

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Keeping the Lights On

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Shaping Our Energy Future Through Innovation



Matt Hotzler
Manager

The energy industry is undergoing significant change driven by technology and the transition to more sustainable forms of energy. Innovation is essential in addressing these challenges and ensuring a continuous, reliable, affordable power supply.

Electric co-ops are no strangers to adapting to the needs of the local communities we serve. H-D Electric Cooperative has always leaned into change as we explore new ways to meet your energy needs.

Advanced Technologies

Investing in smarter technologies also can enhance the monitoring and control of electricity flow so we can respond swiftly to changing needs. Smart electric meters remotely collect data on how electricity is being used. This helps promptly prioritize and dispatch crews during an outage, reducing restoration time during weather-related disruptions. Even before adverse weather is here, data from our systems allows us to take proactive preventative measures to shore up our system.

Preparing for Increased Energy Use

Today, we depend on electricity more than ever before. From vehicles to farming equipment to home heating options, more products and appliances we depend on run on electricity.

Interest in electric vehicles (EVs) is growing. H-D Electric is available to help our members make informed decisions about EVs, including electric charging options and capacity requirements for the home.

Automakers may transition many or all new vehicles to electric-only models in the next ten years. Like all electric providers, H-D Electric must plan now to have the necessary infrastructure in place to meet future EV charging needs – without jeopardizing the ability to provide reliable power.

Innovative Efficiency Solutions

A commitment to community and member satisfaction drives h-D Electric. As consumers

become more proactive in managing their energy use, we provide new ways to help our members lower their use and save money.

Energy evaluations for a home or business can help you take advantage of the co-op's actionable energy-saving advice and efficiency services. Rebates, budget bill flexibility, and loans for new ENERGY STAR®-rated appliances and heating/cooling systems are just a few examples of how H-D Electric can help you take control of your energy use.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives

You may not realize it, but H-D Electric is part of a larger network of 900 electric co-ops nationwide. While you locally own us, the co-op members, we also have the advantage of working with co-ops across the country to share ideas and leverage the innovations our colleagues might have tried out first. As cooperatives, we're collaborators instead of competitors – it's a unique aspect of our business model, and we're stronger because of it.

Our energy future will look different than in the past, but H-D Electric is prepared to adapt for the members we serve. Our mission and commitment to you remain steady – to provide reliable power at a cost local families and businesses can afford.

April is Lineworker Appreciation Month

April is Lineworker Appreciation Month, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) will celebrate the day on April 8, 2024, but other organizations may choose a different day to celebrate lineworkers. I see other National organizations have set April 18th each year to celebrate. While some might think, why can't you pick a single day, I think it's great to celebrate lineworkers and all of our employees as much as we can because we are appreciative of them for all the work they do to make sure we have electricity in our homes, farms, schools, and businesses. It is great to have an entire month for them.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

H-D ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-905)

General Manager: Matt Hotzler

Headquarters Employees:

- Annie Aberle – Finance and Administration Manager
- Michelle Prins – Billing Clerk
- Heidi Brewer-Grimlie – Accounting Clerk
- Jami Bolden – Receptionist/Cashier
- Roger Cutshaw – Engineer
- Darren Matthies – Building Property Worker

Operations:

- Troy Kwasniewski – Operations Manager
- Todd Sprang – Line Foreman

Line Crew:

- Pat Kirby – Operations Support
- Joe Raml – Lead Lineworker
- Cody Scarrott – Lineworker
- Derek Bille – Lineworker
- Kevin Holida – Lead Lineworker
- Matt Miller – Lead Equipment Operator/ Mechanic
- Joseph Jordan Jr. – Apprentice Lineworker
- Eric Page – Apprentice Lineworker
- Brady Mellendorf - Equipment Operator/ Mechanic

Member Services:

- Tom Lundberg – Member Services Manager
- Noah Reichling – Electrician Foreman
- Jim Thompson – Lead Electrician
- Deaven Boots – Apprentice Electrician

Board of Directors:

- President Bert Rogness – Astoria
- Vice President Terry Strohfus – Hazel
- Secretary Roxanne Bass – Castlewood
- Treasurer Steven Hansen – Clear Lake
- Dale Williams – Estelline
- Casper Niemann – Lake Norden
- Kevin DeBoer – Clear Lake
- Calvin Musch – Revillo
- Todd Moritz – Clear Lake

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Design assistance by SDREA.



**Congratulations
Eric Page
On Becoming a Lineworker**

**Congratulations
Dallas Bocek**
Winner of the \$100 Bill Credit in the Paperless Bill Drawing

Benefits of Paperless Bill Statements:

- Receive your bill quicker with Email Notification and avoid frustration over postal delays.
- View or print your electric bill anytime with 24/7 secure access to your online account.
- Helps H-D Electric reduce operating costs of printing, paper and postage which saves you, the Member, money and helps the environment.

Signing up is easy as 1-2-3:

Website:

- ⇒ Visit <https://hdelectric.smarthub.coop/> and login using your Email Address and Password.
- ⇒ If not registered, create a new SmartHub account by clicking on 'New User? Sign up to access our self-service site'.
- ⇒ Once logged in to SmartHub:
 1. Click on 'My Profile'
 2. Choose 'Update My Paperless Settings'
 3. Click button to turn 'ON' paperless billing

Mobile App:

- ⇒ Download our free, secure SmartHub mobile app from the Apple or Google Play Store:
- ⇒ Provider is H-D Electric
- 1. Click on Menu 2. Go to 'Settings' 3. 'Activate Paperless Billing', click the slider to enable paperless

Break Dirt Without Breaking the Law

As the warmer spring temperatures cause the ground to thaw, contractors and homeowners alike are likely to begin on projects that require some sort of digging.

By law, anyone who is digging in South Dakota needs to call 811 and have a locate ticket in their hand before moving any ground. If you're not the one that's digging and you've hired a landscaper to do the work instead, that landscaper should have a ticket in their name.

When someone calls 811, the call goes through a center in Dallas, Texas. That call center then notifies utilities in the area, according to South Dakota 811 Executive Director Codi Gregg.

An excavator or digger has to allow 48 hours for the utilities in the area they plan to dig into to come on site and mark the location of those underground utilities. On average, there are five to eight utilities notified per call.

If there's a potential loss of life or property, the allowed response time is shortened to a maximum of two hours during normal business hours.

"When the ticket goes in, the excavator is given a list of the utilities that are involved or are working or that are in that area where they're working," Gregg explained.

Those companies that own the utilities will make marks that identify the location. Those flags are also color coded according to the type of utility. As more and more overhead electrical lines are converted to underground lines, it's imperative that anyone who plans on doing a project that requires digging call 8-1-1 to avoid a dangerous and deadly situation.

"It's a free phone call for the excavator to make. There's no real reason for them not to make the phone call other than not being aware of it," Gregg said.

Kristie Fiegen, South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairwoman, echoed Gregg's comments, stating that making the call to 811 is the "most important and easiest call anyone can make before starting a digging project."

"This simple and imperative effort will help to prevent damages to vital underground utilities and safeguard critical services that our residents and economy depend on," Fiegen said. "During the 2024 construction season, I urge everyone to call 811 before you dig and protect all South Dakotans by abiding by our state laws and making safety our highest priority."

- Last year, there were 176,984 notices to the 811 Center of work occurring.
- South Dakota's 811 laws were established in 1993.
- In 2017, South Dakota 811 added damage reporting to our laws, stating if there was a damage, disturbance, or a dislocation of a utility – 811 was to be contacted to report the damage. It was also added that 911 was to be contacted first if there was a leak.
- Free accounts are offered upon request, allowing account holders to enter locate tickets themselves without calling an agent.
- A total of 1,944 utilities were reportedly damaged in 2023. Of that total, 375 excavators did not have a previous ticket.
- According to Common Ground Alliance's Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report, the annual rate of damages to buried infrastructure costs the U.S. a staggering \$30 billion every year and 60% of nationwide damages to underground utilities are caused specifically by professional contractors not contacting 811 prior to digging.



Don't Fly Drones Near Power Lines

Lyndon Kaski, Age 8

Lyndon Kaski warns readers to stay away from power lines when flying drones. Great advice! Lyndon's parents are Jonathan and Amanda Kaski, members of Kingsbury Electric Cooperative.

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.

SALSA SAVORY

FRESH SALSA

Ingredients:

4-6 med. to large tomatoes, seeded and chopped
 1 med. onion, chopped
 4 fresh jalapenos, seeded and finely chopped*
 1 clove garlic, crushed
 1 tbsp. dried parsley or fresh cilantro to taste
 1 tsp. salt

Method

*To prevent jalapenos from burning your fingers, lightly rub fingers with shortening, especially around fingernails.
 Serve with tortilla chips.

Linda Hubbard
 Rapid City, S.D.

LUANN'S FRESH SALSA

Ingredients:

4 med. tomatoes, peeled and chopped
 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
 1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper
 1-2 tbsps. jalapeno or other hot pepper, seeded and finely chopped
 1 tsp. salt
 pepper to taste
 1 tbsp. lime juice or red wine vinegar
 1-2 tps. catsup
 dash garlic powder
 dash cayenne pepper
 1-2 tps. sugar
 cilantro (optional)

Method

Mix all ingredients. Serve with any tortilla or corn chips for dipping. Will keep approximately 1 week in the refrigerator.

Nancy Stenson
 Fort Pierre, S.D.

TAMARIND PASILLA MANGO PINEAPPLE SALSA

Ingredients:

1 1/4 cups diced fresh pineapple
 1 large mango, pitted and diced (about 1 1/4 cup)
 1 small red onion, diced
 1 small red bell pepper, diced
 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro
 1 med. jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
 3 tbsps. fresh lime juice
 1 tbsp. honey
 4 1/2 teaspoons Tamarind Naturally Flavored & Pasilla Chile Seasoning

Method

Mix all ingredients in medium bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving. Stir before serving. Serve with tortilla chips or use to top tacos or nachos.

McCormick

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Celebrate Earth Day

Why Taking Steps to Conserve Matters



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Earth Day is April 22, a time when we celebrate this beautiful planet we are lucky to call home. During this day of appreciation, I encourage you to take action at home by making changes to conserve energy. If we all contribute, even small adjustments and changes to how much energy we use can have positive impacts.

Electricity is essential to our daily lives. It gives us opportunities to learn, keeps us safe and comfortable and provides entertainment. The downside is that every source of energy generation has consequences. Fossil fuels emit carbon. Hydropower dams limit the passage of migrating fish. Even solar panels can't be made without mining minerals. Using less electricity is a way to mitigate the impact of producing the electricity that powers our lives.

Before diving into ways to use less energy, it's important to know the difference between conservation and energy efficiency. Energy efficiency refers to equipment that uses less energy to do the same job. For example, ENERGY STAR®-certified refrigerators keep your food just as fresh as standard models but use about 9% less energy to do it, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Conservation is using less energy by changing behavior and practices. For example, adjusting your thermostat to be closer to the temperature outside or turning off the lights or a ceiling fan when you leave the room conserves energy.

Conservation has the best return on investment. It's often free and can save a little or a lot – depending on what you are changing and how drastic of a change you make.

Let's start with what's typically the biggest energy user in the average household: heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment. Save energy while you sleep by programming your thermostat to be a few degrees closer to the outside temperature at night. In colder climates, add an extra blanket or comforter to your bed to keep you warm.

Typically, the second biggest energy user is the water heater. Replacing an electric storage water heater with a heat pump/hybrid water heater is a great example of an energy efficient project. Adjusting the temperature setting to the recommended 120 degrees and using less hot water in your home conserves energy. Wash clothes in cold water. When washing dishes, don't let the hot water run longer than necessary.

Earth Day also lends itself to thinking of ways we can connect with each other and limit our screen time. Look for electricity-free opportunities with your family or community. I like to unplug and get outside with friends and family. Going for a hike, a walk or even just spending time in your yard or local park is a great way to reconnect with others and nature. Before you head out, adjust that thermostat and turn off everything possible. Unplug chargers from outlets and turn off all electronics and lights.

I am grateful for this planet we call home. It offers so much to sustain us. Any small changes we can make to benefit the planet can add up if we all pitch in.

State Technical Colleges Offering Dual Credits

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

More and more motivated high school students in South Dakota are getting a leg up on their careers through dual credit programs offered by the state's technical colleges.

In fact, three high school students are set to walk away with their degrees from Lake Area Technical College this spring.

Lake Area Technical College President Tiffany Sanderson said more high school juniors and seniors are participating in the state's dual credit program to get a jump start on their career paths while saving a considerable amount in tuition costs.

"Students have ten different public colleges and universities in the state to choose from. At Lake Area Tech, the savings are huge. A student normally pays \$166 per credit but will only pay \$48 per credit through the dual credit program," Sanderson said. "That's a 70% savings on college coursework."

"It's popular for students to take both technical courses and general education courses. Often that first class helps them understand what they're interested in pursuing."

At Mitchell Technical College, more and more students are not only enrolling in the dual credit program but taking more

than one course during each semester. That's according to Carol Grode-Hanks, vice president of academics at MTC, and Hilary Vining, director of enrollment at MTC.

Vining said about 80% of those in the dual credit program just take one class.

"Students that take one class save \$570, while full-time students save \$3,500," Grode-Hanks said.

Vining said students enrolled in dual credit courses full-time typically only have their elective high school classes remaining.

"However, by taking dual enrollment courses, they have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning and actively participate in practical activities," Vining said. "There are some kids that are ready to get out in the workforce and get as much as they can get done at a cheaper rate. It's becoming a lot more popular. Parents are getting more educated about the opportunity as well."

At Western Dakota Technical College, for the 2023-2024 school year, there are 310 dual enrollment students in the fall semester and 327 students in the spring semester.

Diana Newman, director of admissions at WDTA, said the school works with many students one-on-one to advise them toward a track to get ahead in addition to a graduation plan.

"Western Dakota Technical College aims to help make dual enrollment accessible. Through the use of grants, we have been able to support more students to have access to books, tools, equipment, uniforms, and other needed items to succeed in dual enrollment classes," Newman said.

Southeast Technical College President Robert Griggs said he's also seeing an increased interest in the dual credit program.

"Dual credit courses provide high school students the opportunity to explore different career fields and areas of interest, all while earning credits that count towards a high school diploma and a college degree," Griggs said. "Southeast Technical College works with area school districts to package dual credit learning options that facilitate the transition into college and entry into high-demand career fields."

Dual credit programs that fill up fast at Southeast Technical College include welding, medical and cardiovascular sonography, HVAC, electrician, nursing, and vet tech.

For more information on enrolling in the dual credit program, students and parents should reach out to their high school counselor's office or check out the options at <https://ourdakotadreams.com/high-school/dual-credit/>.



Students enrolled in Western Dakota Technical College's Dual Credit Program.
Photo courtesy of Western Dakota Technical College.



Elliot and Janaye Rayman at their second annual Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser.

One Lineman's After-hours Outreach

Frank Turner

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Across the state, linemen are charged with keeping South Dakota's power going. It's a big responsibility: troubleshooting electrical systems, operating heavy equipment, and maintaining power lines. These workers are frequently asked to navigate high voltage and confront dangerous challenges in all kinds of extreme weather. In the face of these challenges, it takes a truly community-minded individual to ensure the community's lights stay on. Many of these crucial workers demonstrate their commitment to their community daily, both during and outside of work hours.

Butte Electric Journeyman Lineman Elliot Rayman, who has been with the cooperative for seven years, serves as just one example of an electric cooperative employee who has pulled extra hours for his local community of Spearfish, S.D. In addition to his role as a lineman, Elliot wears many hats in his community beyond just the hard hat of a co-op employee. He is a veteran of the National Guard, having served a deployment overseas. Elliot and his wife, Janaye, are also deeply involved in their community as the owners of Barefoot Fitness, a gym in the Spearfish community. Janaye, a cancer survivor, operates the gym and is an integral part of their community efforts.

Janaye and Elliot purchased Barefoot Fitness in 2018, fulfilling Janaye's long-standing dream of owning a gym. Shortly after their purchase, the couple learned that Janaye's cancer, previously in remission, had metastasized into Stage 4 breast cancer.

"In 2020, I had reoccurrence everywhere – brain, lungs, liver, bones," said Janaye. "Since then, I have been on a mission every day to heal and recover. It's also been my goal to help others every single day, day in and day out, and that's

what keeps me going. That's my job and it's what I love to do, so I'm not stopping."

"My wife is an inspiration to many people," added Elliot. "She is the strongest person I know."

Undeterred, Elliot and Janaye decided to press on and use their gym as a platform to engage with their local community. Despite Janaye's ongoing battle with breast cancer, the two started a new Barefoot Fitness tradition – an annual Memorial Day fundraiser to benefit South Dakota's gold star families, the families of fallen soldiers.

"After a few years of owning the gym, we decided we needed to give back to the community, because the community had really been there for us through everything," said Elliot. "We knew we had the ability and the platform to give back to the community through Barefoot Fitness, so we settled on a Memorial Day fundraiser that would benefit gold star families in our state."

This May, Elliot and Janaye will host their fourth Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser. Like previous years, the event will feature local catering from Spearfish businesses, such as Spearfish Brewing Company and Timmons Market. The event will also include an optional community workout for all ages.

"We kick off our day with the National Guard leading the pledge of allegiance and national anthem," said Janaye. "We do a prayer, and then we do our Memorial Day workout. It's a team workout that people are encouraged to complete with their family or friends."

According to Janaye and Elliot, the team workout is about more than just breaking a sweat. Instead, it's about remembering those who gave their lives for this country.

"You always hear about people doing things for veterans, but you never hear about the story on the other side of

that – the families," Janaye said. "A lot of times the family is forgotten so we really want to honor the families that also made a sacrifice."

At the end of the day, Elliot and Janaye said none of their efforts would be possible without the support they have received from the Spearfish community, the veteran community,

and the electric cooperative community.

"Butte Electric and the co-op world have helped us out so much," said Elliot. "The culture of the co-op community is huge: there is brotherhood – it's the way people help each other out. You just can't ask for a better group of people, and that's the same way with the veteran world."



Janaye and Elliot lead a community workout session, challenging participants to complete 300 weighted ball throws.

Payment Options

Our single-phase service monthly bills are typically processed on the 1st each month with a due date of the 16th. Once bills are processed, our software vendor from Saint Louis, Missouri prints and mails these. If the post office is experiencing extreme weather conditions or delays along the delivery routes, this may cause delays in the mail delivery.

If you are experiencing mail delivery delays of your bills, we want to offer some solutions. We encourage members to access SmartHub to view bills and receive the monthly email or text notifications. The link to register can be found below. We also offer automatic payment options through a bank account or with a Visa/MasterCard. Find information on AutoPay in SmartHub, on the back of your monthly bill or call the office for more details.

SmartHub

With SmartHub, the power of data is in your hands through convenient account management and detailed usage information. SmartHub, a mobile and Web app, delivers accurate, timely account information and allows you to make payments in a secure environment with the touch of a button, right from your mobile device or on your PC. The two-way communication available with SmartHub allows you to notify us of account and service issues while providing us a way to let you know about special offers, programs, events and more.

With SmartHub you can:

- Check your usage
- Contact our office
- Pay your bill and have the option to sign up for recurring payments using a bank account or credit card
- Check our news feed

There are four ways to register and start using SmartHub:

- On your computer go to: <https://hdelectric.smarthub.coop>
- Go to our H-D website at: www.hdelectric.coop and click on the SmartHub link
- Call H-D Electric and we will help you register
- For your phone go to: www.smarthubapp.com

Automatic Payment Plan for ACH and Credit Card for H-D Electric

H-D Electric offers members the Automatic Payment Plan. You can have your payment

taken automatically from your credit card, checking or savings account. Payments are processed on the 15th each month. When the 15th day of the month is on a weekend or holiday, the payment will be processed on the following working day.

The payments are always on time. Members using the automatic payment plan will receive a statement each month showing the amount that will be withdrawn from your bank account and state that your bill will be paid by ACH or Credit Card.

Two ways to sign up for Automatic Payments using your Checking or Savings Account.

1. Go to our SmartHub website, login or register your account and sign up through the Auto Pay Program under the Billing & Payments tab.
2. On the back of your monthly bill statement, there is a section for Automatic Payment Authorization for you to complete and send back to our office with a voided check or bank slip.

One way to sign up for Automatic Payments using your Credit Card.

Go to our SmartHub website, login or register your account and sign up through the Auto Pay Program under the Billing & Payments tab.

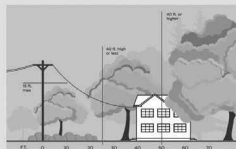
H-D Electric follows the Payment Card Industries compliance standards which requires us to only to enter credit card information through a secure device. We currently use a secure VeriFone device to process one-time credit card payments. This VeriFone device does not allow us to save credit card information for the Automatic Payment Plan or future use.

If you need help registering your account on the SmartHub website or saving your credit card information for the Auto Pay Program, please contact our office.

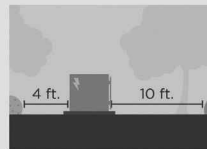
3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them. Here's how you can help:

1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



Trimming improves safety for all.

Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.

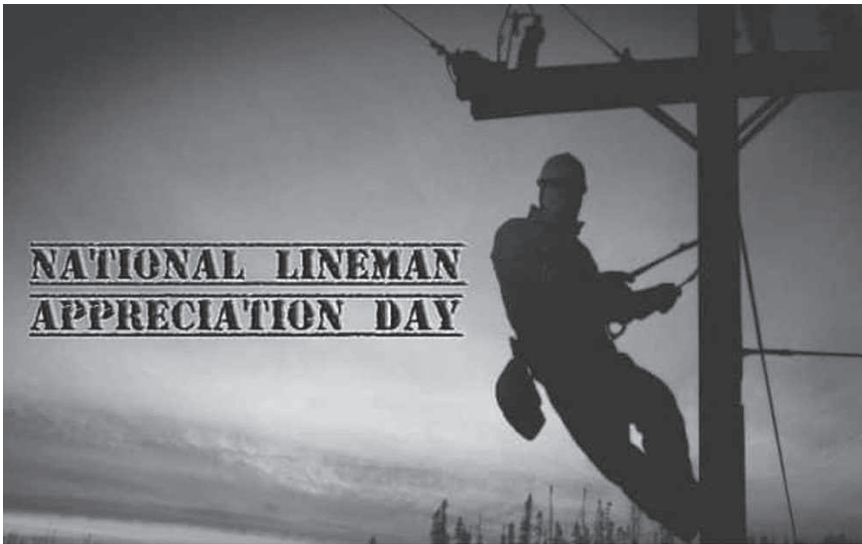
H-D Electric Yard Light Program

Installing yard lights has been and continues to be an important service to our members. We repair yard lights at the cost of the parts and also install new yard lights.

We sell 40-watt LED lights for new yard light installations as well as for any existing yard lights that cannot be repaired. The cost of an LED light is \$270 (plus tax). For new installations, there may be additional costs for a pole and wire if required.

Life expectancy for an LED light is about 20 years and has a savings of approximately \$30 a year.

Give us a call if you have any questions or are interested in purchasing a new LED yard light or replacing an existing yard light.



Operating Statistics

	January 2023	January 2024
Customers	3,778	3,831
Amount Collected.....	\$1,196,609	\$1,293,470
Average Bill	\$316.73	\$337.63
Average Kilowatt-Hour	3,338	3,548
Kilowatt-Hours Purchased.....	13,321,297	14,352,789
Kilowatt-Hours Sold	12,611,284	13,594,281

H-D Electric Water Heater Program

H-D Electric sells three sizes (50, 85, 100 gallons) of high-efficiency lifetime warranty Marathon water heaters. We have a rebate and discount program for our members.

Replacing an old water heater?

Call H-D Electric and see if you qualify for a new 50-, 85-, 100-gallon lifetime water heater from H-D Electric, and after the rebate only pay \$600 for a 50 gallon and \$850 for an 85- or 100-gallon (tax included).

New Construction or Gas Water Heater Conversion?

Check out what H-D Electric has to offer for the lifetime warranty water heaters for you. If you qualify a new 50 gallon would only be \$400 and an 85- or 100-gallon would only be \$600 (tax included).

Call the H-D Electric office during normal business hours to find out the complete list of qualifications.

To receive the rebates noted above, a controller must be installed within 90 days of purchase. If a member chooses to not have a controller installed, they may only purchase 50 gallon

and must pay the full amount with no rebates. The cost with no rebates is \$1,300. Due to 85- and 100 gallon being grid enabled they must have controllers installed.





SDHP Trooper Megan Koch stands by her patrol vehicle. Koch works within the state's Motor Carrier Division. *Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel*

COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

When commercial motor vehicles come into the state of South Dakota, it's the job of the South Dakota Highway Patrol's Motor Carrier Division to ensure the drivers of those vehicles have the necessary paperwork, permits and documents.

The task is one of public safety.

Making sure the carriers are adhering to safe driving practices is just another way to ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be while driving on the state's roadways.

South Dakota Highway Patrol

Trooper Megan Koch is one of the officers who works within the motor carrier division.

"Our main focus is making sure the motor carriers or trucks are safe on the roadways and keeping everybody else safe. It helps them perform their job of carrying their property or passengers across the state lines and within the state. We help make sure that they can do that job," Koch explained.

Mainly, Koch works specifically with commercial motor vehicles that carry over a certain weight or property of monetary value within the state or interstate.

"When we do an inspection on a driver, we're checking a bunch of different things. Weight sometimes is one of them, but not always. It just depends on the situation," Koch said.

"They have to have certain paperwork with them and they are required to follow certain rules. It depends on what they're doing."

The dependent variables include whether a carrier is traveling with goods within the state or going out of the state and how far away they are from the hub, or where they leave every day or go home to every day.

Koch also checks their paperwork to ensure the drivers are within compliance of state law.

"They have to follow certain hours that they can work so that they don't get tired while driving. It's a big thing that we follow for safety," Koch said.

"We also check things like

equipment violations, headlights, taillights, tires, you know, stuff that makes them safe on the roadway and keeps them safe. We'll also check for things such as bad driving behavior, if they're not staying within their own lane, using blinkers, not properly stopping at stop sign – stuff like that. So, if we see something like that, we can initiate an inspection."

Koch, a Plankinton native whose father was a truck driver, said the division is typically checking brake lines and lights.

In South Dakota, there are four main ports of entry. The ports are located along Interstate 29 in Jefferson and Sisseton, and along Interstate 90 in Sioux Falls and Tilford.

Each carrier is issued a "safety score," which is assessed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

"That's based on whether or not they have the proper paperwork, if they're driving within their hours, if they have the proper equipment and whether or not they've received any driving or alcohol violations," Koch said.

If a driver has a high enough safety score, they aren't required by law to stop at a port for inspection.

Overall, it all comes down to keeping the roadways safe for everyone, regardless of what type of vehicle they are driving.

"These rules and laws are in place for a reason. They have to be extra alert and awake while they're driving and that all of their equipment works properly. If you're driving a very heavy, large vehicle, you need excellent brakes. You have to be able to stop in time. That is the main reason we're checking all these things. It helps everybody on the road."

The division also works

with rural electric cooperatives when oversized loads travel along the state's highway system, according to Lieutenant Austin Schmitz, District Four Assistant Commander with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Sometimes oversized loads require that overhead power lines be moved out of the way to let the carrier pass through.

"As a district we do work with a lot of the cooperatives such as East River Electric. We all get together when planning for oversized loads coming through our area," Schmitz said.

"They usually run the route first and let us know what lines they need to move."

That was the case when a massive generator was moved across the state. The generator was so heavy and huge that the truck carrying it could only travel 30 miles per hour. That truck was also equipped with over a hundred tires, Schmitz said.

"That generator came through Watertown a couple of years ago and we've got some more coming in two or

three years," Schmitz said, referring to the multi-million pound machines.

"The planning for those started last year. That equipment will be coming in through the Great Lakes on a ship. They'll pick them up there and then they'll move through our state then Wyoming, Montana, however they can go," Schmitz said.

The truck carrying the heavy equipment is too big to go across most bridges and overpasses, so finding a route that allows the machinery to snake across the country is tricky.

While moving huge pieces of machinery can be one of the more interesting parts of the job, it's the flexibility of the job that Koch enjoys most.

"I get to pick and choose where I want to go for the day. I get to do something a little bit different every day. Because, I mean, nothing is ever the same," Koch said.

"It's kind of nice to be able to do that and make the day what you want of it."



A SDHP officer has the latest technology at his or her fingertips to ensure trucks on South Dakota roads are operating safely. Photo Credit: South Dakota Highway Patrol

Fun and Unique Places to Stay in South Dakota

Scott Waltman

South Dakota is known as the land of infinite variety, and for good reason.

From the Black Hills to the Badlands to the rolling East River prairies and from scorching heat to bitter cold, South Dakota covers a wide swath of geography, weather and activities.

That carries over to places to stay across the state.

There are plenty of fun and unique Airbnb and Vrbo options in South Dakota with something to please everybody who doesn't need the hustle, bustle and traffic of a major metropolitan area. Not surprisingly, some of the best options are near water. Others are remote for folks who want to unplug for a few days, while some are near farms and ranches and offer the opportunity to help with modest chores, if visitors so choose.

Here is a look at some of the more distinctive and interesting staycation options in South Dakota.

Lookout Loft Treehouse near Valley Springs

How about planning a stay in a treehouse? That's possible with the Lookout Loft Treehouse near Valley Springs. Two decks, a fire pit, a hot tub and 360-degree views more than make up for any lack of space for a guest or two looking for a getaway that sets itself apart from most others. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Wrap-around deck
- Pillow-top mattress
- Hot tub

- Propane fire pit
- Kitchenette
- Air conditioning and heat

Mansfield Micro-Cabin

In the heart of the pheasant belt, this small Escape Vista trailer is ideal for hunters seeking for South Dakota's state bird or those who just want to escape. No city lights, no traffic, no interruptions. Just peaceful prairie surroundings with easy access to top-notch hunting. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Queen bed
- Full bath
- Patio
- Kitchen
- Backyard

Log cabin in Vanocker Canyon

There's a lot to like about this custom-built log cabin that's surrounded by the Black Hills National Forest on three sides. With 1,300 square feet, it's roomy and sleeps as many as eight guests. There's a deck, patio and hot tub, and the cabin is settled on 40 acres between Nemo and Sturgis. There's easy access to ATV trails and nearby golf courses. Take in the local history knowing Gen. George Custer camped in the canyon during the summer of 1847. This rental is available through Vrbo.

Amenities

- Gourmet kitchen
- 60-inch high-definition TV
- Deck and patio
- Log pool table
- Luxury bath
- Propane grill



Cabin over water on the prairie near Philip

- Fireplace and fire pit
- Washer and dryer

Dennis Ranch near Red Owl

Settle in and enjoy a working cattle ranch that's a century old at the Dennis Ranch. Take a personal tour led by your hosts. Go for a hike, search for arrowheads and dinosaur bones or just enjoy nature and bird-watching. For an extra fee, guests can watch or help with day-to-day ranch work. Those who can ride horses can hop on and ride alongside working cowboys and ranchers. Visitors will stay in a house with the hosts, who will happily share the history of the land and ranch.

Amenities

- Two bedrooms
- Dedicated workspace
- Wi-Fi
- Washer and dryer
- Fire pit
- Shared patio



Mansfield Micro-Cabin



The Still House near Rapid City

The Still House near Rapid City

How's a tent with an attached deck sound for a unique option? That's what The Still House offers. Visitors won't exactly be roughing it with sleeping bags on the ground. The 16-foot-by-13-foot wall tent is more like luxury camping near the Black Hills. A heated shower is attached and there's a private, odor-free, environmentally friendly "outhouse" just a few steps away. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Wood-burning fireplace
- Private deck
- Barbecue grill and outdoor kitchen
- Fire pit
- Outdoor shower
- Outdoor furniture and dining area
- Hammock

37-foot recreational vehicle near Hot Springs

If you don't have your own RV, but you're willing to stay in one, here's something to consider. This large RV offers a few extras, including a beautiful patio overlook and a hot tub. The Evans Plunge mineral springs are just a 15-minute drive away. This rental is available via Vrbo.

Amenities

- Seven beds, including three bunk beds
- One full bath
- Private property with an overlook view of Hot Brook Canyon

- Propane fire pit
- Hot tub available upon request
- Mountain view

Cabin over water on the prairie near Philip

Relax and enjoy in this locally constructed prairie home that sits along the bank of a small dam. Don't expect the bells and whistles offered by a top-end motel room. This is a place for people who enjoy nature and the outdoors. Hop in a kayak and row away a portion of the day while getting a little exercise. This rental is available via Airbnb.

Amenities

- Four queen beds
- 43-inch TV
- Private patio
- Kayak
- Grill
- Fire pit

The Lodge at Broken Arrow Farms near Pierre

If you have a big gathering and need lots of room, The Lodge is worth considering. It's huge. The nine bedrooms can accommodate as many as 28 guests, and there are eight and a half bathrooms. Need a place for a family reunion,

team-building event or an upscale base for fishing or hunting? You've found it. Just northeast of Pierre, the waters of the Missouri River are nearby and easy to access. This rental is available via Vrbo.

Amenities

- Pool table
- Bluetooth sound system
- Patio
- Four king beds, 10 queen beds
- Fire pit
- Barbecue

Deep Snow near Terry Peak Ski Area

This is a stop for folks who love snow skiing, but it makes for a great summer stay, too, with plenty of hiking options. Terry Peak Ski Area is not even 1,000 feet away, so don't forget to pack your gear. There are no shortage of other options, either, with the history and casinos of Deadwood nearby and the entire Black Hills area as a possible playground. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Fully equipped kitchen
- Hot tub
- Wi-Fi
- Patio
- Grill



Log cabin in Vanocker Canyon



APRIL 5-7, 2024
PBR: Unleash the Beast
 Denny Sanford
 PREMIER Center
 Sioux Falls, SD

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

MARCH 30
BHEC Community Easter Egg Hunt
 10 a.m.
 Hermosa Baseball Fields
 Hermosa, SD

MARCH 31
Easter Sunday Sunrise Celebration
 7 a.m.
 Mount Rushmore National Monument
 Keystone, SD

APRIL 2
Clay-Union Electric Ribbon Cutting & Open House
 3 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
 31321 SD Hwy. 19
 Vermillion, SD

APRIL 5
A Night at the Races fundraiser for Safe Place of Eastern SD
 6:30 p.m.
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 5-7
71st Annual Hayes Play: Under a Cowboy Moon
 7 p.m.
 Hayes Community Hall
 Hayes, SD

APRIL 12-14
The Farmer's Daughter 19th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 13
Front Porch 605 Shop Hop
 9 a.m.
 Groton, SD

APRIL 14
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 20
Healthy Kids Day
 10 a.m.
 Liberty Center YMCA
 Box Elder, SD

APRIL 20
Groton Firemen's Spring Social
 7 p.m.
 Groton Fire Station
 Groton, SD

APRIL 21
Fiddle & Popular Song
 2 p.m.
 Gayville Hall
 Gayville, SD

APRIL 26
Mitchell Technical College Alumni Cornhole Tournament
 6:30 p.m.
 World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 27
66th Annual Lions Pancake Jamboree
 7 a.m.
 Masonic Hall
 Mitchell, SD

MAY 11
Opening Day
 1880 Train
 Hill City, SD

MAY 18-28
Free Amish Carriage & Buggy Rides
 10 a.m.-4 p.m. every Saturday
 Buggy & Ag Museums
 Stockholm, SD

JUNE 26-29
Crystal Springs Rodeo
 Clear Lake, SD
 605-874-2996

JULY 26-28
Clear Lake Days
 ClearLakeDays.com
 Clear Lake, SD

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