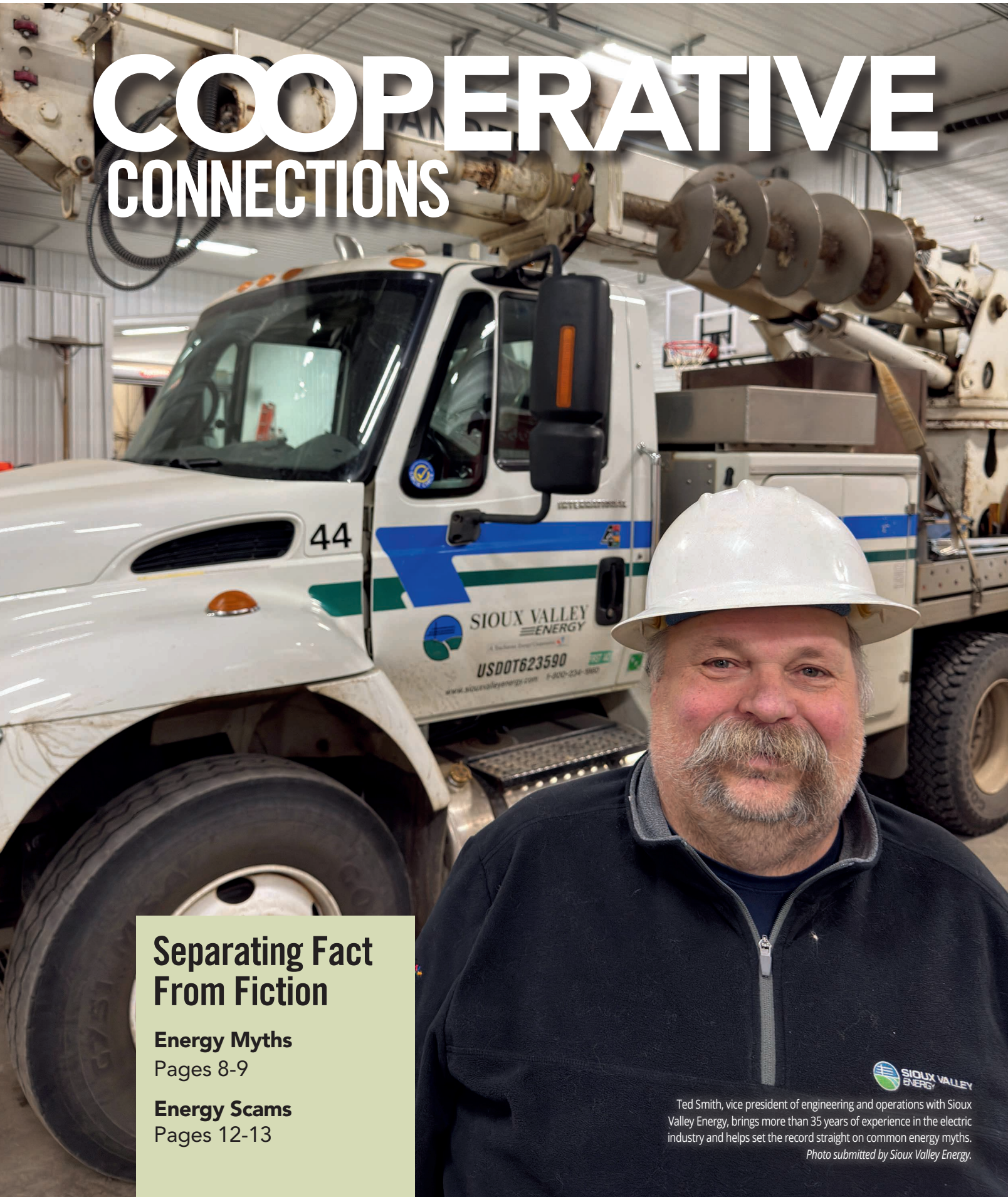


# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Separating Fact From Fiction

**Energy Myths**

Pages 8-9

**Energy Scams**

Pages 12-13



Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations with Sioux Valley Energy, brings more than 35 years of experience in the electric industry and helps set the record straight on common energy myths.

*Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy.*

# Governance & Power Supply Updates



**Tim O'Leary**  
General Manager

This month's article provides an update on the director nominating committee, a reminder of the upcoming district meetings, and a brief overview of future wholesale power costs. Next month, I will provide an update on recent discussions regarding office space at our headquarters building.

## Nominating Committee Update

The nominating committee met and nominated candidates to stand for election in each district. The nominated candidates are:

**District 1:** Scott Johnson and Neil Thooft

**District 2:** Glen Grant and John Wiese

**District 3:** Dale Fier and Darin Brink

One name you will not see on the ballot this year is Galen Grant. Galen has represented District 2 since 1993 and has decided that it is time to step away from board service. We thank Galen for his many years of dedication and service to the cooperative and its members.

Members who are interested in becoming a candidate still have an opportunity to do so through the petition process. This process allows a member to become a candidate by submitting a petition signed by 10 members within their district. If you are interested in becoming a candidate or would like more information about the petition process, please contact the cooperative office.

We also encourage members who are interested in serving on the nominating committee in the future or who would like to be considered as a future director candidate to contact us so we can include you in future discussions.

## District Meeting Reminder

Members will vote on director candidates at the upcoming district meetings. These meetings are an important part of the cooperative's governance process and provide an opportunity to participate in elections, hear updates on cooperative operations, and ask questions.

*All meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m. and will be held at the following locations:*

**District 1: Monday, April 6**

Lyon-Lincoln Headquarters, Tyler

**District 2: Tuesday, April 7**

Russell Community Center, Russell

**District 3: Thursday, April 9**

Hendricks Golf Club, Hendricks

The candidate receiving the most votes at each district meeting will be listed first on the annual meeting ballot for their district. We encourage members to attend their district meetings and participate in the cooperative's democratic process.

## Wholesale Power Supply and 2027 Cost Outlook

In February, I attended a meeting with our power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, where staff provided updates on their transmission system, generation resources, and long-term plans to maintain reliable power for their member cooperatives.

Basin continues to invest in transmission infrastructure to improve reliability and reduce congestion across the regional transmission system. These projects are designed to strengthen the grid and ensure power can be delivered reliably during periods of high demand.

Basin is also investing in new generation resources, including the Basin Generating Station, a 1,400-megawatt natural gas facility. This project will help Basin meet reserve requirements within the Southwest Power Pool and ensure sufficient generation capacity to serve member cooperatives. In addition, Basin continues to invest in upgrades and maintenance at its existing generation facilities to maintain reliability.

As discussed in previous newsletters, Basin implemented the first phase of its wholesale power rate adjustment in January 2026 and plans to implement the second phase on January 1, 2027. These increases reflect long-term investments in generation, transmission, and system reliability.

Basin has also implemented a Large Load Commercial Program to address new large power users, such as data centers. This program is designed to protect existing cooperative members by ensuring that the costs and risks associated with serving large new loads are appropriately managed.

Wholesale power costs remain the largest expense for Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative. We will continue to evaluate the impact of future wholesale power cost increases on our local rates and will work to manage controllable costs responsibly. As always, we will keep members informed as we move through the budgeting and planning process.

## Stay Informed and Participate

We encourage members to attend their district meeting to stay informed, participate in director elections, and learn more about the cooperative's operations and future plans. Additional updates will continue to be shared in upcoming newsletters and at district and annual meetings.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### LYON-LINCOLN ELECTRIC

(ISSN 1540-6989)

#### 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](http://www.llec.coop)

Lyon-Lincoln Electric hours are  
8:00 AM–4:30 PM Monday thru Friday

LYON-LINCOLN ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is  
published monthly by Lyon-Lincoln  
Electric Cooperative, 205 W. Hwy. 14,  
PO Box 639, Tyler, MN 56178. Electric  
co-op members devote 50 cents  
from their monthly electric payments  
for a subscription. Non-member  
subscriptions are available for \$12  
annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at  
Tyler Post Office, Tyler, MN 56178 and  
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POSTMASTER: Send address changes  
to: Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative  
Connections, PO Box 639, Tyler, MN  
56178; Telephone (507) 247-5505;  
Toll Free 1-800-927-6276; Fax (507)  
247-5508.

Jessica Gums, Editor

# WHO POWERS YOU

## Contest Nominations Now Being Accepted

Nominations are now open for “Who Powers You,” a contest being hosted by Lyon-Lincoln Electric and the region’s other Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives. The fifth annual Who Powers You contest seeks to highlight local figures and organizations who are making a difference in their communities.

“No one succeeds alone, and that is especially true in rural areas, where friends and neighbors in tight-knit communities support, encourage and inspire each other,” said General Manager, Tim O’Leary. “Those people don’t do it for the recognition, but they deserve to be recognized, and we’d like to help make that happen.”

Member-owners, employees, organizations and residents who live, work or support communities within the service territory of the region’s Touchstone Energy Cooperatives are eligible to be nominated.

Nominations will be accepted February 1 through April 19, 2026. Three final winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact that they have on the community. Weekly finalists will be announced and featured on Keloland Living starting March 12, 2026, and the three contest winners will be announced on Keloland Living on May 28, 2026.

The Who Powers You contest grand prize winner will receive a \$3,000 prize. A second-place winner will receive \$1,500, and the contest’s third-place winner will receive \$500.

“As an electric cooperative, our services extend beyond delivering safe, affordable and reliable power to our member-owners,” said General Manager, Tim O’Leary. “The Who Powers You contest highlights the commitment of our co-op to the communities and member-owners that we serve. We know that our co-op community is filled with people making a difference. Let’s celebrate them!”

**To learn more about the Who Powers You contest and to nominate someone in your community, visit [WhoPowersYouContest.com](http://WhoPowersYouContest.com)**



We know our co-op community is filled with people making a difference. Let’s celebrate them! Nominate a hero in your community who goes above and beyond. **They could win up to \$3,000!**

# STAYING FOCUSED BEHIND THE WHEEL: A SIMPLE GUIDE TO SAFER ROADS

Distractions behind the wheel aren't just inconvenient – they're deadly. Each moment you allocate to anything other than driving increases the risk for you and everyone sharing the road. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, distracted driving claimed 3,522 lives in the United States in 2021, underscoring how costly a split-second lapse can be. The good news is that small, deliberate habits behind the wheel can make a big difference. Here are three practical ways to stay focused.

First, minimize phone use. Store your device out of sight before starting the engine. Texting or scrolling through apps draws your eyes from the road, your hands from the wheel and your mind from the task at hand. If you must communicate, pull over safely or use hands-free features only if absolutely necessary and legal in your area. Remember, many places have laws prohibiting texting while driving, with penalties that reflect the risk. Consider enabling “do not disturb” modes that silence notifications while you drive, and set your status to indicate you're driving. This simple barrier can prevent impulsive checks and help you maintain steady attention.

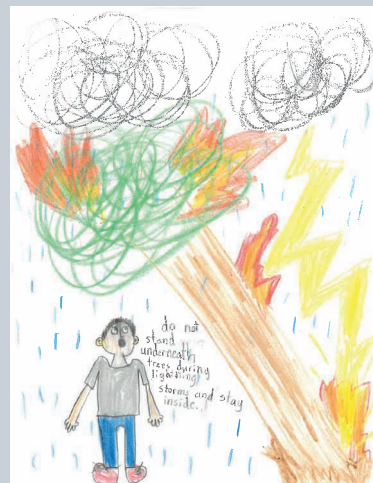
Second, plan your route before you depart. Entering a destination while driving is a dangerous distraction. Take a few minutes to review the route, check traffic conditions, and set your navigation system in advance. With your route loaded, you can keep your attention on driving rather than on-screen instructions during the journey. If possible, choose routes with fewer turns or fewer heavy-traffic segments, and be ready to adjust if conditions change. Having a mental map of the journey can also reduce the need to peek at the screen for updates.

Third, ensure you are well rested. Fatigue can dull reaction times, reduce concentration, and cause your eyes or your vehicle to drift. Prioritize a good night's sleep before long trips, and consider stopping for short breaks on extended drives to refresh your focus. Even brief pauses for stretching and deep breathing can reset your alertness and help you respond more quickly to changing road situations.

Beyond these tips, practice general safe-driving habits: obey speed limits, maintain a safe following distance and stay alert for pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists. If you feel distracted or fatigued, it's wiser to pause and reassess rather than press on. Safe driving is about consistent, proactive choices that protect everyone on the road.



**"Do not stand underneath trees during lightning storms and stay inside."**



**Ramsey Faini,  
Age 8**

Ramsey warns readers about the dangers of lightning storms. Thank you for sharing your picture, Ramsey! Ramsey's mom is Katie Faini from Rapid City, 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.

# MAIN DISHES

## HOMEMADE MAC & CHEESE

### Ingredients:

16 oz. box elbow macaroni noodles  
Oil  
1 pkg. bacon  
3 cups whole milk  
1/2 cup butter (melted)  
5 oz. can (about 2/3 cup) evaporated milk  
16 oz. block Velveeta cheese (cut into cubes)  
1 tsp. salt  
Guda cheese  
Parsley (to taste)  
1 tsp. garlic powder  
1/2 tsp. black pepper

### Method

Cook noodles as directed. Drain noodles and pour a small amount of oil on them while in the strainer. Cook bacon and cut into small pieces. Add all of the ingredients into a Crock-Pot and mix. Cover and cook on low for 1.5 hours, stirring once or twice while cooking. Serve and enjoy.

**Cindi Foster**  
Codington-Clark Electric

## CHEDDAR POTATO SOUP

### Ingredients:

1 medium onion, chopped  
3/4 cup celery, chopped  
1/4 cup butter  
5 cups peeled potatoes, cubed  
3 cups water  
3 cups milk, divided  
4 tps. chicken bouillon granules  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. pepper  
1/4 cup flour  
4 cups (16 oz.) cheddar cheese, shredded

### Method

In large Dutch oven or kettle, saute onion and celery in butter for 5 minutes. Add potatoes and water, bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir in 2 cups milk, bouillon, salt and pepper. Combine flour and remaining milk until smooth, gradually stir into soup. Bring to a boil, cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat, add cheese and stir until cheese is melted.

**Sally Florey**  
Charles Mix Electric

## CARAMELIZED HAM & SWISS SLIDERS

### Ingredients:

12 Hawaiian dinner rolls, split  
1/4 cup horseradish sauce (optional)  
12 slices deli ham (or 24 if it's thinly sliced)  
6 slices Swiss cheese, cut in fourths (so you will have 24 squares of cheese)  
**Sauce**  
1/2 cup butter  
1/4 tsp. onion powder  
2 tbsps. brown sugar  
1 tbsp. Dijon mustard  
2 tps. poppy seeds  
1 1/2 tps. Worcestershire sauce  
1/4 tsp. garlic powder

### Method

Spray a 9x9 or 9x13 glass dish with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside. Preheat oven to 325°. Spread roll bottoms with horseradish sauce (if using). Fold up pieces of ham to fit the rolls and place them on the bottom halves of the roll. Next, place 2 squares of cheese. Replace tops and place in a single layer in the prepared pan.

### Sauce

In a small skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour over rolls. Cover with foil and bake covered for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake 5 more minutes. These can also be made ahead of time. Just cover with foil and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Bake as instructed.

**Jerald & Virginia Jensen**  
Sioux Valley Energy

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.

## January 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative was held on Monday, January 26, 2026. 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 December, 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 November 30, 2025. The Board reviewed cooperative's 2026 Weighted Cost of Capital and voted to maintain the current capital credit discount rate at 6% for 2026. The Board also reviewed and discussed the 2025 financials and approved transferring \$75,000 from the Revenue Deferral Fund to Operating Revenue.

The board viewed the December 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 Cyber Security Training which was presented by Jacob Schaefer from East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.'s IT Department. Mr. Lamote indicated that MREA had requested volunteers to assist cooperatives in Virginia in response to predicted severe

weather. Two linemen from Lyon-Lincoln Electric volunteered to assist in the effort. Although the storm impact was less than anticipated and assistance was ultimately not needed, the effort reflects the cooperative principal of cooperation among Cooperatives. Mr. Lamote indicated that the linemen were working on the following projects: setting poles, conducting line patrol, trimming trees, and completing maintenance identified during inspections.

Brian Jeremiason, Manager of Marketing and External Relations, reviewed his report with the Board and discussion was as follows: Gave an update on the Load Control Receiver (LCR) Replacement Project, which is beginning with a soft rollout to the first 100 members served by the Lake Benton Substation. This phased approach will allow staff to refine the process before expanding the project. Reviewed distributed energy resources on its system, which currently include four small wind projects and 23 active solar installations. Co-ops in the Classroom program was delivered at Southview Elementary School in Marshall, MN. The program was presented in partnership with Jennifer Gross, Education & Outreach Coordinator from East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. Together, they visited eight fourth-grade classrooms. Feedback from teachers was very positive, and students seemed to enjoy the program. Tonia Czech - 1115100.

General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, gave his General Manager's Report and was as follows: reviewed the December 2025 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, presented the General

Manager's Expense Report for January 2026, reviewed upcoming meetings and notices and reviewed the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s Cyber Report for December, 2025 which was prepared by East River Cyber Security Department.

The Board also heard a legislative update from Minnesota State Representative Chris Swedzinski, who discussed the upcoming session, including issues related to the nuclear moratorium, wildfire mitigation, and cooperative regulatory matters.

Directors reviewed and approved Nominating Committee appointments for 2026 as follows:

District One: Alan Benz, Pat Krog & Diana Nielsen

District Two: John Wiese, Charlotte Thooft & Vickie VanDamme

District Three: Donna Stone, Scott Fier & Luke Moore

The Board reviewed Policy 304 - Ethical Conduct Statement, reviewed the 2025 Service Reliability Report and viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. Monthly Meeting Report including the Summary for Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.

There being no further business to come before the Board, President, Dale Fier, adjourned the meeting at 1:16pm.

### OUTAGE REPORT:

10 OR MORE CONSUMERS

JANUARY 2026

No Outages in January 2026

Always assume a downed power line is energized and dangerous, even if it's not sparking or making noise. Know what to do to save lives.

### STAY AWAY FROM DOWNED LINES

**STAY AT LEAST 50 FEET AWAY**

**KEEP YOUR DISTANCE**

- Stay at least 50 feet away.
- Do not touch the line, or anything or anyone it's touching.
- Warn others to stay far back.
- Do not touch or step in water near a downed line. Water conducts electricity and creates a dangerous mix.
- Call 911 and state it's an electrical emergency.

**NEVER DRIVE OVER A DOWNED POWER LINE**

**IF YOU'RE INSIDE THE VEHICLE:**

- Stay inside and call 911.
- Wait for utility or emergency crews to tell you its safe to exit.
- only leave the vehicle if there's immediate danger, like a fire.

**IF YOU'RE INSIDE THE VEHICLE:**

1. Open door that's not touching the ground, if possible.
2. Cross your arms over your chest. Jump clear without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time.
3. Land with feet together. Shuffle or bunny hop, keeping your feet together, and get as far away as you can.
4. Avoid power lines that are on the ground or sagging overhead.
5. Do not go back to the vehicle until its confirmed safe.

Safe Electricity.org

## 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, Nicholas Digre and Ron Wiering 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

As we prepare for the seasonal shift, remember to set your ceiling fan rotation accordingly. In winter months (or whenever your home heating system is running), fan blades should rotate clockwise, which produces an updraft that pushes warm air down. In summer months (or whenever your home cooling system is running), blades should rotate counterclockwise, which produces a downdraft or windchill effect that makes you feel cooler. When used correctly, ceiling fans can boost comfort and allow you to adjust the thermostat a few degrees for energy savings.

Source: energy.gov

## YEAR-TO-DATE COMPARISON

DECEMBER 2025

	December - 2024	December - 2025
Total Revenue	\$11,225,498	\$12,461,493
Cost of Power	\$6,428,384	\$7,090,389
Operating Expenses	\$4,694,191	\$4,978,165
Operating Margins	\$102,923	\$392,939
KWH's Purchased	98,032,267	103,740,100
KWH's Sold	92,902,329	98,341,682
Members	3,958	3,954
Miles of Line	1,670	1,669
Members per Mile	2.37	2.37



From left, in the Sioux Valley Energy shop: Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations; Chad Williams, manager of operations; journey lineworker Jager Rus; and journey lineworker Paul Schamber. Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy

# BUSTING ENERGY MYTHS

## with Ted Smith of Sioux Valley Energy

### Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Electricity powers nearly every part of daily life, yet most people only think about it when the lights flicker or a bill arrives. Because the system works quietly in the background, assumptions about how it operates tend to fill the gaps.

To sort through several common misconceptions, Cooperative Connections spoke with Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations at Sioux Valley Energy, the cooperative serving South Dakota counties of Brookings, Lake, Moody, Kingsbury, and Minnehaha and Minnesota counties of Rock and Pipestone. Smith has worked in the electric industry for 35 years, including 20 years at Sioux Valley, where he

oversees engineering, line crews and dispatch.

Here are several claims he regularly hears from members and how he responds.

**Myth: If the lights go out, it must be a local problem.**  
**Smith: That's definitely a myth.**

An outage can begin anywhere from inside your home all the way back to a generating station two states away. The electric grid is highly interconnected. A disruption in one area can ripple outward across transmission lines that serve multiple utilities.

There have been large historical outages, especially in the eastern United States, where a single event such as a tree contacting a transmission line triggered a cascading failure across multiple states. Entire cities lost power

because one initiating fault spread across the network.

Closer to home, severe weather in one region can affect transmission lines feeding a much broader footprint. If a major transmission line trips offline, and another line is already out for maintenance, service interruptions can extend far beyond the original storm area.

“Just because your lights go out doesn't mean the problem started down the road, close to home” Smith said. “It could be much farther upstream.”

**Myth: The grid can be powered entirely by renewable energy.**  
**Smith: At times, yes. Around the clock, no.**

Smith pointed to hydroelectric dams along the Missouri River as renewable generation that run continuously, but other renewable resources, such as wind and solar, simply aren't reliable sources of energy and only contribute

significantly when conditions allow.

“Although sometimes it seems like it, the wind doesn’t always blow in South Dakota,” Smith said. “And solar only produces during daylight hours.”

Although battery storage has improved in recent years, Smith says storing enough energy to power the grid around the clock is prohibitively expensive at this point in time.

For now, maintaining reliability requires a mix of generation resources so supply remains available regardless of weather or time of day.

**Myth: If my neighbor has power and I do not after a storm, the cooperative skipped me.**

**Smith: That’s not how it works.**

In some cases, the cooperative may not yet know a member is without service. Reporting outages remains important.

Another possibility is that the issue is on the member side of the meter. Crews may restore cooperative equipment and determine that the damage is within the member’s own service.

“When crews see it’s a problem on the member side of the meter, they will call dispatch and have them contact the member,” Smith said.

He also emphasized the importance of keeping current phone numbers on file. Fewer households rely on landlines today, which makes updated cell phone numbers critical during storm response.

**Myth: Burying all power lines would eliminate outages.**

**Smith: No.**

Underground lines are not exposed to wind and ice, but they are not immune to failure. Over time, underground conductors deteriorate. Rodents such as gophers can damage them. Excavation damage is also common when individuals dig without confirming where utilities are buried.

Before digging, members should always contact 811, the national call-before-you-dig number. That service

notifies utility providers so buried lines can be located and marked before excavation begins. Failing to call 811 can be dangerous and increase the risk of damaging underground infrastructure, causing outages.

And even when damage occurs naturally, locating the fault underground can take time.

“With overhead lines, crews can usually see the damage,” Smith said. “Underground, it takes troubleshooting to figure out exactly where the fault is, sometimes leading to longer outage durations.”

He recalled one outage that proved especially difficult to diagnose.

“One time we had an outage that we just could not narrow down,” he said. “When we finally found the damage, we saw that a gopher had chewed the bottom of the wire. You could not see it from the top. We had to dig up about 20 feet of cable and turn it over before we could see the damage.”

Underground systems can reduce certain types of outages, but they do not eliminate them, and repairs often require more time and labor.

**Myth: Wind and solar power are free once installed.**

**Smith: The fuel is free, but that’s the only thing that’s free.**

Wind turbines require ongoing maintenance, including mechanical components that need to be regularly serviced. Solar power relies on inverters and other equipment that must be maintained and eventually replaced.

There are construction costs, financing costs and transmission costs involved in delivering electricity from generation sites to homes and businesses. Those transmission and maintenance assets are accounted for over time and included in the overall cost of electricity.

Free fuel lowers one portion of cost. It does not remove the need to build, maintain and replace infrastructure.

**Myth: Electric cooperatives raise rates to increase profits.**

**Smith: No. Cooperatives are not-for-profit.**

Electric cooperatives are member owned, not investor owned. That means there are no outside shareholders expecting earnings. Instead, cooperatives operate on margins, collecting enough revenue to pay expenses, maintain infrastructure and meet financial obligations.

“The only place we get money is from the people at the end of the line,” Smith said. “We don’t have a printing press in the basement.”

In fact, if revenue exceeds expenses in a given year, a portion of those margins are allocated back to members as capital credits when the board determines it’s financially appropriate. Capital credits represent a member’s share of the cooperative’s financial performance during the years they received service.

However, in recent years, equipment costs have risen significantly. Smith cited bucket trucks that once cost around \$220,000 have since more than doubled in price, and major system components have seen similar increases. Usually, the cost of wholesale power from the cooperative’s power suppliers makes up the largest share of the budget and those costs have been increasing as well.

Rate adjustments reflect those rising operational costs and the need to maintain reliable service, not profit distribution.

Electricity may seem simple at the flip of a switch, but as Smith makes clear, the system behind it involves infrastructure, coordination and constant evaluation. Understanding how it works helps members separate assumption from reality and better appreciate the network that serves them every day.

# LINeworker APPRECIATION DAY APRIL 13, 2026

When the lights go out, lineworkers are ready to answer the call, day or night, to safely restore power and keep our communities moving forward. They take pride in powering the places we call home. Today and every day, we thank lineworkers for their service and commitment.

TODAY AND EVERY DAY...  
WE THANK LINeworkERS FOR THEIR  
COMMITMENT TO POWERING OUR  
COMMUNITIES



READY WHEN IT MATTERS MOST.



# Lineworkers

Each April, Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative takes time to recognize the dedicated individuals who work every day to keep the lights on, our lineworkers.

When storms move through the area and outages occur, many experience the inconvenience, but lineworkers see a call to action. Crews are ready when it matters most, leaving family dinners, working through the night and heading into challenging conditions to restore power as safely and quickly as possible. That level of readiness is not accidental. It is built on rigorous training, years of hands-on experience and a deep commitment to serving others.

What makes lineworkers especially remarkable is that they are not just restoring power to a system, they are restoring power to their own communities. They live here, raise their families here and understand that electricity is more than a convenience. It is essential to daily life, local businesses, schools, farms and emergency services. Powering the places we call home is personal.

Electric cooperatives were founded on the principle of neighbors helping neighbors, and lineworkers embody that spirit every day. They are often the first to respond and the last to leave, working long hours behind the scenes. At times, serving members means going beyond the cooperative's own service territory through mutual aid. During major outage events, crews may assist neighboring cooperatives, sometimes close to home and sometimes across state lines, to help restore power. This spirit of cooperation strengthens all co-ops and ultimately benefits the members they serve.

Power outages can be frustrating and disruptive. The cooperative is grateful for members' patience and understanding during these times. Linework is demanding, physical and, at times, dangerous. Crews approach each job with a strong focus on safety and teamwork, taking pride in their craft and in the trust placed in them by the community.

On April 13, 2026, Lineworker Appreciation Day offers a special opportunity to say thank you but appreciation extends far beyond a single day. The dedication and professionalism of lineworkers are the backbone of the cooperative and the communities it serves.

**To our lineworkers:** Thank you for your hard work, your readiness and your unwavering commitment to the communities we serve. We are proud to stand behind you and grateful for all that you do.

COMMITTED BEYOND THE SWITCH.



POWERING THE PLACES WE CALL HOME.



WHO ANSWER THE CALL.

NEIGHBORS



# ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ENERGY SCAMS

Photo by Frank Turner

### Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

It's no April Fools' joke. Consumers with an electricity connection have long been targets for scams. In today's digital world, those schemes have evolved. As more daily business is conducted online, scammers have shifted their tactics to match. They now use phone calls, texts and emails to create urgency, confusion and fear, hoping consumers will act before taking time to verify the claim.

For victims, these scams can lead to financial loss and identity theft, but understanding how the most common schemes work and what they typically look like is one of the best defenses to staying safe.

### The "Past Due" Disconnection Threat

One of the most common tactics that scammers use is the disconnection threat. They use a fake message claiming a bill is past due and that service will be disconnected immediately unless payment is made on the spot.

The call may sound official. The message may include account numbers

or appear to come from your local cooperative's phone number due to caller ID spoofing. The scammer's goal is simple: create panic so you pay first and question later.

In reality, cooperatives follow clear procedures and provide advance notice before any disconnection. A demand for instant payment, especially with threats attached, is a major red flag.

### The "You Overpaid" Refund Scam

Who would not want a refund? Scammers take advantage of that instinct.

In this scheme, a text, call or email claims a member overpaid an electric bill and is owed money. The message often includes instructions to click a link or provide banking information so the refund can be "processed."

The message can sound especially convincing to cooperative members because electric cooperatives do return margins to members in the form of capital credits. Capital credits represent a member's share of the cooperative's annual margins and are returned over time.

However, capital credits are distributed through established,

official processes. They are not issued through unsolicited texts, surprise phone calls or links requesting personal banking information. When your local cooperative retires capital credits, members are notified through official channels such as billing statements, newsletters, verified mailings or even through Cooperative Connections.

An unexpected refund message that asks for sensitive information is a red flag. When in doubt, pause and contact your local cooperative directly using trusted contact information.

### Gift Card and Cryptocurrency Demands

Scammers often insist on unusual payment methods such as gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency. They may provide detailed instructions on how to purchase gift cards and read the numbers over the phone.

This is a clear warning sign. Legitimate cooperatives do not request payment in gift cards or cryptocurrency. These forms of payment are nearly impossible to trace or recover, which makes them attractive to criminals.

## Spotting a Scam

Regardless of the method, every scam has similar warning signs that members can watch for:

- High-pressure tactics that demand immediate payment
- Requests for payment through gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency
- Emails or text messages with poor grammar, spelling errors or unfamiliar web addresses

Scammers rely on urgency. Taking a few extra minutes to verify a message can prevent lasting financial consequences.

## What Your Local Cooperative Will and Will Not Do

Your local cooperative will not demand immediate payment without prior notice. Cooperatives follow

established procedures and provide advance communication before any service interruption.

Your local cooperative will not ask for Social Security numbers, banking details or other sensitive information through unsolicited phone calls, emails or text messages.

Members have secure payment options available through official cooperative channels, including the cooperative's verified website and approved payment systems. When in doubt, independently locate the cooperative's official contact information rather than using links or phone numbers included in a message.

Text alerts are only sent to members who have enrolled in official notification programs, such as outage updates.

## Avoiding Energy Scams

If you receive a suspicious call, text or email claiming to be from your local cooperative, do not use the contact information provided in that message. Instead, use the phone number printed on your billing statement or listed on the cooperative's verified website.

Also, reporting suspected scams helps protect fellow members. By alerting your local cooperative to fraudulent activity, members help strengthen the community's defense against energy scams and ensure the cooperative network remains secure for everyone.

Have a question about whether something is real or not? Reach out to your local cooperative. Electric cooperatives are owned by the members they serve and powered by the communities around them.

## SIGNS OF AN

# ENERGY SCAM

### High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

### Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

### Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.



# WHY DOES LLEC TRIM TREES

## Right-of-Way Maintenance

Our right-of-way maintenance program helps prevent power interruptions by trimming or removing trees and brush which could be potential fire hazards or cause power outages. Tree-to-line contact can also cause momentary interruptions or blinks in power. Tree trimming or clearing helps prevent extended outages during storms or strong winds.

Safety is the number one reason for cutting down trees around power lines. Electricity always seeks a path to the ground. Conductors of electricity include water, your body, tree branches, metal poles and ladders. When you become part of this path, you may be injured or killed. Reducing the amount of trees and brush provides a safer environment for your family members and provides safer access for Lyon-Lincoln personnel when it becomes necessary to repair power lines or poles.

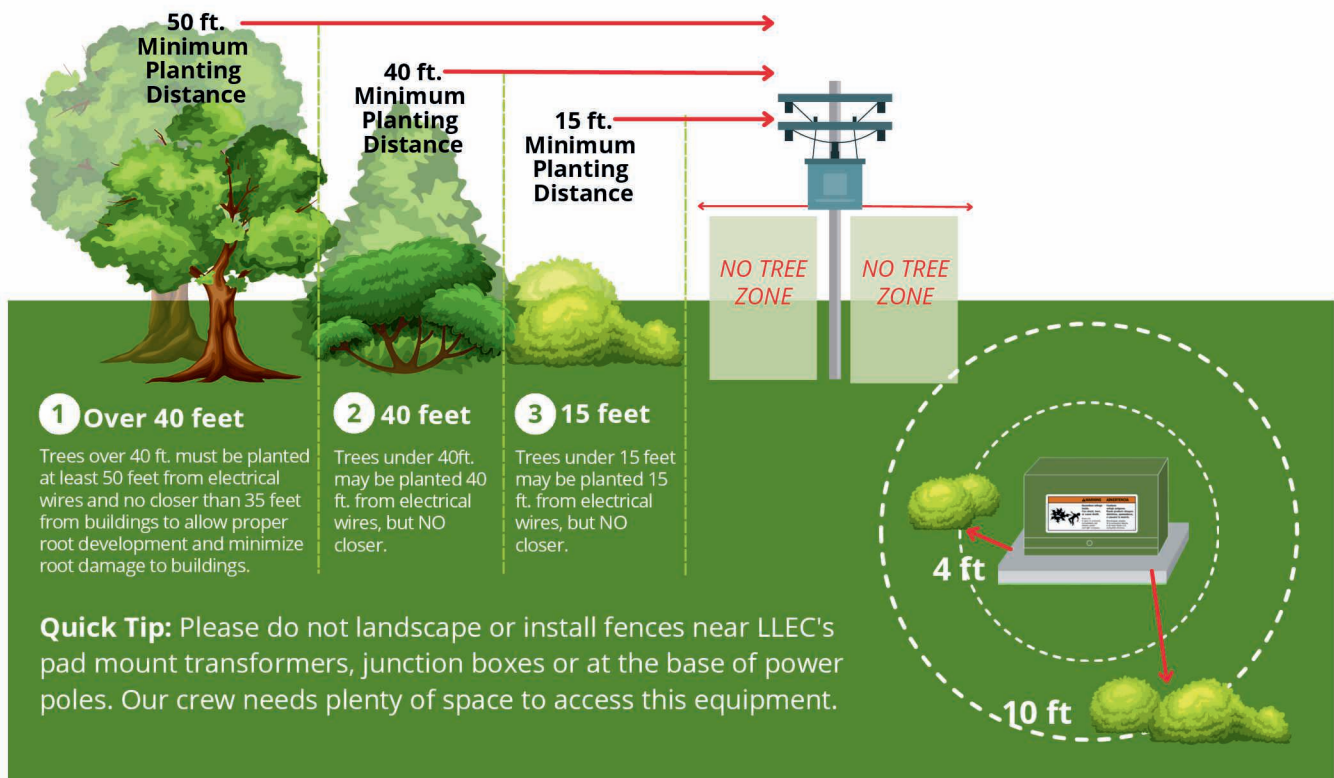
After safety, service reliability is a key responsibility of your electric cooperative; providing members with the best possible power quality. Have you ever noticed your lights blink? Tree branches that touch power lines are a major reason for these blinks. One tree on your property coming into direct contact with power lines not only affects your home, but it affects the power quality for hundreds of your neighbors. Proper clearance today prevents inconvenience tomorrow.

## What is the Electric Line Right-of-Way?

An electric line right of way is a strip of land that an electric utility uses to construct, maintain, repair or replace an overhead or underground power line. The right of way allows the utility to provide clearance from trees, buildings and other structures that could interfere with the line installation, maintenance and operation.

Clearance requirements depend on the amount of voltage on a line. Primary wires (7,200 volts) generally require a 15-ft. maximum clearance on all sides for trimming. Secondary service wires (240 volts) require a 5-ft. clearance. Pad mount Transformers (the "green box") require 10 ft. of clearance in front of doors and 4 ft. on all other sides of the box.

**Please notify LLEC at 1-800-927-6276 if trees on or near your property are endangering the power lines.**



# GROW YOUR SAVINGS

## Landscaping That Cuts Energy Costs

When most people think about saving energy, they picture insulation upgrades, efficient windows and appliance swaps. But your yard can play a major role too. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a well-planned landscape can reduce air-conditioning costs by up to 25% and pay for itself in less than eight years.

Because landscaping results vary by region, keep in mind that the United States has four main climate zones: temperate, hot-arid, hot-humid and cool. Plant strategically for your zone.

### Choose the right trees: Deciduous or evergreen

Deciduous trees (those that lose their leaves in the winter) block sunlight in the summer and allow light in during the colder months, helping to regulate indoor temperatures year-round.

Evergreen trees provide consistent shade and can serve as windbreaks, which is especially helpful in cool climates.

**Tip:** *In hot climates, choose native or drought-tolerant species. They require less water and are typically more resilient.*

### Placement matters

- West and northwest sides: Plant trees to block strong mid- to late-afternoon sun.
- East and west windows: Use deciduous trees to block summer sun but still allow winter light.
- South side: Tall trees planted at a distance equal to two to five times their mature height can shade your home without blocking winter sun.
- West side: Shorter trees and shrubs help shield against intense, low-angle afternoon sun. Craig Winter - 632700.
- Patios and driveways: Shade these areas to reduce reflected heat.
- Home perimeter: Bushes can absorb sunlight and reduce heat transfer, but avoid dense plantings in humid climates, where airflow is important to prevent excess moisture.

**Tip:** *Be mindful near solar panels. Avoid planting tall trees on the south side of panels to prevent shade during peak sun hours.*

### Plan for a tree's mature height

- Avoid planting trees that will grow taller than 15 feet near power lines.
- For taller species, plant at least 20 feet away — 45 feet is even better — to prevent safety hazards and avoid future pruning.

Thoughtful landscaping is more than curb appeal, it's an investment in comfort, safety and energy savings. With a little planning today, your yard can help reduce your energy bills for years to come.

# CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Before starting any planting or landscaping project, call 811. This free service will locate and mark underground utility lines, including electric, gas and water lines. Contact 811 at least several business days before digging to avoid costly and potentially dangerous accidents.

## Before digging in, take these five steps to safer digging:

1. Pre-mark the proposed dig area with white paint or white flags.
2. Call 811 or go online to submit your locate request before you dig. There is no charge for the service.
3. Wait the required amount of time (typically two to three business days).
4. Respect the marks and do not move any flags.
5. Dig with care. Avoid digging on top of or within 18–24 inches on all sides of utility marks.

For more information about 811, visit [call811.com](http://call811.com)



**APRIL 9-11**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Festival of  
 Tasting  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237  
[www.schmeckfest.com](http://www.schmeckfest.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.

**MARCH 27-APRIL 4**  
**The Passion and the Cross**  
 Orpheum Theatre  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-367-6000  
[www.ThePassionMusical.com](http://www.ThePassionMusical.com)

**APRIL 3**  
**Bachelors of Broadway:  
 Gentlemen of the Theatre**  
 7 p.m.  
 Johnson Fine Arts Center  
 Aberdeen, SD

**APRIL 5**  
**Easter Sunrise Service**  
 7 a.m.  
 Mount Rushmore

**APRIL 9**  
**McCrossan Wildest Banquet  
 Auction in the Midwest**  
 Jimmy Buffett Tribute  
 Polynesian Paradise Dancers  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
[www.mccrossan.org](http://www.mccrossan.org)

**APRIL 9-11**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Heritage Celebration  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237  
[www.schmeckfest.com](http://www.schmeckfest.com)

**APRIL 11**  
**Women VetsConnect Retreat**  
 A Wellness Retreat for  
 Women Veterans and Military  
 Spouses  
 9 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Our Savior's Lutheran Church  
 909 W. 33rd St.  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**APRIL 11**  
**Minnehaha County Pheasants  
 Forever Annual Banquet**  
 5:30 p.m.-10 p.m.  
 Blue Haven Atrium  
 46594 268th St.  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-214-1415

**APRIL 11-12**  
**The Black Market**  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-332-6004

**APRIL 18**  
**Brookings Quilt Show XII**  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Admission: \$10  
 Dakota Bank Center  
 Brookings, SD  
 605-690-3246

**APRIL 18**  
**Tri-Valley Chorus  
 75th Annual Show**  
 4 p.m.  
 Centerville, SD  
 605-201-9398

**APRIL 20**  
**The Bronx Wanderers**  
 7 p.m.  
 Johnson Fine Arts Center  
 Aberdeen, SD

**APRIL 25**  
**Screams by Night  
 Halfway to Halloween Con**  
 11 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 The Social  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**APRIL 28**  
**American Legion Bingo**  
 5-6 p.m. Social  
 6-6:30 p.m. Meal  
 6:45 p.m. Bingo  
 American Legion Post 15  
 1600 W. Russell  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-682-1222

**MAY 2-10**  
**Rustic Designs & More Spring  
 Show, Flea Market**  
 41450 264th St.  
 Ethan, SD  
 605-770-2411

**MAY 2**  
**Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**  
 2-8 p.m.  
 Milbank, SD  
 605-432-6656

**JUNE 13**  
**Journey Into Historic Pickstown**  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Ft. Randall Town & Museum  
 Pickstown, SD  
 605-487-7299

**JUNE 26-27**  
**Buckhorn Rodeo**  
 Britton, SD  
 605-880-5077

**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.**