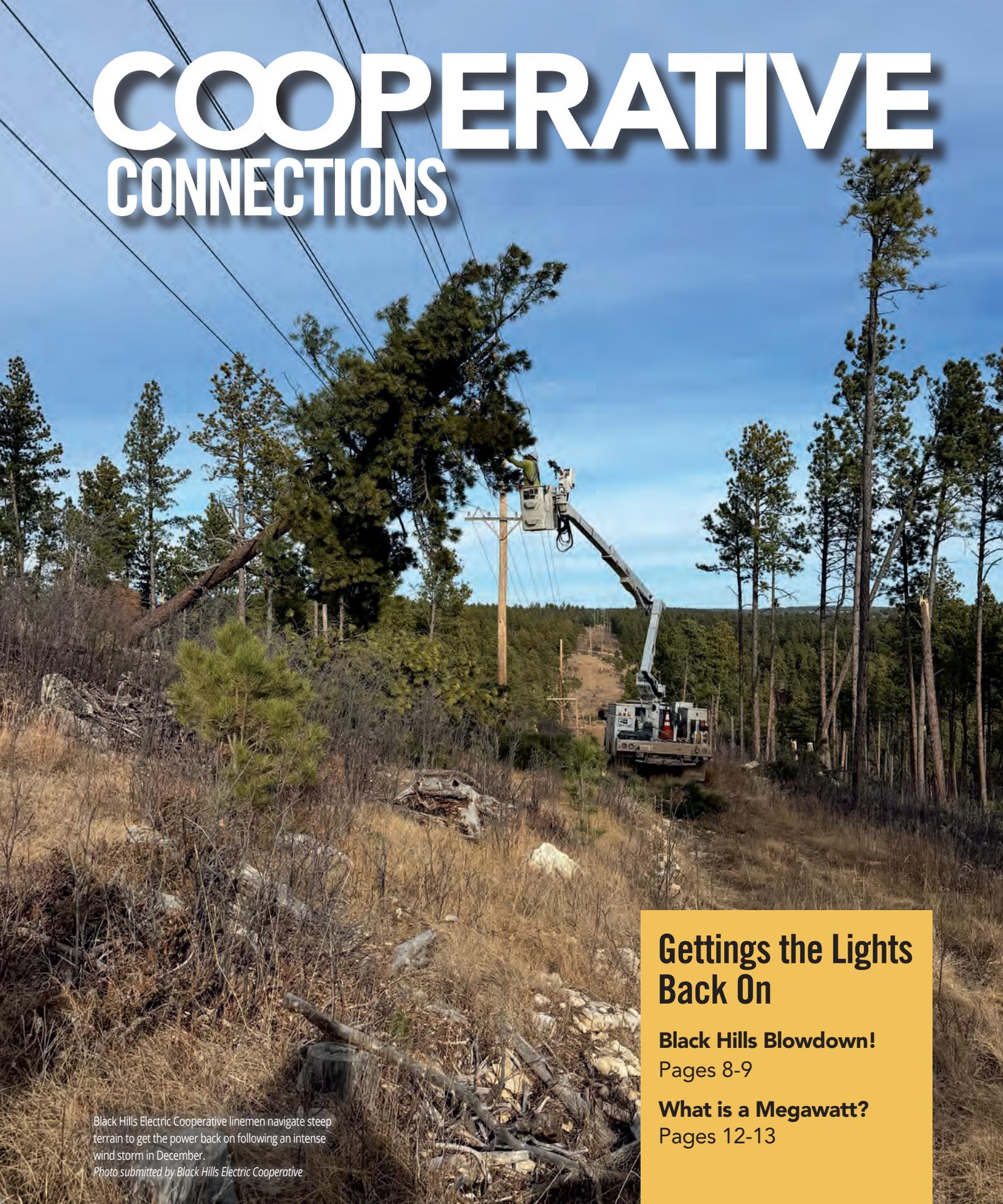


# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Black Hills Electric Cooperative linemen navigate steep terrain to get the power back on following an intense wind storm in December.  
*Photo submitted by Black Hills Electric Cooperative*

## Gettings the Lights Back On

**Black Hills Blowdown!**  
Pages 8-9

**What is a Megawatt?**  
Pages 12-13

# BOARD REPORT



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

## January 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 January 20, 2026, 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, Eric Odenbach, Tom Thorpe, Kelly Melius. Operations Manager Sean Christiansen, Electrical Manager Ryan Holien, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, and CEO Scott Moore. Paula Petersen, absent.

**Guest Employee:** Justin Larson

**Changes to the agenda:** None

**Changes/Additions to Minutes from December 16, 2025, meeting:** none

**Next Meeting Date:** After a review of the calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Friday, February 20, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Moved by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve administrative business.

The board and staff watched NRECA Governance Video titled "Fiduciary Duties of a Director."

CEO Moore brought a member concern with mail delivery and FEM billing policy. Board and Staff had a lengthy discussion on options available currently along with doing more advertising on payment options.

Moved by Kelly Melius was seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to acknowledge the manager, and staff reports along with East River Electric load management report.

The board acknowledges receiving and reviewing December 2025 Cyber Security Report.

Moved by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius to approve the following Work Order Inventories:

#627	\$661,800.19
#628	\$20,412.82
#629	(\$425,702.63)
#630	\$88,407.40
#631	\$263,063.65
	\$607,981.43

### Resolutions and Contracts:

Moved by Kelly Melius was seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to nominate Sean Christiansen as voting delegate for NRECA.

Moved by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve Policy 315 and leave membership fee at \$20.00.

### Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

**Disconnects:** Steve Henderson, Aberdeen, SD, Active Farm; Gerald & Gladys Beutler, Eureka, SD, Pasture Pump; Dikoff Ranch, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Donald Tuscherer, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Michael Neuharth, Eureka, SD, Active Farm & Pasture Pump; James & Marcella Mohr, Hosmer, SD, Vacant Farm

**Reconnects:** Gordon Petrich, Leola, SD, Active Farm; Glenn & Karen Beutler, Eureka, SD, Pasture Pump; Sheldon & Brandi Holt, Cresbard, SD, Active Farm; Darrel & Rhonda Tuscherer, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Alexandra Preszler & Cody Hoff, Eureka, SD, Active Farm & Pasture Pump; Jeffery & Cathy Mohr, Hosmer, SD, Vacant Farm

**Contracts:** Century Swine, RE, LLC, Brandon, SD, Hog Barn

**Retired Locations:** Joann Hanson, Montrose, CO, Residence; Herbert & Vincentia Flakol, Forbes, ND, Pasture Pump

Moved by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach to approve three phase contract for Century Swine, RE, LLC.

### Capital Credits:

**Estates** – January 2026: None

**73 & Older** – January 2026: None

Board acknowledged receipt of following financial business.

Financial Business: The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information:

**Continued on page 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 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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Website:  
www.femelectric.coop  
Design assistance by SDREA

**FEM Electric is an equal  
opportunity provider and  
employer.**



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

As we close out 2025, I'm happy to inform FEM Electric members that we finished with good financials. It will be April before the annual audit is completed and approved. The FEM Electric board approved two projects that FEM employees will be working on with Star Energy.

The first is a Cost to Serve Study which looks at each rate class along with what the cost is to get a kwh to your meter. The last cost of service study was done in 2019 by National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC). The FEM Electric staff will be pulling together information and reports for Star Energy to use in the study. The plan is to have this study completed by July 2026 and present it to the board and employees. I will go out on a limb and say our rates are simple and fair, and that this study will confirm what FEM is doing. It will also help correct some rates if they are paying too much or not enough.

The second project is working on a new

four-year work plan. Operations will be completing our current four-year work plan in 2026. As always, notes have been made over the past four years of projects that need to be studied and put into our next work plan. Starting in January 2026, conversation on projects, along with many studies including voltage drops and future growth were discussed. In the past thirty-two years, the FEM Electric system has changed from small farms to having agri-business, on the farm storage and grain drying. FEM Electric members and employees are still enjoying work plan projects completed twenty plus years ago. At the time our engineer was Dalager Engineering, and he gave FEM Electric good advice on how to keep our system solid while improving reliability. All we needed to do was listen and get the projects completed.

The temperatures and ice storms in the last week of January tested our national grid system and the local power companies in southern and eastern States. What happens several States

*Continued on page 6*

**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**

March 26, 2026 for March's energy

April 28, 2026 for April's energy

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

# Ensuring Drone Safety Near Power Lines

As drones continue to gain popularity for recreational and commercial use, their integration into our daily lives should not lessen the consideration of safety – particularly when it comes to flying near power lines. The intersection of drone technology and electrical infrastructure necessitates adherence to safety protocols, regulations, and best practices to protect both pilots and the integrity of electrical systems.

Power lines are essential components of our electrical grid, delivering energy to homes and businesses. However, they can pose serious hazards for drone operators. Collisions with power lines can cause significant equipment damage, leading to costly repairs or replacements. More critically, such incidents can disrupt service for hundreds of members, creating outages that could last for hours or even days.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has established regulations governing drone use, including restrictions on flying in proximity to power lines. According to FAA guidelines, drone pilots must always maintain a visual line of sight with their aircraft and avoid flying over people. When operating near electrical infrastructure, it is crucial to adhere to the regulations pertaining to altitude and no-fly zones.

Drone operators should also be familiar with state and local laws, as some municipalities have designated specific areas as no-fly zones, particularly near critical infrastructure like power facilities. Understanding these regulations is not only a legal requirement but also an essential step in ensuring the safety of all involved.

### Best Practices for Safe Operations

To minimize risks when flying drones near power lines, operators should adopt several best practices:

1. **Pre-Flight Planning:** Before taking off, thoroughly assess the flight area. Identify the location of power lines, potential obstacles, and any relevant no-fly zones. Consulting local maps and aerial photography can aid in understanding the landscape.
2. **Maintain Safe Distances:** When operating near power lines, always keep a safe distance. The FAA recommends a separation of at least 500 feet from energized power lines to avoid potential collisions. Keeping a safe buffer not only protects the drone but also mitigates risks to nearby electrical infrastructure.

3. **Use Technology Wisely:** Many modern drones come equipped with GPS and obstacle avoidance systems that can aid in safe navigation. Utilize these features and ensure that your drone's software is updated to reduce the likelihood of malfunction.
4. **Operating in Controlled Conditions:** Avoid flying drones in poor weather conditions such as high winds, rain, or reduced visibility. Harsh weather not only affects flight stability but can also lead to loss of control over the drone, increasing the risk of accidents.
5. **Emergency Procedures:** In case of a malfunction or loss of control, having an emergency plan in place is vital. Be prepared to communicate with local authorities if a drone becomes entangled in power lines or presents a safety concern.

As the popularity of drones continues to soar, awareness around safety protocols, especially near power lines, has become increasingly critical. By understanding the risks involved, adhering to regulations, and implementing best practices for safe drone operations, pilots can ensure the protection of themselves, others, and vital electrical infrastructure. Responsible drone use fosters innovation while ensuring safety remains paramount in our evolving technological landscape.

### "Never ever try to grab birds off of power lines!"



**Naomi Krcil,  
Age 8**

Naomi warns readers to never EVER grab birds off of a power line. Great picture, Naomi! Naomi's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil from Dante, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

# Scrumptious SALADS

## MACARONI SALAD

### Ingredients:

2 cups macaroni (cooked, drained, rinsed and cooled)  
 2 or more cups of carrots (chopped or shredded)  
 1 small chopped onion (optional)  
 1 cup chopped green pepper (optional)

### Dressing

1 cup mayonnaise (Hellmans)  
 1/4 cup vinegar  
 1/2 cup sugar  
 7 oz. sweetened condensed milk  
 1/4 tsp. salt  
 1/4 tsp. pepper

R. Gregg Fritz  
 H-D Electric

## KARI REDER'S POTATO SALAD

### Ingredients:

7-8 lbs. potatoes, Yukon gold or red  
 1 dozen eggs  
 1 med. sweet onion  
 2 cups Mayo  
 1 tbsp. cream  
 1/4 cup of apple cider vinegar  
 1/2 cup of sugar or splenda  
 1 1/2 tbsps. mustard  
 2 tbsps. celery seed  
 Celery salt, salt and pepper to taste

### Method

Boil potatoes and eggs, peel and dice. Add the chopped onion. Mix together mayo, cream, apple cider vinegar, sugar, mustard, celery seed, celery salt, salt and pepper. Mix all together well and refrigerate.

Kari Reder  
 Northern Electric

## SUMMER GARDEN PASTA SALAD

### Ingredients:

1 lb. thin spaghetti, broken into 1" pieces  
 1 pt. cherry tomatoes, halved  
 2 med. zucchini, peeled & diced  
 2 med. cucumbers, diced  
 1 green pepper, diced  
 1 red pepper, diced  
 1 - 16 oz. can sliced black olives, drained

### Dressing:

1 - 16 oz. bottle Italian dressing  
 1/4 cup parmesan cheese  
 1 tbsp. sesame seeds  
 1 tsp. paprika  
 1/2 tsp. celery seed  
 1/2 tsp. garlic salt

### Method

Cook pasta; drain. Drizzle with 1-2 tps. olive oil. In large bowl, combine pasta, tomatoes, zucchini, cucumber, peppers and olives.

Whisk dressing ingredients together. Pour over salad ingredients and toss to coat.

Cover and refrigerate for three hours.

Jane Ham  
 Cam Wal Electric

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

## Board Report Continued from page 2

The check register for the month of December 2025 contained information on checks #35854 through #35923 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for December 2025 totaling \$398,729.08.

December 2025 "preliminary" financials were reviewed. FEM is awaiting entries from Basin and East River to close December 2025 financials.

The board reviewed two options for leasing trucks and decided to purchase the trucks.

Director of Finance and benefits Rhonda Tuscherer reported on quarterly RUS and CFC loan summaries.

Moore reported that while serving in South Dakota House of Representatives all reimbursement from the State of South Dakota are returned to FEM, the same as if an employee is serving on jury duty.

Moved by Eric Odenbach seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve board expense reports and attorney fees.

**Legal Update:** Names for nominating committee.

### Meeting Report:

East River monthly board report was given by Gary Bachman, and monthly video was watched. Tom Thorpe gave a report on SDREA board meeting.

The safety meeting minutes from December 9, 2025, were acknowledged along with several accident and property damage reports. Safety Committee and Employee Meeting Minutes were also acknowledged.

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



## Manager's Article Continued from page 3

away does matter. We are fortunate to have our regional transmission operators Southwest Power Pool (SPP) and Midwest Independent System Operators (MISO) monitoring the electric grid twenty-four hours a day, keeping the system balanced.

Good planning usually makes projects go smoothly and saves time and money. If you are thinking of or planning a project that will need additional energy or updated electrical equipment, please call Sean Christiansen or Ryan Holien at 605-426-6891.

## 10 YEARS OF SERVICE CELEBRATED



On January 8th, Scott Moore presented Barb Schaefer with a gift for 10 Years of Service to FEM Electric.

### WATCH

A watch means there is a **great chance of a severe thunderstorm or tornado.**

**"Watch" and wait for more information** while taking precautionary measures.



### WARNING

A warning means that a **severe thunderstorm or tornado has been spotted or seen** on radar.

The moment you get a warning, **take shelter in the safest part of your home.**



Safe Electricity.org®

# FAST AND CONVENIENT WAYS TO PAY YOUR BILL

Looking for ways to avoid mail delays? We have options that may be right for you!

## Online:

You can pay your bill through SmartHub online by either creating an account or through out Pay Now option. If you have set up an account through SmartHub, you also have the option to set up recurring payments through your bank information or with your credit card. Payments will be automatically made without you having to worry about late fees.

## SmartHub App:

You can download the SmartHub app from your mobile device's store and select FEM as your provider. You will need to have your account number ready if you are creating a new SmartHub account. If you have already registered for SmartHub, simply login to manage your payments. You can set up recurring payments with a credit card or through your bank information, all while knowing the SmartHub app is safe and secure.

## Pay by Phone:

If you'd like to make a payment by ACH or credit card over the phone, call 844-965-1321. You will need to have your account number ready, and will need to select the prompt that works best for you. You also have the option to set up recurring payments with a credit card or bank information.

## ACH:

Do you want a worry free way to pay your electric bill? Sign up for ACH! Your electric payment will be automatically withdrawn from your bank account each month without you having to worry about missing a payment or late fees. Forms are available at the office.

## In Person:

FEM Electric accepts cash, check or credit card payments in our office Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Our office is located at 800 5th Ave. Ipswich, SD 57451.

## Drop Box:

If you are unable to come in during office hours, FEM offers a convenient and secure drop box located in our parking lot. The drop box is checked every morning. Please use an envelope for your payment, and do not leave cash in the drop box.

## Budget Billing:

Under this plan, FEM Electric will level your electric bill based on past energy consumption. This will allow you to have a steady monthly payment all year long, instead of high winter bills and low summer bills. You will be able anticipate your bill amount and send payment by mail early!

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Scammers and cyber criminals look for weak points to exploit before software companies can fix them. Update software programs on your computer, tablet and mobile phone as soon as possible when a newer version becomes available. Software updates often contain critical patches and protections against security threats. Turn on automatic updates to automatically update your security software, internet browser, operating system and mobile apps.

Source: [consumer.ftc.org](http://consumer.ftc.org)





Intense wind left the crossarm of a broken three-phase pole hanging after a holiday storm.  
*Photos submitted by Black Hills Electric Cooperative*

# GETTING THE LIGHTS BACK ON

## Black Hills Electric Cooperative Works Tirelessly Following Holiday Storm

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

In the early morning hours of Dec. 18, powerful winds swept across western South Dakota, leaving much of the Black Hills without electricity. The outage included the home of Bill Brisk, manager of operations at Black Hills Electric Cooperative.

Through wild winds, Brisk set out for his office at the cooperative at 3 a.m., where he discovered that the windstorm was unlike anything he had seen in his 36 years with the cooperative.

“We get wind in the Hills,” Brisk said. “But nothing like that. In all of the time that I’ve been at the cooperative, I’ve never seen wind that strong.”

Wind gusts were later estimated at more than 100 mph, tearing through the Black

Hills with unprecedented force.

When Brisk arrived, the scope of the damage became clear. Nearly the entire system was down, and more than 11,000 of the co-op’s approximately 11,500 meters were without power. By daybreak, more than 96% of Black Hills Electric Cooperative’s system was dark, the largest outage event in the cooperative’s history.

Although an influx of outage calls from members came in around midnight, Brisk made an early and critical decision; crews would not be sent out while the storm was still raging.

“We began receiving calls around midnight, but I did not have our crews go out, just for the fact that it was just too dangerous,” Brisk said. “Trees were breaking off, conditions were hazardous, and I didn’t want to put our crews in any

dangerous situations.”

Instead, crews waited for daylight, when conditions allowed for safe assessment – the first step of getting the lights back on.

Assessment almost always begins with reporting from the community. Due to an overwhelming call volume during storm events, local reports of outages are forwarded to Basin Electric Power Cooperative’s Security and Response Services. These services relay important updates to electric cooperatives. Dispatchers communicate with linemen via push-to-talk radios and cell phones, tracking linemen from the time they leave the shop until the outage has been restored.

In addition to local reports, linemen also conduct their own assessments. That morning, linemen reported countless uprooted and snapped trees, downed poles and even wires lay broken across forest floors and roadways. In some areas, trees fell into other trees, creating dangerous conditions for anyone working below.

“I believe this was one of the worst storms in our cooperative’s history, including winter storm Atlas,” said Brisk.

As the assessment was underway, line

crews worked to bring downed substations back online first, then main three-phase feeders, followed by smaller distribution lines that bring power directly to homes and businesses. That order helps restore electricity to the greatest number of members as quickly as possible.

In the Black Hills, terrain adds another layer of complexity. Many lines run through dense forest, steep canyons and areas far from maintained roads.

“This isn’t square-mile territory,” Brisk said. “You might have to drive five or six miles just to get around a canyon.”

By midday Dec. 18, it was decided the damage was too widespread for Black Hills Electric to tackle alone. Brisk reached out to Mark Patterson, South Dakota Rural Electric Association’s manager of loss control, to request mutual aid from neighboring cooperatives – reinforcing a long-standing cooperative tradition built on neighbors helping neighbors.

Within hours, assistance began mobilizing. Crews, trucks and equipment arrived from across western South Dakota. Six electric cooperatives and a contractor ultimately sent help, bringing 55 additional linemen to the Black Hills. Those crews came from Butte Electric Cooperative, Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative, Lacreek Electric Association, West Central Electric Cooperative, West River Electric Association, Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative and Kainz Power Lines, a local contractor based out of Custer.

“I had each operations manager of the responding cooperatives call me and ask what we needed,” Brisk said. “We asked for bucket trucks, digger trucks, chainsaws, attachments for skid steers, and extra line crews, and they sent everything we asked for.”

Days began early and ended late with crews often working 12 to 16-hour shifts. Brisk emphasized safety repeatedly to the crews as they worked among unstable trees, high winds and rugged terrain.

Behind the scenes, the restoration effort extended beyond the field. Office staff coordinated logistics and prepared meals. Lunches were packed daily for crews heading out before dawn. Supplies

were tracked, equipment was staged and communication updates were shared with members.

“It wasn’t just the line crews,” Brisk said. “Everybody stepped up.”

As crews continued working and Christmas approached, it appeared unlikely that power would be fully restored in time for the holiday. The visiting crews made it clear they were willing to stay through the holiday.

“All the outside crews said they weren’t leaving,” Brisk said. “They stayed to help us finish.”

By Christmas Eve, most members had power for the holiday and visiting crews were able to return home. Even still, Black Hills Electric crews continued limited work through the holiday, work that continues today.

“To be truthful, we are still cutting trees, setting poles and repairing lines from this storm,” said Brisk.

The storm was later designated a FEMA-eligible event, requiring detailed tracking of labor, equipment and materials.

Looking back, Brisk said the restoration efforts relied heavily on cooperation and dedication among crews from the assisting cooperatives.

“It’s good to know you’ve got great neighbors,” he said. “When you need help, they come.”



An assisting lineman from West River Electric Cooperative installs a ground on the line to be further worked on.



Damage from the storm not only affected poles, but also uprooted trees.



Bill Brisk, manager of operations at Black Hills Electric Cooperative, gives a morning briefing, updating the cooperative and assisting crews with storm recovery assignments.

# FEM DIRECTOR DISTRICTS 2 AND 3 UP FOR ELECTION

**FEM Electric Director in District 2 and District 3 will be up for election at the 2026 annual meeting June 23rd, 2026.**

**One of the incumbents is not seeking re-election.**

To be an eligible nominee, one must be an active member (with an FEM Electric energy account in their name) who resides in the Director’s District in which the nominee seeks to run. FEM Electric Director Districts are as follows:

**District No. 1:** McPherson County Townships of Bauer, Bergdorf, Cleveland, Detmold, Glucksthal, Hillsview, Jackson, Kassel, Odessa, Petersburg, Rosenthal, Spring Creek and Stickel, and Edmunds County Townships of Hosmer, Modena, Sangamon;

**District No. 2:** McPherson County Townships of Arena, Blaine, Carl, Dewey, Harrison, Highland, Hoffman, Howard, Koto, Leola, Lincoln, Long Lake, Moscow, Spring, Wachter, Wacker, Washington, Weber, Willow;

**District No. 3:** Edmunds County Townships of Bowdle, Bryant, Cloyd Valley, Cottonwood, Glen, Glover, Hillside, Hudson, Madison, Montpelier, North Bryant, Odessa and Vermont, and Faulk County Townships of Clark, Enterprise and Sherman;

**District No. 4:** Edmunds County Townships of Adrian, Belle, Clear Lake, Cleveland, Cortlandt, Fountain, Harmony, Huntley, Ipswich, Kent, Liberty, Pembrook, Powell, Richland, Rosette and Union;

**District No 5:** Faulk County Townships of Arcade, Bryant, Centerville, DeVoe, Elroy, Ellisville, Emerson, Fairfield, Freedom, Hillsdale, Irving, Lafoon, Latham, Myron, O’Neil, Orient, Pulaski, Saratoga, Seneca, Tamworth, Thirteen, Union and Wesley.

Committee which shall consist of three to seven members from the Director District(s) which are up for election and shall include one at-large position. This group shall be appointed no more than 180 days and no less than 60 days prior to the annual meeting. The committee shall post the nominations at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting of the members of FEM Electric Association, Inc. set for June 23rd, 2026.

**Nomination by Petition:** Any 15 or more members of the cooperative may make additional nominations by listing their nominee and the appropriate Director District and signing such Petition for Nomination. The petition must be submitted to the board of directors at least 25 days prior to the annual meeting. Any such petition so submitted will be posted along with the list of nominations made by the Nominating Committee.

**FEM Electric Director Districts**

	Spring Creek	Detmold	Petersburg	Bergdorf	Harrison	Wacker	Weber	Wachter
McPherson County	Glucksthal	Rosenthal	Odessa	Long Lake	Highland	Hoffman	Koto	Carl
	Bauer	Stickel	Kassel	Moscow	Arena	Spring	Leola	Willow
	Jackson	Hillsview	Cleveland	Blaine	Dewey	Howard	Washington	Lincoln
	Modena	Hosmer	Sangamon	North Bryant	Adrian	Rosette	Belle	Pembrook
Edmunds County	Bowdle	Cottonwood	Glen	Bryant	Huntley	Ipswich	Fountain	Cortlandt
	Odessa	Cloyd Valley	Glover	Montpelier	Cleveland	Harmony	Union	Richland
	Hudson	Madison	Hillside	Vermont	Liberty	Powell	Kent	Clear Lake
Faulk County	Sherman	Clark	Enterprise	Freedom	Emerson	Fairview	Union	
	Elroy	O’Neil	Saratoga	Pulaski	Myron	Devoe	Wesley	
	Seneca	Latham	Bryant	Tamworth	Lafoon	Centerville		
	Ellisville	Thirteen	Irving	Orient	Arcade	Hillsdale		

The colored areas of the district map are up for election in 2026.

**NOMINATIONS**

There are two processes (committee and petition) by which an eligible member’s name may be nominated for the board of directors election for FEM Electric Association, Inc. No nominations may come from the floor during your co-op’s annual meeting.

Any member of FEM Electric requiring additional information may refer to the bylaws of the association or may contact the FEM Electric office at 605-426-6891.

**Nomination by Committee:** The board of directors shall appoint a Nominating

**FEM is seeking nominations for District 3.**

District 1 is represented by Eric Odenbach of Eureka, District 2 is represented by Tom Thorpe of Forbes, ND, District 4 is represented by Paula Peterson of Cresbard, and District 5 is represented by Kelly Melius of Faulkton.



# CPR & FIRST AID TRAINING

## FEM EMPLOYEES TAKE A REFRESHER COURSE ON CPR AND FIRST AID

A top priority for FEM is safety, which is why several safety trainings are held every year. Continuous training, even if it covers the same topics, helps reinforce learning. When training becomes second nature, it means reactions during a real emergency will likely have positive results.

On December 3rd, Joe Denison from the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) presented several safety topics for annual review. Topics included first aid, CPR, using an AED, hazard communications and bloodborne pathogens. The line department had an additional training for lock out/tag out.

The best way to reinforce training is hands on. Employees were given the opportunity to brace a broken arm injury with splints, wrap and slings. Hopefully no one has to use what they've learned in these trainings, but the goal is to be able to provide the best care possible in an emergency before professionals arrive.



Chad Dutenhofer finishes wrapping a splint around Justin Larson's arm.



Rhonda Tuscherer practices splinting Crystal Thorson's arm.



Cody Scarrott finishes tying a sling on Gregg Zwart.

## What Can You Do With 1 Megawatt?

### Factory

Facilities with heavy machinery can draw 1 MW of power.

### Big Box Stores

1 MW will power a typical large retail store.

### Office Building

1 MW can power several medium-sized office buildings.

### Hospital

1 MW will power a small hospital.

### Power Plant

#### Typical outputs:

Coal: 500 MW to 1 GW

Gas: 50 MW to 1 GW

Nuclear: 500 MW to 1.5 GW

**1 MW is 1 million watts of power.**

### School

0.5 MW will power a medium-size public school.

### EV Charging

1 MW can power four Tesla Supercharger V3s simultaneously.

### Data Center

1 MW will power one small data center.

### Other facilities that can draw up to 1 MW of power:

- High-speed rail
- Large farms
- Wastewater treatment
- Stadiums

### Residential

1 MW can power 750 to 1,000 homes.

# WHAT IS A MEGAWATT?

Jacob Boyko

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

If you're a regular Cooperative Connections reader, you've probably seen the term "megawatt" countless times. From articles about new power generation facilities, energy-saving tips, major infrastructure projects or energy policy, megawatts come up again and again. But what does a megawatt actually mean?

## Watts, Kilowatts, Megawatts & More

A megawatt is a unit of power that measures the speed at which energy is generated or used at a given time. A megawatt is 1,000 kilowatts (KW), or 1 million watts.

You may recognize watts from the labels on everyday household items like light bulbs and phone chargers. These numbers indicate the amount of power the device draws while operating.

Here are the wattages for some common household items:

- LED Light bulb – 5-20 Watts
- Refrigerator – 350-800 Watts
- Desktop PC – 100-800 Watts
- LED Television: 30-300 Watts
- Microwave – 700-1,200 Watts
- Hair Dryer – 1,500-2,000 Watts
- Clothes Dryer – 1,800-5,000 Watts

At East River Electric Power Cooperative, the generation and transmission cooperative that sells power to member co-ops in Eastern South Dakota and Western Minnesota, Jennifer Gross uses a modified bicycle to help put power into perspective.

The bike is stationary – the pedals power a small generator wired to several different kinds of light bulbs. Gross, who is East River's education and outreach coordinator, says the "pedal power bike" demonstrates energy use in a tangible way and highlights the difference of energy-efficient products.

"It's actually quite difficult for the person pedaling to generate electricity consistently for more than a few minutes," Gross said.



"When they're pedaling to power the inefficient, old-school incandescent light bulbs, they can pedal for about one minute and not even keep it at 200 watts the whole time."

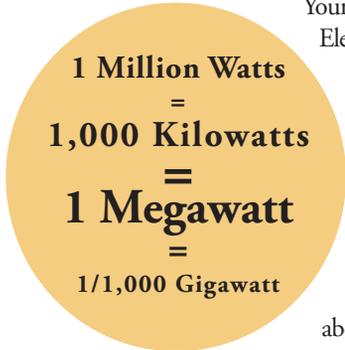
The electric grid experiences the most strain during peak demand times – the hours before and after work and school when most people are home doing laundry, watching TV etc.

In communities with hundreds to thousands of homes and businesses, electricity demand grows large enough to be measured in megawatts – the unit equal to 1,000 KW.

Your electric co-op's electricity is generated by Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which was formed in the 1960s by electric co-ops in the upper Midwest to generate electricity for co-ops. Serving over 3 million consumers across nine states, Basin generates power from its owned and leased assets, which include coal, natural gas, solar and wind. Basin's generation capability is so massive that it's measured in gigawatts – the unit equal to 1,000 MW.

Basin reports a maximum generating capacity of about 8,427 MW – or 8.427 GW. That figure reflects every available generation resource running at full output, including the oil-fueled peaking units used during times of high demand, along with purchases from the Western Area Power Administration and the Southwest Power Pool energy market.

On an even larger scale, the total installed generation capacity in the U.S. reaches the terawatt level, totalling about 1.3 TW, which is equal to 1,300 GW, 1.3 million MW or 1.3 billion KW – enough to simultaneously run about 1 billion hair dryers!



## Your Co-op's Megawatts

As a co-op member, you're a part-owner of Basin Electric's generation resources. Here's a look at several of those facilities.



Antelope Valley Station  
Beulah, N.D. • 1984  
900 MW • Coal



Bison Gen. Station  
Epping, N.D. • 2030  
1,490 MW • Nat. Gas



Pioneer Gen. Station  
Williston, N.D. • 2013  
822 MW • Nat. Gas



Crow Lake Wind  
White Lake, S.D. • 2011  
172 MW • Wind



Wild Springs Solar  
New Underwood, S.D.  
2024 • 114 MW • Solar



# TORNADO SAFETY & ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

## BEING PREPARED CAN PREVENT INJURY OR DEATH

Tornadoes can strike with little warning, leaving behind downed power lines, damaged electrical equipment and dangerous debris. Preparing before a tornado, and knowing how to stay safe afterward, can help prevent electrical shock, fire and injury. Make sure your emergency plan includes electrical safety steps so you and your family are ready to act quickly and safely.

### Before a tornado:

- Prepare an emergency kit with water, battery-powered flashlight, radio, extra batteries and portable phone charger.
- Keep your electric utility's phone number handy in case you need to report an outage or downed line.
- Fully charge cell phones and backup power banks before severe weather hits so you can use them in an emergency.

### During a tornado:

- Seek shelter immediately in a basement or a small, interior room with no windows, such as a bathroom or closet.
- Turn off and unplug appliances and electronics

to protect them from power surges. Leave one light on so you'll know when power is restored.

- Do not stay inside a vehicle or try to outrun a tornado. Exit the vehicle and seek shelter in a sturdy building. If none are available, lie flat in a low-lying area away from the

## Safety Tip

If you're outside during a tornado, get to a sturdy building if possible. Never stay in a vehicle during a tornado or try to outrun it. If no shelter is nearby, lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area away from cars, trees and power lines. Protect your head with your arms.



Safe  
Electricity.org®

vehicle and power lines.

#### After a tornado:

- Stay away from downed power lines and anything they could touch, such as trees, fences or debris. Always assume they are energized.
- If you see a downed line while driving, do not exit your vehicle. Call 911 and your utility, and warn others to stay away.
- Do not touch anyone who is in contact with a power line. Call 911 immediately and wait for emergency responders.
- Do not enter damaged buildings until electricity and gas are shut off by professionals. Never attempt to turn off power if you must stand in water to reach the breaker.
- Avoid flooded areas with electrical outlets, appliances, or cords, and never touch electrical equipment when wet or standing in water.
- Have all water-damaged electrical systems, appliances, and devices inspected by a licensed electrician before use.

#### Power outages and generator safety:

- Never use a generator indoors or in partially enclosed spaces such as garages, porches, or near open windows and doors. Place it at least 20 feet away from your home to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Keep the generator dry by placing it on a tarp or under a canopy, and follow all manufacturer's instructions.
- Never plug a generator directly into a wall outlet. This can inadvertently energize power lines and pose a lethal risk to you, neighbors and utility workers.

Stay informed, stay alert, and share this information to help protect your family and community during severe weather events.

Article courtesy of [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org)

# WHEN A FLOOD BECOMES A DANGER ZONE



If floodwaters are infiltrating your home...

<p><b>DO NOT</b></p> <p>touch electrical equipment</p>	<p><b>MOVE</b></p> <p>to an upper level or attic</p>
<p><b>AVOID</b></p> <p>drinking tap water</p>	<p><b>KNOW</b></p> <p>that standing water could be energized</p>
<p><b>DO NOT</b></p> <p>enter a flooded basement or room</p>	<p><b>WEAR</b></p> <p>heavy work gloves, protective clothing and boots</p>
<p><b>USE</b></p> <p>generators outdoors and away from windows and doors</p>	<p><b>DO NOT</b></p> <p>turn off electricity to your home unless it is dry and safe to do so</p>

Source: Ready.gov





**MARCH 7**  
**Ag Day**  
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Washington Pavilion  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-367-6000

*Washington Pavilion Photo*

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

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

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

**MARCH 7**  
**Southern Hills Holistic Fair**  
 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Mueller Civic Center  
 Hot Springs, SD

**MARCH 7-8**  
**The Black Market**  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 W.H. Lyon Expo Building  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-332-6004

**MARCH 14-15**  
**Philip Area Annual Rod & Gun Show**  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sun. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 American Legion Hall  
 Philip, SD  
 605-859-2135

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

**MARCH 14**  
**SNOLF (Snow Golf) Tournament**  
 Webster, SD  
 Contact: Buster's Resort  
 605-345-2787

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

**MARCH 20-22, 27-29**  
**Mighty Corson Art Players**  
 March 20-21, 27-28: 7:30 p.m.  
 March 22, 29: 2:30 p.m.  
 Corson Playhouse  
 Corson, SD  
 www.mightycorson.com

**MARCH 27**  
**East Dakota Chapter NWTf 33rd Annual Banquet**  
 Ramkota Expo Hall  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-940-0702

**MARCH 28**  
**Coteau Prairie Masters Gardeners Ready, Set, Grow**  
 9 a.m.-12 p.m.  
 Codington Cty. Extension Cplx.  
 Watertown, SD

**MARCH 28**  
**VFW Teener Baseball Benefit Vegas Night**  
 Social: 4:30 p.m., Meal: 6 p.m.  
 Tyndall, SD

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

**APRIL 5**  
**Easter Sunrise Service**  
 7 a.m.  
 Mount Rushmore  
 605-391-9156

**APRIL 9**  
**McCrossan Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest**  
 Jimmy Buffett Tribute  
 Polynesian Paradise Dancers  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 www.mccrossan.org

**APRIL 9-11**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Heritage Celebration  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237  
 www.schmeckfest.com

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

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

**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.**