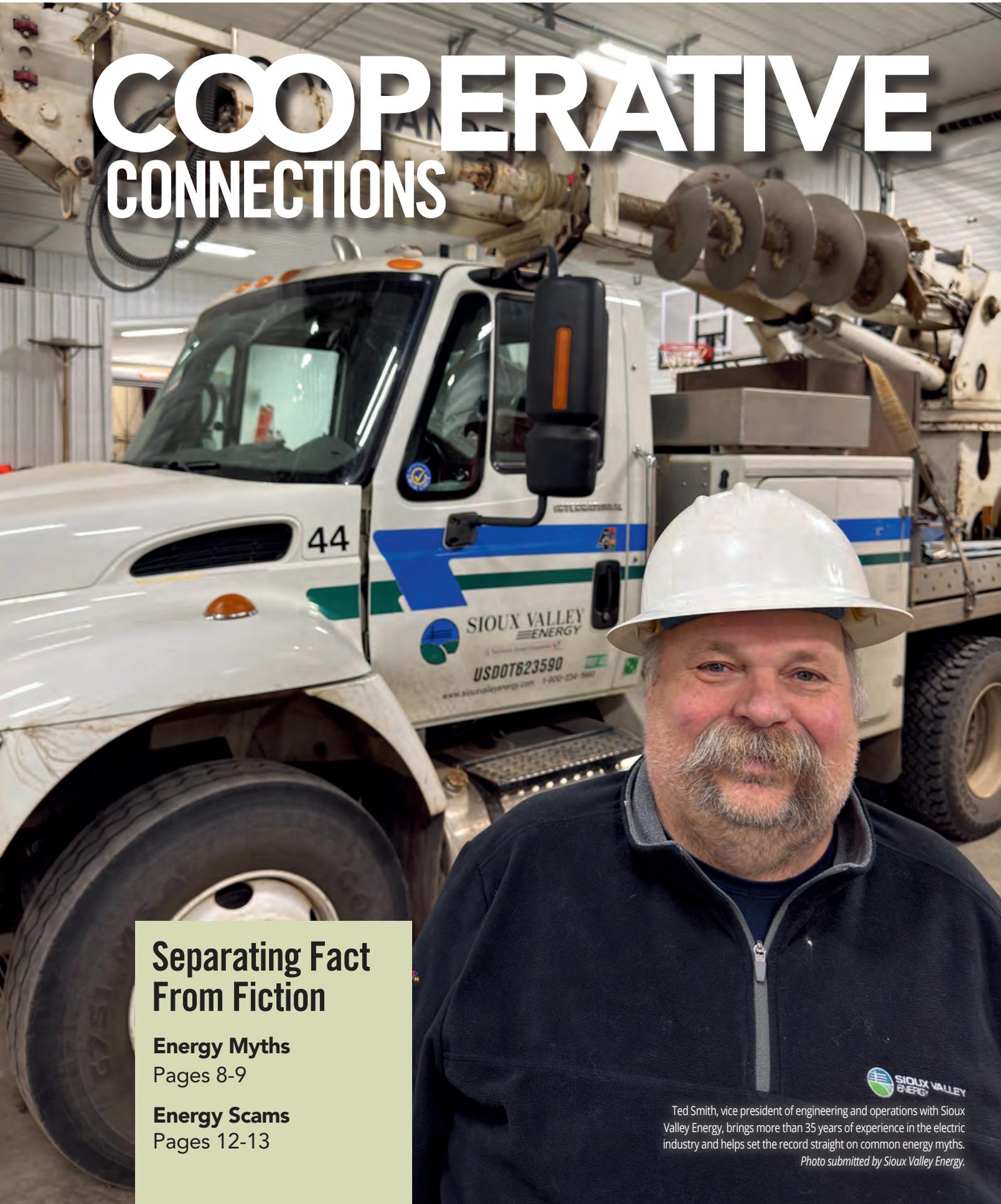


# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Separating Fact From Fiction

**Energy Myths**

Pages 8-9

**Energy Scams**

Pages 12-13



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

# BOARD REPORT



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

## February 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 February 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 and Paula Petersen. Operations Manager Sean Christiansen, Electrical Manager Ryan Holien, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, and CEO Scott Moore.

**Guest Employee:** Chad Dutenhoffer

**Changes to the agenda:** None

**Changes/Additions to Minutes from January 20, 2026, 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, March 20, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Moved by Paula Petersen, seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve administrative business.

The board and staff watched NRECA Governance Video titled "Methods of Nominating Directors".

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. They also reviewed OSHA 300 (3year history) and reported no lost time hours since 1/25/2023.

The board acknowledges receiving and reviewing January 2026 Cyber Security Report.

Moved by Eric Odenbach seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to enter executive session at 9:19 a.m.

Moved by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to come out of executive session at 9:29 a.m.

### Resolutions and Contracts:

Moved by Kelly Melius was seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve 2026 Nominating Committee: District 3 Greg Preszler and Clayton Geist. District 2 Jed Anliker and Grant Kindelspire, at large Justin Davis. Nominating committee will meet March 5th, 2026.

The board acknowledged Notice of NISC Annual Meeting and Request for NCSC Class E Director Candidate.

### Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

### New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

**Disconnects:** Gary Gisi, Ipswich, SD, Bar/RV Site/House and Road Side Sign; Snow Lake Cabin Trust, Mina, SD, Lake House; Linda & David Flier, Burkeville, TX, Active Farm; Tom & Carol Lacher, Ipswich, SD, Shop

**Reconnects:** Greg & Donna Gisi, Ipswich, SD, Bar/RV Site/House and Road Side Sign; Kent Snow, Faulkton, SD, Lake House; Jacob Maryott, Mina, SD, Active Farm; Scott & Angie Kulesa, Ipswich, SD, Shop

**Contracts:** David & Carla Palmer, Mina, SD, Grain Bin

**Retired Locations:** Gerard & Emily Kadlec, Roscoe, SD, Vacant Farm

Moved by Tom Thorpe seconded by Paula Petersen to approve a three-phase contract for David and Carla Palmer.

### Capital Credits:

**Estates - February 2026:** Two = \$670.03  
**73 & Older - February 2026:** None

Board acknowledged receipt of following financial business.

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

The check register for the month of January 2026 contained information on checks #35924 through #36002 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for January 2026 totaling \$284,302.78.

December 2025 "Unaudited" financials were reviewed.

Financial Ratios for December 2025

**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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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FEM Electric Cooperative Connections, Box 468, Ipswich, SD 57451-0468.

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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

If phone calls/inquiries for expanding or adding, electrical services are an indication of future workload, FEM Electric employees should have a busy 2026 construction season. Most of our material that is needed to complete these projects has been ordered and some has begun arriving. If you have not reached out and are considering adding some electrical equipment, please call Ryan Holien or Sean Christiansen 605-426-6891.

As of the beginning of March, we had a mild winter allowing our operations department to complete 2025 maintenance and continue line inspection. The operation department drives every mile of line, which includes both overhead line and underground facilities, and inspects everything.

On the overhead electric line, crews look for broken or damaged poles, wire, insulators, and anchors. In the members' yards they read the electrical meters and look for problems with the

members' electrical equipment, which could be overhead secondary wire that is in poor condition or electrical boxes that may be missing a cover. They also look for clearance problems where a new approach may have been built. While doing underground inspection the crews open the green boxes and transformers looking for rodent and other damage. Over the past twenty years many of these issues have been resolved, making for a safe electrical system owned by both FEM Electric and our members.

With spring work just around the corner please remember to be safe while working around equipment and cattle.

Just a reminder, to mark your calendar, our 2026 annual meeting will be held June 23, 2026, in Ipswich South Dakota at the public school.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

#### FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

@FEMElectric on

@fem\_electric on

@FEMelectric 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

April 28, 2026 for April's energy

May 27, 2026 for May's energy

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

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

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

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

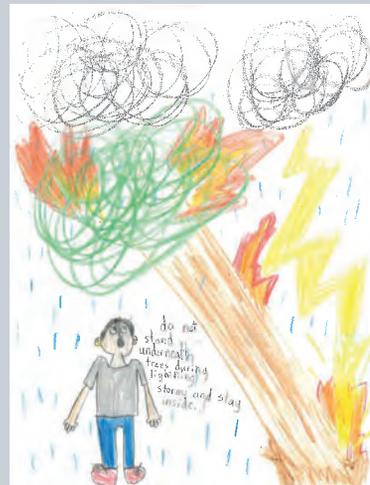
Second, plan your route before you depart. Entering a destination while driving is a dangerous distraction. Take a few minutes to review the route, check traffic conditions, and set your navigation system in advance. With your route loaded, you can keep your attention on driving rather than on-screen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

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

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



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



**Ramsey Faini,  
Age 8**

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

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

# MAIN DISHES

## HOMEMADE MAC & CHEESE

### Ingredients:

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

### Method

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

**Cindi Foster**  
 Codington-Clark Electric

## CHEDDAR POTATO SOUP

### Ingredients:

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

### Method

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

**Sally Florey**  
 Charles Mix Electric

## CARAMELIZED HAM & SWISS SLIDERS

### Ingredients:

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

### Method

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

### Sauce

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

**Jerald & Virginia Jensen**  
 Sioux Valley Energy

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture submitted by zoryanchik via Shutterstock

# BOARD REPORT CONTINUED

## Board Report Continued from page 2

reviewed.

January 2026 financials were reviewed.

Director of Finance and benefits Rhonda Tuscherer reported on KWH Tax Report/City Gross Receipts Tax.

2025 "Unaudited" RUS Statistical and Operating Report were reviewed.

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

**Legal Update:** none

### Meeting Report:

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

Tom Thorpe and Gary Bachman reported on the East River Forum.

Tom Thorpe reported on Coop Day at the Capitol.

The safety meeting minutes from January 7 & 8th, 2026 were acknowledged along with several accident and property damage reports. January 9, 2026, Safety Committee Meeting Minutes and Employee Meeting Minutes from January 30, 2026, were also acknowledged.

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



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

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

Source: energy.gov



# SAFETY FIRST WITH 811

Spring is in the air, which means it's a great time to remind our members to call 811 before you dig!

When you contact 811, they will notify relevant utility companies to mark underground lines, free of charge, using colored flags or paint. This process usually only takes a few days.

Different colors are used to mark underground utilities, and each color is universal:

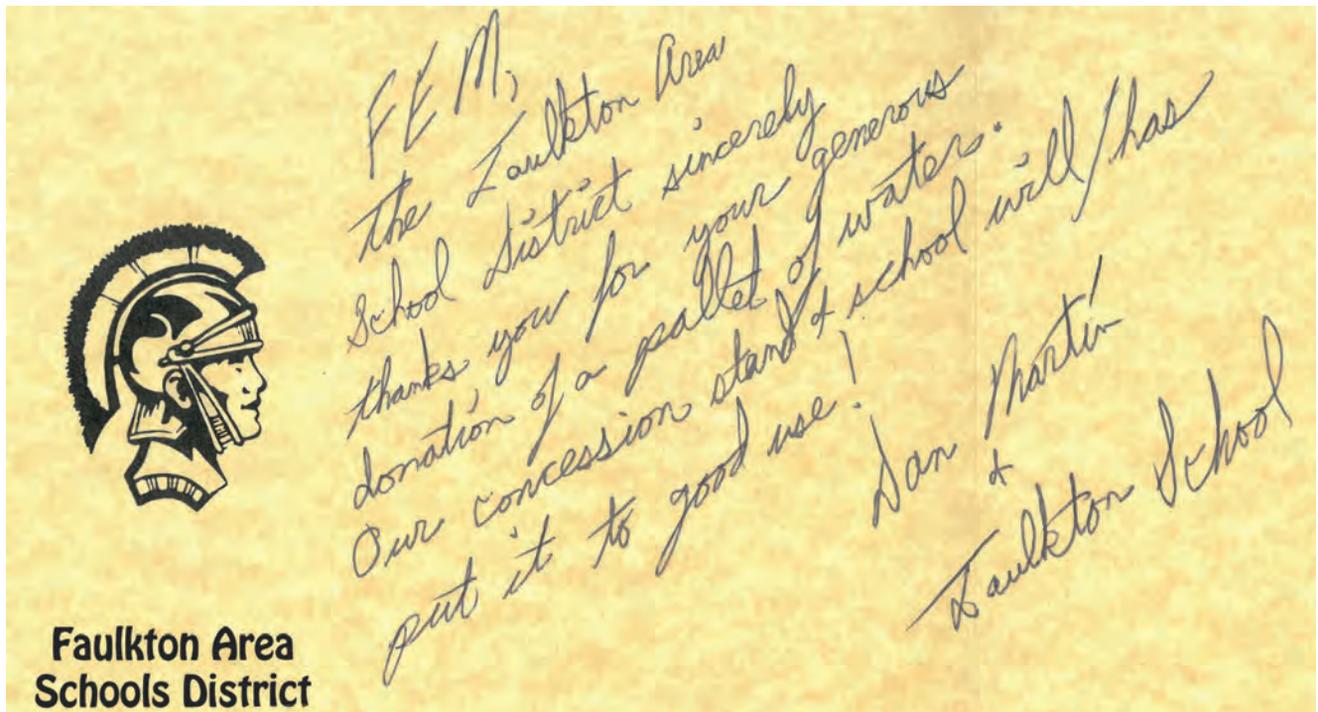
- **Red - Electric**
- **Orange - Communications, Telephone/CATV**
- **Blue - Potable Water**
- **Green - Sewer/Drainage**
- **Yellow - Gas/Petroleum**
- **Purple - Reclaimed Water**
- White - Premark Site of Proposed Excavation

After receiving utility markings, follow these practices:

- Respect the marks. Dig carefully around them.
- Maintain markings. Refresh if they fade or are removed.
- Ensure all utilities have reported.
- Use hand tools within 18-24 inches of marked utilities.



Remember, 811 does not locate private utilities. Hire a private locator for systems like underground sprinklers, invisible fences, or any wiring after your meter.





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

# BUSTING ENERGY MYTHS

## with Ted Smith of Sioux Valley Energy

**Frank Turner**  
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

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

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

oversees engineering, line crews and dispatch.

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

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

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

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

because one initiating fault spread across the network.

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

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

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

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

significantly when conditions allow.

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

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

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

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

**Smith: That’s not how it works.**

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

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

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

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

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

**Smith: No.**

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

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

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

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

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

He recalled one outage that proved especially difficult to diagnose.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# LINWORKERS ARE READY WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

When strong and dangerous storms move through our area, they often cause damage and outages. This is an inconvenience to most people, but to our lineworkers, it's a call to action. FEM crews are always ready when it matters most. This means they often leave their families, day or night, and head into difficult and dangerous conditions to restore power as safely and quickly as possible. Crews are ready because they've trained for these moments, they have experience and they have a commitment to serving others.

Our lineworkers live in the same rural areas that FEM members live. They're not just restoring power to people surrounding them, they might be restoring power to their family,

too. Because of this, they know that restoring power is essential, not just a convenience. Electricity is powering daily life for homes, businesses, farms and more.

Electric cooperatives across the state and country were built on the principle of neighbors helping neighbors, and our lineworkers live that every day. They're often the first to respond, and the last to leave, working long hours behind the scenes. Sometimes this means our crews leave FEM's territory to help other cooperatives in need, known as mutual aid.

While power outages can be frustrating as it often times means life grinds to a halt, FEM Electric

appreciates our member's patience and encouragement while our crews are working. Linework is a physical, demanding and often times dangerous job, which is why FEM crews approach each job with a focus on safety and teamwork.

On April 13th, we will celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day. One day is hardly enough, though, which is why we thank our lineworkers every day for being the backbone of our cooperative.

To FEM Electric lineworkers: thank you for your hard work, readiness and commitment to the members we serve. We are grateful for all that you do.



# FEM ELECTRIC'S ANNUAL PANCAKE & SAUSAGE BREAKFAST

## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL BREAKFAST SERVED AT FEM ELECTRIC

FEM Board members and employees welcomed over 180 people to the annual Pancake and Sausage Breakfast on February 13th, 2026.

Members were served some Valentine's themed pancakes by FEM Director Eric Odenbach and his daughter, Georgia. Director's Tom Thorpe, Gary Bachman, Kelly Melius and Paula Petersen also helped serve throughout the morning.

Donations were collected for local food pantries in Faulk, Edmunds and McPherson counties, and were delivered



*Georgia preps Valentine themed pancakes for FEM's youngest members with her father, Eric Odenbach.*



*A floral pancake created by Georgia.*

the following week.

The board of Directors and FEM employees would like to thank everyone who took the time to join us for breakfast, and those who were able to donate. We hope to see everyone next year for our annual Pancake and Sausage breakfast!



*A large crowd gathered together for breakfast.*

# ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ENERGY SCAMS

Photo by Frank Turner

### Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

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

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

### The "Past Due" Disconnection Threat

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

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

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

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

### The "You Overpaid" Refund Scam

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

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

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

However, capital credits are distributed through established,

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

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

### Gift Card and Cryptocurrency Demands

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

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

## Spotting a Scam

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

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

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

## What Your Local Cooperative Will and Will Not Do

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

established procedures and provide advance communication before any service interruption.

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

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

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

## Avoiding Energy Scams

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

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

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

**SIGNS OF AN ENERGY SCAM**

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

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

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

# PAWS, PLAN, PREPARE:

Build the ultimate pet emergency kit



Pets are beloved members of the family. Make sure they're prepared for emergencies by **including these essential items in an emergency kit:**

- **Food and water:** Pack several days' supply in waterproof containers.
- **Medicine:** Include extra supplies of daily meds in a waterproof container.
- **ID tag and gear:** Add a backup leash, collar, ID tag and pet registration (hard copy and digital).
- **Carrier:** Secure a sturdy travel crate or bag for each pet.
- **Sanitation:** Include litter, litter box (if needed), paper towels and trash bags.
- **Photo:** Save a picture of you with your pet for identification if separated.
- **Comfort items:** Don't forget toys, treats or bedding to ease stress.

## PREPARE PETS FOR TRAVEL



**When evacuating, reduce stress when using a carrier:**

- Feed your pets treats near or inside the carrier.
- Place treats, blankets or small beds inside so it smells familiar.
- Note your pet's hiding spots to quickly find them during emergencies.

Safe Electricity.org®

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Don't fall victim to power outage scams. When widespread outages occur, scammers may target affected utility customers. They can contact you via call, text or email, urging you to act quickly and provide personal information to restore service. Always communicate with your utility through official channels, such as their website, mobile app or phone number listed on your bill. Your safety and personal information are worth taking a moment to pause and verify unknown senders.

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



# STAY AWAY FROM DOWNED LINES

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

## Keep your distance:

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



**STAY AT LEAST  
50 FEET AWAY.**



**NEVER DRIVE  
OVER A DOWNED  
POWER LINE.**

## If you're inside your vehicle:

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

## If you must exit the vehicle due to fire or other danger:

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



**APRIL 9-11**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Festival of  
 Tasting  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237  
 www.schmeckfest.com

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

**MARCH 27-APRIL 4**  
**The Passion and the Cross**  
 Orpheum Theatre  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-367-6000  
 www.ThePassionMusical.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**