity demand, helping ensure reliable power for homes, businesses and industries across the SPP footprint.

So, what does this mean for cooperative members in South Dakota? Valerie Weigel, senior vice president of Energy Markets and Dakota Coal Operations at Basin Electric, said higher reserve margins means Basin Electric needs to supply more generation capacity to the SPP market to meet expected peak winter demands, which affects Basin Electric’s wholesale rates for the cooperatives it serves.

“The increase in reserve margins means we need to build additional generation to ensure we have enough accredited resources to meet new planning requirements,” Weigel said. “As we look toward the rate increase in 2026, part of that increase reflects the cost of adding these resources to meet updated market requirements.”

Learning The Lingo

Transmission

High-voltage power lines and related infrastructure that move electricity long distances from power plants to local utilities. Transmission allows electricity to be shared across regions, especially during emergencies or peak demand.

Generation Capacity

The maximum amount of electricity that a utility’s power plant or portfolio of power plants can produce at one time. Capacity matters most during peak demand, when the grid is under the most strain. This may happen during extreme heat or cold, when people are using more electricity to heat or cool their homes.

Southwest Power Pool (SPP)

A regional transmission organization that coordinates electricity transmission and wholesale power markets across 14 Midwestern states, including South Dakota and Minnesota. SPP does not own power plants or transmission lines; instead, it manages how electricity flows across the regional grid.

Regional Transmission Organization (RTO)

A federally approved organization, like SPP, that operates the electric grid across multiple states. RTOs balance supply and demand, manage wholesale electricity markets and plan for long-term grid reliability.

Reserve Margin

The extra amount of generation capacity kept available above expected peak demand. This extra capacity helps the grid handle extreme weather, unexpected outages or sudden increases in electricity use.

THE POWER SURGE:

What's Driving Electricity Demand in Our Area

Electricity use is growing across the country, and Lyon-Lincoln Electric is seeing many of the same trends here at home. As our daily lives become more dependent on electricity, careful planning is essential to ensure reliable service for our members, especially during times of extreme weather.

According to national reliability assessments, the electric grid is expected to meet demand under normal conditions. However, severe weather events can place additional stress on the system. When rising electricity use is combined with extreme temperatures, utilities must be prepared to respond quickly and effectively. For electric cooperatives like Lyon-Lincoln Electric, long-term planning plays a key role in maintaining reliability.

One of the primary drivers of increased electricity demand is expanded electrification. More members are choosing electric solutions for home heating, water heating and transportation. High-efficiency electric heat pumps are replacing traditional heating systems, and electric vehicles are becoming more common on rural roads and in town. These technologies offer benefits such as improved efficiency and lower emissions, but they also increase overall electricity use.

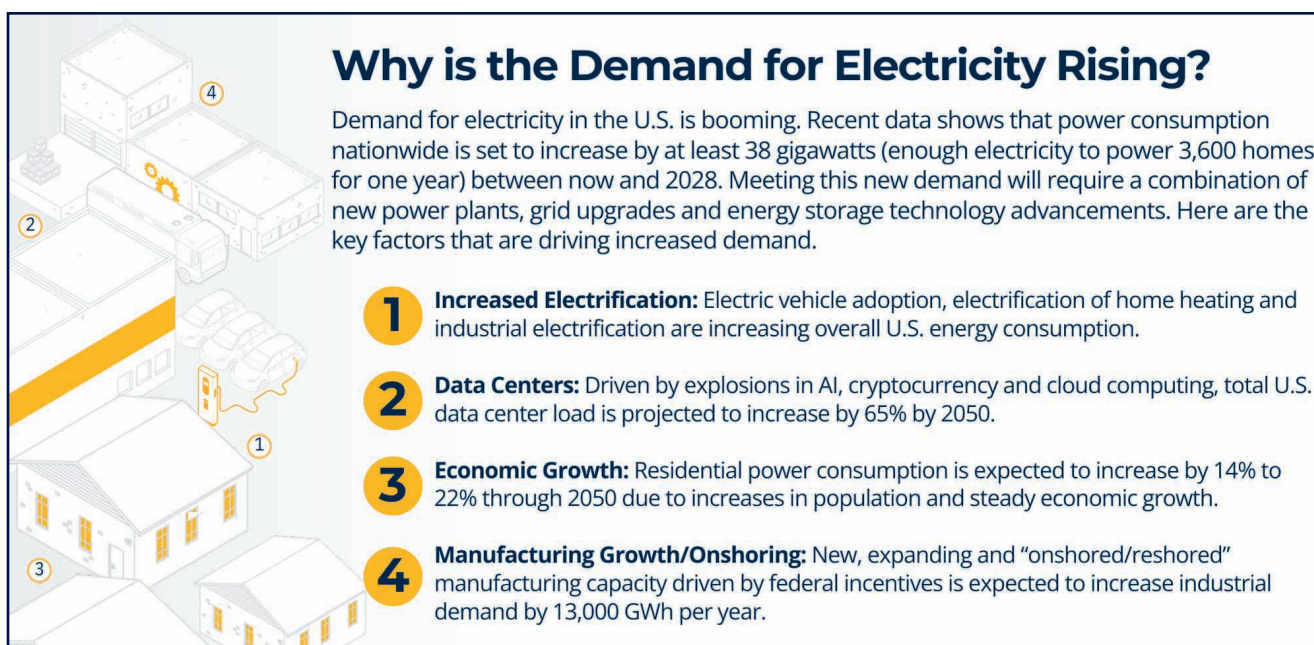
Economic growth and development also contribute to higher demand. As local businesses expand and

new industries invest in our communities, the need for dependable, high-capacity power continues to grow. Manufacturing, agricultural operations and small businesses rely on electricity around the clock, making reliability more important than ever.

Population growth and housing development add to this demand as well. New homes, renovations and modern lifestyles require electricity for everything from lighting and appliances to home offices and entertainment systems. Even as appliances become more energy efficient, the number of electric devices in each home continues to rise.

While increased electricity demand presents challenges, it also creates opportunities. Growth supports local jobs, strengthens the regional economy and allows Lyon-Lincoln Electric to invest in system improvements. Our cooperative is actively planning for the future by maintaining and upgrading infrastructure and exploring ways to manage peak demand. Tara Cowell - 1508600

Electricity powers nearly every part of modern life, and its role will only continue to expand. Lyon-Lincoln Electric is committed to meeting the evolving needs of our members through thoughtful planning, investment and responsible energy use, ensuring reliable power for today and for generations to come.



Why is the Demand for Electricity Rising?

Demand for electricity in the U.S. is booming. Recent data shows that power consumption nationwide is set to increase by at least 38 gigawatts (enough electricity to power 3,600 homes for one year) between now and 2028. Meeting this new demand will require a combination of new power plants, grid upgrades and energy storage technology advancements. Here are the key factors that are driving increased demand.

- 1 Increased Electrification:** Electric vehicle adoption, electrification of home heating and industrial electrification are increasing overall U.S. energy consumption.
- 2 Data Centers:** Driven by explosions in AI, cryptocurrency and cloud computing, total U.S. data center load is projected to increase by 65% by 2050.
- 3 Economic Growth:** Residential power consumption is expected to increase by 14% to 22% through 2050 due to increases in population and steady economic growth.
- 4 Manufacturing Growth/Onshoring:** New, expanding and "onshored/reshored" manufacturing capacity driven by federal incentives is expected to increase industrial demand by 13,000 GWh per year.

BE PROACTIVE IN

Take steps to help prevent electrical fires by identifying possible issues before they occur.

PREVENTING ELECTRICAL FIRES

When assessing your home, the first step is to hire a qualified electrician to check all wiring to ensure it is up to code and that the electrical system can handle the demands of your electronics, appliances, lights and other electrical needs. Beyond that, watch for possible issues as they arise.

Symptoms of issues include flickering lights, discolored outlets and switch plates, damaged cords, frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses.

1 Electrical Outlets:

Check for loose-fitting plugs and loose wall receptacles. Replace missing or broken wall plates. If you have young children, install tamper-resistant outlets if your home does not have them. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.

2 Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters:

Make sure GFCIs are installed in your kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, workshop, basement, garage and outdoor outlets. GFCIs help protect against electrical shock. Use the Test and Reset buttons monthly to ensure that they are working properly.

3 Cords:

Check cords to ensure they are not frayed or cracked, placed under rugs, tightly wrapped around an object or located in high traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors or other objects.

4 Extension Cords:

These are not intended to be permanent solutions, so use them temporarily. If you find that you need more electrical outlets, consult your electrician.

5 Light Bulbs:

Verify that your light bulbs are the intended wattage for the lamp or fixture they are in.

6 Appliances/Electronics:

If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or gives you an electrical shock, it is time to discard it and replace it with a new version. Use surge protectors to protect expensive electronics. Make sure your appliances and electronics are placed in dry locations.

7 Circuit Breakers/Fuses:

Check that circuit breakers are working properly. Fuses should be properly rated for the circuits they protect.

8 Electrical Wiring:

If an outlet is not working, it may be an indicator of unsafe wiring. Also, check for loose wires and lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. If light switches are hot to the touch or lights spark and flicker, immediately shut them off at the circuit breaker and contact a qualified electrician to make repairs.

9 Arc fault circuit interrupters:

AFCIs, which monitor the flow of electricity throughout your home, should be properly installed. If an AFCI detects any abnormality, it shuts the system off to prevent a fire. Upon inspection, an electrician can assess whether your home is properly protected.

10 Service Capacity:

If fuses blow or trip frequently, you may need to increase the capacity of your electrical service or add new branch circuits. Contact a qualified electrician.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo 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.

JAN. 30-FEB. 7
Annual Black Hills Stock Show
Central States Fairgrounds
Rapid City, SD
www.centralstatesfairinc.com
605-355-3861

FEB. 1
The Great Lake County Hotdish Competition
11:30-1:30 p.m.
St. Thomas School Gym
Madison, SD
605-256-5308

FEB. 6-7
31st Annual Dinner Theater
Reliance Legion Hall
Reliance, SD
Tickets: 605-730-0553

FEB. 7-8
The Black Market/Formerly Benson's Flea Market
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

FEB. 13-16
12th Annual Frost Fest
Brookings, SD

FEB. 14
Polar Bear Chili Cook-Off
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Hill City, SD

FEB. 20-22
Winterfest
Fireworks, Parade of Lights, Bonfire, Snowshoeing
Lead, SD
www.leadmethere.com/winterfest

FEB. 21
Knights of Columbus Fishing Derby & Raffle
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Enemy Swim Lake, Waubay, SD
605-881-5075

FEB. 21
All Ability Skate
12-3 p.m.
Main Street Square
Rapid City, SD
disabilityaac@rcgov.org

FEB. 21
Bellator Titans Casino Night Fundraiser
6-11 p.m.
City Lights Bar & Event Center
Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 22
C Street Brass
4 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 24
Life as an Astronaut
Free Presentation by NASA
Astronaut Charles Gemar
7-8 p.m.
DSU Science Center
Madison, SD
605-256-5308

MARCH 5
SD Jazz Festival
7:30 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

MARCH 7
Free Christian Men's Event
The Barn at Aspen Acres
8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Spearfish, SD
Register: RiseUpMen.com

MARCH 14
St. Uhro Finnish Festival
11 a.m. Main Street Parade
12 p.m. Community Ctr. Lunch
Lake Norden, SD
605-881-1758

MARCH 20-21
Badlands Quilters Getaway
Fri. 5:30 p.m. Start
Sat. 8 a.m. Start
Wall Community Center
Wall, SD
605-279-2807

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.