

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Rural Electrification

**West Central - The Last  
Co-op to Incorporate**  
Pages 8-9

**Generational Farmers**  
Pages 12-13

Rural Electrification served even  
the most rural communities.





Your FEM Electric Board of Directors

## 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 15, 2025, 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, 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.

### Guest Employee: Dan Feldhaus

Accounting Clerk Angie Sieh was present during Employee Benefit review.

### Changes to the agenda: none

### Changes/Additions to Minutes from July 15, 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 Tuesday, September 16, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Motion by Eric Odenbach, seconded

by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve administrative business.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to acknowledge the manager, and staff reports along with East River Electric load management report.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve 2026 Employee Benefit Renewal presented by Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer.

July 2025 Cyber Security Report was acknowledged.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to enter executive session at 10:34 a.m. to complete board and CEO annual performance appraisals.

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to come out of executive session at 11:44 a.m.

### Resolutions and Contracts:

The board acknowledged receiving notice of Basin Electric's Annual Meeting and Voting Delegate.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to nominate Tom Thorpe as Voting Delegate for CFC annual meeting.

The board had a conversation about sending a resolution to Basin Board pertaining to electric rate increase and lack of communications with Class C's and Class A members. No action taken but FEM Electric board requested more information from CEO Moore.

### Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

### New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

**Disconnects:** Joy Voegele, Roscoe, SD, Active Farm; MBHR, LLC, Shakopee, MN, Grain Bin; Nancy Opp, Eureka, SD, Active Farm; Sharon Beitelspacher, Bowdle, SD, Pasture Pump; Melvin & Lavonne Rohrbach, Roscoe, SD, Active Farm/Shop, Grain Bin, Pasture Pump

**Reconnects:** LeRoy Voegele, Roscoe, SD, Active Farm; Eric & Kelly Odenbach, Eureka, SD, Grain Bin; Tod Gohl, Eureka, SD, Active Farm; Kindra & Robert Gordon, Whitewood, SD, Pasture Pump; Rick & Carmen Rohrbach, Roscoe, SD, Active Farm/Shop, Grain Bin, Pasture Pump

**Contracts:** Ramsey & Rachel Crissman, Ipswich, SD, House; Cody & Sarah Edgar, Rockham, SD, Hunting Lodge; Glenn & Karen Beutler, Eureka, SD, Pasture Pump

**Retired Locations:** None

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve three line construction contracts with Ramsey & Rachel Crissman, Cody and Sarah Edgar, Glenn and Karen Beutler.

### Capital Credits:

**Estates - August 2025:** Two = \$7,412.24

**73 & Older - August 2025:** Two = \$6,134.74

*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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employer.**



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

My prediction was correct. Summer has started and now it is over. Labor Day and all the fairs behind us, we are already three to four weeks into fall sports and classrooms full of young smiling faces, ready to learn. As we all know, South Dakota children are the best crop we can grow for the continued success of South Dakota. Creating opportunities for young people to stay or return to South Dakota should be a top priority.

FEM Electric has had a busy but successful summer construction season installing new underground primary lines, we continue to get requests for new services as crops near maturity. The pole tester has completed testing approximately twenty-four hundred poles with a low rejection rate. The operation department will have the rejected poles changed out by late 2025.

Our electrical department has been busy and has several big projects yet to start this fall Ryan is limiting committing to new large electrical projects for 2025.

Ryan does a good job planning for successful project completion by not taking on more jobs than our crew can complete in a timely manner. This makes for happier member satisfaction. Please check your electrical equipment at grain bin sites before starting to combine as weather and mice have a way of causing problems with electrical equipment.

FEM Electric has started to establish a 2026 annual budget and in 2026 we will be developing a new four-year work plan. Staff will work through the budget process to present to the board of directors in November 2025 and ask for final approval in December. Using our current work plan along with a detailed annual budget gives the board, staff, and employees a roadmap for a successful year with little to no big surprises.

As Basin Electric, our power provider, and East River, our electrical transmission provider, are still working through their numbers, FEM will not have final rate numbers until November. We are

*Continued on page 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 28, 2025 for October's energy  
November 25, 2025 for November's energy

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

# Go Above and Beyond for a Safe Harvest

Anne Prince  
NRECA

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height and extensions make them particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

### 360 Awareness

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used.

### Smart Harvest Safety Tips

To ensure a safer harvest season, SafeElectricity.org recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- Exercise caution near power lines. Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines. Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.

- Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.
- Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path. Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- Avoid using metal poles inside bins. Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- Hire qualified electricians. Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.



### "Don't play with outlets!"

#### Kinzlee Klomp, Age 12

Kinzlee warns readers not to play with power outlets. Great advice, Kinzlee! Kinzlee's parents are Kaitlin and Austin Klomp from Box Elder, 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.



# Fresh BREADS

## ZUCCHINI BREAD

### Ingredients:

3 eggs  
2 cups sugar  
1 cup oil  
2 tsps. vanilla  
3 cups flour  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1/2 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
3 cups zucchini (shredded)

### Method

Cream together eggs, sugar and oil. Then add the vanilla. Mix together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and add to the egg mixture. Stir in zucchini. Pour into two loaf pans. Bake at 325°F for approximately one hour.

**Kimberly Grimm**  
Southeastern Electric

## GLUTEN FREE OATMEAL PANCAKES

### Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups oats  
1 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
1/2 tsp. salt  
2 eggs  
1/2 cup milk  
3/4 cup applesauce  
3 tsps. maple syrup  
2 tsps. apple cider vinegar  
2 tsps. vanilla

### Method

Grind 2 1/2 cups oats in blender until turned into flour. In large bowl, whisk together oats, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. Form a bowl in center, add eggs and whisk them. Then, add milk, applesauce, maple syrup, apple cider vinegar and vanilla. Stir to combine. Wait five minutes to thicken batter. Cook in oiled pan.

**Jean Beauchamp**  
Southeastern Electric

## KUNSI' FRY BREAD

### Ingredients:

1 tbsp. yeast (quick rise)  
2 tsps. sugar  
1 qt. warm water  
1 tbsp. oil/melted butter  
1/2 tsp. salt  
6 cups all-purpose flour  
2 tsps. powdered dry milk  
4 cups oil for frying

### Method

Mix yeast, sugar, salt, warm water, oil/melted butter and let proof for 15 minutes. Mix flour and powdered dry milk. Make a well in the flour mixture and add yeast mixture. Gradually add warm water until dough comes together and is no longer sticky. Cover and let rise until doubled in size. Heat oil to fry dough. Separate dough into 10 to 12 baseball-size dough balls (or smaller if you want smaller pieces). Stretch dough balls and shape into oval discs or round discs approximately 1/4 inch thick. Test the oil to see if it's hot enough by dropping a small pea size piece of the dough in the oil. If it floats it's ready. Flatten the disc between your hands and stretch it again. Fry the bread until both sides are golden brown. Transfer to paper towel lined plate to drain. Continue until all the dough is fried. Enjoy with soup or a Spam and egg sandwich or taco toppings.

**Sheila Ironheart**  
Whetstone Valley 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*

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 2025 contained information on checks #35495 through #35568 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for July 2025 totaling \$808,319.15.

July 2025 financials were reviewed.

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

Tom Thorpe and Gary Bachman reported on Basin Electric annual meeting.

**Legal Update:** Moore reported that attorney Vaughn Beck had no report.

### **Meeting Report:**

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

Tom Thorpe and Gary Bachman reported on Basin Electric annual meeting.

The safety meeting minutes from July 24, 2025, were acknowledged.

Employee meeting minutes from July 26, 2025, were acknowledged.

Safety Committee meeting minutes from July 24, 2025 were acknowledged.

Adjourn: President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## **STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Person with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, 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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**Manager's Article Continued from page 3**

anticipating a rate increase but until we get final figures, I would be just speculating on the increase.

With just weeks away from a busy fall harvest, bringing livestock home from summer grazing, and vehicles full of school age children please remember to be careful.

If you are planning on adding electrical load in 2026, please call Ryan Holien or Sean Christiansen 605-426-6891.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

### TIP OF THE MONTH

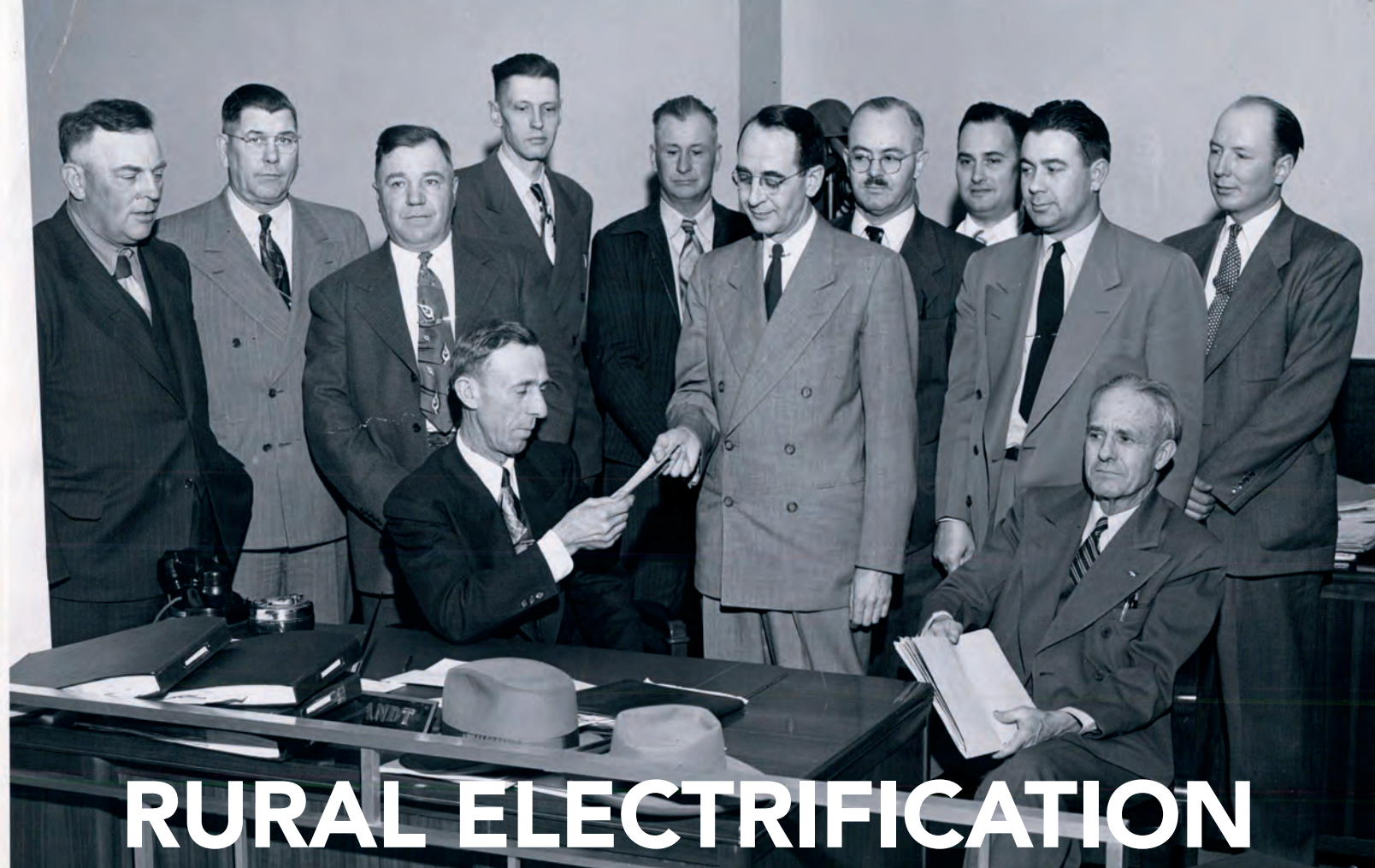
As winter approaches, now is the time to inspect your home for air leaks around windows. Leaks reduce indoor comfort and lead to higher heating costs.

If you can see daylight around the edges of a window frame or if a window rattles slightly when touched, air is likely leaking.

Caulking and weatherstripping are simple, effective methods for sealing windows. These materials are available in a variety of compounds and forms, each designed for different types of surfaces. Choose the right product and apply it properly to reduce heat loss, improve comfort and lower energy bills.







# RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

## WEST CENTRAL

### Last to Incorporate, Lasting in Impact

**Frank Turner**

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

Before rural electrification, South Dakota's farmsteads ended the day in silence. There was no music from the radio playing in the living room or hum of an electric refrigerator in the kitchen. Over decades of work, power lines would stretch across the prairie through President Franklin Roosevelt's vision of rural electrification, carrying not only electricity but also a new way of life.

In 1935, President Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) as part of his New Deal policies to revive a nation struggling through the Great Depression and bring electricity to

America's rural communities, something that private and investor-owned utilities refused to do.

Clay-Union Electric was the first rural community in South Dakota to adopt the cooperative model in 1937, and West Central was the last in 1949. But as former West Central Electric CEO Steve Reed can attest, being the last to adopt the cooperative way didn't hinder their success. Once the path to forming a cooperative was established, the members of West Central benefitted from electricity's transformation from a luxury into a necessity with the rest of rural South Dakota.

"We couldn't rely on the power

West Central Electric board directors present a check to a representative of Central Electric and Gas in 1951, finalizing the cooperative's purchase of the private utility system. *Photo submitted by West Central Electric.*

companies to come out to serve rural South Dakota," said Reed, a 42-year cooperative veteran who joined West Central Electric as a lineman and worked his way up to CEO. "They were never going to do it at price that was affordable, so rural electric has been great for not only the members of West Central but the entire country."

So why was West Central the last to form a cooperative? According to Reed, the rural communities that organized West Central Electric in 1949 had several hurdles to clear. The first was overcoming the sheer remoteness of the territory, which then had a system that averaged 1.5 members per mile of line constructed, even including towns and



cities. Because members were few and far between, the REA needed the towns in the proposed West Central territory to become members: from Philip to Hayes and Murdo to Kennebec, where West Central Electric was incorporated.

That led to the next problem: the towns and cities in the proposed West Central Electric's service territory were already being served by Central Electric and Gas, a private company based out of Philadelphia. This obstacle didn't stop the people who had a vision of what rural electrification could accomplish. Following lengthy discussion in 1951, West Central Electric purchased systems from Central Electric and Gas for \$850,000 using low-interest REA federal funds.

Former West Central Electric Attorney John Larson outlined the discussions in his 50th Annual Meeting Speech: "There was no choice but to buy out the private supplier, Central Electric and Gas, and that was accomplished... (Former South Dakota Governor M. Q. Sharpe, who served as West Central Electric's attorney), showed up for the meeting that morning unshaven and unkempt, with a threadbare shirt and suit. For the entire morning, he listened with his head down and eyes shut to the Philadelphia lawyer types who represented the power company. After the dinner break, however, he showed up in a new suit, shaved, and took over the meeting by dictating exactly what West Central would do and what we would pay. During an afternoon break, one of the Philadelphia types was heard to mutter, 'You want to watch that old guy. When he's got his head down and eyes shut, he's not sleeping!'"

West Central Electric's 1951 purchase included all the electrical infrastructure within the town boundaries, as well as the diesel generation system extending west from Chamberlain. Shortly after, the evolution of West Central Electric progressed with the construction of distribution systems to farms and reconstructing the systems of various

towns, including the installation of street lights.

Since that iconic moment, West Central has continued to grow with its membership, meeting more demand for electrical energy than had been previously thought possible, a reflection of just how integral electricity has

become in day-to-day living for business owners, ag producers, and rural folk alike.

"That moment modernized us," said Reed. "It just did so much for everything – and without it, where would we be?"



(Top) A West Central Electric Annual Meeting.  
(Bottom) A West Central Electric Board Meeting with the REA.  
*Photos submitted by West Central Electric*





# FARM SAFETY PARTY

## SAFETY IS THE MESSAGE AT THE BROWN COUNTY FAIR

The Brown County Fair is known for its entertainment, carnival, shopping and more. However, local cooperatives have taken on the mission to educate the youngest attendees about safety, both on and off the farm with the Farm Safety Party.

FEM Electric has partnered with Agtegra, Lake Region Electric and Northern Electric for a number of years to host the Farm Safety Party during Kid's Day at the fair. This year, East River Electric was also invited to talk about energy efficiency with a hands on display.

As in the past, children are challenged to attend safety demonstration displays throughout the Kid's Zone, an area the fair has dedicated to kids events, activities, and play areas. This year, 9 stations were set up, 3 of which were hosted by electric cooperatives: FEM, Northern, Lake Region and East River Electric. Agtegra took on 5 stations consisting of teaching attendees how to use a fire extinguisher, ATV safety, helmet safety, grain bin safety, blind spot safety around semi trucks, and invited Avera to host an interactive demonstration on "Stop the Bleed". Before they began their tour, children were handed a "bingo" card, where they had to have each station checked off in order to receive a prize at the end.

FEM and Northern presented on personal protective equipment, or PPE, that lineworker's wear when working on power lines. Rubber gloves with leather protectors and climbing belts were provided for children to try on, and to practice working as a



lineworker to demonstrate the precautions they take when working on power lines. Attempts were made to twist on and off nuts and insulators on a make-shift powerline, and a miniature power pole was provided for kids to "climb" with all of their gear on. Water was handed out with electrical safety messages on the labels, as well.

Lake Region Electric provided their power town demonstration, which is a miniature display of a farm with interactive parts to demonstrate what happens when farm equipment comes in contact with powerlines. Throughout the demonstration, messages are passed on to educate attendees about what to do if they come in contact with overhead or underground powerlines while in a vehicle.

East River Electric provided their interactive display on energy efficiency, which allows children to experience how much energy it requires to power light bulbs. The bulbs start at extremely efficient LED bulbs and work their way down to the most inefficient incandescent bulbs. Attendees hop on a bicycle and peddle to power the bulbs. As they move through the bulbs, they find that incandescent bulbs are the most difficult to peddle for, showing how inefficient they are.



At the end of their safety tour, children turn in their bingo card, and received a goodie bag filled with prizes. As in the past, this event was well attended, and we hope that everyone took home a message about safety.





# HELP KEEP ELECTRIC LINE WORKERS SAFE



**Be patient** when the power goes out. Workers need to work efficiently and **safely** to restore power.



## ZONE IN ON SAFETY



Respect **roadside** work crews.



Don't drive distracted.  
Reduce your speed.  
Change lanes.

**1** work zone crash occurs  
every **5.4 minutes**



**70** work zone crashes  
result in **injuries**  
each day



**12** work zone crashes  
result in at least  
**1 fatality** each  
week



**Never plug a generator into a wall outlet** in your home or garage. The power that back feeds into the electric line **could electrocute a utility worker** or neighbor.



**DON'T** post signs  
on **utility poles**.

Foreign objects can **tear** utility workers' **protective clothing**, which is the first line of protection from an **electric shock**.



Electric line workers **RANK 15** on the list of **25 MOST DANGEROUS JOBS** in America. Help keep them safe!



Learn more at  **Safe  
Electricity.org**

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Do you know the warning signs of an energy scam? Scammers will often use **high-pressure tactics** that create a sense of urgency. They may also ask for **unusual payment methods** such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. **Dodgy communication** is typically associated with a scam, including poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. If you spot any of these warning signs, take a moment to pause and determine if it's legitimate or if it's a scam.





Photo submitted by JT and Luann Weber.

# GENERATIONAL FARMERS

## Four Generations of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Members Ranch on Lake Benton-Area Land

**Jacob Boyko**

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

Nestled amongst the rolling green pastures of western Minnesota, there's a generations-old farm worked by one family for over three quarters of a century.

From their Lincoln County property, the Weber family watched rural electrification improve the prairie, connect neighbors and bring reliability to farmsteads. Now they watch precision agriculture guide planting, bovine genetics strengthen herds, and social media and the internet connect their business to the wider world.

It all started in 1947, when John and Marie Weber moved into the old three-bedroom farmhouse from nearby

Elkton, S.D. Luckily, the move came six years after Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative energized lines in the area, so the Weber home enjoyed many of the modern amenities brought on by rural electrification, including electric lights, kitchen appliances and a washing machine.

"I know I had the best mom and dad in the world," said JT, one of John and Marie's eight children, who today helps run the ranch with his wife, Luann, their three sons and their families. "Dad was very community-oriented. He was on the school board, the elevator board and the rural water board. In fact, he was instrumental in starting rural water. He went from place to place, talking people

into getting rural water."

JT was born on the farm in 1957 during a blizzard that left his parents unable to reach the hospital in town. As a boy, he remembers collecting rainwater in a cistern and using it for cooking, cleaning and baths. Even as rural electrification began to transform the countryside, life on the farm remained far different – and often harder – than life in town.

"When I grew up, back in the 60s and 70s, if you milked 40 cows that was quite a few," JT said. "We were milking about 100 cows – we were kind of ahead of our time. But we had a big family, and us boys, we got right in there."

He continued, "We were hauling silage, hauling manure, milking cows and doing chores. But Dad never told us to do anything. He always asked us if we wanted to, and there's a difference. You wanted to work for him. He made you want to work for him, and it was never a burden."

That was a quality JT kept in mind with his own seven children on that same



ranch where he grew up. Today, JT and Luann's sons Jake, Garret, and Matt all stay involved in the ranch, now Weber Bros. Cattle.

"Growing up, I kind of always had that bug to get in the tractor, chase cows, put up fence, and do what needs to be done," explained Jake, the oldest son.

Today, they specialize in raising purebred Angus bulls and Simmental-Angus crosses, while also producing corn silage and alfalfa to help sustain the operation. While the operation may be old, it's not at all low-tech.

"Our main thing is our bull program," Jake said. "We sell about 50 registered Angus and Simmental bulls by private treaty every spring, and we also develop 50 replacement and bred heifers, and market a portion of them. We do a lot of artificial insemination and embryo transfer. Some of the more elite donor cows we can get our hands on by buying females and buying embryos. We're just trying to make good cows."

Jake, like his dad, graduated from South Dakota State University with an animal science degree, and was excited to return to the ranch to incorporate some of his new skills into the operation.

"When I got back from school, we really amped up our embryo transfer program with different ideas and stuff I learned about genetics from contacts and producers we've met over the years," Jake continued. "We went from selling 10 bulls per year to selling close to 50 bulls."

Jake's younger brother and fellow SDSU animal science graduate, Garret, keeps involved on the family's ranch as well. Though he works full time as swine genetic company Hypor's US Sales Manager, he helps out with the operation and finds the time to run Weber Bros. Cattle's social media pages, which he says has successfully expanded their presence in the market.

"Whether it's Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or our company website, we're able to hit such a broad spectrum of people, and it's a great way to tell the story of our operation, what we're doing year-in and year-out and advertise the



genetics of the cattle that we're showing and selling," Garret explained. "We're able to have a much greater touch point of individuals that we can reach out to and market our livestock."

JT, Jake and Garret all credit their spouses and families for supporting them as they work to grow the operation.

"It took a long time and a lot of support for us to get established and get to where we are today," JT said.

Looking toward the future – and the next generation, their goals are to make an already successful operation even better.

"We'll keep working with the cow herd, continue to make improvements and make better genetics every year," Jake said. "I want this opportunity to be available to my kids, so that if they want to be able to do this, they'll have the same chance we did."

Garret added, "It's something that I hope my sons can do someday if we're able to continue to grow the operation. I hope it's something they're going to be able to share and cherish with their own kids, because those are the memories that stick with you forever."

JT and Luann Weber with their adult children, Jake, Garret, Matt and Sara Weber, Liz Mergen, and Maria Opheim, and families.

Back, from left: Garret Weber, Levi Weber, Kailey Weber, Jake Weber, Amanda Weber, Sara Weber, Cade Opheim, Maria Opheim, Tawnee Opheim, JT Weber, Luann Weber, Brent Mergen, Liz Mergen, Davie Fiedler, Matt Weber, Racheal Krog.

Front, from left: Adam Weber, Chisum Weber, Abeline Weber, Vidalia Fiedler.  
Not pictured: Talon Weber



Photo submitted by JT and Luanne Weber.



A purebred Angus Heifer.  
Photo by Garret Weber



## HAVING A BACKUP PLAN FOR MEDICAL DEVICES CAN BE LIFESAVING

If you depend on electric medical equipment, your power provider will do all they can to assist you during a power outage by giving your residence a priority tag. Examples of lifesaving medical devices include an oxygen concentrator or a ventilator.

If you or someone in your household depends on life-sustaining medical equipment, contact your local electric utility to let them know.

Although the utility will do all they can to help, it is best to have a backup plan in place in case of severe weather events, which can cause prolonged outages.

Backup safety tips include the following:

- Have an emergency plan in place with friends and family that outlines places you can go in the event of a long-term outage.
- Before an outage occurs, find out if the medical equipment safely runs on a backup power source and for how long (see manufacturer's recommendations).

- Keep a full charge on battery-powered devices or have extra batteries available.
- If recommended by the manufacturer, consider purchasing a portable battery pack to power devices.
- Gather related resources that will last for two weeks, including batteries, supplemental equipment and prescriptions.
- Realize that local shelters and hospitals that are also experiencing an outage may be at capacity and have limited resources, including auxiliary power.
- Think about the other special equipment you might need, such as coolers for refrigerated medicine.
- Like any important device, keep up regular maintenance.
- Keep a file that includes the device's manufacturer, serial numbers and photos of the device.

Learn more about preparing for an emergency at:



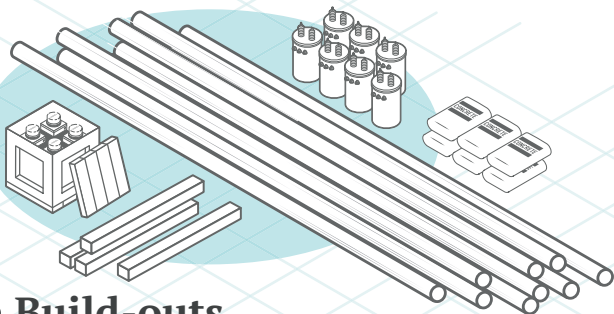


# Cost Increases

The past five years have been a period of exploding costs for the electric utility industry and for broadband providers, pushed by soaring demand, supply chain challenges, raw materials shortages, increased labor costs and tariffs. The impact has been rapid increases in the cost of producing power, longer and more unpredictable project timelines and the need for more financing, all of which have driven electric rates up for residences, businesses and other end-users. Here's a look at what's contributing to the trend. **Percent increase since 2020:**

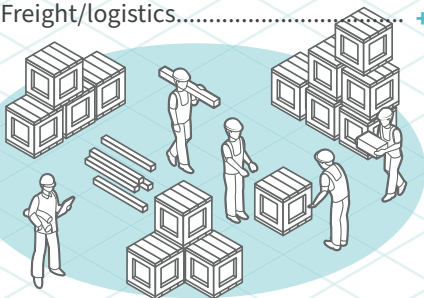
## Infrastructure

Utility poles (wood, steel, composite)	+25-40%
Crossarms & braces (steel/wood).....	+20-35%
Conductor wire (aluminum/copper)...	+30-50%
Transformers.....	+70-100%
Grain-oriented electrical steel.....	+80-100%
Oil/dielectric fluids.....	+25-40%
Copper wiring.....	+50%
Concrete.....	+25-35%
Smart meters.....	+20-35%
Pad-mounted switchgear.....	+25-40%
Circuit breakers/reclosers.....	+20-35%



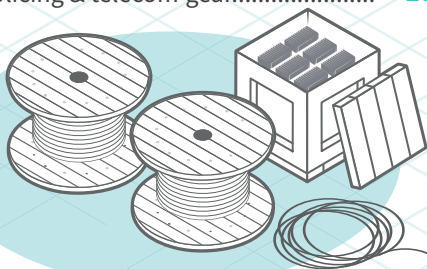
## Build-outs

Utility construction labor.....	+20-40%
Freight/logistics.....	+30-60%



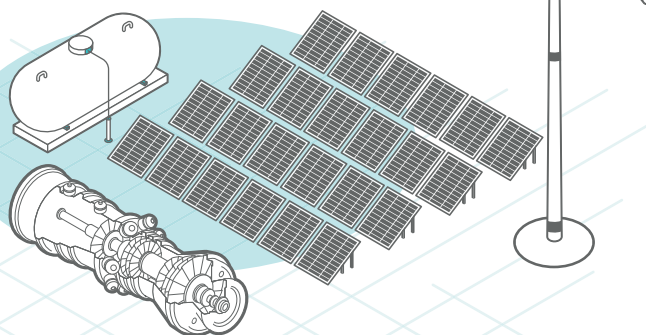
## Broadband

Fiber-optic cable.....	+25-40%
Splicing & telecom gear.....	+20-30%



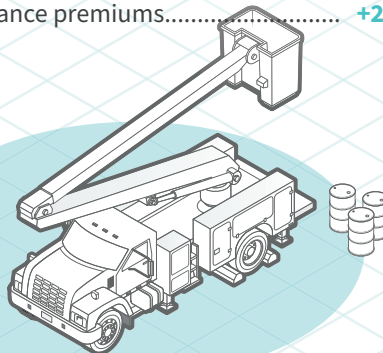
## Generation

Diesel gensets.....	+20-40%
Gas turbines.....	+20-30%
Solar PV systems.....	+25-35%
Wind turbines.....	+25-35%
Hydropower components.....	+20-30%
Battery storage.....	+25-40%
SCADA/EMS systems.....	+20-30%
Inverters.....	+20-30%
Relays & switchgear.....	+25-40%
Natural Gas.....	+20-120%
Coal.....	+30-60%
Diesel/fuel oil.....	+40-70%



## Fleets

Light trucks.....	+25-40%
Bucket trucks, digger derricks .....	+20-50%
Fuel costs (especially diesel).....	+20-30%
Maintenance.....	+15-25%
Insurance premiums.....	+20%



Sources: BLS; energynews.com; Reuters; Wood Mackenzie; NREL; IEA



**OCT. 10-12**  
**Black Hills Powwow**  
 Rapid City, SD  
 605-341-0925

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.

**UNTIL OCT. 31**  
**Wallace Dow, Prairie Architect**  
**Traveling Exhibit**  
 Lake County Museum  
 Madison, SD  
 605-256-5308

**OCT. 3**  
**DSU Architecture Walking Tour**  
 3-4 p.m.  
 Lake County Museum  
 Madison, SD

**OCT. 3-5**  
**Black Hills Film Festival**  
 Journey Museum  
 Rapid City, SD  
 605-574-9454

**OCT. 4**  
**Pumpkin Train, Vendor**  
**Showcase**  
 Prairie Village  
 Madison, SD

**OCT. 4-5**  
**Sioux Falls Quilt Guild**  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sun. 11 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Sioux Falls Convention Center  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-951-2034

**OCT. 10-11**  
**Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest**  
**& Vendor Show**  
 Fri. 12 p.m.-6 p.m.  
 Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m.,  
 Philip, SD  
 605-441-1060

**OCT. 11**  
**A Celebration of Classic Hits**  
 7 p.m.  
 Gayville Music Hall  
 Gayville, SD  
 605-760-5799

**OCT. 11**  
**Howard Fall Festival**  
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Miner County 4-H Grounds  
 Howard, SD

**OCT. 18**  
**Arts & Crafts Festival**  
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Faulkton, SD

**OCT. 18**  
**Northern Prairie Arts**  
**Barn Quilt Class**  
 Highland Conference Center  
 Register by Oct. 6  
 Watertown, SD  
 605-882-1780

**OCT. 18-19**  
**Heartland Quilting Stars Show**  
 Highland Conference Center  
 Mitchell, SD  
 605-770-1551

**OCT. 19**  
**Helping With Horsepower**  
**Year-End Horse Show**  
 10 a.m.  
 Reclamation Ranch  
 Mitchell, SD

**OCT. 24**  
**Humor for Heroes**  
**Comedy Night Fundraiser**  
 Comedians, Silent Auction  
 Tickets \$15, two for \$25  
 1600 W. Russell St.  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-336-3470

**OCT. 25**  
**The Greats of Country**  
 7 p.m.  
 Gayville Music Hall  
 Gayville, SD  
 605-760-5799

**OCT. 31-NOV. 2**  
**Haunted Trail at**  
**Reclamation Ranch**  
 7-10 p.m.  
 Reclamation Ranch  
 Mitchell, SD

**NOV. 1**  
**Reliance Christmas Carousel**  
 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Reliance, SD  
 605-730-1462

**NOV. 1**  
**Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show**  
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Dakota Christian School  
 Corsica, SD  
 605-366-7940

**NOV. 1**  
**Black Hills Meat Fest**  
 2-4 p.m.  
 Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall  
 Rapid City, SD

**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.**