

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## **Get Out & Vote!**

**It's Your Civic Duty**

Pages 8-9

**Upcoming Energy Projects**

Pages 12-13

# Investing in the Future: Our 50-Year-Old Office Building



**Tim O'Leary**  
General Manager

After nearly 50 years of serving our member-owners from the same building, we are determining whether the building is in need of a remodel. While rising costs and higher electricity rates are realities we all face, our board and leadership team are confident this is the right time to develop a plan to update our office space. Any project will look at extending the life of our

headquarters for another 40 years, positioning us to serve our member-owners well into the future.

## Why Now Matters

With inflation and material costs on the rise, it may seem counterintuitive to start looking at a building project. But delaying would only mean higher expenses down the road. By investing soon, we may avoid higher future costs and ensure the improvements are completed in time to support the needs of our employees and our member-owners for decades to come. This approach reflects strong stewardship and careful long-term planning by the board.

## Modernization for Today and Tomorrow

The board is looking at construction plans that will touch nearly every part of the building, including offices, meeting spaces, the lobby, exterior, and essential mechanical systems. Each of these areas being modernized would create a facility that is both functional and welcoming. The lobby and exterior will offer a refreshed appearance, sending a message of professionalism and pride to everyone who walks through the doors. Inside, updated offices and meeting spaces will give employees the tools they need to work effectively with each other and our member-owners.

## Improving Energy Efficiency

Rising electric rates are a challenge for households and businesses alike. That is why we are considering significant upgrades to our HVAC systems and air quality. These improvements will make the building far more energy efficient, lowering utility costs and reducing environmental impact. The long-term savings generated by these upgrades will continue to benefit our organization for years to come.

## Supporting Employees

Our employees are the heart of our service. They have worked in a space that no longer reflects the standards of comfort and efficiency expected today. The construction will provide a healthier, more comfortable workplace that supports productivity and morale. Bright, efficient lighting, modern heating and cooling, and thoughtfully designed work areas will help employees focus on what matters most: delivering excellent service to our member-owners.

## A Building for the Community

While much of the work will take place behind the scenes, our member-owners will notice the improvements. A modernized lobby and refreshed exterior will make the building more welcoming. Meeting spaces will be better equipped to host gatherings and conversations that strengthen our ties with members and our community stakeholders. The construction is not just about bricks and mortar; it is about demonstrating our commitment to the people we serve. Chad Nuy- 1161200.

## Looking Ahead

An updated building and work environment was identified during our strategic planning in 2024. We had a facility planning study completed by Cooperative Building Solutions and this was shared with the board last September. We have spent the last several months visiting other cooperative facilities to see their buildings and to learn more about what worked and what didn't work during the construction process. We continue to discuss options monthly and we understand that we are in a multi-step planning process that requires careful planning, financial responsibility, and steady progress.

*"In the months ahead, we will share updates as the work moves forward. We are excited about what this project represents: a commitment to modern facilities, energy efficiency, employee well-being, and continued service to our community."*

In the months ahead, we will share updates as the work moves forward. We are excited about what this project represents: a commitment to modern facilities, energy efficiency, employee well-being, and continued service to our community.

**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/Warehouse 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 at additional mailing offices.

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

Jessica Gums, Editor

**OPERATION ROUNDUP**  
 Turning Coins into CHANGE

**HOW OPERATION ROUNDUP WORKS**

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

**MARCH BOARD MEETING SUMMARY**

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Trust, Inc. was held March 2, 2026. The board reviewed the Trust Funding Policy and Guidelines and applications received. After discussion, grant requests were approved. Then, thank you notes and final reports from grant recipients were reviewed. The next meeting will be held June 1st, 2026.

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

Applications for grants can be found at [www.llec.coop](http://www.llec.coop) under the “Your Cooperative” tab.

**THE NEXT ROUND OF APPLICATIONS WILL BE DUE: MAY 20TH, 2026.**

**OPERATION ROUNDUP**

**Board Of Directors**

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



**MARCH 2026 GRANTEES**

- City of Russell  
 Community Center AED  
 \$2,000

---

- Lutheran Social Services- Lyon Co.  
 meals for high-risk seniors  
 \$1,250

---

- Minneota Post Prom Committee  
 After-prom food, games, and activities for students  
 \$200

---

- Prairie Five Community Action  
 Reach Our For Warmth Program  
 \$2,000

---

- RTR After Prom Committee  
 After-prom food, games, and activities for students  
 \$200

---

- SWMACDE  
 Environmental Fair  
 \$1,500

---

- SWWC Foundation for Innovation  
 in Education  
 Student Enrichment Program  
 \$1,000

---

- TeenPact Leadership Schools  
 TeenPact Minnesota State Class  
 \$1,000

---

- True Friends  
 Outdoor Enrichment Programs  
 \$1,200

## ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH: TIPS FOR PRIORITIZING SAFETY

At your local cooperative, Electrical Safety Month is recognized every May, but the importance of practicing safety year-round is always emphasized. From co-op crews to the consumer-members served, everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity that powers daily life, but it can also be dangerous — something your local cooperative understands firsthand from working with it 365 days a year.

Safety is more than a catchphrase. Cooperative leadership recognizes the responsibility to keep employees safe while also helping protect members and the broader community. That's why your local cooperative hosts safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year, highlighting the dangers of electricity. These demonstrations often include emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines, along with discussions about the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the widespread use of electrical devices, tools and appliances, here are a few practical electrical safety tips:

Watch for frayed wires. Power cords can become damaged from age, heavy use or excessive current flow. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them to avoid shock hazards.

Avoid overloading circuits. Circuits can only handle a limited amount of electricity. Running too many devices on one circuit can lead to overheating and potential fire risk.

Label circuit breakers. Understanding your home's electrical system can help prevent overloads. If your home is more than 40 years old and you plan to install large appliances, contact a qualified electrician.

Use extension cords properly. Never plug one extension cord into another. "Daisy chaining" can cause overheating and fire hazards. Do not exceed the cord's wattage, and avoid using extension cords as permanent solutions. If additional outlets are needed, consult a licensed electrician.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to talk with children

about playing it safe and smart around electricity, including staying aware of overhead power lines near outdoor play areas.

Providing a reliable energy supply 24/7, 365 days a year is a top priority. Equally important is keeping the community safe around electricity.

Contact your local cooperative for additional electrical safety tips or to request a safety demonstration at a school or upcoming community event.



**PLUG INTO SAFETY**

**ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH**  
Make electrical safety a priority this month, and every month.



**"Do not fly kites by power lines!"**

**Casen Yuker**

Casen cautions readers not to fly kites around power lines. Thank you for sharing your picture, Casen! Casen's parents are Lance and Tarah Yuker from Aberdeen 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.

# Delicious DESSERTS

## RHUBARB CAKE DESSERT

### Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix  
1 cup sugar  
4 cups rhubarb, diced  
2 cups half and half

### Method

Prepare cake mix as directed on package and pour into a greased 9x13 pan. Mix sugar and rhubarb together. Spoon evenly over cake batter. Pour half and half over top of rhubarb mixture. Bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes. This is like an upside-down cake with custard on the bottom of the cake.

**Marla Gilbert**  
Southeastern Electric

## FUZZY NAVEL CAKE

### Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix  
1 instant vanilla pudding (large, 5.1 oz. size)  
3/4 cup peach schnapps  
1/2 cup vegetable oil  
1/2 cup orange juice  
4 eggs

### Glaze

1 cup powdered sugar  
4 tbsps. orange juice  
2 tbsps. peach schnapps

### Method

Spray a 12-cup fluted baking pan with cooking spray, dust with flour. Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended, spread evenly in pan. Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes until golden brown and cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool cake for 20 minutes. Run a long, sharp knife around the edges to loosen, and invert onto platter. Whisk glaze ingredients together until smooth. With wooden skewer, poke holes on top and around sides of cake. Spoon glaze over the warm cake, allowing to seep in holes, and drizzle down the sides and center. Cool completely before slicing.

**Sally Florey**  
Charles Mix Electric

## HAWAIIAN PINEAPPLE CAKE

### Ingredients:

2 cups flour  
2 cups sugar  
2 eggs  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. vanilla  
Pinch salt  
1 20 oz. can crushed pineapple, undrained (in natural juice, not heavy syrup)

### Frosting

1/2 cup butter, softened  
1 8 oz. cream cheese softened  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar

### Method

Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended. Bake in greased 9x13 pan at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until top is golden brown.

Combine cream cheese, butter and vanilla. Beat until smooth and creamy. Gradually add powdered sugar. Spread frosting on cake while still warm. Garnish with some toasted coconut if desired.

**Sally Florey**  
Charles Mix 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.

Picture submitted by William Berry via Shutterstock.

## February 2026 Board Meeting Minutes



The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative was held on Monday, February 23, 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 January 2026 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 December 31, 2025. The Board reviewed the 2025 Margin Allocation Estimates that had been provided by Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. and East River Electric Cooperative, Inc.

The board viewed the January 2026 Outage and Safety Reports prepared by Lyle Lamote, Line Superintendent. Mr. Lamote indicated that the linemen were working on the following projects: trimming trees and using the grubber to control growth along the electric lines in Lyon-Lincoln’s service territory.

Brian Jeremiason, Manager of Marketing and External Relations, reviewed his report with the Board and discussion was as follows: The Board received updates on scholarship applications, heat pump water heater trends, and approved both the 2025 Cogeneration Report and updated Rate Schedule 14, being the Minnesota Renewable Energy Rate Under 40KW, effective March 1, 2026.

General Manager, Timothy O’Leary, gave his General Manager’s Report and was as follows: reviewed the January 2026 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, reviewed upcoming meetings and notices and reviewed the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.’s Cyber Report for January 2026 which was prepared by East River Cyber Security Department.

The Board reviewed the MREA Legislative Update and it was indicated that the priorities include net metering reform, repeal of the nuclear moratorium and opposition to more mandates.

The Nominating Committee met to review its role and select candidates for each district. Final nominations were presented as follows:

- District 1- Scott Johnson and Neil Thoof
- District 2 - John Weiss and Glen Grant

District 3- Dale Fier and Darin Brink

District meeting dates and the 2026 annual meeting were also discussed.

Board members reported on the East River Energize Forum, with discussions concerning artificial intelligence, load management, and future energy demand.

The Board reviewed progress and priorities for potential headquarters building improvements, including HVAC, roof repairs, office layout, and facility upgrades.

The Board recessed for lunch at 12:04pm and reconvened at 12:30pm.

There was general discussion concerning the MREA visits. The Board also reviewed the Rate Comparison Chart for neighboring cooperatives.

There being no further business to come before the Board, President, Dale Fier, adjourned the meeting at 12:45pm.

### OUTAGE REPORT:

10 OR MORE CONSUMERS

FEBRUARY 2026

2/17/26- 79 consumers were off 2 hours and 30 minutes in Marble and Alta Vista Townships. The cause was an underground fault.

## Do You Have a Generator? Help Us Serve You Better

At Lyon-Lincoln Electric, keeping the lines of communication open is just as important as keeping the lights on. We're asking for your help to ensure we can provide the best possible service, especially during outages.

**Do you have a generator at your home or business?** If so, we'd appreciate you letting us know. When you contact us, we may ask for a few additional details about your generator, such as the type, size, and how it is connected. This information helps our crews better understand your setup and respond safely and effectively during an outage.

**During Business Hours-** If an outage occurs during regular business hours, please let our staff members know if you have a generator running. When power is restored, we will contact you directly with updates so you can safely turn your generator off.

**After-Hours Call Response-** If you experience an outage and contact our after-hours call center, Cooperative Response Center (CRC), please let the representative know if you are running a generator, and ask for a follow up to let you know when power has been restored so you can safely turn your generator off. These return calls are an important part of restoring power safely and efficiently.

**Keep Your Contact Information Current-** Accurate contact information ensures we can reach you with important outage updates, restoration notifications, and follow-up communication. If your phone number or email has changed, please take a moment to update your account information with us.



### YEAR-TO-DATE COMPARISON

JANUARY 2026

	January - 2025	January - 2026
Total Revenue	\$1,225,275	\$1,384,245
Cost of Power	\$627,320	\$804,410
Operating Expenses	\$571,830	\$461,809
Operating Margins	\$26,125	\$118,026
KWH's Purchased	11,673,070	11,610,629
KWH's Sold	11,200,706	11,010,821
Members	3,956	3,950
Miles of Line	1,670	1,669
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, Craig Winter & Tonia Czech 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 temperatures start to rise, many homeowners focus on staying cool. Don't forget about the small gaps around windows and doors. While air sealing is often associated with keeping cold air out during winter, it's just as important during summer. Tiny cracks and worn weatherstripping allow cool, conditioned air to escape and hot, humid air to seep indoors. This forces your air conditioner to work harder than necessary and increases energy costs. Take a few minutes to check for drafts, replace weatherstripping and seal leaks. A tighter home keeps you more comfortable and helps manage energy use.

Source: energy.gov

## ONE VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE



**Chuck Sloan • Piedmont, S.D.**

**Board Treasurer, West River Electric Association**

**U.S. Air Force 1983-2003**

Chuck Sloan has spent much of his life serving his nation.

Sloan enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1983 and served 21 years on active duty before retiring as a master sergeant in 2004. In that time, he was stationed at bases all around the world, including Oman, South Korea, Turkey, and the Pacific. Since 2004, Sloan has worked as a civilian at Ellsworth Air Force Base, where today he is Chief of Operations Compliance.

Serving in the military, Sloan observed firsthand how seriously service members took absentee voting and civic participation, despite being thousands of miles from American soil. Their passion helped ignite Sloan's own admiration for America's democratic system of government.

"If I found somebody a little laissez-faire about voting, saying, 'my vote probably won't count,' I would give them a spiel," Sloan explained. "Yes, your vote does count, and you'll want to be able to say that you made that vote."

He continued, "If you don't choose to exercise that responsibility, then later on if you're displeased, you really can't

complain about it because you didn't make a choice – If anything, vote and give yourself the opportunity to legitimately complain!"

Sloan said people should never underestimate the importance of showing up and making their voices heard, because in close races, one vote can tip the scale.

"There are many instances when one vote may have been a determining factor," Sloan said. "It may not be a general election, but how about in a state or local election where one vote can be the deciding factor? That happens more often than one would think. Your vote matters, no matter what you do."

Sloan brought that civic-mindedness along with him to West River Electric Association, where he serves on the Board of Directors and helps make decisions in the interest of his neighbors and communities he represents.

Sloan said it all just comes back to civic responsibility and staying involved.

"From the time I turned 18, I've never missed a vote," Sloan said. "It's second nature. It's too important to not do."



## VOTING STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES



**Evan Buckmiller • De Smet, S.D.**

**General Manager, Kingsbury Electric Cooperative**

**De Smet School District Board**

For Kingsbury Electric Cooperative General Manager Evan Buckmiller, his call to public service came after a mid-term resignation on the De Smet School District

Board left a vacancy that needed to be filled.

"The board had to appoint someone to fill the seat," Buckmiller said. "Initially when I was asked, I didn't know if I wanted to do it, but I also knew that my wife and I have two young kids in the school system, so I agreed to fill the spot until the next election."

Buckmiller wasn't expecting to develop a passion for civic-service, but six years and two election cycles later, he's still representing the De Smet community on the school board.

"It's for my kids, to make sure they have the best education opportunities possible to prepare them for their future," Buckmiller added.

He said that while serving on the school board has been a

rewarding endeavor, there are also moments that are discouraging; some people will sit out elections, but are also vocal about board decisions they disagree with.

"I receive phone calls about how we are doing everything wrong, but they don't want to step up to be a part of change," Buckmiller explained.

His advice is simple: show up.

"Public participation at the monthly school board meetings is always encouraged," Buckmiller said. "When a community is engaged, there is more diverse input and you get to see the needs of everyone. The needs for one person might not be the same as another, and when you are sitting on a board you want to hear the needs of everyone so you can make the best decision possible for everyone."

Buckmiller said when more people get involved and exercise their civic duties, the communities like his are better for it.

"Being active in the community makes the community stronger and allows different opinions to be heard," Buckmiller said.

"When you show up to meetings and vote, you are giving the board direction so they can make decisions that are in the best interest of everyone."

## STICK UP FOR YOURSELF & VOTE



**Don Schurdevin • Elk Point, S.D.**  
**Board President, Union County Electric Cooperative**  
**U.S. Navy 1962-1968**

Serving on the Union County Electric Cooperative board for more than 25 years, Don Schurdevin has built a reputation for steady leadership and a strong commitment

to the cooperative and its members. But before serving his neighbors and community on the co-op board, Schurdevin first served in a different way. He served not just his Union County neighbors, but his entire country in the U.S. Navy. Schurdevin enrolled during his junior year of high school in 1962, serving active duty in Vietnam from 1963 to 1965, some of that time aboard the USS Midway. The experience helped shape his views on patriotism, civic duty and personal responsibility.

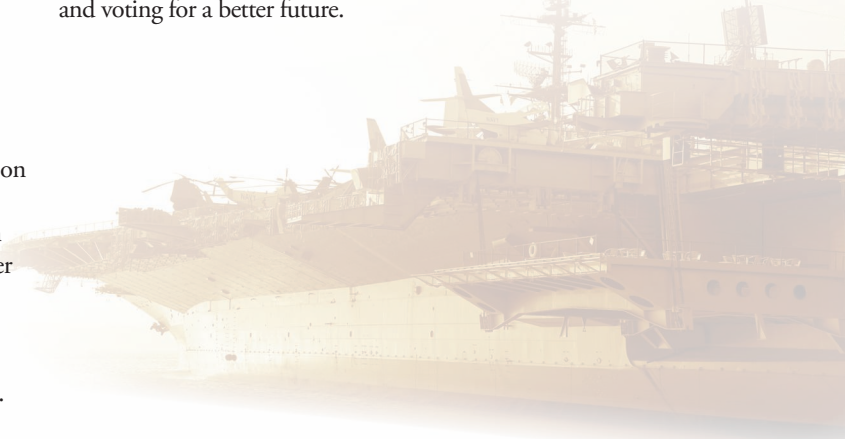
“In the navy, you learn to get along with people, but you learn to also stick up for yourself, because nobody else – is so you better take care of your own business,” he said.

That’s the attitude that Schurdevin brings to his civic participation. He said serving in the military gave him a deeper appreciation for the freedoms Americans enjoy, including voting.

Schurdevin believes participating in elections is one of the most important ways citizens can stay involved in their communities and help shape the future of their community, state and country.

“I think I voted in every election since I could,” Schurdevin recalled. “School board election, county, state – if I was able to vote I was voting.”

That sense of duty carried into his years of cooperative service. As a director, Schurdevin remains focused on serving members and ensuring the co-op continues to meet local needs. Schurdevin encourages others to “stick up for yourself” by staying informed and voting for a better future.



## LEADERS DEPEND ON YOU SPEAKING UP



**Chris Rahn • Mission, S.D.**  
**Member Services Manager, Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative**  
**Todd County School District Board, Rosebud Sioux Tribe**

Chris Rahn was not always interested in his local government. In fact, up until just several years ago, he sat many elections out.

But through his work at Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative and the commitment to community that came with it, Rahn gained a new perspective on civic participation, realizing that change only happens when peoples’ voices are heard.

“I believe everybody who has an opinion should come out and vote,” Rahn said. “One vote matters. One vote can change an entire election.”

Rahn’s indifference to voting began to change as he was asked to take on more responsibilities with the co-op. Cherry-Todd Electric General Manager Tim Grablander nominated Rahn to the Rushmore Electric Federal Credit Union Board of Directors, where Rahn now serves as president.

Shortly after, he was encouraged by local community leaders to apply for a board seat with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. The tribal

council voted to seat Rahn on the judiciary committee, leading to his first real experience with public service. Like flipping a switch, Rahn’s enthusiasm led to his appointment to other tribal boards, including the Tribal Utilities Commission, Tribal Tax Commission, and the Rosebud Energy Services Company.

Rahn said serving in tribal government opened his mind to the impact he can have on his community. That realization inspired Rahn to run for his first publicly-elected position as a school board member for the Todd County School District.

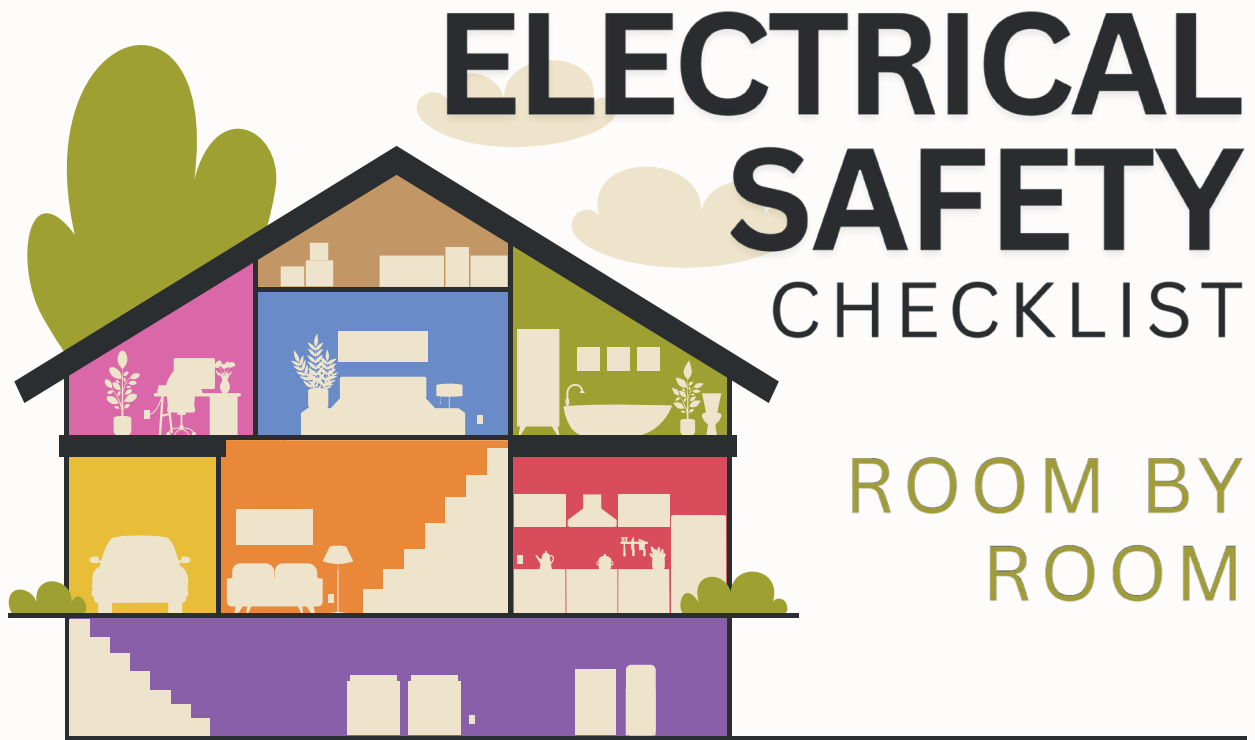
“I wanted to be more involved in my daughter’s education and just listen to the community’s input,” Rahn said, restating the importance of community members actively engaging with elected officials and sharing feedback.

He continued: “I feel like I’ve been able to bridge the gap between the people I represent and the administration and other public leaders.”

As Rahn looks ahead to years of future public service to work for a better community, he encourages others to step up as well — and all it takes is a vote.

“If you speak up, your voice is heard,” he continued. “When everyone’s voice is heard, we can make better decisions for the community as a whole.”

*Photos by Shutterstock*



Check these monthly to keep your home and family safe.

**Kitchen**

- Clean refrigerator coils and allow space for airflow.
- Store and use appliances away from the sink.
- Use and test GFCI outlets.
- Inspect cords for cracks or frays.
- Keep cords off counters; unplug when not in use.

**Bedroom**

- Place and test smoke and CO detectors on every level and near sleeping areas.
- Keep cords out from under rugs or furniture.
- Unplug devices and chargers when not in use.
- Make sure lightbulbs are the correct wattage.
- Plug window AC units into a dedicated circuit.

**Basement**

- Ensure washer and dryer are stable and ventilated.
- Remove dryer lint after each use.
- Set water heater to 120°F or lower.
- Have furnace inspected and confirm proper ventilation.

**Bathroom**

- Keep appliances away from water (sink, toilet, tub, shower).
- Unplug appliances when not in use.
- Use and test GFCI outlets.

**Living Room**

- Use safety caps on unused outlets, especially if children or pets are present.
- Ensure electronics have space for airflow.
- Replace cracked light switch or outlet covers.
- Avoid overloading outlets, power strips and surge protectors.

**Garage**

- Use and test GFCI outlets.
- Inspect cords for cracks or damage.
- Unplug tools and appliances when not in use.
- Place garage refrigerators/freezers on dedicated appliance circuits.

Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)

# SMART HOME, SMART SAVINGS:

Easy tech upgrades to lower energy bills

**Smart home technology includes connected devices that automate tasks and provide energy-use data. You don't need a fully connected system to see benefits. Many affordable, stand-alone options can help you cut waste and manage costs without sacrificing comfort.**

### SMART THERMOSTATS

Smart or not, your thermostat is the most effective tool for controlling energy use, as heating and cooling typically account for the largest portion of energy bills. Smart thermostats allow you to adjust the indoor temperature through an app, giving you full control from anywhere on the go. Many smart thermostats include learning capabilities and will adjust the thermostat based on previous behavior and patterns.

According to the Department of Energy, smart thermostats can reduce heating and cooling bills by more than 8% annually, and with models as low as \$65, they typically pay for themselves in one year.

### SMART PLUGS

Smart plugs are inexpensive gadgets that can help you save energy. Many electronic devices consume power even when they are turned off (known as "phantom load"), which can take a toll on your energy bills. Smart plugs are simply plugged into an electrical outlet and connected to your Wi-Fi network. When set up, the smart plug can cut power (or return power) to non-smart devices, like coffee makers, phone chargers and other items that draw phantom load. Amanda Stattelmann - 1573200.

Many smart plugs can be paired with popular smart hubs, like Alexa or Google Nest, or controlled through the plug's associated app. Smart plugs are simple to use and a set of four can be purchased for as little as \$25.

### SMART LIGHTING

Smart LED bulbs use less electricity than traditional bulbs and can be scheduled or turned off (or on) remotely through a smart phone app. Smart bulbs are available in a range of shapes, brightness levels, colors and more, so shop for the products that work best for your home lighting needs.

Many smart bulbs include motion sensors that turn on or off based on room activity, further optimizing home energy use. If you're new to smart lighting, try a home starter kit. Prices for kits range from \$70 to \$300+ depending on how many bulbs you need.

**Whether you start with one device or several, smart tech can help reduce energy waste, save money and make daily routines easier. Get more energy efficiency tips at [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org).**

# 6 TIPS

## FOR YEAR-ROUND ENERGY SAVINGS



1

Use your ceiling fan counter-clockwise in the summer for a down breeze and clockwise in the winter for an updraft to force warm air down into your room.

2

Turn off lights and unplug chargers and electronics when not in use.

3

Regularly change or clean your furnace and indoor AC filters as recommended and keep the area around your outdoor AC unit clear of obstructions.

4

Close or lower window coverings to keep out heat or cold.

5

Insulate your home and weatherproof windows and doors.

6

Use a programmable or smart thermostat. Adjust the temperature a few degrees for overall savings.

Get more tips on creating a resilient and efficient home:

 Safe  
Electricity.org®

# BUILDING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

Basin Electric's Pioneer Generation Station, located near Williston, N.D.  
Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

## Basin Electric Expands Generation Capacity to Meet Growing Demand

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Although the flick of a switch can seem close at hand, the electricity that powers our world is often generated many miles away.

For rural cooperative members, electricity often comes from North Dakota, where Basin Electric Power Cooperative operates a fleet of power plants to serve rural communities across nine states. As demand continues to build across that system, the infrastructure behind it is growing right alongside it.

This steady growth has shaped the work now underway across Basin Electric's service territory. In response, the cooperative has kept up with demand by expanding existing generation facilities, building a new power plant and supporting the system with additional transmission projects in just a few short years.

"We're seeing load growth across our system, and it's coming from a combination of residential, agricultural, commercial and energy development," said Gavin McCollam, Basin Electric's senior vice president and chief operating officer. "When you step back and look at it as a whole, it becomes clear that we need to continue building to keep pace with that growth."



New transmission lines in western North Dakota support Basin Electric's newest generation assets.  
Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

### Pioneer Generation Station

To maintain reliability and keep the lights on for their members, Basin Electric recently expanded its generation capacity through new development to Pioneer Generation Station near Williston, N.D.

Originally developed in the early 2010s, the facility grew in phases over time. Those additions turned Pioneer Generation Station into one of Basin Electric's most important generation assets, but within a decade, the pace of that growth had begun to change.

"Coming out of COVID, not just us but everybody

was seeing rapid increases in loads,” McCollam said. “At that point, we were asking what we could do the quickest to add capacity.”

To meet the need, Basin Electric moved forward with Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. The cooperative completed the project in 2025, adding about 580 megawatts of generation and bringing the site’s total capacity to 822 megawatts, enough to power roughly 400,000 homes.

The expansion moved quickly in part because Basin Electric built on what it already had.

“We had the site and the people that worked there, so we could add onto it a lot quicker than we could analyze and research new sites,” McCollam said.

## Bison Generation Station

Still, Basin Electric continued building for traditional member load growth, beyond Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV, turning to a new project: Bison Generation Station.

Located near Epping, N.D., the natural gas-fueled generation project is being built from the ground up as a large-scale, natural gas facility designed to meet future demand. Once completed, the combined-cycle power plant will produce approximately 1,490

megawatts of electricity, making it the largest power plant solely owned by Basin Electric – almost double the capacity of Pioneer Generation Station. The plant is expected to come online in two phases, with the first unit operating in 2029 and the second in 2030.

Unlike Pioneer Generation Station, which expanded over time, Bison Generation Station is being built as a single, large project.

“We had a history of building small units, piecemealing them in as quickly as we could. That worked for a long time, but eventually we reached a point where we needed to think about building differently,” McCollam said. “There was a point where we recognized that continuing to add smaller pieces wasn’t going to be the most effective approach. We needed to build something at a scale that would allow us to stay ahead of that growth.”

Serendipitously, the transition from Pioneer Generation Station to Bison Generation Station happened on the same day. Basin Electric finished construction at Pioneer and turned the facility over to operations, then received the permits to begin construction on Bison.

“I’m kind of a nerd,” McCollam

said, laughing. “I’m nerdy enough to think this wasn’t a coincidence, and the power plant gods were smiling on us.”

Once complete, it will become a central part of Basin Electric’s generation portfolio.

“It’s going to be the flagship of our gas fleet,” McCollam said. “It’s being designed with the understanding that the system we’re serving today is going to continue to grow.”

## Looking Ahead

According to McCollam, these new generation assets are a response to the organic growth Basin Electric is seeing across its traditional membership, including residential demand, agriculture, commercial activity and energy production.

“We support that growth where it happens, and we make sure the system can deliver power where it’s needed,” he said.

For Basin Electric, the work underway now is part of a longer process to ensure reliability in a time of growing energy demand.

“The entire purpose of Basin Electric is to provide reliable service to our membership,” McCollam said. “As that system grows, we have to continue building to keep up with it.”





## Work Safely Near Utility Lines

Whether you're running heavy equipment or using handheld tools, working outdoors can put you dangerously close to overhead and underground utility lines. A line strike can cause outages, fires, fines, serious injury or death.

### **Look up:** Overhead power line safety

- **Survey the job site** each day for overhead lines, poles, guy wires and pad-mounted equipment. Check carefully for lines hidden by trees or buildings.
- **Assume all overhead lines are energized**, including service drops from poles to buildings. Keep clear unless the utility confirms that a line is not energized.
- **Set a clear boundary:** Keep workers, tools, ladders and equipment at least 10 feet from power lines. When using cranes or derricks, keep at least 20 feet away. Follow OSHA guidelines for clearance at different voltages.
- **Use a dedicated spotter** to keep you, your crew and your equipment a safe distance from power lines.

### **Dig safely:** Underground utility lines

- **Pre-mark the excavation area** with white paint (use black on snow), flags, chalk, lath or whiskers.
- **Use 811 or 811beforeyoudig.com** before you dig to have lines marked. Every job needs a locate request, even small ones.
- **Wait for utilities to mark their lines** before digging.
- **Expose marked utilities carefully** by hand or with soft excavation to verify location and depth.
- **Report** any utility strike or damage to the facility owner. Never cover up damage.

### **If equipment contacts a power line:**

- **Stay on the equipment.** Tell others to stay back.
- **Call 911 and the electric utility** right away.
- **Do not exit the cab** until utility workers say it's safe.
- **If fire or other danger forces you off,** jump clear and do not touch the equipment and ground at the same time. Land with your feet together. Shuffle away with both feet on the ground or hop away with both feet together.

Work safely to protect yourself, your crew and the public. Review your crew's emergency plan so that everyone knows what to do if a line is contacted.



# Building Near Power Lines: Required clearance

The National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) is a widely used industry safety code, but requirements may also come from utilities and state or local building codes.

## Plan early

- **Check** easements and right-of-way restrictions before finalizing a plan.
- **Contact** the utility early if a structure will be near overhead or underground lines.
- **Confirm** which rules apply and follow the most restrictive.

## Clearance basics

- **Clearance** is the required separation between lines and structures, including roofs, balconies and decks.
- **Design for worst-case sag/swing** from wind, ice and heat.
- **Horizontal:** Distance for lines near walls, windows or projections.
- **Vertical:** Distance for lines over roofs, balconies or accessible areas.
- **Service drops:** Separate rules for lines serving the building.

## Factors affecting clearances

- **Voltage:** Higher voltage requires greater clearance.
- **Access:** Areas accessible to people or vehicles require greater clearance.
- **Line type:** Requirements differ for service drops, distribution, transmission and communications space.
- **Conditions:** Sag and swing vary with heat, wind and ice.

## Things to remember:

- **Treat roof access** as a design trigger. Accessible roofs require more clearance.
- **Avoid routing service drops** over areas that could later become accessible (decks, rooftop equipment, roof doors).
- **Verify clearance** at worst-case sag and loading, not just on a mild day
- **Confirm requirements** with the utility and local code authority.

**Don't guess.** Minimum clearances vary by voltage, line type and location. Involve the utility and local code authority early.

Sources: OSHA, JULIE, NESC



**MAY 18**  
**Voter Registration  
Deadline for Primary  
Election**

5 p.m.  
(South Dakota)

**JUNE 1**  
**Last Day to Request  
Absentee Ballot.**

5 p.m.  
(South Dakota)

**JUNE 2**  
**Primary Election**  
7 a.m.-7 p.m.  
(South Dakota)

*Photo by Shutterstock*

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

**MAY 2**  
**Consignment Auction**  
7 a.m. Gates Open  
10 a.m. Auction  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

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

**MAY 3**  
**Prairie Village Opening Day**  
2 p.m. Train Ride  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

**MAY 6-7**  
**Energize! Exploring Innovative  
Rural Communities Conference**  
Hosted by SDSU Extension  
Community Vitality  
Community Center  
Wall, SD  
[extension.sdstate.edu/energize](http://extension.sdstate.edu/energize)

**MAY 9**  
**1880 Train Opens**  
Hill City, SD

**MAY 15-17**  
**Open House Weekend**  
Free Entrance  
Custer State Park  
Custer, SD

**MAY 16**  
**2nd Annual Bird Bash**  
8 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Bear Butte State Park  
Sturgis, SD  
605-390-2901  
[valleyhummingbird@yahoo.com](mailto:valleyhummingbird@yahoo.com)

**MAY 23**  
**Free Christian Men's Event**  
8 a.m.-2 p.m.  
The Barn at Aspen Acres  
Spearfish, SD  
Register: [RiseUpMen.com](http://RiseUpMen.com)

**MAY 30**  
**Familyfest Fun Cruise  
& SDSC Safety Fair**  
9 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Bucket Trucks, Safety & More  
Sioux Falls, SD  
[thehoodmagazine.com/ff-faqs/](http://thehoodmagazine.com/ff-faqs/)

**MAY 30**  
**Frühlingsfest**  
Spring Street Market  
1-5 p.m.  
Main Street Square  
Rapid City, SD  
605-718-8484

**MAY 30**  
**Miss Prairie Village/Miss  
Prairie Princess Pageant**  
6:30 p.m.  
Lawrence Welk Opera House  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

**JUNE 4-6**  
**Black Hills Quilt Show**  
Thurs. 5-8 p.m.  
Fri. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Rushmore Hall  
at the Monument  
Rapid City, SD

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

**JUNE 13**  
**Luce Pioneer Day**  
10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Rope & Candle Making, Butter  
Churning, Dutch Oven Cooking  
Lake Herman State Park  
Madison, SD  
605-880-5077

**JUNE 19-20**  
**77th Annual Czech Days**  
Tabor, SD  
[www.taborczechdays.com](http://www.taborczechdays.com)

**JUNE 24-27**  
**Crystal Springs Rodeo**  
Clear Lake, SD  
605-874-2996

**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.**

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.