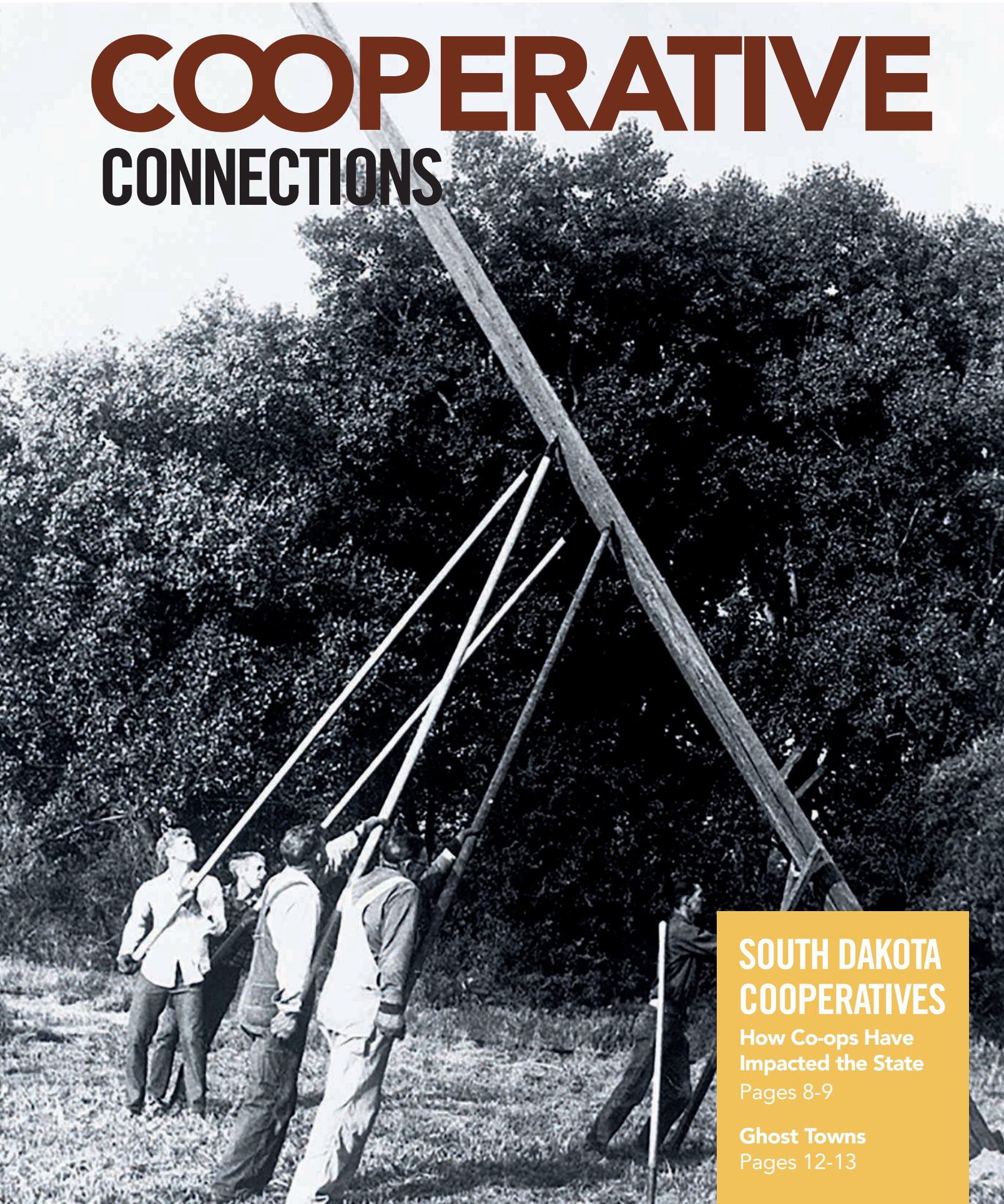


# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## **SOUTH DAKOTA COOPERATIVES**

**How Co-ops Have  
Impacted the State**  
Pages 8-9

**Ghost Towns**  
Pages 12-13

# Winners & Losers



**Russell Gall**  
Manager

During the 2003/2004 school year, the Andes Central Eagles were sporting a pretty amazing volleyball team. They had excellent coaching and a couple of big hitters on the team that rendered them a formidable force to be reckoned with. In fact, these girls were so salty that they went the entire volleyball season with not one loss...almost.

My two youngest daughters were part of that team, and although they were not the big hitters, they contributed enough to be considered essential cogs in that gear of success. When the team fought their way through Districts, were victorious at Regions, and moved on to the State B Tournament in Rapid City, everyone on the team, including my daughters, were giddy with

excitement. It seemed the whole community turned out at the event with

visions of bringing home the State Championship trophy.

In the opening and progressive matches, the girls played well, fighting their way through the first few brackets of the tournament. Ultimately, they found themselves in the championship match with the Northwestern Wildcats, a team that had been to the state tournament many times. Although Andes Central was favored in the matchup, the Wildcats were no slackers. The Eagle

team came out strong and quickly found themselves two-games up on the Wildcats with a blowout victory all but assured. With a 21-15 lead, the Lady Eagles were just four points from victory. However, the Eagle team suddenly faltered, giving up the third game to Northwestern. Now with momentum on their side, the Wildcats swept the next two games straight to become state champions, leaving my daughters' team as state runners-up.

Everyone took that loss very hard, including my daughters. The only consolation I could offer at that time is that runner-up was still a prestigious honor to hold. After all, they were the second-best team in the State of South Dakota. As with everything in

life, there are winners and unfortunately, there are losers.

The reason I tell this story is that over the last two years, I have been trying to let everyone know of the impending electricity price increase, which will include a rate redesign. Just as it has been in the past, the change in electricity prices will have winners and losers. Minor tweaks in the different components of the rates can affect every class of customers differently, depending on use habits and consumption levels. When the cost per kilowatt/hour is increased, the customer that uses large amounts of energy could easily see a much bigger impact in costs compared to someone who uses little. *(continued on page 7)*

**The coming changes will be difficult for some, but the intent is to be fair to all.**



Although they were state runners-up, the "agony of defeat" is apparent on the faces of the 2003/2004 ACHS volleyball team. We can only hope that the upcoming rate change is less painful.

**COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS**

**CHARLES MIX  
ELECTRIC**

(ISSN) No. 1531-0922  
MANAGER Russell A. Gall  
cme@cme.coop

CME Board of Directors  
President Richard Dvorak  
Vice-President Sam Schuman  
Secretary/Treasurer Don Krcil  
Directors: Brice Bultje, Todd Link, Denise Soukup, Ron Samuelson

**Regular meetings of the board of directors of this cooperative are held on the third Thursday of each month.**

**Office Staff**

Office Manager Karen Soulek  
Member Services Michael Dangel  
Acctg/Work Orders Carol Dvorak  
Secretary/Cashier Sally Florey  
Line Supt Chad Loeffler

**Line Crew**

Foreman Ryan Frederick  
Foreman Jared VanDerWerff  
Journeyman Aaron Vandenhoeck  
Journeyman Joe Michael  
Journeyman Wade Wright  
Journeyman Alex Evans  
Journeyman Cole Christopherson

**This institution is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.**

Charles Mix Electric Cooperative Connections is published monthly by Charles Mix Electric Association, PO Box 10, 210 S. 9th Ave, Lake Andes, SD 57356 for its members. Families subscribe as part of their electric cooperative membership. Charles Mix Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better rural living.

Subscription information: Electric cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Lake Andes Post Office, Lake Andes, SD 57356 and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Charles Mix Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 10, Lake Andes, SD 57356; Telephone (605) 487-7321; Toll Free 1-800-208-8587; FAX (605) 487-7868; email cme@cme.coop.

Website: <http://www.cme.coop>

**IMPACTS OF THE EPA'S POWER PLANT RULE**

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) power plant rule threatens access to reliable electricity for millions of Americans. The EPA's power plant rule will:



- 1** Force the premature closure of many power plants that currently provide electricity 24/7.
- 2** Mandate the deployment of unproven carbon capture and storage technology.
- 3** Jeopardize the reliability of the grid at a time when America is already facing a surge in electricity demand.
- 4** Heighten the risk of rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the electric grid.
- 5** Increase costs for consumers as utilities are forced to pay for new power generation to comply with the EPA rule.



**Open 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Closed weekends/holidays  
Call 1-800-208-8587 for outages or emergencies.**

**Your meter is read on the 1st of each month. Payments are due by the 20th of each month. \$2 fee for late payments.**

# FIRE SAFETY

Cooking and heating are the leading causes of home fires and fire injuries, and winter months are the peak time for fire-related deaths. **Fire Prevention Week (Oct. 6-12, 2024)** is the perfect time to review and practice fire safety.

### Minimize Your Risks

The good news: Deaths from home fires in the U.S. have trended downward since the 1970s, according to Injury Facts, but even one death from a preventable fire is too many. While fire doesn't discriminate by age, it is the third leading cause of death for children 1 to 14.

**When cooking, make fire safety a priority by keeping these tips in mind:**

- Be alert; if you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the oven or stovetop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, boiling or broiling food.
- Keep anything that can catch fire away from your stovetop.

**Heating is the second leading cause of home fires. Follow these tips:**

- Keep all flammables, like paper, clothing, bedding, drapes or rugs, at least three feet from a space heater, stove or fireplace.
- Never leave portable heaters and fireplaces unattended; turn off heaters and make sure fireplace embers are extinguished before leaving the room.
- If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, nonflammable surface, like ceramic tile, not on a rug or carpet.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- When buying a space heater, look for models that shut off automatically if the heater falls over.

### Working Smoke Alarms Are a Must

About three out of five fire deaths happen in homes without working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are a key part of a home fire escape plan providing early warning to reduce your risk of dying in a fire. The National Fire Protection Association recommends you:

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas on the ceiling or high on the wall.
- Keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen, at least 10 feet from the stove, to reduce false alarms.
- Use special alarms with strobe lights and bed shakers for

- people who are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Test smoke alarms monthly.
- Replace batteries in your smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector annually.
- Replace smoke alarms that are 10 or more years old.

### When and How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

Always put your safety first; if you are not confident in your ability to use a fire extinguisher, get out and call 9-1-1. The American Red Cross cautions you to evaluate the situation and ensure:

- Everyone has left or is leaving the home
- The fire department has been called
- The fire is small, not spreading, and there is not much smoke
- Your back is to an exit you can use quickly

### Remember the acronym PASS:

**P**ull the pin.

**A**im low at the base of the fire.

**S**queeze the handle slowly.

**S**weep the nozzle side to side.

*Source: National Safety Council*



### Power Line Safety "Watch Out for Power Lines!"

#### Archer Rindels, Age 7

Archer Rindels warns readers to be careful around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Archer! Archer's parents are Kyle and Rochelle Rindels, members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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.

# Delicious CHICKEN

## CHEESY CHICKEN BUNDLES

### Ingredients:

- 1 (11 oz.) can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 1/2 cup milk
- 3/4 cup Velveeta, shredded or cubed
- 1 (10 oz.) can chunk chicken, drained and flaked
- 1 (8 oz.) can crescent rolls

### Method

Combine soup, milk and cheese. Heat until melted and smooth. Pour into a 7x11 inch pan that has been sprayed with vegetable oil.

Separate crescents into 8 triangles. Place 2 tbsps. of chicken on wide end of crescent roll. Pinch to seal. Place on top of sauce.

Bake uncovered at 375 degrees for 25 minutes and until golden brown. Serve with sauce on top.

Yields eight chicken bundles or four servings.

**Janet Ochsner**  
Box Elder, S.D.

## CROCKPOT CHICKEN PARMESAN SOUP

### Ingredients:

- 3 boneless chicken breasts
- 1 tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 can crushed tomatoes (28 oz. can)
- 1 can tomato sauce (15 oz. can)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup parmesan cheese (freshly shaved)
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 8 oz. rotini pasta (uncooked)
- 1 1/2 cup shredded Mozzarella

### Method

Add the chicken breast, minced garlic, crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, salt, pepper, Italian seasoning and chicken broth to the Crock-Pot.

Cover Crock-Pot with lid and cook on low for 6-8 hours.

Shred the chicken. Stir in the shredded parmesan cheese, heavy whipping cream and rotini pasta. Cover and cook on low for 30 minutes.

Top the individual soup servings with mozzarella cheese.

**Kayla Beaner**  
Centerville, S.D.

## BUTTER CHICKEN

### Ingredients:

- 4 tsps. Garam Masala blend
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1/8 tsp. crushed red pepper
- 4 tbsps. butter, divided
- 1 can (14.5 oz.) petite diced tomatoes
- 1 med. red onion, chopped
- 1 1/4 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt

### Method

Mix Garam Masala, garlic, ginger, turmeric and crushed red pepper in small bowl. Heat large non-stick skillet on medium heat. Toast seasoning mixture 1 min. or just until fragrant, stirring constantly. Add 2 tbsps. of the butter to skillet, swirling to melt. Add onion; cook and stir 2 to 3 mins. until softened. Stir in tomatoes; cook 5 mins. Carefully transfer mixture to blender container; cover. Blend until smooth, scraping sides as needed. Return pureed sauce to skillet. Bring to simmer on med.-low heat. Add chicken; cook 8 to 10 minutes or until chicken is cooked though, stirring occasionally. Stir in remaining butter, cream and salt until well blended. Simmer on med.-low heat 2 to 3 minutes until sauce is slightly thickened. Stir in additional crushed red pepper to taste and serve with hot cooked basmati rice or warm naan bread, if desired. Garnish with fresh cilantro leaves, if desired.

**McCormick.com**

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.

# Efficiency: Now More Important Than Ever



**Mike Dangel**  
Member Services

Energy efficiency is the topic of the month, with a focus on heating systems. Winter is approaching. Have you taken the time to inspect, maintain and prepare your heating system to keep your family warm through the frigid winter?

If you are a do-it yourselfer, you can go online and find many checklists and tips on what you should do every fall to get your heating system ready for the heating season. If you want extra help or need repairs, please call a heating and cooling expert to help you prepare. Keeping your current system maintained and with a set of clean filters will enable your system to run as efficiently as possible.

I want to talk about efficiency if you are purchasing a new heating system. All new air-source heat pumps are 200% efficient when compared to straight resistance electric heat. With the new technologies, some of the air-to-air units are even getting as high as 300% efficient, and geothermal units are pushing over the 300% efficiency mark. When purchasing a heat pump, you will gain

efficiency in your electric consumption, and start saving money on your electric bill.

Air-source heat pumps are designed to pull heat out of the outside air. New highly efficient units are designed to heat your house even when outside temperatures dip down to -10 degrees. These heat pumps will provide most of your heat through the winter, although you will need a backup heating source. An electric resistance heater installed in the furnace will provide all the backup you will need.

Let's look at energy costs for running a heat pump compared to a propane furnace. With CME's current electric heat rate, you would need to purchase propane at 70 cents per gallon to compete with electricity. If you have a system that is

reaching the 300% efficiency level, you will need to purchase propane at 48 cents per gallon. I have not seen propane at this price in several years, so if you are looking at installing a new heating system, this makes a heat pump very attractive.

I know everyone is getting a little anxious about the rate restructuring and increase we will be having next year. Currently, it does not look like an increase to the electric heat rate is needed.

Start preparing now for winter, and if you need to visit with me about heating systems, give me a call or stop in and visit.

I also need to remind you to be safe around power lines while out hunting for that prized ringneck pheasant. Enjoy the hunting season with family and friends.



Harvest season means sharing the road with large equipment, which can be wide and slow. Farmers must move slowly, but public roads are often the only way to get from point A to point B.

When you find yourself following or meeting large farm equipment on the road, be cautious and give slow-moving machinery some extra space. Do not pass at intersections, over bridges or railroad crossings, or in a "No Passing Zone."

Do not tailgate. Following too closely can put you in an operator's blind spot. When you do get the chance to pass, do so safely. Make sure the tractor is not trying to make a left turn. Be patient. Oftentimes, farmers will move their equipment over if it is safe to do so.

## Manager's Column

*continued from page 3*

The exact opposite occurs when price increases are put on the service charge, since the big users are less affected percentage-wise by that change, compared to those who consume little.

However, with the new rate redesign it's much different this time. Residential customers will soon see a major shift in how we charge for power they use. The new rate structure will have four components which, depending on the customers use habits, could greatly affect their electricity bill.

The four components are as follows:

- **SERVICE CHARGE** - charges for providing electric service at any given location.
- **CAPACITY CHARGE** – charges for the capacity of the system related to the customer's highest electricity use each month. It is measured in kilowatts (kW).
- **COINCIDENTAL DEMAND CHARGE** – charges for the demand for electricity by the customer during the peak demand time of the regional electric grid. It is measured in kilowatts (kW).
- **ENERGY CHARGE** – charges for electricity use over time. It is measured in kilowatt/hours.

Although there are now more components to the rate, not all will see a major change in their electricity bill. Some may see only a slight increase as costs are shifted from the previous rate structure to the new four-component structure. While these individuals can consider themselves the winners during this change, there are going to be losers that are undesirably impacted. With the service charge expected to nearly double, some members may experience an increase of nearly 100%. No, that is not a typo. Where services exist that use very little energy, the cost per year could double from \$530 to over \$1060.

At the time of this writing, Basin Electric is planning a 6.5% price increase along with the 5.5% increase from East River Electric. This will significantly increase power costs to CME starting January 1st, 2025. Although it does not translate directly to a 12% increase for our members, it will be a significant addition on top of the 4% to 6% increase I have been predicting since 2022. When the Charles Mix Electric Board of Directors and I confidently know what the power costs will be, we will inform our members through bill inserts,

Facebook, the CME webpage, and in-person informational meetings across our service area. Furthermore, for those that will be greatly affected by these changes, we will be here to help them understand their bill and offer remedies to assist them in lowering their costs.

In closing, I have no doubt that these coming changes will be difficult for some CME members, but be assured that the Board of Directors are not making these changes for the sake of change. The intent is to create the fairest price structure for all members and eliminate cost shifting from one rate class in support of another.

On a personal note, it has been twenty years since that loss at the State B tournament, and my daughters are still reluctant to talk about it today. Although I have offered to sit down and watch the video recording of that match with them, neither has ever had the desire to revisit that painful memory. I can only hope that this change in our rate structure does not produce the same feelings for our members.

Until next month, stay safe and God Bless.



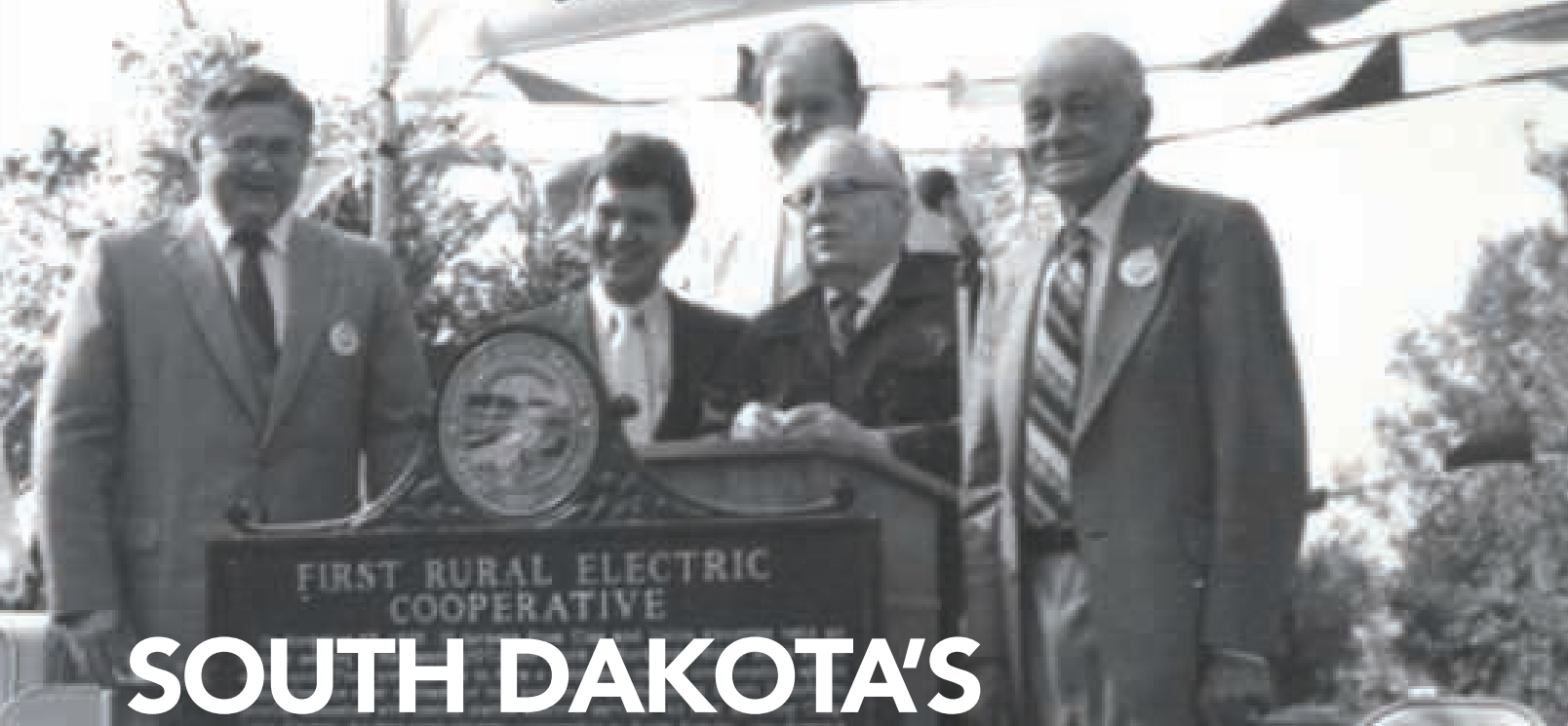
**SAVE MONEY  
THE SMART  
WAY**

Smart thermostats. Smart lights, Smart appliances. These may just seem like cool tech gadgets, but they're so much more. These devices can help you save energy, which in turn saves you money.

### CALENDAR RAFFLE WINNERS - AUGUST

Apple iPad - Jenny Patterson, West River Electric, Wall, SD

\$250 Meat Bundle and Cooler - Landon Prins, Clear Lake, SD



# SOUTH DAKOTA'S COOPERATIVES

## Jacob Boyko

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

Picture life in rural South Dakota 100 years ago. Each morning, families woke before dawn to work by the flicker of kerosene lamps, hand-pumped water to fill a gas-powered wringer-washer, and retrieved breakfast ingredients from a dripping ice box. Looming in the backs of producers' minds were fears that the market would trend downward and they may not be able to cover their debts, or even harvest their fields.

Today, South Dakota's rural farmers and ranchers enjoy virtually all of the accommodations of modern living their suburban counterparts enjoy. Past luxuries like running water, full-time electricity, internet and telephone are now standard, and many farmers enjoy stronger economic security compared to the past's tumultuous markets.

That's because for over 100 years, rural South Dakotans have pooled their resources by forming cooperatives that level out some of the disparities between rural and urban life. Thanks to members' ingenuity, rural America is not just a viable, but a thriving place to live and work.

## The First Cooperatives

The first cooperatives in South Dakota were agriculture-focused. Far too often, an

oversupply of goods led to price crashes, resulting in farmers unable to economically harvest crops or market livestock. This led to tremendous waste and crushed livelihoods.

As producers grew weary of the uncertain market, they organized to collectively market and distribute their products: they coordinated, shared risk and pooled resources.

South Dakota's earliest farm supply and marketing cooperatives started popping up a little after the turn of the 20th century. The South Dakota Secretary of State's office lists Lake Andes Farmers Cooperative, formed in 1909, as the oldest ongoing cooperative in the state.

During this early period, cooperatives operated in a legal gray area. Since producers working collectively in a cooperative setting could be viewed as monopolistic or collusive, they were under careful watch by the Federal Trade Commission as well as their larger competitors.

That changed in 1922 with the passage of the Capper-Volstead Act.

"Capper-Volstead allowed producers to come together and market their products and not be in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act," explained Brenda Forman, South Dakota Association of Cooperatives executive director. "[Cooperatives] were not considered to be a monopoly as long as they were a cooperative association formed

Clay-Union Electric Corporation was the first electric cooperative in South Dakota.

by producers, owned by the members, one member gets one vote in cooperative elections, etc."

The presence of ag cooperatives surged in the 1930s as producers looked for stability during the Great Depression, the South Dakota Farmers Union says. With effectiveness proven, the cooperative strategy has stuck around since.

Today, there are 63 farm supply and marketing cooperatives serving over 130 South Dakota communities, Forman said.

Those same visionaries who established the first ag cooperatives identified another need that was not being met. Using the same cooperative model that changed their lives once already, farmers would bring power to the prairie.

## Electricity

Before energy infrastructure was widespread, many small towns in South Dakota relied on local power plants. However, with distribution lines only serving the city, living even a mile or two out of town was the difference between flipping a light switch and carrying a lantern.

Despite requests from farmers to run lines to their homes – some of whom even offered to pay installation costs – most municipalities and investor-owned utilities (IOUs) refused because undertaking the effort didn't lead to any meaningful profit.

Even many of the state's elected representatives seemed resigned to the idea



that the future of energy for their farming constituents was tied to on-site generation, like the modest Delco–Light plants that could power a few small appliances and light bulbs. To them, it seemed laughable that there was any feasible way to run lines in a state where the service would average out to a sparse 2.2 customers per mile of line, and for many, that was the end of the conversation.

The narrative changed when President Franklin D. Roosevelt expanded his New Deal programs to modernize rural America, creating the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) to finance ambitious projects.

The profit-minded IOUs were largely uninterested in expanding into sparse territory for mealy returns, and little progress was made toward Roosevelt's vision.

In 1936, once it was apparent IOUs wouldn't be making the foray into rural territories as farmers had hoped they would, Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act. Now, cooperatives could organize and receive REA loans while the IOUs idled.

A group of 17 farmers from Clay and Union counties jumped at the opportunity to finally bring their homes into the modern age. Just months after the REA was established, and at a time when just 5% of South Dakota farms had power, the group hatched out a plan to secure an REA loan for their newly-formed Fairview Rural Electric System, today Clay-Union Electric Corporation.

Going door to door and collecting \$5 sign-ons from neighbors ranging from ecstatic to skeptical, the cooperative finally got the REA's green light and received a \$70,000 loan to build 67 miles of line that would serve about 300 members, according to a 1936 Argus Leader report.

The success of South Dakota's first electric cooperative brought hope to still more than 90% of South Dakota farmers without power. It wasn't long before dozens more newly-formed cooperatives were each going door to door collecting sign-on fees to secure their own REA loans.

## Serving Everyone

In 1946, roughly 10 years after the state's first electric cooperative debuted, rural farmers and ranchers from the state's

remote northwest corner met in Lemmon to form their own cooperative. The board understood securing a loan from REA to serve such a vast and sparse territory would be a big ask, so they opted to charge members a \$10 monthly minimum, which was twice the minimum rate of most South Dakota cooperatives, and equal to about \$170 today.

Even so, would-be members agreed to the terms of the longshot project and paid their \$5 membership fee. Despite federal hesitation about the feasibility of such a project, the REA loan was approved.

Grand Electric Cooperative received more than \$1.8 million over two loans that would build 1,127 miles of line and serve 948 members. The investment amounted to one of the REA's largest and riskiest yet in the state, but proved to be a success.

Cooperative members did the impossible; the wires in northwest South Dakota had finally been energized. Board members then eyed another ambitious goal – bringing telephone to Northwest South Dakota.

West River Cooperative Telephone Company was formed as a separate entity, but in the spirit of cooperation, the telephone and electric cooperative would be jointly operated. The two would, and still to this day, share a building, staff and infrastructure.

“Up here, we cover almost 8,000 square miles and have 4,000 miles of wire, but we only have 1,800 members,” explained Eric Kahler, the cooperatives' joint general manager. “When you look at the economics of this type of service territory, if you're in the business to make money, you're not going to be too successful here. The cooperative model is really the only model that could work here.”

And the community knows that fact and is grateful for their cooperative, says Patricia Palmer, who has spent much of her last 63 years working in Grand Electric and West River Telephone's member services.

“They're thankful,” she said. “Very thankful. We have a terrific telephone work crew and line department. At times, they work tirelessly in horrible weather conditions... You can't believe the thank you notes that we get.”

Growing up on a farm near McIntosh, Palmer has a firsthand account of the impact

of cooperatives. And she says it's one she will never forget.

The night she watched her family's farmhouse light up for the first time was also the beginning of a new chapter, she recalled. A chapter with an automatic washer, a refrigerator and a toaster.

As times change, cooperatives continue to be at the forefront of bringing service that might otherwise be out of reach.

“When I came to the cooperative, it was just telephone and electricity, and now we have high-speed internet and TV,” Palmer said. “Over the years, the cooperative has really grown!”

## Other Applications

The cooperative model is also used in many other sectors; there are 34 South Dakota credit unions that offer member-owners better interest rates and reduced fees compared to for-profit banks.

Even some rural water systems, while not wholly cooperatives themselves, borrow some of the cooperative fundamentals to make serving large areas more practical.

“Cooperatives are pretty significant in the impact they've had,” Forman said. “And the other cooperatives we have – there are daycare co-ops, food co-ops, education co-ops – there's a number of different structures that the cooperative model has been used for, because of that ownership and one member, one vote.”

Today, there are 141 cooperatives in the state, providing more than 78,500 jobs, \$2.8 billion in worker salaries and \$3.9 billion in gross domestic product (GDP), according to a South Dakota State University study titled *The Economic Impact of Cooperatives in South Dakota*.

That means cooperatives contribute almost 13% of South Dakota jobs, more than 11% of salaries, and 6.2% of the state's entire GDP.

“In a cooperative, your board is local,” Forman said. “[The co-op board and employees] support and participate in sports functions, 4-H barbecues, you may go to church with them, or they may be at family dinner. Which means when something is a concern or challenge, you have somebody to go to and you have contacts close that know you and understand the system.”

# A Real Power Trip



## CME & Douglas Electric members explore power generation sites

The bi-annual member bus trip known as the Basin Electric bus tour welcomed 46 guests on a educational trip to several different power generation sites in early August. Known locally as “Chuck & Doug’s” bus tour after the hosting co-ops Charles Mix and Douglas Electric, the trip offers members a chance to see first-hand how the electricity they consume every day is produced.

The guests visited Prairie Winds, a wind farm near Crow Lake, SD that is owned by Basin Electric. The massive wind towers produce electricity which is marketed to nine states ranging from Montana to Minnesota and as far south as New Mexico.

A lunch stop in Pierre was followed by a tour of the power plant at the Oahe Dam. The dam’s seven generators were put into operation in the early 1960s and were upgraded in the 1980s. As the largest power producer on the

Missouri River, the project uses hydro power to produce 2.8 billion kilowatts annually, or enough electricity to power 259,000 homes for a year.

A short side trip took the guests to Hoven, SD to visit the St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, which is billed at the “Cathedral on the Prairie.” Although unrelated to power production, the historic and beautifully ornate architecture of the church built by German immigrants in 1883 offered an interesting stop to break up the long bus ride.

Day One of the tour ended as the group arrived in Mandan, ND for a social

gathering and dinner sponsored by Basin Electric. A short presentation by Basin Electric staff highlighted the energy facilities that the company owns and operates, and gave tourists a preview of what they would visit the next day.

Tourists spent Day Two visiting the Antelope Valley Station power plant and the accompanying Coteau Freedom coal mine. The tour bus



The group visits at Capitol Lake on the grounds of the SD State Capitol Building in Pierre.

was able to venture down into the open pit of largest lignite coal mine in the United States, and tourists learned how the enormous draglines are used to remove the topsoil to expose the coal seams. The coal is hauled away in 300-ton trucks to be used in the power plant, where it is burned to heat water in huge boilers, which then produces steam to drive the generators and produce electricity.

The environmentally conscious will appreciate the fact that once all of the coal has been removed from an area of the mine, that area is “reclaimed”, or restored to its original use, whether it be farmland or grassland. Approximately 700 acres of land are reclaimed each

year. Trees are planted, and hills and valleys are restored to mimic the previous terrain. In fact, Coteau Properties has received awards for their excellence in being good stewards of their environment.

Tour guests commented, “This was an eye-opening trip. Everyone should do this. Wish we had known about it sooner”, and “I now have a broader knowledge of how and where electricity is produced.”

CME strives to provide this tour every other year. The tour bus filled extremely quickly this year, with more interested guests than we could accommodate. Plans are to host the trip again in 2026, and we hope you can join us then!



CME lineman Cole Christopherson works with electricity every day, but enjoyed learning more about how it is actually produced.



Above and below: The equipment used in the open pit coal mine is absolutely immense!



The group prepares to tour the inner workings of the Antelope Valley Station power plant.



The group got to drive down into the Coteau Freedom coal mine and see how the coal is removed for use in generating electricity. The boiler of the generating plant uses 350 tons of coal per hour to produce the steam that drives the generators to produce power.

# GHOST TOWNS

## South Dakota's History Remembered

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Scattered across open fields and through narrow mountain gulches, a careful eye can spot many of South Dakota's nearly 250 long-lost prairie villages and prospecting towns.

Many of these communities were once thriving outposts, railroad hubs, farming villages and mining towns, but were dealt their final blows by the hardships of the dust bowl, changes to railroad systems and the depletion of natural resources.

Most of the towns are long forgotten, their existence marked only by the rotted shell of an old wood barn or a crumbling foundation poking up from the ground.

Thanks to the work of local historical societies who have pieced together the history of the communities' "booms and busts" through old newspaper clippings, plat maps and land records, we can get a glimpse into the lives of the first rural South Dakotans and learn about the communities that once bustled with life.

### Galena

Unique among a cavalcade of abandoned Black Hills gold-rush towns, Galena's roots are in its silver. The town was settled in the late 1870s after prospectors Patrick Donegan and John F. Cochran discovered layers of lead and silver ore near Bear Butte Creek while searching for gold deposits.

The U.S. government removed the two men from the area in accordance with Native American treaties. However,

their exile turned out to be short-lived. Donegan and Cochran returned shortly after to mine their claim as more and more gold-hungry settlers tested the increasingly unenforceable treaties.

The claim, which would later become the Sitting Bull mine, turned out to be a mother lode, according to Galena Historical Society member Jeff Jacobsen.

Over the next several years, other mining operations popped up in the gulch as the miners' families made Galena their new home. The town soon had multiple houses, a hotel, restaurant, stores, a catholic church, cemetery and school, attracting new settlers through its peak between 1881 and 1883.

Arriving from Chicago in hopes of expanding his fortune, Col. John Davey soon became a Galena mining heavyweight, buying up claims along the Bear Butte Creek, including the Sitting Bull claim.

Davey's more than 125-man operation was running smoothly until trouble arose from a claim dispute. The owners of the nearby Richmond claim suspected Davey was digging too far into the hill and mining their silver. Davey claimed he was following the path of the ore, which according to mining law, he was allowed to follow onto another claim. The Richmond claim owners said the law didn't apply to a horizontal blanket formation of ore, like the one in Galena.

A lengthy court battle ensued, and the judge shut down the Sitting Bull mine

until the ruling. Galena was suspended in controversy as many of the townsfolk found themselves out of work.

Thus began Galena's rocky "boom and bust" cycle, Jacobsen explained.

"The boom time was when Col. Davey and other mines were producing, and then the lawsuit shut that down and you have a bust," he said.

The judge ruled against Davey, and the operation never recovered. Galena would never again be the bustling town it was in the early 1880s.

"In 1892, some more people came into town and tried to start up again, so that was a boom, and then they went bankrupt, so there's a bust," Jacobsen continued. "There's like three or four cycles like that in Galena."

By the mid 1930s, the town had seen its final bust. The mining wasn't comparable to the riches of the past, and interest in the gulch slowly started to fade. The tracks were removed and the school house closed in 1943.

Today, Galena is the best-preserved Ghost Town in South Dakota. On the second Saturday of each June, visitors can tour the town, visit the maintained graveyard and go inside the newly-restored schoolhouse, courtesy of the Galena Historical Society.

"It just kind of stands out," Jacobsen said. "Galena is just one of the very few silver mining areas in the Black Hills when almost everyone else was trying for gold."



Galena School  
Photo Credit: Galena Historical Society

## Did You Know

In 1947, Deadwood resident Ollie Wiswell came across an orphaned coyote pup while he was out on a hike. He gave the pup, named Tootsie, to Fred and Esther Borsch of Galena. Tootsie gained fame as the mascot for the Borschs' Deadwood liquor store, famously appearing on the store's sign. Fred taught Tootsie to howl along to his singing, and the two recorded the album "South Dakota Tootsie."

Tootsie, at this point a South Dakota mascot, rode through parades, was featured in an airline advertising campaign, and even embarked on a nationwide tour where she visited the White House and performed for President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vice President Richard Nixon.

Gov. George Mickelson, a fan of Tootsie himself, signed legislation in 1949 making the coyote the state's official animal. Tootsie died in 1959 and is buried near her home in Galena.

## Argonne

About nine miles northwest of Howard, just off state Highway 25, lay the remains of the ill-fated farming community, Argonne.

Marked by a blue historical sign, travelers-by can catch a glimpse of the town's massive cement bank vault with its swinging iron door, an old silo bearing the town's name, several concrete foundations, and a house falling into its own footprint.

The town's founder, Dr. Louis Gotthelf, was a Prussian-born physician who emigrated to the United States in the aftermath of the Prussian revolution. Gotthelf staked his claim in 1881 and established the townsite in 1886.

The town was originally called St. Mary's, named after Gotthelf's daughter, and was strategically positioned along the Chicago and North Western railroad, with the streets running parallel to the railroad rather than the traditional east-west layout. Confusion with another St. Mary's led to the residents voting to change the name to Argonne in 1920, which was chosen to honor local soldiers who had served in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive during World War I.

Despite having what should have been a prime location, Argonne failed to grow to Gotthelf's satisfaction, and he left with his family for Parker in 1889.

A 1919 land boom in South Dakota finally turned things around for Argonne, Miner County Historical Society member George Justice Forster said.

"Most of the growth that happened initially was when it kind of took off as a

trade center," he explained. "Suddenly the town had a railway depot, lumberyard, farmer's cooperative and general store."

In the early 20s, Argonne's population boomed to about 100 residents, and the town offered new amenities including a school, blacksmith and post office.

Argonne's peak was short-lived, and by 1930 the population had fallen to about 65 residents.

When Doug Jerlow moved to town in 1953, much of what was built in the town's prime was left abandoned, and most of the businesses that did remain were struggling.

"It was past the peak," Jerlow recounted. "One general store closed when the post office inside it closed, and that was an elderly lady who ran that and lived in a house by herself. The Haxby family's store was open for maybe a year or two after that."

Though the town was facing a bleak outlook, there remained one huge point of pride for Argonne: high school basketball.

Delbert Gillam, also known as the

Argonne Ace, led the Argonne Arrows to a 10-1 start in his junior year in 1953. Gillam also broke the state record for the most points scored by a player in a single game, making 31 field goals and 10 free throws, scoring 72. Argonne still holds this record.

The high school closed in 1956, but the community limped on for a few more years before the grade school closed in 1970 when the railroad picked up and left.

Doug Jerlow's family, the last residents of Argonne, left town that same year.

Jerlow pointed out that while many other communities along the rail line like Unityville, Canova, Carthage, and Esmond struggled to recover from the abandonment of the line, for Argonne, it was the death blow.

Now, Forster and other members of the Miner County Historical Society are working to preserve the history of Argonne.

A historical marker will soon be placed east of Argonne on state Highway 25 that will tell the story of Argonne from its founding to its final household.

Though Jerlow now lives near Madison, he still farms near Argonne and owns most of the former townsite. As the unofficial mayor of Argonne, as Jerlow sometimes calls himself, he wants to keep the memory of his childhood hometown alive.

"It was just a nice community to grow up in," he said. "Those small communities, I think it's becoming harder to find them anymore."



Argonne Arrows  
Photo Credit: Miner County Historical Society



# RELIABLE ENERGY

## How the EPA's Power Plant Rule Jeopardizes Grid Reliability

**Jocelyn Johnson**

[jocelyn.johnson@sirea.coop](mailto:jocelyn.johnson@sirea.coop)

The energy future outlined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Power Plant Rule means more blackouts, greater uncertainty and higher electric bills. This is the concern of electric cooperatives and other industry leaders who are in litigation with the EPA over the legality of the power plant rule issued in May of this year.

“The administration and the EPA specifically have made it a priority to undertake a ‘death by a thousand cuts’ approach to regulating the utility sector,” said Stephen Bell, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's vice president of advocacy, press and member communications. “They've enacted a number of rules, including the EPA Power Plant Rule. As a result, they're proposing rules and regulations at a

rapid pace that have a direct impact on our industry specifically.”

Boiled down, the EPA's Power Plant Rule requires coal-fired and natural gas power plants to capture 90% of carbon dioxide emissions using carbon capture and sequestration technology by 2032. This is not attainable according to NRECA who represents electric cooperatives nationally.

Alongside other industry leaders and 27 states' attorneys general, NRECA filed a lawsuit and stay request in the D.C. Circuit against the EPA earlier this year. The stay request, which attempted to delay the implementation of the rule, was denied in July and an appeal was immediately made to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing that

the Clean Air Act's Section 111 requires EPA's standards be based on technology that has been adequately demonstrated. A system that meets all of EPA's requirements has never existed and therefore cannot be considered adequately demonstrated.

"No operating coal or natural gas power plants in America exist that use carbon capture at the scale that would comply with EPA's regulation," said Bell. "Their final rule is unreasonable, unrealistic and unachievable, because it relies on technology for implementing greenhouse gas reductions that just isn't ready for prime time."

Grid reliability is a concern for many in the energy industry – including local distribution cooperatives whose mission is to provide safe, affordable and reliable energy to member-consumers.

"The numbers don't add up," said Bell. "I think we are in a situation where reliability is being put at risk

by a policy that doesn't focus on the importance of keeping the lights on."

South Dakota Rural Electric Association's General Manager Steve Barnett added the same sentiment, acknowledging that the timing of the power plant rule was troubling.

"At the same time the EPA is leading our nation down the path to fewer power plants, utilities are facing a surge in electricity demand – driven by the onshoring of manufacturing, the growth of the American economy and the rapid expansion of data centers to support artificial intelligence, e-commerce and cryptocurrency," said Barnett.

Grid reliability affects everyone's ability to turn on the lights, heat their homes and use electric appliances. However, the future of grid reliability does not have a positive outlook for many in the energy industry.

As it stands, the EPA's rule would cause debilitating pressure on an already strained grid. It would also

have a potential impact on consumer costs.

"When demand is high and supply is low, costs go up," Barnett said. "We're concerned about threats to reliability as well as cost increases to our members."

This growing demand – and shrinking supply – is why the North American Electric Reliability Corporation has warned that 19 states could see rolling blackouts over the next five years during times of high electrical usage, including during life-threatening cold snaps and heat waves.

"Demand for power is increasing and supply is not keeping up," said Bell. "Against that backdrop, the EPA has proposed a rule that will force electric co-ops to take power plants offline. They will be forced to do more with less in a situation where we need more. This is not a recipe for success."



**SEPT. 14-OCT. 27**  
**Mazing Acres Fall Festival**  
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
30851 433rd Ave.  
Yankton, SD  
605-760-2759



**SEPT. 27-29**  
**Coal Springs Threshing Bee and Antique Show**  
Meadow, SD  
605-788-2299

**OCT. 4-5**  
**Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest and Vendor Show**  
Philip, SD  
605-441-1060

**OCT. 4-5**  
**25th Annual Pumpkin Fest**  
Webster, SD  
<https://webstersd.com/home>

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Run Crazy Horse Marathons**  
Crazy Horse  
605-390-6137  
[www.runcrazyhorse.com](http://www.runcrazyhorse.com)

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Magic Needlers Quilt Show**  
Codington County Extension Complex  
Watertown, SD  
605-881-3273

**OCT. 5-6**  
**The Black Market**  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-332-6004

**OCT. 6**  
**Giant Pumpkin Festival**  
Bentley Memorial Building  
Bison, SD  
Enter Pumpkins by 11:30 a.m.  
605-244-5475

**OCT. 10-11**  
**Rural Women in Agriculture Conference**  
Oct. 10 from 1-9 p.m.  
Oct. 11 from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.  
The Lodge of Deadwood  
Deadwood, SD  
[SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com](http://SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com)

**OCT. 11-12**  
**Junkin' Market Days**  
Ramkota Exhibit Hall  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-941-4958

**OCT. 19**  
**Buffalo County Fall Ball**  
Live Music and Food  
8 p.m.  
Fire Hall  
Gann Valley, SD

**OCT. 25-27**  
**Forest of Fears Haunted Trail**  
7 p.m.-10 p.m.  
Reclamation-Ranch  
40787 259th St.  
Mitchell, SD

**OCT. 26**  
**Hill City Children's Boo Bash and Pumpkin Festival**  
Hill City, SD  
605-574-2368

**OCT. 26**  
**Hartford Women of Today Fall Craft Fair**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
West Central Becker Center  
Hartford, SD  
605-359-2049

**OCT. 26**  
**Owl-O-Ween**  
Noon-5 p.m.  
Black Hills Raptor Center  
Caputa, SD  
605-391-2511

**OCT. 31**  
**Treat Street**  
5:30 p.m.-7 p.m.  
Main St.  
Milbank, SD  
605-432-6656  
[MilbankSD.com/Chamber](http://MilbankSD.com/Chamber)

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

**NOV. 2**  
**Reliance Christmas Carousel**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Legion Hall  
Reliance, SD  
605-730-0553

**NOV. 22-23**  
**Holiday Arts Christmas Craft Show**  
Davison County Fairgrounds  
Mitchell, SD  
605-359-2049

**NOV. 30**  
**A Hometown Christmas Market**  
2 p.m.-6 p.m.  
Main St.  
Elk Point, 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.

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