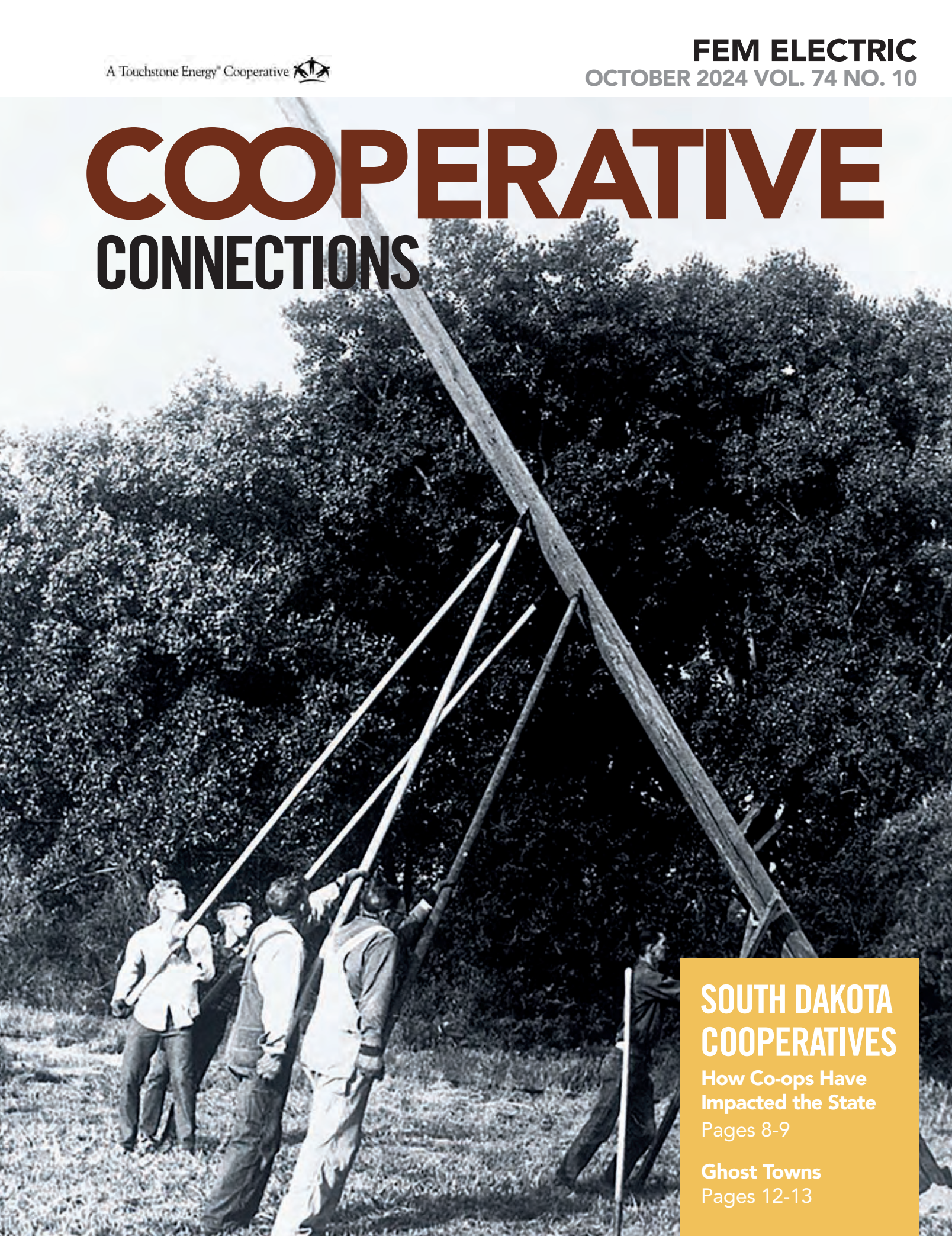


# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## **SOUTH DAKOTA COOPERATIVES**

**How Co-ops Have  
Impacted the State**  
Pages 8-9

**Ghost Towns**  
Pages 12-13





The FEM Board of Directors meet with staff at the August meeting.

## August Board Report

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on August 20, 2024, pursuant to due call and notice. It being determined that a quorum was present, President Gary Bachman called the meeting to order. Secretary Eric Odenbach kept the minutes of the meeting. The following directors were declared present by roll call: Gary Bachman, Paula Petersen, Tom Thorpe, Eric Odenbach. Operations Manager Sean Christiansen, Accounting Clerk Angie Sieh, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, Manager/CEO Scott Moore, Electrical Manager Ryan Holien. Kelly Melius absent.

Guest Employee - Perry Ptacek

**Changes to the agenda:** None

**Changes/Additions to Minutes from July 16, 2024, meeting:** None

**Next Meeting Date:** After a review of calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Tuesday, September 24, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve administrative business.

Motion by Eric Odenbach, seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to acknowledge manager and staff reports.

July 2024 Cyber Security Report was acknowledged.

Motion by Paula seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve the following Work Order Inventories:

WO 612:	\$34,160.52
WO 613:	\$233,959.80
WO 614:	\$218,796.67
Total:	\$486,916.99

A discussion was held on VCAP funding with NRECA RS Plan no action taken. The board requested additional information and several options.

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by Tom Thorpe to approve 2025 employee benefits as presented.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to enter executive session at 10:37 to review board and Manager/CEO Performance Appraisals.

Motion Eric Odenbach seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to leave executive session at 11:47.

Manager/CEO appraisal was discussed/reviewed and signed.

### Resolutions and Contracts:

The board acknowledged and discussed NISC board seat that is up for election.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to nominate Scott Moore as CFC Region 6 voting delegate.

### Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

### New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

**Disconnects:** Willis & Nancy Schnabel, Eureka, SD, Pasture Pump/Farm House

**Reconnects:** Timothy Vander Laan, Bismarck, ND, Pasture Pump/Farm House

**Contracts:** Craven Corner, LLC, Ipswich, SD, Storage Containers

**Retired Locations:** Allen & Margaret Beyers, Roscoe, SD, Grain Bin

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve one construction contract for new service.

### Capital Credits:

**Estates - August 2024** - One = \$290.23  
**73 & Older - August 2024** - One - \$449.41

Board acknowledged receipt of following financial business:

**Financial Business:** The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: The check register for the month of July 2024 contained information on checks #34532 through #34609 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for July 2024 totaling \$639,053.56.

**Continued on pg 6**

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### FEM ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

(USPS 189-720)

#### Board of Directors

Gary Bachman, President  
Tom Thorpe, Vice President  
Eric Odenbach, Secretary  
Paula Petersen, Treasurer  
Kelly Melius, Asst. Secretary/  
Treasurer  
Vaughn Beck, Attorney

#### CEO/General Manager

Scott Moore  
info@femelectric.coop

#### Management Staff

Sean Christiansen  
*Operations Manager*  
Ryan Holien  
*Electrical Department Manager*  
Rhonda Tuscherer  
*Director of Finance and  
Benefits*

#### Editor's e-mail:

oban@femelectric.coop

FEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of FEM Electric Association, Inc., 800 5th Ave., Ipswich, SD 57451. FEM Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to members on electric cooperative matters and better living.

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www.femelectric.coop  
Design assistance by SDREA

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opportunity provider and  
employer.**



**Scott Moore**  
**General Manager/CEO**

Some FEM Electric members are asking: What is a server farm? And why are they interested in South Dakota? First, this is Scott Moore's opinion, not the opinion of the FEM board or the South Dakota Rural Electrics, but FEM has been dealing with several organizations for the past twenty-four plus months about serving large buildings full of computers capable of multiple jobs within our service territory. About ten years ago BIT Coin appeared and there were companies looking to install shipping containers full of computer servers that would be placed near an energy source and would consume large amounts of power. FEM Electric had little interest in serving such loads since the equipment was easy to move, the investors were unknown, and we/I didn't understand the exact trading of BIT Coin/Crypto Currency, even after months of meetings. We were warned to be cautious.

Now we have investors looking to build large buildings filling them full of computers and servers or renting the

spaces out to others to fill them with the same equipment. I would identify these facilities as a data center, where information would be collected and sold, or collected for a sole purpose. Some would be AI centers (Artificial Intelligence) where the computers would be used for AI. Both have or require similar amounts of power and backup power requirements, but both have large power requirements.

At the Brown County Fair, one of our US Senators reported there are eight thousand data/AI facilities in the world and the US hosts about two-thirds of these facilities and we should host more due to national security.

Why are they interested in South Dakota? South Dakota has excess capacity on some of our existing transmission lines, and facilities are in place where they don't have to pay to build new transmission lines. We have affordable or low-cost power compared to other regions, and we have multiple renewable energy projects being planned or are

Continued on pg 7

#### FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

@FEMEelectric on

@fem\_electric on

@FEMEelectric on

We'll post outage updates, safety tips, news and more to keep our members informed on all the latest from FEM Electric.

## Statement Mailing Dates

October 25, 2024 for October's energy  
November 26, 2024 for November's energy

Regardless of the statement mail out date, payments are due in the office by the 9th of the following month.

# FIRE SAFETY

Cooking and heating are the leading causes of home fires and fire injuries, and winter months are the peak time for fire-related deaths. **Fire Prevention Week (Oct. 6-12, 2024)** is the perfect time to review and practice fire safety.

### Minimize Your Risks

The good news: Deaths from home fires in the U.S. have trended downward since the 1970s, according to Injury Facts, but even one death from a preventable fire is too many. While fire doesn't discriminate by age, it is the third leading cause of death for children 1 to 14.

**When cooking, make fire safety a priority by keeping these tips in mind:**

- Be alert; if you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the oven or stovetop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, boiling or broiling food.
- Keep anything that can catch fire away from your stovetop.

**Heating is the second leading cause of home fires. Follow these tips:**

- Keep all flammables, like paper, clothing, bedding, drapes or rugs, at least three feet from a space heater, stove or fireplace.
- Never leave portable heaters and fireplaces unattended; turn off heaters and make sure fireplace embers are extinguished before leaving the room.
- If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, nonflammable surface, like ceramic tile, not on a rug or carpet.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- When buying a space heater, look for models that shut off automatically if the heater falls over.

### Working Smoke Alarms Are a Must

About three out of five fire deaths happen in homes without working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are a key part of a home fire escape plan providing early warning to reduce your risk of dying in a fire. The National Fire Protection Association recommends you:

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas on the ceiling or high on the wall.
- Keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen, at least 10 feet from the stove, to reduce false alarms.
- Use special alarms with strobe lights and bed shakers for

people who are hard of hearing or deaf.

- Test smoke alarms monthly.
- Replace batteries in your smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector annually.
- Replace smoke alarms that are 10 or more years old.

### When and How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

Always put your safety first; if you are not confident in your ability to use a fire extinguisher, get out and call 9-1-1. The American Red Cross cautions you to evaluate the situation and ensure:

- Everyone has left or is leaving the home
- The fire department has been called
- The fire is small, not spreading, and there is not much smoke
- Your back is to an exit you can use quickly

### Remember the acronym PASS:

**P**ull the pin.

**A**im low at the base of the fire.

**S**queeze the handle slowly.

**S**weep the nozzle side to side.

*Source: National Safety Council*



### Power Line Safety "Watch Out for Power Lines!"

#### Archer Rindels, Age 7

Archer Rindels warns readers to be careful around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Archer! Archer's parents are Kyle and Rochelle Rindels, members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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 CHICKEN

## CHEESY CHICKEN BUNDLES

### Ingredients:

1 (11 oz.) can condensed cream of chicken soup  
1/2 cup milk  
3/4 cup Velveeta, shredded or cubed  
1 (10 oz.) can chunk chicken, drained and flaked  
1 (8 oz.) can crescent rolls

### Method

Combine soup, milk and cheese. Heat until melted and smooth. Pour into a 7x11 inch pan that has been sprayed with vegetable oil.

Separate crescents into 8 triangles. Place 2 tbsps. of chicken on wide end of crescent roll. Pinch to seal. Place on top of sauce.

Bake uncovered at 375 degrees for 25 minutes and until golden brown. Serve with sauce on top.

Yields eight chicken bundles or four servings.

**Janet Ochsner**  
Box Elder, S.D.

## CROCKPOT CHICKEN PARMESAN SOUP

### Ingredients:

3 boneless chicken breasts  
1 tbsp. minced garlic  
1 can crushed tomatoes (28 oz. can)  
1 can tomato sauce (15 oz. can)  
1 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. ground black pepper  
2 tsp. Italian seasoning  
4 cups chicken broth  
1 cup parmesan cheese (freshly shaved)  
1 cup heavy whipping cream  
8 oz. rotini pasta (uncooked)  
1 1/2 cup shredded Mozzarella

### Method

Add the chicken breast, minced garlic, crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, salt, pepper, Italian seasoning and chicken broth to the Crock-Pot.

Cover Crock-Pot with lid and cook on low for 6-8 hours.

Shred the chicken. Stir in the shredded parmesan cheese, heavy whipping cream and rotini pasta. Cover and cook on low for 30 minutes.

Top the individual soup servings with mozzarella cheese.

**Kayla Beaner**  
Centerville, S.D.

## BUTTER CHICKEN

### Ingredients:

4 tps. Garam Masala blend  
1/2 tsp. garlic powder  
1/2 tsp. ground ginger  
1/2 tsp. ground turmeric  
1/8 tsp. crushed red pepper  
4 tbsps. butter, divided  
1 can (14.5 oz.) petite diced tomatoes  
1 med. red onion, chopped  
1 1/4 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch cubes  
1/4 cup heavy cream  
1/2 tsp. sea salt

### Method

Mix Garam Masala, garlic, ginger, turmeric and crushed red pepper in small bowl. Heat large non-stick skillet on medium heat. Toast seasoning mixture 1 min. or just until fragrant, stirring constantly. Add 2 tbsps. of the butter to skillet, swirling to melt. Add onion; cook and stir 2 to 3 mins. until softened. Stir in tomatoes; cook 5 mins. Carefully transfer mixture to blender container; cover. Blend until smooth, scraping sides as needed. Return pureed sauce to skillet. Bring to simmer on med.-low heat. Add chicken; cook 8 to 10 minutes or until chicken is cooked though, stirring occasionally. Stir in remaining butter, cream and salt until well blended. Simmer on med.-low heat 2 to 3 minutes until sauce is slightly thickened. Stir in additional crushed red pepper to taste and serve with hot cooked basmati rice or warm naan bread, if desired. Garnish with fresh cilantro leaves, if desired.

**McCormick.com**

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

## Continued from pg 2

Board acknowledged receipt of July 2024 financials.

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve board expense reports and attorney fees.

**Legal Update:** Moore discussed with board the East River and FEM Electric plan to intervene at the South Dakota PUC regarding MDU (Montana Dakota Utilities) request to serve a large load in FEM Electric's territory in McPherson County located at 11641 358<sup>th</sup> Ave adjacent to MDU substation. Attorney Vaughn Beck is representing FEM Electric.

### Meeting Report:

East River monthly video was watched, and report given by Gary Bachman.

Ryan Holien, Paula Petersen and Gary Bachman reported on Basin Electric Annual meeting held in Bismarck August 13 and 14th.

Safety meeting minutes from July 24 and employee meeting minutes from July 17, 2024, were acknowledged.

**Adjourn:** President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Person with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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## Continued from pg 3

investigating to construct.

Can FEM Electric/East River Power Cooperative serve these large loads? Yes, we can, and we would do a great job meeting the needs of these new members.

Should your local electric cooperative serve these large loads? Once again, my answer is yes. I believe these companies will be here to stay and for years to come. I believe data collection and AI are here and here to stay. We can only guess what the next development will be.

What is the negative? They are noisy, it sounds like grain bin dryer fans running. I did travel to Ellendale, North Dakota, in the spring of 2024, to see what the buildings look like and what the noise level was like at that facility. I can't say this is a negative, but these facilities are new to the area, we don't fully understand them and their operations, and it is a change.

What is the positive? Job growth, hopefully new families and housing in these small communities, increased school enrollment, and tax base for local schools, counties and municipalities. Are there any guarantees? Not to my knowledge.

What is FEM Electric's management and board of directors' responsibilities to serve these loads? First, we must make sure

our current members' investments are protected now and in the future. This electric cooperative was built for and by our local ag producers no matter what size of operation they run. I believe with proper planning, deposits, contracts and aid to construction FEM Electric would have no problem serving and maintaining reliability to our current and future members.

In South Dakota we have service territories that define who provide power to new and existing consumers. Also, in law is "Biddable Electric Service", which means any new electric load that is over two megawatts is biddable, and the user can choose their power provider. There is a process working with South Dakota PUC to make these consumer requested changes. That is where FEM Electric is now with Leola Data Center, who has chosen Montana Dakota Utilities (MDU) to provide power for the newly planned data center in McPherson County, next to an existing MDU substation.

FEM Electric/East River Power Cooperative are currently working with a second company at a different location, but only time will tell if the project moves forward and if FEM Electric will be serving the electric load.

I hope this article helps explain one of many challenges in the electric industry.

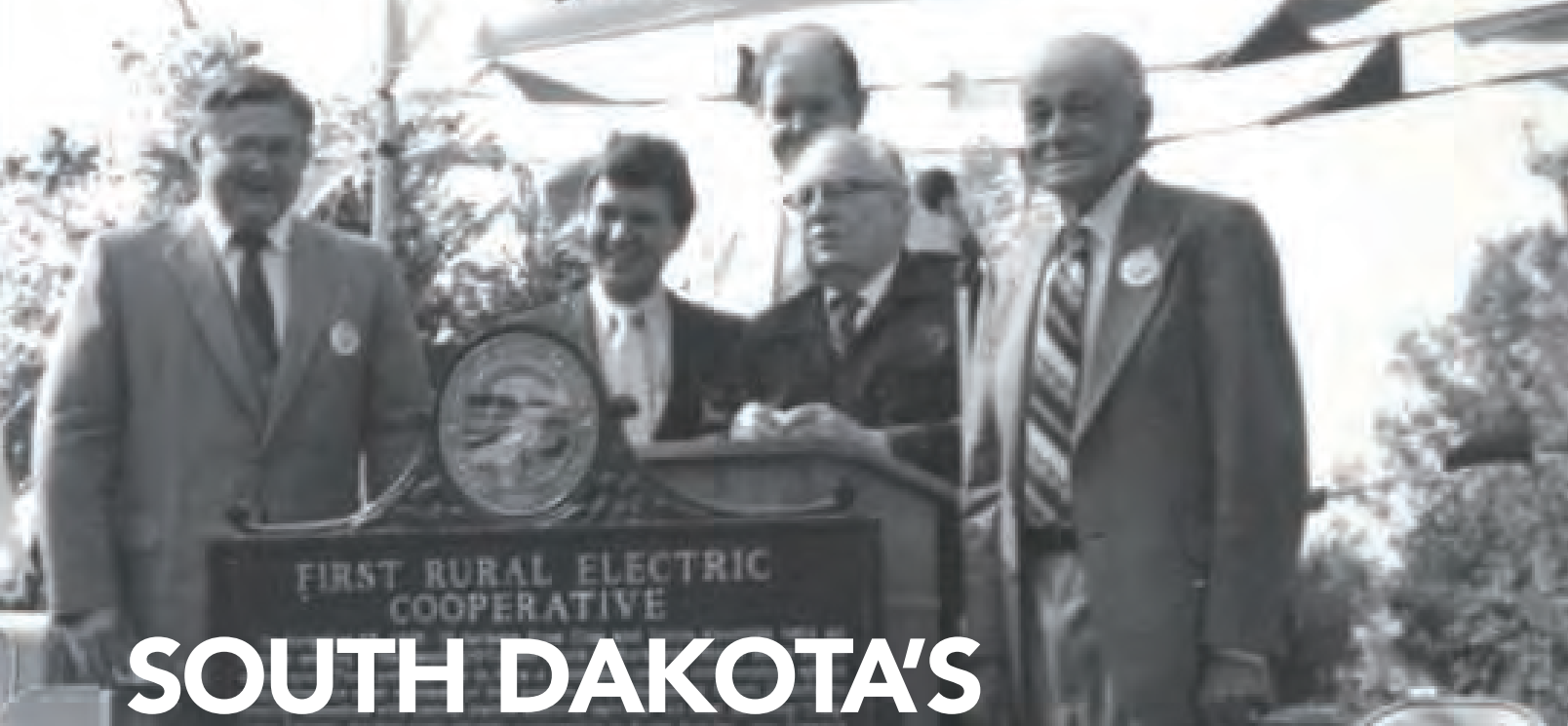
## FEM Needs Your Help

FEM Electric works hard to provide safe, reliable and convenient electric power for you and your family. We also provide programs to help you use energy efficiently.

To help us plan for the future and determine what programs will benefit you most, FEM needs your help.

This fall, we will be conducting a survey of our residential members. If you receive a survey, please help us by taking a few minutes to complete it. Your answers are very important, so please respond as best as possible and return it promptly. A postage-paid return envelope is included for your convenience. The survey will also be available to complete online.





# SOUTH DAKOTA'S COOPERATIVES

**Jacob Boyko**

[jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

Picture life in rural South Dakota 100 years ago. Each morning, families woke before dawn to work by the flicker of kerosene lamps, hand-pumped water to fill a gas-powered wringer-washer, and retrieved breakfast ingredients from a dripping ice box. Looming in the backs of producers' minds were fears that the market would trend downward and they may not be able to cover their debts, or even harvest their fields.

Today, South Dakota's rural farmers and ranchers enjoy virtually all of the accommodations of modern living their suburban counterparts enjoy. Past luxuries like running water, full-time electricity, internet and telephone are now standard, and many farmers enjoy stronger economic security compared to the past's tumultuous markets.

That's because for over 100 years, rural South Dakotans have pooled their resources by forming cooperatives that level out some of the disparities between rural and urban life. Thanks to members' ingenuity, rural America is not just a viable, but a thriving place to live and work.

## The First Cooperatives

The first cooperatives in South Dakota were agriculture-focused. Far too often, an

oversupply of goods led to price crashes, resulting in farmers unable to economically harvest crops or market livestock. This led to tremendous waste and crushed livelihoods.

As producers grew weary of the uncertain market, they organized to collectively market and distribute their products: they coordinated, shared risk and pooled resources.

South Dakota's earliest farm supply and marketing cooperatives started popping up a little after the turn of the 20th century. The South Dakota Secretary of State's office lists Lake Andes Farmers Cooperative, formed in 1909, as the oldest ongoing cooperative in the state.

During this early period, cooperatives operated in a legal gray area. Since producers working collectively in a cooperative setting could be viewed as monopolistic or collusive, they were under careful watch by the Federal Trade Commission as well as their larger competitors.

That changed in 1922 with the passage of the Capper-Volstead Act.

"Capper-Volstead allowed producers to come together and market their products and not be in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act," explained Brenda Forman, South Dakota Association of Cooperatives executive director. "[Cooperatives] were not considered to be a monopoly as long as they were a cooperative association formed

Clay-Union Electric Corporation was the first electric cooperative in South Dakota.

by producers, owned by the members, one member gets one vote in cooperative elections, etc."

The presence of ag cooperatives surged in the 1930s as producers looked for stability during the Great Depression, the South Dakota Farmers Union says. With effectiveness proven, the cooperative strategy has stuck around since.

Today, there are 63 farm supply and marketing cooperatives serving over 130 South Dakota communities, Forman said.

Those same visionaries who established the first ag cooperatives identified another need that was not being met. Using the same cooperative model that changed their lives once already, farmers would bring power to the prairie.

## Electricity

Before energy infrastructure was widespread, many small towns in South Dakota relied on local power plants. However, with distribution lines only serving the city, living even a mile or two out of town was the difference between flipping a light switch and carrying a lantern.

Despite requests from farmers to run lines to their homes – some of whom even offered to pay installation costs – most municipalities and investor-owned utilities (IOUs) refused because undertaking the effort didn't lead to any meaningful profit.

Even many of the state's elected representatives seemed resigned to the idea



that the future of energy for their farming constituents was tied to on-site generation, like the modest Delco-Light plants that could power a few small appliances and light bulbs. To them, it seemed laughable that there was any feasible way to run lines in a state where the service would average out to a sparse 2.2 customers per mile of line, and for many, that was the end of the conversation.

The narrative changed when President Franklin D. Roosevelt expanded his New Deal programs to modernize rural America, creating the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) to finance ambitious projects.

The profit-minded IOUs were largely uninterested in expanding into sparse territory for measly returns, and little progress was made toward Roosevelt's vision.

In 1936, once it was apparent IOUs wouldn't be making the foray into rural territories as farmers had hoped they would, Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act. Now, cooperatives could organize and receive REA loans while the IOUs idled.

A group of 17 farmers from Clay and Union counties jumped at the opportunity to finally bring their homes into the modern age. Just months after the REA was established, and at a time when just 5% of South Dakota farms had power, the group hatched out a plan to secure an REA loan for their newly-formed Fairview Rural Electric System, today Clay-Union Electric Corporation.

Going door to door and collecting \$5 sign-ons from neighbors ranging from ecstatic to skeptical, the cooperative finally got the REA's green light and received a \$70,000 loan to build 67 miles of line that would serve about 300 members, according to a 1936 Argus Leader report.

The success of South Dakota's first electric cooperative brought hope to still more than 90% of South Dakota farmers without power. It wasn't long before dozens more newly-formed cooperatives were each going door to door collecting sign-on fees to secure their own REA loans.

## Serving Everyone

In 1946, roughly 10 years after the state's first electric cooperative debuted, rural farmers and ranchers from the state's

remote northwest corner met in Lemmon to form their own cooperative. The board understood securing a loan from REA to serve such a vast and sparse territory would be a big ask, so they opted to charge members a \$10 monthly minimum, which was twice the minimum rate of most South Dakota cooperatives, and equal to about \$170 today.

Even so, would-be members agreed to the terms of the longshot project and paid their \$5 membership fee. Despite federal hesitation about the feasibility of such a project, the REA loan was approved.

Grand Electric Cooperative received more than \$1.8 million over two loans that would build 1,127 miles of line and serve 948 members. The investment amounted to one of the REA's largest and riskiest yet in the state, but proved to be a success.

Cooperative members did the impossible; the wires in northwest South Dakota had finally been energized. Board members then eyed another ambitious goal – bringing telephone to Northwest South Dakota.

West River Cooperative Telephone Company was formed as a separate entity, but in the spirit of cooperation, the telephone and electric cooperative would be jointly operated. The two would, and still to this day, share a building, staff and infrastructure.

"Up here, we cover almost 8,000 square miles and have 4,000 miles of wire, but we only have 1,800 members," explained Eric Kahler, the cooperatives' joint general manager. "When you look at the economics of this type of service territory, if you're in the business to make money, you're not going to be too successful here. The cooperative model is really the only model that could work here."

And the community knows that fact and is grateful for their cooperative, says Patricia Palmer, who has spent much of her last 63 years working in Grand Electric and West River Telephone's member services.

"They're thankful," she said. "Very thankful. We have a terrific telephone work crew and line department. At times, they work tirelessly in horrible weather conditions... You can't believe the thank you notes that we get."

Growing up on a farm near McIntosh, Palmer has a firsthand account of the impact

of cooperatives. And she says it's one she will never forget.

The night she watched her family's farmhouse light up for the first time was also the beginning of a new chapter, she recalled. A chapter with an automatic washer, a refrigerator and a toaster.

As times change, cooperatives continue to be at the forefront of bringing service that might otherwise be out of reach.

"When I came to the cooperative, it was just telephone and electricity, and now we have high-speed internet and TV," Palmer said. "Over the years, the cooperative has really grown!"

## Other Applications

The cooperative model is also used in many other sectors; there are 34 South Dakota credit unions that offer member-owners better interest rates and reduced fees compared to for-profit banks.

Even some rural water systems, while not wholly cooperatives themselves, borrow some of the cooperative fundamentals to make serving large areas more practical.

"Cooperatives are pretty significant in the impact they've had," Forman said. "And the other cooperatives we have – there are daycare co-ops, food co-ops, education co-ops – there's a number of different structures that the cooperative model has been used for, because of that ownership and one member, one vote."

Today, there are 141 cooperatives in the state, providing more than 78,500 jobs, \$2.8 billion in worker salaries and \$3.9 billion in gross domestic product (GDP), according to a South Dakota State University study titled *The Economic Impact of Cooperatives in South Dakota*.

That means cooperatives contribute almost 13% of South Dakota jobs, more than 11% of salaries, and 6.2% of the state's entire GDP.

"In a cooperative, your board is local," Forman said. "[The co-op board and employees] support and participate in sports functions, 4-H barbecues, you may go to church with them, or they may be at family dinner. Which means when something is a concern or challenge, you have somebody to go to and you have contacts close that know you and understand the system."

# TEEN DRIVER SAFETY

### AS A PARENT, YOU'RE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Parenting teens can be challenging. While some battles aren't worth fighting, protecting your teen behind the wheel is.

And although no one wants to think about teens being in car accidents, it does happen. Protecting your teen behind the wheel is crucial due to their inexperience, which makes them more susceptible to crashes. Car accidents are a leading cause of death for teens in the U.S., with the highest risk in the first year of driving. Common hazards include additional passengers, speeding, drowsy driving and using phones.

Distracted driving is a major issue, with 3,308 people killed in distracted-affected crashes in 2022, including 2,613 teens, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. That's approximately seven teens per day.

Teen drivers often lack the skills and experience needed to avoid fatal crashes, and distractions such as texting can be particularly dangerous. For example, reading a text at 55 mph is like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed. For this reason, many states have laws against texting, talking on the phone and engaging in other distractions while driving.

There are three types of driving distractions to discuss with your teen:

- Visual, when you take your eyes off the road.
- Manual, when you take your

hands off the wheel.

- Cognitive, when you take your mind off driving.

**To prevent distracted driving, teach your teens (and emulate) these tips:**

1. Do not text while driving.
2. Block texts and keep your phone out of sight.
3. Avoid eating while driving.
4. Use playlists instead of searching for music.
5. Set up navigation before driving or have a passenger navigate.

Teen drivers report pressure from families and friends to use phones while driving. Many drivers continue to use phones even when they are aware of the crash risk. Technology can help avoid cell phone use while driving. Use built-in features on your smartphone or cell phone blocking apps to prevent distractions. For the greatest safety benefit, change your phone settings to block hands-free and calls and text messages.

### Stay safe around power lines

Ensure your teen knows what to do if they encounter downed power lines: stay in the vehicle, call 9-1-1 and stay at least 50 feet away from the scene if they witness an accident.

Make sure they realize that downed lines or other damaged utility equipment can look lifeless and harmless yet still be energized. They do not have to be sparking, moving or sizzling (like you often see in movies) to be energized.

For more safety tips, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safepower.org) and consider downloading a [Parent-Teen Driving Agreement](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

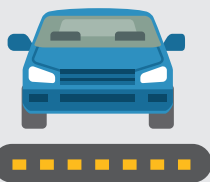
### Driving Safety Tip

In the U.S., nine people are killed each day in crashes that are reported to involve a distracted driver. When you drive, just drive. distracted driving not only puts you and others at risk, but it also endangers roadside crews, bikers and pedestrians.

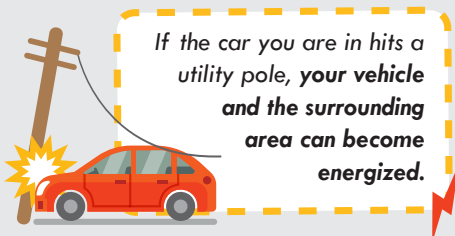




# KNOW WHAT TO DO



*if in an Auto Accident  
with Power Lines*



*If the car you are in hits a utility pole, your vehicle and the surrounding area can become energized.*

*Even if you do not touch lines or equipment, you can still be killed or seriously injured.*



**1. Do NOT leave the car,**  
and warn others to stay away.

**2. Call 911** to have  
the utility notified.



**3. Wait** until a utility professional  
has told you it is safe.



The **only** reason  
to exit the vehicle is  
**if it's on fire.**

**If the car is on fire, jump clear**  
**of the vehicle: with feet together,**  
**and without touching the car and**  
**the ground at the same time.**



Continue to **hop away**  
with your **feet together**  
as far as you can.



Learn more at

**Safe**  
**Electricity.org**

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL

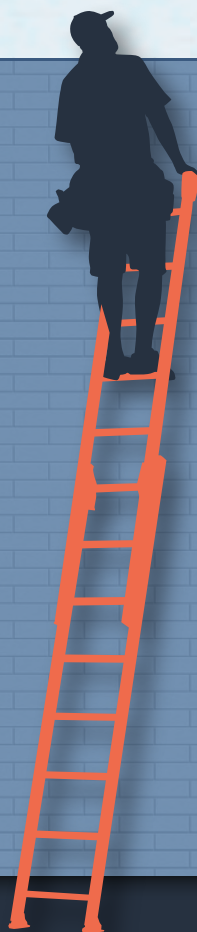
**C O O P**  
**M O N T H**

**Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit, community-led utilities. Because we are a co-op, we can adapt to our local members' needs, providing the programs and services you care about most. That's the power of co-op membership.**

# LOOK UP

*Before You Climb*

*Using a ladder near overhead power lines could cause electrocution.*



## WHEN USING A LADDER:

- 1. Keep yourself and your equipment 10 feet away from overhead power lines.**
  - Electricity can arc or jump if a ladder gets too close.
  - Or a ladder could make direct contact with the line.
- 2. Use a ladder during ideal weather conditions.**
  - Rain can make the ground slippery.
  - Wind could blow a ladder into a power line.
- 3. Do not trim trees/branches that are near power lines.**
  - It is dangerous to trim near overhead power lines.
  - By law, only certified line clearance tree trimmers can do so.
- 4. Do not use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near overhead lines.**
  - All power lines can cause electrocution, including those feeding your home.
  - Always follow the 10-foot distance rule when working or playing outside.

Follow all manufacturer's safety recommendations when using a ladder. Look up before you climb.

Learn more at: **Safe**  
**Electricity.org®**

# GHOST TOWNS

## South Dakota's History Remembered

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Scattered across open fields and through narrow mountain gulches, a careful eye can spot many of South Dakota's nearly 250 long-lost prairie villages and prospecting towns.

Many of these communities were once thriving outposts, railroad hubs, farming villages and mining towns, but were dealt their final blows by the hardships of the dust bowl, changes to railroad systems and the depletion of natural resources.

Most of the towns are long forgotten, their existence marked only by the rotted shell of an old wood barn or a crumbling foundation poking up from the ground.

Thanks to the work of local historical societies who have pieced together the history of the communities' "booms and busts" through old newspaper clippings, plat maps and land records, we can get a glimpse into the lives of the first rural South Dakotans and learn about the communities that once bustled with life.

### Galena

Unique among a cavalcade of abandoned Black Hills gold-rush towns, Galena's roots are in its silver. The town was settled in the late 1870s after prospectors Patrick Donegan and John F. Cochran discovered layers of lead and silver ore near Bear Butte Creek while searching for gold deposits.

The U.S. government removed the two men from the area in accordance with Native American treaties. However,

their exile turned out to be short-lived. Donegan and Cochran returned shortly after to mine their claim as more and more gold-hungry settlers tested the increasingly unenforceable treaties.

The claim, which would later become the Sitting Bull mine, turned out to be a mother lode, according to Galena Historical Society member Jeff Jacobsen.

Over the next several years, other mining operations popped up in the gulch as the miners' families made Galena their new home. The town soon had multiple houses, a hotel, restaurant, stores, a catholic church, cemetery and school, attracting new settlers through its peak between 1881 and 1883.

Arriving from Chicago in hopes of expanding his fortune, Col. John Davey soon became a Galena mining heavyweight, buying up claims along the Bear Butte Creek, including the Sitting Bull claim.

Davey's more than 125-man operation was running smoothly until trouble arose from a claim dispute. The owners of the nearby Richmond claim suspected Davey was digging too far into the hill and mining their silver. Davey claimed he was following the path of the ore, which according to mining law, he was allowed to follow onto another claim. The Richmond claim owners said the law didn't apply to a horizontal blanket formation of ore, like the one in Galena.

A lengthy court battle ensued, and the judge shut down the Sitting Bull mine

until the ruling. Galena was suspended in controversy as many of the townsfolk found themselves out of work.

Thus began Galena's rocky "boom and bust" cycle, Jacobsen explained.

"The boom time was when Col. Davey and other mines were producing, and then the lawsuit shut that down and you have a bust," he said.

The judge ruled against Davey, and the operation never recovered. Galena would never again be the bustling town it was in the early 1880s.

"In 1892, some more people came into town and tried to start up again, so that was a boom, and then they went bankrupt, so there's a bust," Jacobsen continued. "There's like three or four cycles like that in Galena."

By the mid 1930s, the town had seen its final bust. The mining wasn't comparable to the riches of the past, and interest in the gulch slowly started to fade. The tracks were removed and the school house closed in 1943.

Today, Galena is the best-preserved Ghost Town in South Dakota. On the second Saturday of each June, visitors can tour the town, visit the maintained graveyard and go inside the newly-restored schoolhouse, courtesy of the Galena Historical Society.

"It just kind of stands out," Jacobsen said. "Galena is just one of the very few silver mining areas in the Black Hills when almost everyone else was trying for gold."



Galena School  
Photo Credit: Galena Historical Society



## Did You Know

In 1947, Deadwood resident Ollie Wiswell came across an orphaned coyote pup while he was out on a hike. He gave the pup, named Tootsie, to Fred and Esther Borsch of Galena. Tootsie gained fame as the mascot for the Borschs' Deadwood liquor store, famously appearing on the store's sign. Fred taught Tootsie to howl along to his singing, and the two recorded the album "South Dakota Tootsie."

Tootsie, at this point a South Dakota mascot, rode through parades, was featured in an airline advertising campaign, and even embarked on a nationwide tour where she visited the White House and performed for President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vice President Richard Nixon.

Gov. George Mickelson, a fan of Tootsie himself, signed legislation in 1949 making the coyote the state's official animal. Tootsie died in 1959 and is buried near her home in Galena.

## Argonne

About nine miles northwest of Howard, just off state Highway 25, lay the remains of the ill-fated farming community, Argonne.

Marked by a blue historical sign, travelers-by can catch a glimpse of the town's massive cement bank vault with its swinging iron door, an old silo bearing the town's name, several concrete foundations, and a house falling into its own footprint.

The town's founder, Dr. Louis Gotthelf, was a Prussian-born physician who emigrated to the United States in the aftermath of the Prussian revolution. Gotthelf staked his claim in 1881 and established the townsite in 1886.

The town was originally called St. Mary's, named after Gotthelf's daughter, and was strategically positioned along the Chicago and North Western railroad, with the streets running parallel to the railroad rather than the traditional east-west layout. Confusion with another St. Mary's led to the residents voting to change the name to Argonne in 1920, which was chosen to honor local soldiers who had served in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive during World War I.

Despite having what should have been a prime location, Argonne failed to grow to Gotthelf's satisfaction, and he left with his family for Parker in 1889.

A 1919 land boom in South Dakota finally turned things around for Argonne, Miner County Historical Society member George Justice Forster said.

"Most of the growth that happened initially was when it kind of took off as a

trade center," he explained. "Suddenly the town had a railway depot, lumberyard, farmer's cooperative and general store."

In the early 20s, Argonne's population boomed to about 100 residents, and the town offered new amenities including a school, blacksmith and post office.

Argonne's peak was short-lived, and by 1930 the population had fallen to about 65 residents.

When Doug Jerlow moved to town in 1953, much of what was built in the town's prime was left abandoned, and most of the businesses that did remain were struggling.

"It was past the peak," Jerlow recounted. "One general store closed when the post office inside it closed, and that was an elderly lady who ran that and lived in a house by herself. The Haxby family's store was open for maybe a year or two after that."

Though the town was facing a bleak outlook, there remained one huge point of pride for Argonne: high school basketball.

Delbert Gillam, also known as the

Argonne Ace, led the Argonne Arrows to a 10-1 start in his junior year in 1953. Gillam also broke the state record for the most points scored by a player in a single game, making 31 field goals and 10 free throws, scoring 72. Argonne still holds this record.

The high school closed in 1956, but the community limped on for a few more years before the grade school closed in 1970 when the railroad picked up and left.

Doug Jerlow's family, the last residents of Argonne, left town that same year.

Jerlow pointed out that while many other communities along the rail line like Unityville, Canova, Carthage, and Esmond struggled to recover from the abandonment of the line, for Argonne, it was the death blow.

Now, Forster and other members of the Miner County Historical Society are working to preserve the history of Argonne.

A historical marker will soon be placed east of Argonne on state Highway 25 that will tell the story of Argonne from its founding to its final household.

Though Jerlow now lives near Madison, he still farms near Argonne and owns most of the former townsite. As the unofficial mayor of Argonne, as Jerlow sometimes calls himself, he wants to keep the memory of his childhood hometown alive.

"It was just a nice community to grow up in," he said. "Those small communities, I think it's becoming harder to find them anymore."



Argonne Arrows  
Photo Credit: Miner County Historical Society

# SAFETY REFRESHER

## FEM CREWS SPEND TWO DAYS GOING OVER SAFETY BASICS TO REINFORCE SAFETY CULTURE

Over a two day course, July 24th and 25th, FEM Electric linemen participated in an annual safety training conducted by SDREA (South Dakota Rural Electric Association).



Several topics were discussed, and each lineman went through a series of trainings to reinforce safety culture. As part of the visit, linemen went through climber certification, a field observation, arial dielectric testing, a safety belt and lanyard inspection, truck and tool inspection, a rubber glove refresher, as well as pole top and bucket rescue.



Each aspect of this training covers every area a lineman works, and they're taking the time to remember they're not working alone. During pole top rescue, each lineman puts on their climbing gear, and practices rescuing a dummy hanging from a pole. They climb the pole, secure a rope around the dummy, and lower it to the ground. This training is designed to simulate rescuing a fellow lineman, and how to administer first aid once they're safely on the ground.

Bucket rescue is similar in that linemen are rescuing a fellow lineman. In this instance though, the lineman on the ground takes over bucket controls from the body of the truck to safely lower their crew mate. Both pole top and bucket rescue trainings help reinforce what linemen should do in an emergency and could be the difference between life and death in a true emergency.



In addition to these trainings, crews also have their gear, tools, and trucks inspected to make sure everything is still functioning properly and safe to use. Each inspection helps prevent injury and potentially death.

FEM Electric staff and crews put a high value on safety, which is why safety trainings and refreshers are held periodically throughout the year. These trainings help keep safety in the forefront of everyone's mind.







## FARM SAFETY PARTY

### SAFETY IS THE MESSAGE AT THE BROWN COUNTY FAIR

It wasn't just carnival rides and food trucks at the Brown County Fair on August 15th. FEM Electric, Northern Electric, Lake Region Electric and Atgegra partnered to host a Farm Safety Party during the biggest event of the summer.

From 10:00 am to 2:00 pm the cooperatives manned 8 stations that educated youngsters about safety. The stations included fire extinguisher training, ATV safety, helmet safety, a semi truck blind spot demonstration, propane safety, a grain bin engulfment demonstration, personal protective equipment demonstration and the power town demonstration.

Each kid that came to the event was provided a ticket with all 8 stations listed. The demonstrator at each station would check their station off of the ticket. Once every station was completed, kids were able to redeem their ticket for a prize bag.

FEM and Northern Electric hosted a personal protective equipment (PPE) for lineworkers together, and allowed kiddos to dress up as a lineworker to attempt to unscrew insulators and bolts while wearing rubber sleeves and gloves. Lake Region Electric provided their power town and demonstrated how dangerous it is to come in contact with overhead or underground power lines.

The weather cooperated, and there was a constant stream of kids throughout the day. If you were able to stop out and learn, we appreciate the opportunity to educate your youngsters. We hope to see you next year.





**SEPT. 14-OCT. 27**  
**Mazing Acres Fall Festival**

10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
30851 433rd Ave.  
Yankton, SD  
605-760-2759



**SEPT. 27-29**  
**Coal Springs Threshing Bee and Antique Show**  
Meadow, SD  
605-788-2299

**OCT. 4-5**  
**Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest and Vendor Show**  
Philip, SD  
605-441-1060

**OCT. 4-5**  
**25th Annual Pumpkin Fest**  
Webster, SD  
<https://webstersd.com/home>

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Run Crazy Horse Marathons**  
Crazy Horse  
605-390-6137  
[www.runcrazyhorse.com](http://www.runcrazyhorse.com)

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Magic Needlers Quilt Show**  
Codington County Extension Complex  
Watertown, SD  
605-881-3273

**OCT. 5-6**  
**The Black Market**  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-332-6004

**OCT. 6**  
**Giant Pumpkin Festival**  
Bentley Memorial Building  
Bison, SD  
Enter Pumpkins by 11:30 a.m.  
605-244-5475

**OCT. 10-11**  
**Rural Women in Agriculture Conference**  
Oct. 10 from 1-9 p.m.  
Oct. 11 from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.  
The Lodge of Deadwood  
Deadwood, SD  
[SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com](http://SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com)

**OCT. 11-12**  
**Junkin' Market Days**  
Ramkota Exhibit Hall  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-941-4958

**OCT. 19**  
**Buffalo County Fall Ball**  
Live Music and Food  
8 p.m.  
Fire Hall  
Gann Valley, SD

**OCT. 25-27**  
**Forest of Fears Haunted Trail**  
7 p.m.-10 p.m.  
Reclamation-Ranch  
40787 259th St.  
Mitchell, SD

**OCT. 26**  
**Hill City Children's Boo Bash and Pumpkin Festival**  
Hill City, SD  
605-574-2368

**OCT. 26**  
**Hartford Women of Today Fall Craft Fair**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
West Central Becker Center  
Hartford, SD  
605-359-2049

**OCT. 26**  
**Owl-O-Ween**  
Noon-5 p.m.  
Black Hills Raptor Center  
Caputa, SD  
605-391-2511

**OCT. 31**  
**Treat Street**  
5:30 p.m.-7 p.m.  
Main St.  
Milbank, SD  
605-432-6656  
[MilbankSD.com/Chamber](http://MilbankSD.com/Chamber)

**NOV. 2**  
**Fall Fling Craft Show**  
10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Dakota Christian School  
Corsica, SD  
605-366-7940

**NOV. 2**  
**Reliance Christmas Carousel**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Legion Hall  
Reliance, SD  
605-730-0553

**NOV. 22-23**  
**Holiday Arts Christmas Craft Show**  
Davison County Fairgrounds  
Mitchell, SD  
605-359-2049

**NOV. 30**  
**A Hometown Christmas Market**  
2 p.m.-6 p.m.  
Main St.  
Elk Point, SD

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.

**Note: Please make sure to call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**