

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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The Season of Giving



Matt Hotzler
Manager

As the holiday season approaches and the air turns crisp, we're reminded that this truly is the season of giving – a time for gratitude, generosity, and looking out for one another. At H-D Electric Cooperative, that's something we strive to live out year-round.

“Concern for community” isn't just a phrase – it's one of the core cooperative principles that makes us different from other utilities. We're not only here to keep the lights on, but to make life better for the people we serve: our members, neighbors, and friends. In fact, it's our mission statement: Committed to safely enhance the quality of life for our members, employees, and communities.

Over the years, our co-op family has come together to face challenges, support those in need, and invest in a stronger future. That spirit of generosity shines especially bright during the holidays. From sponsoring local students on the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., to teaching electrical safety in schools, we believe knowledge and opportunity are among the greatest gifts we can give. You'll also see our team coaching youth sports, volunteering at events, and serving on local boards – because when you're part of a cooperative, giving back comes naturally.

We also know the season can bring financial stress. If you'd like advice on saving energy, need payment options, or simply have questions, please reach out. We're here to help – not just during the holiday season, but all year long.

At H-D Electric Cooperative, we believe generosity and care for the community are at the heart of who we are. And because you're not just customers, but member-owners, everything we do is rooted in serving you.

From all of us at H-D Electric Cooperative, thank you for being part of our co-op family. We wish you and your loved ones a safe, joyful, and bright holiday season.

Looking Ahead: Rate Increase Expected in 2026

Alongside this season of gratitude, we want to keep you informed about challenges on the horizon. Unfortunately, our power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, has announced a substantial rate increase beginning in January 2026. While we are still working through the exact impact on your bills, we know that H-D Electric will need to adjust rates next year to cover these rising costs.

Why are rates increasing?

- **Growing demand:** Even without data centers, AI or crypto loads – traditional load growth means Basin Electric must invest in new generation and transmission. These new facilities are far more expensive than older plants.
- **Fuel and market volatility:** Basin's costs are affected by fluctuating commodity prices, both for the fuels they purchase and the revenues from their subsidiaries.
- **System reliability:** Basin and East River Electric continue to invest in strengthening the grid to reduce outage times.
- **Higher reserve requirements:** The Southwest Power Pool, our regional grid operator, now requires Basin Electric to maintain larger “just in case” power reserves. Building and maintaining that extra capacity raises both capital and operating costs.

At H-D Electric Cooperative, we remain committed to keeping costs as low as possible while ensuring dependable service. Because we are a not-for-profit, member-owned cooperative, every dollar we collect goes directly into providing safe, reliable electricity to you and your community.

We will continue to share updates as more details become available and will provide resources to help you manage your energy use effectively.

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
- Kevin Holida – Lead Lineworker
- Joe Raml – Lead Lineworker
- Derek Bille – Lineworker
- Eric Page – Lineworker
- Joseph Jordan Jr. – Lineworker
- Jonah Paintner – Apprentice Lineworker
- Matt Miller – Lead Equipment Operator/Mechanic
- Brady Mellendorf - Equipment Operator/Mechanic

Member Services:

- Tom Lundberg – Member Services Manager
 - Noah Reichling – Electrician Foreman
 - Jim Thompson – Lead Electrician
 - Deaven Boots – Apprentice Electrician
 - Jon Zirbel – Meter/Load Management
- Board of Directors:**
- President Bert Rogness – Astoria
 - Vice President Terry Strohfus – Hazel
 - Treasurer Steven Hansen – Clear Lake
 - Secretary Todd Moritz – Castlewood
 - Sherwin Dekam – Castlewood
 - Dale Williams – Estelline
 - Casper Niemann – Lake Norden
 - Kevin DeBoer – Clear Lake
 - Calvin Musch – Revillo

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OUR OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED THURSDAY AND FRIDAY IN OBSERVANCE OF THE HOLIDAY.
Please call 605-874-2171 for an outage or emergencies.

FREE WASHINGTON D.C. TRIP FOR JUNIORS & SENIORS
JUNE 14-20, 2026

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?
 ALL AREA HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS WHOSE PARENTS/GUARDIANS ARE MEMBERS OF H-D ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE.

HOW DO I QUALIFY?
 COMPLETE THE RURAL ELECTRIC YOUTH TOUR APPLICATION FORM THAT IS AVAILABLE FROM YOUR SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR, H-D ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE WEBSITE WWW.H-DELECTRIC.COOP OR IN PERSON AT H-D ELECTRIC HEADQUARTERS.

Submit completed applications to H-D Electric Cooperative before Nov 1, 2025.
 Contact Information
 605-874-2171 or jambah-delectric.coop or visit www.h-delectric.coop for more information.

Operating Statistics

| | August 2024 | August 2025 |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Customers | 3,859 | 3,899 |
| Amount Collected..... | \$1,186,943 | \$1,347,485 |
| Average Bill | \$307.58 | \$345.60 |
| Average Kilowatt-Hour | 2,749 | 3,041 |
| Kilowatt-Hours Purchased..... | 11,169,450 | 12,593,672 |
| Kilowatt-Hours Sold | 10,608,821 | 11,855,573 |

Stay Safe This Holiday Season: Tips for a Merry and Accident-Free Celebration

The holidays bring families together with twinkling lights, festive meals and cozy traditions. But they also bring seasonal risks that can turn celebrations into emergencies if precautions aren't taken. Local safety officials are reminding residents to keep safety in mind when cooking, decorating, and entertaining this year.

Extension Cords

With more lights and electronics plugged in during the holidays, extension cords are often stretched to their limits. Experts urge homeowners not to overload outlets and to replace any cords that are frayed or damaged. Only outdoor-rated cords should be used outside, especially in snowy or wet conditions.

Families should avoid running cords under rugs or across doorways where they can overheat or become tripping hazards.

Turkey Fryers

Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners have grown to include deep-fried turkeys, but safety must come first. Fryers should only be used outdoors, on a flat surface and far away from buildings, garages or wooden decks. Fire officials caution that a partially frozen or wet turkey can cause oil to boil over and ignite, leading to severe burns or home fires.

A fire extinguisher rated for grease fires should always be kept nearby, and fryers should never be left unattended while in use. One distracted moment can cause a disaster.

Ladders

From hanging lights to topping off the tree, ladders are part of the holiday routine. Falls are among the most common seasonal injuries, so ladders should be set on level ground and never leaned against unstable surfaces. Having another person hold the ladder is strongly advised.

Candles and Fireplaces

Candles and fireplaces are popular during the holiday season, but they also raise the risk of home fires, especially when combined with the extra decorations and greenery that fill many homes in December. According to the National Fire Protection Association, candles cause an average of

46% of fires in December each year. Never leaving a flame unattended and incorporating a few safety rules can prevent a devastating fire.

Lights and Decorations

Before hanging holiday lights, inspect strands for cracked socket, frayed wires or loose connections, and replace any damaged sets. Outdoor lights should always be weather-rated, and lights should be turned off before bedtime or when leaving the house. Timers and smart plugs can help make this easier.

Decorations should be securely fastened to prevent them from tipping or falling, especially in homes with children or pets. Heavy ornaments should be placed higher on the tree, out of reach of small hands and wagging tails. Fire officials also recommend choosing flame-resistant or non-combustible decor whenever possible and keeping all decorations away from heaters, fireplaces or open flames.



"Don't fly kites near power lines!"

Kristen Vanden Berg, Age 11

Kristen cautions readers on the dangers of flying kites near power lines. Great picture, Kristen! Kristen's parents are Andy and Geraldine Vanden Berg from Corsica, 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.

Holiday SIDE DISHES

CORN CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

2 15 oz. cans whole kernel corn, drained
 15 oz. can cream corn
 1/2 cup butter, melted
 1 box Jiffy cornbread mix
 1/2 pt. whipped cream

Method

Combine whole kernel corn, cream corn, butter, Jiffy cornbread mix and whipping cream. Mix thoroughly. Pour into greased 8.5"x11" pan and bake at 350° F for 40-45 minutes.

Sharon Houchin
 Central Electric

BETTER THAN STUFFING

Ingredients:

1 box chicken/turkey stuffing mix
 Chicken broth
 Celery
 Carrots
 Onions
 1 stick herbed butter (or make your own)
 2 cups chicken/turkey gravy

Method

Prepare stuffing according to directions but substitute water with broth. Dice and sauté celery, carrots (total of two cups) and onions in herbed butter. Fold into stuffing. Put into baking pan and top with gravy. Poke gravy into stuffing – just a little bit. Don't completely mix. Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes and broil briefly at the end.

Valerie Marso
 Oahe Electric

RAW VEGETABLE SALSA

Ingredients:

2-4 medium cucumbers, cubed
 2-4 medium tomatoes, cubed
 1 small onion or 1/2 of a white or yellow onion sliced
 1 tsp. salt
 1 tbsp. sugar
 2 tbsps. apple cider vinegar
 Additions: black pepper to taste, chopped basil, or chopped green bell pepper.

Method

Place cubed tomatoes and peeled cucumbers into a bowl. Add sliced onion.

Mix in remaining ingredients and stir. Marinate for several hours or overnight.

This salad keeps for 3-4 days refrigerated.

Raw Vegetable salads full of electrolytes, vitamin C and fiber.

Laurie Wernke
 Southeastern 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.

Picture submitted by Laurie Wernke.

Prep Now for Winter Savings



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Q: What can I do now to manage my winter energy bills?

A: You'll be thankful you prepared in the fall for colder weather when you receive your first winter bill. Just as you pull out your winter gear before you need it, prepping your home for the coming season is a great idea.

The following steps can be taken now to use less energy at home before the winter chill sets in. They also help lower strain on the electric grid during extreme winter weather when energy use is at its peak in your community.

First, let's consider your home's layers. Just like layering up those winter flannels, fleeces and down jackets with waterproof, wind-stopping shells, gloves and hats, your home needs layers, too. Air sealing and insulation protect your home from the elements while locking in the warm air to keep you cozy. The same applies to hot weather, making air sealing and insulation a year-round efficiency upgrade.

To offset the costs, federal tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades are available through Dec. 31, 2025. Homeowners can claim a total of 30% of the cost of installation, up to \$3,200. Tax credits are available for insulation, heat pumps, air conditioning systems and more. There's even a tax credit for electrical panel upgrades, which might be needed to accommodate new energy efficient equipment.

There's also a \$150 tax credit for an energy audit, which allows a pro to help determine what your home needs and how to prioritize potential projects. Visit energystar.gov for more information.

When it comes to do-it-yourself projects, there are a few upgrades you

can take care of yourself. Lock in savings with window cleaning and maintenance. Make sure sash locks and window cranks are in good working order and cleaned of any dirt and leaves. Debris can keep them from closing snugly. I find the crevice tool attachment on my vacuum cleaner, combined with a small, dry scrub brush or an old toothbrush, works great. The locks should pull the top and bottom window sashes together tightly. For casement windows, the locks should pull the window tightly to the frame.

Although it might not seem like a significant difference, reducing airflow through and around windows can make your home more comfortable in the winter. Replacing broken or nonfunctional sash locks can be a reasonable DIY project, but it's best to avoid doing it when the winter winds are blowing. Also, use caulk to seal all gaps around the window trim. If you have operable storm windows, make sure they close.

If you have a forced-air heating or air conditioning system, replace the filter. First, turn the system off to check it. If your filter is dirty, leave it in place until you have a replacement. Running your system without a filter can send any dust or dirt in the ductwork directly into the components and damage your equipment. Make a note of the filter's size on your shopping list or take a picture of the filter with your phone so you can reference it when running errands.

Also, stocking up on filters can save you money. I bought a 12-pack of filters for \$72 – \$6 each. A similar filter sold separately was \$10. Don't see a bulk pack at your local hardware store? Ask at the customer service desk. They may be able to order them for you.

This fall, look for opportunities to protect your home from the elements and maintain your equipment before the cold of winter.



HUNTER'S SAFETY

HuntSAFE volunteer instructors, from left, Kit Talich, Derek Wolf and Greg Miller, demonstrate proper gun safety during a HuntSAFE course.

Not pictured is instructor Mike McKernan.

Photo by Frank Turner.

Co-op employees get involved in HuntSAFE

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

For more than 10 years, West Central Electric Cooperative Staff Engineer Kit Talich has volunteered with the HuntSAFE program in his hometown of Murdo. Run by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks with help from local instructors, HuntSAFE teaches young people how to hunt both safely and ethically.

Just last month, Talich was in front of a class at Jones County Elementary School, holding a specially modified firearm designed only for demonstrations. The training guns have no firing pins, but the lessons carry real weight as Talich taught sixth-grade students how to cross a fence safely, keep a muzzle pointed in the right direction and always treat a firearm as if it is loaded.

“I went in for a year or two just to help out,” Talich recalled. “Then I took the instructor exam and got certified in 2015, and I’ve been teaching ever since.”

HuntSAFE is designed for youth hunters in South Dakota. In order to hunt under certain youth tags, students must first complete the program and earn their HuntSAFE card. The course covers everything from basic firearm mechanics to safe handling, outdoor ethics and wildlife conservation.

“It’s about 10 to 12 hours of classroom in-

struction, plus a field day,” Talich explained. “We go over the book material, but then the kids also have to handle firearms, cross fences, shoot clay pigeons and demonstrate that they understand the safety rules.”

Talich said his co-op’s culture of community commitment has always made volunteering possible.

“The co-op has always been very supportive,” Talich said. “They’ve encouraged me to take time out of my day to help with the program. Everyone’s on board with safe hunting and safe handling of firearms. It fits right in with the cooperative principle of concern for community.”

While many of the students go on to hunt deer, pheasants or other game, Talich emphasizes that HuntSAFE is about more than just filling a tag.

“A lot of these kids may never go hunting, but living in rural South Dakota, chances are they’ll be around firearms at some point,” he said. “The most important thing is that they know how to safely handle a firearm or that they have the confidence to speak up if someone else isn’t handling one safely.”

In the safety course, Talich often highlights four core safety rules: always treat every gun as if it is loaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction, keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot, and be sure of your target and what is beyond.

“If you follow those four, the chances of anyone getting hurt are very, very low,” he said. “It’s rewarding to watch them learn and take it seriously. And it’s rewarding to know they’re taking those lessons home – sometimes even teaching their younger siblings or cousins what they’ve learned.”

After nearly two decades at the cooperative, Talich is preparing to join Sioux Valley Energy — a career move that also means stepping away from his role in the HuntSAFE classroom. To ensure the program continues, another West Central Electric employee is ready to take his place. Derek Wolf, who has already been helping in the classroom alongside Talich, said he is thrilled to continue representing West Central Electric in the program.

“I just grew up around hunting and firearms, and I think it’s a neat program for kids to be involved in,” Wolf said. “Whether they end up hunting or just knowing gun safety, I think it’s huge. Obviously, Kit’s been doing it a lot of years, and he saw I was interested. With him stepping out, it just made sense to step in.”

Looking back at 10 years of volunteering, Talich said he is glad to see another co-op face step forward to champion gun safety.

“It’s important to me that the program keeps going strong,” Talich said. “It’s good to know there are people like Wolf who are willing to step up and carry it on.”



CARING FOR CAREGIVERS

Exploring Structured Family Caregiving Services for South Dakota's Caregivers

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

November is recognized nationally as Family Caregivers Month, a time to honor the essential role of caregivers and highlight the resources available to them and the loved ones they support.

Yet, families face a growing challenge: how to care for aging loved ones when services are often far from home. Nursing homes or assisted living centers may be located hours away, and even when they are nearby, the cost or availability of space can present real barriers.

One answer has been the Structured Family Caregiving program, launched by the South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) in 2019.

According to Heather Krzmarzick, Director of the Division of Long-Term Services and Supports within DHS, the program is one of many resources at DHS that are

Several resources are available for caregivers in South Dakota through the Department of Human Services.

Photos by Homecare Services.

available to help older adults and their caregivers. It provides training, coaching, ongoing support and even a modest stipend to those offering significant care for an older adult in the home.

“Structured Family Caregiving serves caregivers who live with their family member and provide substantial care for them, including personal care, supervision, medication management and other things, such as managing finances and transportation for necessary appointments and community activities,” Krzmarzick said.

In many ways, the program echoes the electric cooperative story. Just as co-ops once brought electricity to rural areas that were otherwise overlooked, the program helps families meet a need that might otherwise go unserved. In places where nursing homes or assisted living centers are many miles away, the program gives families a practical way to continue care at home, often the place where people feel most comfortable.

“Structured Family Caregiving is important because it

supports the vital work of family caregivers, strengthens families and improves outcomes, especially in underserved or isolated regions,” she said. “The program honors South Dakota’s values of strong families, independence and community.”

In addition to expanding community-based care options to rural areas, the program allows families to potentially prevent or delay the move to a nursing home and reduce the economic burden that often comes with that transition. Krzmarzick said DHS also offers other programs for those that may need a little extra assistance to remain safely in their homes but don’t require the intensive services of a nursing facility.

“Each caregiver has unique needs and preferences,” she said. “As such, the services and supports are designed to meet the varying needs of each caregiver and help care for a person at home as long as possible.”

To be eligible for the program, the care recipient must be 65 or older or

18 or older with a qualifying disability and meet both functional and financial criteria to qualify for the program.

Since its creation, the program has grown steadily, giving more families the tools to succeed. Krzmarzick said it has allowed many older adults and adults with disabilities to remain in their homes while supporting family caregivers with knowledge, training and a small amount of financial assistance.

Agency Director Steven Novotny with Homecare Services of South Dakota, Inc., one of many in-home care providers in the state, said that few other programs reach and serve those who need care quite like the program.

“Structured Family Caregiving has the unique ability to serve consumers in every community across our state, large or small. Under this program, individuals can receive care from a trusted family member or friend, which allows them to remain independent and living in their community,” he said. “Our caring staff at Homecare Services of South Dakota have seen

firsthand the positive impact on families when we are able to provide support and training to the caregivers that are stepping into what is often a challenging role caring for a loved one.”

Krzmarzick said the Structured Family Caregiving program is just one of many support options that DHS offers individuals and their caregivers in South Dakota. Resources are available online at dhs.sd.gov or through Dakota at Home, South Dakota’s Aging and Disability Resource Center, at 1-833-663-9673.

“All caregivers, not just those utilizing the Structured Family Caregiving Program, may access free training and resources to help improve confidence in their caregiving abilities, reduce stress and prevent burnout,” Krzmarzick said. “Caregivers may also be eligible for other programs that offer respite options. Our Dakota at Home specialists are dedicated to helping you find services and supports to meet your specific needs or the needs of a family member.”



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.

Pay-by-Phone

You can now make credit/debit card or bank account payments with our Automated Phone Payment system. Call our toll-free number 1-855-939-3643 any time that is convenient for you 24/7. You will also have the option to save your payment information for future use or sign up for our auto pay programs. You will need your account number shown on your billing statement to begin the payment process.

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.h-delectric.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.

Heating Season is Here Is Your Heat Meter Breaker On

The heating season is here, and H-D wants to make sure that the breaker for your heat meter is turned on. To receive credit for any electric heat running through the heat meter the breaker must be on. If you have electric heat but do not have a heat meter, give us a call at 874-2171 to find out how you can save money with one.

Electric Heat Rates

Separately metered electric heat qualifies for a 3.5 cent kWh deduction on your electric bill. A heat meter will be installed by H-D Electric at your request at a cost of approximately \$160.

Contact H-D Electric to discuss if your electric heat qualifies.

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HUNTING SAFETY

- Before you begin a hunt, note the location of power lines and other electrical equipment. Dense trees can make them hard to see.
- Obey all signs that advise electrical hazards, especially when placing a tree stand.
- Never use power poles to support a tree stand.
- Never shoot at power lines or electrical equipment.
- When setting up and taking down the stand, make sure you don't make contact with any overhead electrical equipment.
- If you're using a portable generator on your trip, don't run it in a confined area.

For more information visit: SafeElectricity.org

Water Heater Program



| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| New Construction/ Gas to Electric | Replacement |
| ❖ 50 Gallon - \$500 | ❖ 50 Gallon - \$700 |
| ❖ 85 & 100 Gallon - \$700 | ❖ 85 & 100 Gallon - \$950 |

To receive above rebates, a controller must be installed within 90 days of purchase.

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



LINEMENS' TRAINING READYED CREW FOR CHAINSAW ACCIDENT

(From left) When Brandon Schmiege cut his forearm, fellow linemen Tristan Hall, Luke Koval and Brian Davis knew exactly how to respond.
Photo submitted by Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative.

When a Routine Day of Trimming Trees Turned Critical, Cooperative Employees Were Prepared to Help

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Perched within the manlift on a bucket truck, Brandon Schmiege methodically sawed away large tree branches near overhead power lines, dropping them to the ground more than 50 feet below.

It's nothing out of the ordinary, explained the 19-year veteran lineman from Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative in Milbank, South Dakota. After a while, you become accustomed to the work – and its hazards.

From the bucket he was standing in, Brandon reached with

his chainsaw for one of the last few cuts he'd need to make. But as he began the cut, the chainsaw kicked up and he lost control. Steadying himself and throwing the brake on the saw, Brandon looked down at his left arm. He'd been badly cut.

"I saw quite a bit of blood right away," Brandon said. "My first thought was that I needed to get down fast."

Gathering his strength and trying his best to stay calm, Brandon maneuvered his bucket down through the tree limbs back to the ground where linemen Brian Davis, Luke Koval and Tristan Hall noticed something wasn't right.

"I think we all sensed something happened," Brian explained. "The way he was coming down like that, and he'd just fueled up the saw, so we were wondering what had happened."

Luke ran to go shut off the woodchipper, which was drowning out Brandon's yelling. As the engine died, they finally heard Brandon yell, "Call for help!"

Brian raced to the truck to radio back to the office in Milbank, calling in a “Mayday” along with the crew’s location.

With a first-aid and tourniquet kit in hand, Brian sprinted toward Brandon, where Tristan and Luke had removed Brandon’s safety harness and wrapped a towel over the wound on Brandon’s forearm and applied pressure to slow the bleeding.

As the team secured a tourniquet tightly around Brandon’s upper arm, the crew kept in touch with the office by cell phone. The office staff, having called 911 as soon as they heard ‘Mayday,’ worked together to relay the street address and details of the injury to emergency dispatchers.

Seeing the urgency of the situation, the team placed Brandon in the service pickup and Tristan began driving him to the hospital. As the linemen were driving back into town, the ambulance met them and took Brandon to the hospital in Milbank where they stabilized him and discovered he’d severed two arteries in his forearm. He was then transferred to

Sioux Falls and underwent surgery.

Luckily, Whetstone Valley Electric and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association had conducted first-aid training for linemen just several weeks before. The instruction included CPR, AEDs, tourniquets and wound care.

“Regular first-aid training and keeping first-aid supplies on hand is so important because our linemen are often out somewhere rural,” explained Joe Denison, SDREA’s loss control professional and certified paramedic for the Arlington and Lake Norden ambulances. “If we have to wait 30 minutes for an ambulance, that can be too late.”

Whetstone Valley Electric General Manager Dave Page says despite the incident, he finds it encouraging that the employees followed procedure — maintaining clear communication with each other and with 911, administering first aid on site, and knowing exactly what to do each step of the way.

“It wasn’t only the training that was provided, but it was the attention that

these guys gave to that training - where it stuck, and their response was automatic,” Dave said. “In addition, the Mayday training that we do here at Whetstone went a long way to help us all stick to the plan and see a successful outcome.”

Now back on the job, Brandon credits his safe outcome to the co-op’s focus on regular safety training and having first aid supplies in the vehicles.

“I don’t think the makeshift towel tourniquet would have stopped the bleeding,” Brandon said, looking down at the scar on his forearm.

Brian added, “I don’t want to think about the outcome if we didn’t have a plan in place.”

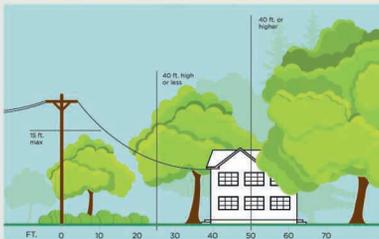
To help prevent those worst case scenarios, electric cooperatives continually scrutinize safety training and workplace incidents. Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative is sharing this story with its members-owners and fellow cooperatives to promote preparedness for unexpected incidents like this one, and overall encourage a culture of safety awareness.

3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

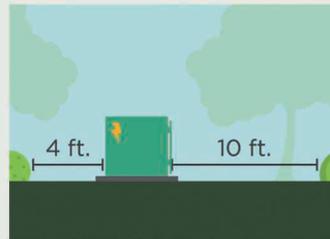
Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them.

Here’s how you can help:

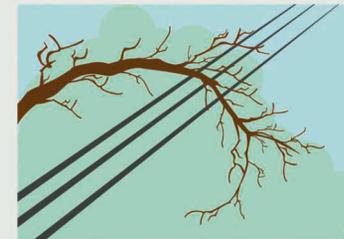
1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



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.



SUSTAINABLE SERVINGS

Frederick-Area Family Grows, Packages Specialty Oatmeal

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

For Taylor and Cassandra Sumption, there's nothing better than waking up early and enjoying a bowl of their very own home-grown oatmeal.

Well, maybe nothing better except sharing that taste of small-town South Dakota with the world.

Living and working on their five-generation family farm in northeast South Dakota, the Northern Electric Cooperative member-family dreamed, developed and launched Anthem Oats, which they say is a farm-to-table alternative that oatmeal enjoyers can feel good about.

But Anthem Oats isn't just a locally-sourced breakfast; it's a process rooted in sustainability.

The Sumptions' small-business journey began in 2016 when Taylor decided to replace his usual wheat cover crop with oats in his corn and soybean rotation.

"I'm kind of a nerd when it comes to crop rotation," Taylor laughed. "I started working with the USDA research farm north of Brookings, and they do a lot of rotational studies ... What I saw was a tremendous increase in yield for crops following oats."

Those increased yields are a result of the oats recycling nutrients like nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus back into the soil. Oats also increase the amount of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in the soil, which the USDA says helps roots intake more nutrients and moisture, making oats an ideal

This field of oats on Taylor and Cassandra Sumptions' farm near Frederick, S.D., will soon be milled and packaged for their oatmeal brand, Anthem Oats.

Photo submitted by Cassandra Sumption

cover crop to boost the next season's returns.

But an oat harvest doesn't bring in the same returns that corn and soybeans do – that had Taylor Sumption thinking about ways to add value to his product.

"It was Taylor's idea from the very beginning, from years and years ago, after many long hours in the tractor thinking about how to bring added value to our farm," Cassandra recalled. "And I loved his ideas. He would just kind of bounce things off me every now and then."

One day, it clicked in Taylor's head; he could add value to his oat harvest by producing a one-of-a-kind, high-quality breakfast product.



Taylor got in contact with the South Dakota Value-Added Agriculture Development Center (VAADC), whom he credits for helping navigate the first steps in starting the business.

Maple Pecan is one of Anthem Oats' top-selling flavors. Among other flavor options: pumpkin spice, vanilla chai, peach and cranberry, super fruit, and dark chocolate brownie.



Taylor and Cassandra Sumption sell their home-grown oatmeal in stores across the US.
Photo submitted by Cassandra Sumption

VAADC CEO Cheri Rath says Anthem Oats is one of the center’s many success stories, and credits the Sumptions for coming up with a marketable idea and running a sustainable business.

“Anthem Oats takes a traditional commodity and adds value to it, helping their farm diversify and add profitability at a time when commodity prices are volatile,” Rath said. “They’ve done an awesome job of branding themselves and getting out into the marketplace.”

According to Taylor and Cassandra, feedback from customers has been overwhelmingly positive, with some customers noting that Anthem Oats’ subtle differences have distinguished the brand from competition.

“When selecting our oat variety was we focused on nutrient density and nutritional value,” Taylor explained. “Our oats mill a little tougher, but there’s a little more flavor and a little more body. Consumers can tell when it’s our oats.”

Cassandra, now a full-time Anthem Oats employee, oversees the product from the harvest to the shelf, and everything in between. It’s an around-the-clock job, and one she had to learn fast.

“I didn’t have a clue – this was all so new to me,” Cassandra laughed, thinking back to when she first jumped into the role. “I did manage a grocery store in Frederick here for a short time, so that kind of helped me with the logistics of shipping and freight and different things like that.”

Today, after more than four years on the market and a continuously growing presence in grocery stores, the Sumption family has unofficially put Frederick on the map as the oatmeal capital of South Dakota.

Cassandra and Taylor also credit their five children, Trevor, Tristan, Preston, Miranda and Marissa for taking time out of their busy lives to help out when they’re able, as the family works to build a brand that resonates with consumers in South Dakota and beyond.

“I get to answer all the emails, like all of the consumers’ questions, and sometimes there’s a complaint, but overall everybody is very kind and sweet in their messages,” Cassandra said. “It helps make your day a little brighter, knowing that you’re doing something that people actually really appreciate and love, and it just makes you feel good at the end of the day and keeps you going.”



What Is the Value-Added Agriculture Development Center?

VAADC is a nonprofit that provides resources for the establishment and success of value-added agricultural businesses.

What Does Value-Added Mean?

When farmers add value to their product, it means they are taking a raw commodity and processing, marketing or otherwise enhancing so it can be sold at a higher price. The Sumption family adds value to their oat harvest by milling, packaging and distributing their product.

What Does VAADC Offer to Start-ups?

VAADC can assist start-ups with feasibility assessments, business plans, grant and funding opportunities, strategic planning and networking. VAADC has assisted more than 300 projects since its founding in 1999.

Who Is VAADC?

VAADC was started by agriculture industry supporters to support producers. VAADC is governed by a board of directors representing the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, East River Electric, Farm Credit Services of America, S.D. Association of Cooperatives, S.D. Bankers Association, S.D. Farmers Union, S.D. Soybean Research & Promotion Council, and the S.D. Wheat Commission.



NOV 22, 26, 28-29

Christmas Tree Sales

Nov. 22: 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Nov. 26: 5-8 p.m.

Nov. 28-29: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

6B Seed And Supplies

Alpena, SD

www.6Bseedandsupplies.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.

NOV. 1

Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show

10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Dakota Christian School

Corsica, SD

605-366-7940

NOV. 1

Scandinavian Buffet & Annual Bazaar

9 a.m.-3 p.m.

First Lutheran Church

12th Street & Dakota Ave.

Sioux Falls, SD

605-336-3735

NOV. 1

Black Hills Meat Fest

2-4 p.m.

Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall

Rapid City, SD

NOV. 1-2

The Black Market/ Formerly Benson's Flea Market

Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m..

Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.

Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 1-2

Tour of Homes

12-4 p.m.

Benefitting Mitchell Tennis Assoc.

mitchelltourofhomes.com

NOV. 3

American Legion Pancake Breakfast

8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

1600 W. Russell St.

Sioux Falls, SD

605-336-3470

NOV. 7-8

Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show

Fri. 12 p.m.-8 p.m.

Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Handmade-Only Show

W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.

Sioux Falls, SD

605-332-6004

NOV. 8

Lutefisk Supper

4:30 p.m., 5:45 p.m., 7 p.m.

Call for Reservations

Lake Campbell Lutheran Church

Volga, SD

605-690-4868 – Cheryl

605-693-4325 – Charlotte

NOV. 14-15

Junkin' Market Days

Fri. 4-7 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Ramkota Exhibit Hall

Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 15

Club 14 Craft + Vendor Fair

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Hendricks Public School

Hendricks, MN

605-690-5586

NOV. 16

Good Samaritan Society Fall Vendor Fair

2-6 p.m.

411 Calumet Ave. NW

De Smet, SD

NOV. 16

An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving

2 p.m.

Gayville Music Hall

Gayville, SD

605-760-5799

NOV. 29

How the Grinch Stole Christmas Holiday Parade

6 p.m.

Flandreau, SD

605-864-1200

DEC. 5-7, 12-14

Mighty Corson Art Players: Humberg

Dec. 5-6, 12-13: 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 7, 14: 2:30 p.m.

Corson, SD

www.mightycorson.com

DEC. 13

Cookie Walk

9 a.m.

Lake Campbell Lutheran Church

Volga, SD

605-864-9907

DEC. 31

American to the Heart New Year's Eve Bash

Doors Open at 5:30 p.m.

American Legion

Sioux Falls, SD

Tickets: 605-336-3470

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.