



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

LACREEK ELECTRIC
NOVEMBER 2023 VOL. 24 NO. 7

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Wings of Valor

A Veteran's Hunting
Retreat

Pages 8-9

Celebrating American
Indian Heritage

Pages 12-13



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

The holiday season is upon us, and that means we'll be using more energy in the kitchen. When possible, cook with smaller countertop appliances instead of the stovetop or oven. Smaller appliances like slow cookers, air fryers and Instant Pots consume less energy.

When using the oven or stovetop, match the size of the pot to the heating element and place a lid over the pot while cooking. The food will cook faster, and you'll use less energy.

Source: Dept. of Energy

Find Your Account Number: It's Worth \$30!

A member's account number has been hidden somewhere in this newsletter. If you find your account number, call the office before **Nov. 10, 2023**, and you will receive a \$30 credit on your next month's billing. If no one finds their account number, the credit will be \$40 in the next issue.

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COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LACREEK ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-912)

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Scott Larson – Secretary
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Cole Lange – Clifford Lafferty
Neal Livermont – Marion Schultz
Jerry Sharp – Connie Whirlwind Horse
Donovan Young Man

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Kasi Harris – Finance Manager
Mike Pisha – Operations Manager
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Jessica Cook – Member Services/IT

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Lesmeister – Garrett Metzinger – Ryan Pettit –
Aaron Risse – Trace Scott – Damon Wangerin
Apprentice Linemen:
Tee Allen – Les Cuny – Kody Hagen –
Matthew Kruid – Chayson Schofield –
Carter Vesperman
Warehouseman: Henry Johnson
Maintenance Man: Justin Smokov

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August 2023 Board Meeting

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Lacreek Electric Association, Inc. was held in the office of the Cooperative, located in the Town of Martin, S.D., on Aug. 21, 2023, beginning at 4 p.m.

The meeting was then called to order by President Wade Risse and the following Directors were present: Donovan Young Man, Connie Whirlwind Horse, Jerry Sharp, Marion Schultz, Neal Livermont, Cole Lange, Clifford Lafferty, Troy Kuxhaus, Clarence Allen, Tom Schlack, Scott Larson, and Brent Ireland. Also present were General Manager Josh Fanning, Finance Manager Anna Haynes, Finance Manager Kasi Harris, Line Foreman Jesse Byerley, Member Service/IT Jessica Cook, Administrative Assistant Ashley Turgeon, Rick Nelson from NREA, Greg Strehle from NREA, and Vance McCoy from NREA. Attending via Webex was Work Order/Staff Assistant Sherry Bakley. Absent were Operations Manager Mike Pisha and Office Manager Tracie Hahn.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Wade Risse.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve Administrative Assistant Ashley Turgeon to record the board minutes.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the July 2023 Board Minutes. Additions to the agenda were asked for by President Risse.

There were no additions to the agenda.

Rick Nelson, Greg Strehle, and Vance McCoy from NREA gave an introduction about themselves and what they do. They have been traveling to all the coops part of NREA looking for feedback and trying to get to know the board of directors and membership of each individual coop.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to accept the Operating Report for June that was presented by Finance Manager Kasi Harris.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the checks and disbursements for July. (Brent “chairman”, Cole, and Scott). The August Check Audit Committee will be (Connie “chairman”, Marion, and Troy).

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to accept the July Analysis of Investments that was presented by Finance Manager Kasi Harris.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the list of new members.

Jessica reported on Ag Appreciation Day at the Central States Fair on August 22nd; the Fall River Ballon Festival on August 25th -27th where the Touchstone Ballon will be on display; on the new phone system coming in September; and on donating to Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota who hands out Blizzard Bags to seniors that contains 4 days’ worth of non-perishable food items to be used in case of severe weather or power outages in our service territory.

Jesse reported on work in progress: nearing completion of 2022 reject poles, 13 new services installed this month, and that lightning from recent storms has damaged transformers. He also reported that the new Telehandler has arrived and three work trucks have damaged equipment but are in the process of getting repaired.

Jesse gave the safety report.

Donovan reported on the SDREA Legislative Committee Meeting he attended.

Josh reported on the FEMA December storm; solar farm information; that the building committee will meet next month to discuss Pride Grain lots; and the Basin Rate change. 2501869801

Clarence and Marion reported on the Basin Electric Annual Meeting they attended.

Discussion was held on the Lacreek Rate Design with the board agreeing to table it for now until they see more examples of Option 4.

Discussion was held on the Resolution Authorizing the Amendment of the 401 (K) Pension Plan and 401 K Adoption Agreement, a motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the resolution.

Discussion was held on SRS phone system and how to use the after-hours phone number.

The Staff was excused from the meeting and the General Manager and Board went into executive session from 7:38-7:51 p.m., with no action taken.

No further business was brought before the board and the meeting was adjourned.

Next Board Meeting – Sept. 19, 2023, at 4 p.m.

Drowsy Driving

Drowsy Driving Prevention Week (Nov. 5-11, 2023), held every year during the first full week of November, is a good time to remember that drowsy driving is impaired driving.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 in 25 adult drivers report having fallen asleep while driving in the previous 30 days, and many more admit to driving when they were sleep-deprived.

These startling figures show how prevalent drowsy driving is. What drivers may not realize is how much drowsy driving puts themselves – and others – at risk. In fact, an estimated 6,400 people died annually in crashes involving drowsy driving, according to the National Sleep Foundation.

Impact of Drowsiness on Driving

Driving while drowsy is similar to driving under influence of alcohol.

- Drivers' reaction times, awareness of hazards and ability to sustain attention all worsen the drowsier the driver.
- Driving after going more than 20 hours without sleep is the equivalent of driving with a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.08% – the U.S. legal limit.
- You are three times more likely to be in a car crash if you are fatigued.

A driver might not even know when he or she is fatigued because signs of fatigue are hard to identify. Some people may also experience micro-sleep – short, involuntary periods of inattention. In the 4 or 5 seconds a driver experiences micro-sleep, at highway speed, the vehicle will travel the length of a football field.

Prevalence of Drowsy Driving Crashes

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that every year about 100,000 police-reported, drowsy-driving crashes result in nearly 800 fatalities and about 50,000 injuries. The real number may be much higher, however, as it is difficult to determine whether a driver was drowsy at the time of a crash.

A study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety estimated that 328,000 drowsy driving crashes occur annually. That's more than three times the police-reported number. The same study found that 109,000 of those drowsy driving crashes resulted in an injury and about 6,400 were fatal. The researchers suggest the prevalence of drowsy driving fatalities is more than 350% greater than reported.

Beyond the human toll is the economic one. NHTSA estimates fatigue-related crashes resulting in injury or death cost society \$109 billion annually, not including property damage.

Interventions for Drowsy Driving

Drowsy driving affects everyone, including adolescents and teens, who are not getting enough sleep (according to the CDC, it is recommended that teens get 8-10 hours of sleep each night). That means interventions focusing on this age group can help reduce drowsy

driving. One such intervention is for parents to incorporate discussions and rules on drowsy driving while completing their parent-teen driving agreements.

Other ways to reduce drowsy driving include:

- **Crash avoidance technologies:** New and existing safety technologies, such as drowsiness alert and lane departure warnings, can detect common drowsy driving patterns and warn drivers to stay in their lane or take a break
- **University interventions:** College students receive less than average sleep, with some estimates at less than six hours a night; education programs aimed at college students may help curb drowsy driving and instill healthier behaviors that can last into adulthood
- **Getting more sleep:** According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Sleep Research Society, adults should get seven or more hours of sleep each night
- **Medication labels:** An article by Consumer Reports found that side-effect warnings are not always clear; new labeling guidelines may help drivers understand when to drive or not drive after taking these medications
- **Employers:** Workplaces with strong off-the-job safety and health programs can include key information on getting sufficient sleep and refraining from driving drowsy

Source: National Safety Council



Don't Fly Kites Near Power Lines!

Jason Willman, Age 9

Jason Willman advises people it's not safe to fly kites around power lines. Jason is the son of Dave and April Willman from Yankton, S.D., members of Clay-Union Electric Corporation.

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.

EASY CROCKPOT CREATIONS

MOM'S ROAST

Ingredients:

3-5 lbs. beef roast
1 can beefy mushroom soup
1 pkg. au jus (dry)

Method

Place roast in crock pot at bedtime. Mix au jus and soup together and pour over the roast. Cook on low. Roast will be ready to serve in its own gravy for dinner tomorrow.

Elaine Rieck
Harrisburg, S.D.

CREAMY GARDEN ROTINI

Ingredients:

1 lb. cooked and drained sausage or beef
1 large can (26 oz.) cream of chicken soup
1 soup can of milk
1 can (14.5 oz.) chicken broth soup
1 tbsp. Italian seasoning
1 cup fresh mushrooms
6 cups fresh spinach
1 pkg. Garden Rotini

Method

Add ingredients in the order given to the instant pot. Pressure cook on high for 20 minutes. Allow pressure to reduce to normal for 10 minutes, then serve! You will need an instant pot for this recipe!

Jean Cave
Sioux Falls, S.D.

CROCKPOT CASHEW CHICKEN

Ingredients:

1 pkg. slow cookers limited edition cashew chicken seasoning
2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken thighs, cubed
1 cup frozen chopped onion and pepper blend
1/3 cup water
3 tbsps. soy sauce
2 tbsps. ketchup
1 cup cashew pieces
2 green onions, finely chopped

Method

Place chicken and vegetables in slow cooker. Mix seasoning, water, soy sauce, and ketchup in bowl until well blended. Pour over chicken and vegetables; stir to coat. Cover. Cook eight hours on low or four hours on high. Stir in cashews. Sprinkle with green onions. Serve over cooked rice, if desired. If cooking on low, decrease water to 1/4 cup.

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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Consumer Guide to Stovetops

Q: I'm considering a new stovetop. Can you explain the different options available?

A: I have found that most people who enjoy cooking have pretty strong opinions about their preferred fuel choice: gas or electric. Induction is a newer option for home stovetops, which is growing in popularity.



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

According to a study completed by Electric Power Research Institute, 74% of the energy from an electric range is transferred to food, versus 40% on a gas range. Induction cooktops are the most efficient option at 90% energy transferred to food. Regardless of your stovetop choice, right-sizing pots and pans to the burner is important to avoid wasting energy.

Electric cooktops are a tried-and-true option for many homes, and they are typically the most affordable option. Glass top models offer a cleaner look than the traditional coil elements and are easier to clean but tend to be a bit more expensive. The most common complaint about electric cooking is that the heating controls are not as fast or precise.

Many home chefs prefer gas stovetops because you can easily see the size of the flame, a visual clue that helps you control the cooking temperature. Temperature adjustments are also faster and more precise than on electric stovetops. However, there are some concerns with safety and indoor air quality associated with gas stoves because gas emissions can be harmful to your health. To help reduce indoor air pollution, always use your exhaust fan when using your gas stovetop. Ideally, your exhaust fan should be vented to the exterior of the home.

Access is also a consideration. Natural gas is typically available in more populated areas, while rural customers may need a propane storage tank installed outside their homes to use a gas stove.

An induction stovetop can offer a higher-end cooking experience than a standard electric stovetop, and some people prefer it to cooking on gas.

Induction stovetops use electromagnetic energy to heat the pan, reducing energy waste. Instead of heating the stove's surface, they heat the pans themselves. Because the pans heat directly, you don't have to wait for the heat to transfer like you do with gas and electric stovetops, resulting in faster cooking times. They also allow for more precise temperature control, which can deliver better results.

Cool burners offer additional safety benefits. You don't have the indoor air quality issues associated with gas, and they won't ignite items like dishrags or paper left on the stovetop.

Induction cooktops are typically more expensive than similar gas or electric models. They also require you to use specific cookware. Stainless steel and cast-iron cookware are both compatible with induction cooktops. If you want to test your pots and pans to see if they are induction compatible, do the magnet test. If a magnet sticks to the bottom of the pan, it will work on an induction stove.

Cooking on an induction stovetop takes a little time to get used to, but many people have made the switch and enjoy the experience.

If you are remodeling and have a gas range, consider running electrical to support an induction cooktop if you change your mind in the future. Setting up the power supply during a remodel can offer significant savings.

If you are considering making the switch, be sure to keep an eye on any incentives for your state or region. A rebate for replacing your gas stove with an electric one may be available under The Inflation Reduction Act.



RattleSnake Randy

Scott Waltman

Thousands of prospectors flocked to the Black Hills after the 1847 expedition of Gen. George Custer and accompanying stories that there were riches to be found in the streams and beneath the pine trees.

South Dakota wasn't even a state back then. But when folks heard there was "gold in them thar hills" of western Dakota Territory, they didn't want to miss out.

That was the onset of the Black Hills Gold Rush, which peaked in 1876 and 1877 not far from the town that's now named for Custer, according to a history account published by Black Hills Visitor Magazine.

Eventually, of course, the discovery of gold led to full-scale mining, much of it near the outlaw and gambling town of Deadwood.

While the big mines have since closed, visitors to the Black Hills can still try their hand at panning for a little gold.

That's where RattleSnake Randy can help out. He'll take folks to a claim of his not far from Rockville for an authentic gold-panning experience. He can't guarantee gold will be found, but said that for those who work at it, the odds of finding a few flakes are good. And he does guarantee fun.



Randy first went panning more than 20 years ago in California.

"Once I did my first pan, I was hooked on it."

Like the prospectors of old, he had the fever.

Randy said he always had an interest in gold, which grew from watching old westerns in which the outlaws would steal gold belonging to the cowboys.

He started Black Hills Gold Mining a few years back after a series of health issues, which included five back surgeries and an aortobifemoral bypass surgery because of problems with some of his blood vessels. It all changed Randy's perspective on life, including the realization that there are more important things than money.

Now, he spends the spring and summer months offering a unique experience to folks from around the world.

"To me, it's to make a memory for a family," he said.

He offers three four-hour gold-panning tours a day with no more than five people per group. Randy's been on a dozen or so TV shows, including one shown in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. And he's taken international rock star Ozzie Osbourne out for a day of panning.

"He called me a lunatic, so if that's any indication..." Randy said with a chuckle. "I took it as a compliment coming from him."

Randy said Osbourne is a history buff, which sparked his interest in trying to find some gold.

The panning experiences are a



combination of science, geology, physics and gold-mining history, Randy said.

Going out with the expectation to have fun is the best plan, he said. With that mindset, finding some gold adds to the excitement. And there's something to realize when the panning yields a little gold.

"When you find it, you're the first one to ever see that gold," Randy said.

His peak months are June through August, but he leads tours from whenever the temperatures warm up until the claim freezes.

Oh, and as for the name RattleSnake Randy? Well, he put a rattlesnake rattle on his gold mining cap, which led to the whole cap being covered with snake rattles. So, a neighbor started calling him Rattlesnake Randy. The name fits in more than one way as others call on him to remove the venomous serpents.

More often, though, he's leading people on panning adventures or exploring the nine other claims he has in the Back Hills.

Randy said it's smart to book early as his business has been increasing every summer. A panning adventure costs \$50 for adults and \$40 for kids 5 to 16. To book or learn more, visit blackhillsgoldpanning.com.



Veterans enjoying their stay at Wings of Valor.

WINGS OF VALOR

A Veteran's Retreat

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

Wings of Valor Lodge isn't just a hunting retreat offering veterans a good time and a free pheasant hunt, it's a place for them to come home.

The non-profit organization offers all U.S. military veterans an all-expense paid hunt in the heart of pheasant country, about five miles south of Parker, South Dakota.

The organization runs almost entirely on volunteers, donations and sponsorships and has already served more than 500 veterans from over 40 states since it began operations in 2019.

Sean Adams, the organization's president and co-founder, said the idea to open a hunting lodge came after discussions with the organization's now-CEO Bruce Weller back in 2018.

Weller owned a private hunting lodge called Birds, Bucks and Berries, and was host to Adams and other veterans during his annual veterans' hunt.

"Bruce was saying how the veterans' hunt was always the best day of the year, so I said, we can make every day the best day of the year if you want," said Adams.

Adams, who was grievously injured while serving in Afghanistan resulting in a double amputation of his legs in 2012, said he was well-versed in the non-profit community by the time he and Weller began discussing opening a hunting lodge that served veterans.

"I know pretty much how it works. If you do what you say, do it on time, do it well, serve veterans with a level of professionalism, and have a little faith, people will come," Adams said.

"From that conversation to Nov. 1, 2019, we worked on build site plans that I designed with one of the volunteers. We took a pavilion area that (Weller) used for weddings and put chalk lines everywhere, which is how we mapped out a building plan."

Adams said he rolled his wheelchair around each room, and if he hit a chalk line, he'd remark the line to ensure it was handicap accessible. That was in



Above: CPL USMC (RET) Sean Adams

Right: Sean Adams recovers in a hospital after suffering serious injuries in an IED explosion in Afghanistan in 2011.



January of 2019. Eleven months later, the lodge had been built and a group of veterans came to hunt under the newly established Wings of Valor Lodge.

Adams said a premise of Wings of Valor Lodge is to welcome veterans' home to something that's not chaotic, a place where they can find purpose and peace.

There's no religious angle, nor any requirements other than having taken the oath to serve our country for a veteran to have their travel expenses and entire hunting trip paid for by the non-profit.

"My generation fought in a war that was religious based," Adams explained. "We do have a spiritual setting, but we don't press anything. We never want a veteran to feel that they are oppressed by any sort of a faith."

Whether a veteran is religious, Christian, Muslim, atheist, or simply spiritual, they will be amongst others who understand what they've been through.

"No veteran is broken, they just need to come home," Adams said.

"God did not call the qualified, he called the unqualified that were willing to do

whatever was asked. Don't think because you did something overseas that your any worse than the pastor in the pulpit. We're all sinners on this earth."

Nature is also a powerful tool that Adams believes helps mend the mind, body and spirit. It's peaceful, which he said is the type of environment veterans need.

"You need all those to regroup yourself back in society. It's really hard to come out of a war, or wars, and describe that to the average human being," Adams said.

The lodge has hosted veterans of World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam to veterans who have served in the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Operation Desert Storm.

Many of the veterans that have come to the lodge have never had a chance to heal or "come home", Adams said.

Some of those men were Marines that Adams served with directly a decade ago.

"They saw me in an IED blast. They didn't have time to heal. They were able to see that I was okay and it was time for them to start healing. They had given enough to the country. It was time to start the healing process," Adams said.

"We also had a veteran talk about Vietnam. He hadn't talked about it since 1968," Adams said.

Combat veterans, regardless of where they served or experienced warfare, establish a connection with one another at the lodge.

Older veterans find purpose in helping their younger counterparts. Adams said the connection can be overwhelming at times for the Vietnam veterans because of the newfound sense of purpose they find in these interactions.

Adams said raising kids and having companionship with your wife or husband is meaningful to veterans, but they often go without the relationships they had with their fellow soldiers they had beside them in the heat of battle.

"Giving someone millions of dollars, houses, or trip – that's great. But that's only mending the problem. Giving someone a sense of purpose is something we have to do," Adams said.

"When the Vietnam veterans tell my generation 'I get it, and it won't last forever', it gives the Vietnam guys a sense of purpose. The longer you hold it in the deeper it gets. That's something we realized at Walter Reed. We started getting off our medications the more we talked about what happened."

Adams said any veteran who wants to come and hunt at the Wings of Valor Lodge need only apply.

Individual applications come to the lodge free of charge. That means the organization will cover the cost of travel and any other expenses incurred to ensure the veteran doesn't pay a dime out of their own pocket.

To apply for a hunt or learn more about Wings of Valor Lodge, go to www.wingsofvalorlodge.org.



A handicap accessible bedroom at Wings of Valor lodge

Power Surge Causes

How to Protect Your Devices

Jessica Cook

Member Services/IT

Could you make it through your day without using a single electronic device or electrical appliance? We have come to rely heavily on electronics, not only for work but for everyday living. That is why it is vital to ensure you protect them from potential power surge-related damage.

Every home that uses electricity experiences power surges now and then. If you haven't already invested in electrical surge protection, you'll want to prioritize it. Without it, you risk not only losing valuable data stored on your computer but also risk losing electronic units. No one wants to be put in a position where they unexpectedly have to replace an appliance they didn't budget for.

What Does Power Surge Mean?

What is a power surge? Well, it's a pretty straightforward answer. True to its name, a power surge, also known as a voltage surge or a transient voltage, is a very brief spike in voltage. Now, the magnitude can vary quite drastically from a small-scale spike of only a few volts to a large-scale jump of several thousand volts. This variance in fluctuation is what makes some power surges virtually undetectable while others can be catastrophic.

How Do Power Surges Cause Damage?

Most wall outlets in US homes operate on a 120-volt system. However, this doesn't translate to a constant stream of 120 volts running through your home. What actually happens is that there's an alternating electrical current that rises and falls in a predetermined rhythm.

When a power surge occurs, it causes a flow of electricity that spikes, resulting in an arc of electrical current. This arc generates heat that is damaging to electronic components and circuit boards. You may not notice damage to your devices after a small power surge. Still, even the slightest fluctuation makes an impact and slowly shortens the lives of your electrical appliances and electrical devices until one day, they mysteriously just stop working.

What Are the Common Causes of Power Surges?

You may be wondering what would cause a power surge. Well, there are many different sources for a surge. Let's take a look at some of the most common causes of power surges.

1. **Internal Sources Within Your Home:** Internal sources within your home are responsible for up to 80% of power surges you'll experience, making them the most common

cause of power surges. When electronic devices with motors and compressors turn on or off, they interrupt the flow of energy to and from other electrical appliances.

You'll frequently see this circuit overload occur with hairdryers, space heaters, power tools, HVAC units or air conditioners, and large appliances. More often than not, these are smaller-scale power surges that occur regularly, causing what's referred to as electronic rust or slowly emerging product damage.

2. **Outdated Electrical Systems:** Another cause for internally-caused power surges is outdated electrical systems and faulty wiring, particularly in older homes that don't have updated wiring. Many homes built before the 1980s have cheaper aluminum wiring rather than today's standard copper wiring. We now know that the old aluminum connections tend to loosen and cause power surges.
3. **Outdated Electrical Systems:** Over 20 million cloud-to-ground lightning strikes are detected annually across the nation. Lightning strikes can cause large-scale power surges that could instantly ruin any electrical devices you have plugged in (like computers and televisions). The electricity from lightning strikes can enter your home through your cable TV or satellite dish cable or the incoming telephone or electrical service lines.
4. **Fallen Tree Limbs, Car Accidents, and Wildlife:** Tree limbs and car accidents that take down power lines can cause power outages. Likewise, animals, such as squirrels, snakes, and birds, can sometimes interfere with electrical equipment by climbing into transformers which knocks out the power service. Then, when the utility company switches power grids to restore power after an outage, an excess of electricity floods the electrical system, causing power surges.

How Do You Recognize If You've Had a Power Surge?

Some visible signs of faulty wiring are fuses that blow frequently or circuit breakers that trip regularly. Flickering or dimming lights when the refrigerator or other large appliances kick on are also signs of a problem.

Here are some other signs that you may have just had a power surge:

- Electrical appliances and electronic devices with flashing clocks are a fairly obvious sign that an electrical surge to the power strip or wall outlet occurred.
- Since power surges can cause burning, you might catch a whiff. If you suspect a power surge, smell around the wall outlet or power strip to see if you can detect a burnt aroma.
- Some wall outlets and power strips have reset buttons. These buttons will move to the reset position if the outlet has experienced an electrical fluctuation. If you have to reset this button manually, there's a good chance there was a power surge.

Power Surge Causes, Continued

Does Insurance Cover Power Surge Damage?

Suppose a power surge zaps your computer, television, or any other electrical device in your home. In that case, you may be left to wonder if insurance will cover the expense of replacing your damaged items. The answer is not entirely straightforward. Whether your insurance company will cover the expense depends on what caused the power surge to happen in the first place and the insurance coverage you have.

With most standard homeowner insurance policies, there's a chance you will be at least partially covered if:

- A lightning strike is the cause or
- An artificially generated electrical current

In these cases, your homeowner's insurance might help to cover the cost of replacing your damaged devices. For those who have coverage, the actual reimbursement amount you receive is based on whether you have a replacement cost policy or an actual cash value policy. An actual cash value policy will only provide reimbursement for the depreciated value of your damaged items. However, a replacement cost policy that specifically includes power surge damage coverage will provide funds for replacing your damaged items, providing as much as your personal property coverage limit allows.

But here's the twist. Some insurance companies make an exception and do not cover specific components of your electronics that allow them to work. For example, if a transistor is the part that's damaged and leads to your electrical appliance no longer working, you're out of luck. The bad news is that virtually all electronic devices use a transistor.

To get around this, you may be able to add equipment breakdown coverage to your homeowner's insurance policy. This added coverage offers you extra protection for all electronic devices damaged due to causes not covered in your standard policy. Examples of what could be covered are short circuits, power surges, mechanical breakdowns, or even improper installation.

Even with the additional coverage, you may not be eligible for insurance assistance if:

- Specific maintenance issues caused your power surge
- You were negligent, or
- Your home has been left vacant for more than 60 days

How Can Power Surges Be Prevented? Is There Power Surge Protection?

How do you prevent an electrical power surge from damaging your appliances or electronic devices? The best protection from power surge damage is high-quality surge protectors (also known as suppressors). Connect all programmable devices and appliances through a surge protector. This includes computer equipment, home entertainment systems, fax machines, telephones, and other digital electronic devices.

Surge Protectors: How Much Surge Protection Do You Need?

Power surges are inevitable, but you can avoid damaged electronics and appliances as a result of them. Surge protectors and surge protection devices are a necessary investment if you want to save your electronic devices and electrical appliances from being damaged. There are even various levels of surge protection devices to choose from.

1. Point-of-entry or whole house surge protectors: These devices are installed by the main electrical panel and protect your electronics by diverting external electrical fluctuations to the ground. Use these in combination with other surge protection devices.
2. Surge protector, or surge suppressor power strips: Most people are familiar with surge protector power strips. They are relatively common, but be aware that not all power strips have surge protection built into them. It would be such a shame to think that your electronics are protected when they aren't, so make sure that yours has the surge protector feature. They're easy to use as you simply plug the cord for these power strips into your standard wall outlets. They're also convenient since you can plug multiple devices into one strip. They even help with energy savings.
3. Backup battery surge protectors: These devices come in handy when there's a power outage since they instantly provide backup power to any connected devices. With these, your wall outlet power charges the battery continuously instead of powering your devices directly, further isolating your devices from power surges.
4. Outlet adapter surge protectors: These are similar to power strips, but they plug directly into your standard wall outlets (no cord). They save space while providing protection where traditional surge protector power strips are not ideal.

Surge Protector Safety Tips

Follow these simple steps to keep your surge protectors working and your home safe.

- Keep your surge protector uncovered.
- Unwind surge protector cords before use.
- Keep your surge protectors in dry spaces.
- Don't use surge protectors with aquariums.
- Never exceed the surge protector's electrical rating.
- Occasionally feel your surge protector to ensure it's not hot to the touch.
- Never plug your surge protectors into extension cords or other surge protectors.
- Do regular inspections to make sure there aren't any frayed wires or worn outlets.

Installing various forms of surge protection devices and replacing your surge protectors every few years is the best way to protect your home from power surge damage. It's also important to check your home's wiring and plugs periodically.



Dignity courtesy of Travel South Dakota

DIGNITY

Celebrating American Indian Heritage

Scott Waltman

Rising from the prairie land as it gives way to bluffs on the east side of the Missouri River is a spectacular sculpture commemorating both South Dakota's 125 anniversary and the state's original inhabitants.

Dignity of the Earth and Sky was built by Sturgis-based sculptor Dale Claude Lamphere, who used to be the state's poet laureate.

The sculpture was erected in 2016 after Norm and Eunabel McKie announced it as a gift to South Dakota upon the state's quasiquintennial in 2014.

Dignity towers 50 feet above the ground, beckoning motorists as they travel along Interstate 90. From the

east, it's the gateway to West River en route to the beautiful Black Hills. From the west, it's a sign to travelers that they are closer to the Minnesota border than the state's most popular playgrounds that range from Wall to Spearfish to Hot Springs.

Ashley Riehle of Sylvania, Ohio, which is on the northwestern outskirts of Toledo and just south of the Michigan

border, said the stretch of I-90 alone makes South Dakota one of the best road trip states in the nation.

She visited South Dakota in 2021, driving from Sioux Falls to the Black Hills and back and twice stopping at the Dignity monument. She planned to visit the sculpture during her drive but said the Chamberlain area also doubled as a logical place to take a break.

As a history buff, Riehle appreciates





Jeremy and Stacey Waltner of Freeman visit the Dignity of Earth and Sky sculpture in 2018.

both the beauty and the significance of Dignity.

“I thought it was great that South Dakota acknowledges the first people that occupied the state,” she said.

Many states don’t, she said, and she doesn’t know of any such significant recognitions in Ohio or Michigan.

Jeremy Waltner of Freeman, South Dakota, also appreciates the sculpture on multiple levels.

“It is as impressive as you can imagine just in terms of both size and impact,” he said.

Being a South Dakotan, he knew of Dignity and that he wanted to visit. But he also wanted to make sure his wife Stacey, daughter Ella and son Oliver could share the experience. They stopped during a trip west in summer 2018.

The sculpture pays homage to South Dakota’s Native American population, setting it apart from so many other tourist stops in the state, Waltner said.

“It’s education as much as it is art,” he said, adding that the context behind Dignity is critical.

Three Native American women from Rapid City served as models for the sculpture, which was created east of the town in an isolated area along the Cheyenne River.

Lamphere’s other creations include work in the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre and the Arch of Dreams in Sioux Falls. He’s done commissioned portraits of Bob and Dolores Hope, Burl Ives, Walter Annenberg, George and Eleanor McGovern and others, according to his website.

For Dignity, he had a specific goal.

“I wanted something that would really honor the indigenous people of the Great Plains, and I kept that in mind all the time. I made the work reflect the name that it has of Dignity, and I think that’s part of what makes it work so well,” Lamphere has said of his creation.

Riehle noted that the star quilt Dignity wears has meaning.

It’s comprised of more than 100 blue diamonds as Dignity holds it behind her back in her outstretched arms.

In Native American culture, star quilts are a sign of respect and are often given as gifts to honor somebody for a substantial achievement in their life.

Including the quilt was a nice touch that took some planning, Riehle said, because it’s a direct tie to the Lakota culture.

While there is a plaque at Dignity that briefly tells the story of the sculpture, Waltner said he’s not sure most people realize the history.

In fact, he said, he’s not sure if most people set out to visit Dignity or just happen across her as they zip through the heart of the state on the interstate.

“It’s South Dakota’s greatest conversational piece outside of two gigantic granite carvings in the Black Hills,” Waltner said, referring to Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial.

Either way, he said, people who take time to admire the grand piece of art wind up learning a little bit.

When he stopped with his family, he said there was a good crowd of people visiting about the sculpture, smiling as they looked on in awe and waiting in line so they could get their pictures taken

with Dignity.

Waltner said he has stopped to see the sculpture twice on his own.

Riehle met friends from Denver and Chicago in the Black Hills as part of her trip. She had been to South Dakota before but got to see and do much more in 2021. She visited Sioux Falls, Mitchell’s Corn Palace, Deadwood, the Badlands, Wall Drug, Spearfish Canyon, Custer State Park, the Chapel in the Hills, Pactola Lake, Palisades State Park and other popular places.

All were fun, but Dignity was special, she said, because it is a reflection of the true foundation of South Dakota’s history.

“So much history focuses on when the white settlers got there,” Riehle said.

Dignity is deeper.

The McKies donated \$1 million to the Dignity project. Less than a decade later, that investment helps the thousands upon thousands of people who stop just east of Chamberlain each year take a moment to remember and acknowledge the rich history of South Dakota’s first citizens.

Additional Facts:

- November is National American Indian Heritage Month. It’s a time to remember and celebrate the important contributions of Native people and their cultures, traditions, and histories.
- The first state to declare and celebrate an American Indian Day was New York on the second Saturday in May 1916.
- In 1990, the month of November was approved by a joint resolution and signed by President George H. W. Bush as “National American Indian Heritage Month.”
- Central Electric Cooperative proudly powers Dignity and the rest area where thousands of visitors stop each year to celebrate the beauty of the American Indian.



Scott Pudwill, director of the Aberdeen Public School District's A-TEC Academy shows school board members one of three electric vehicles purchased for the academy's automotive class. *Photo courtesy of The Aberdeen Insider*

The Rise of Career and Technical Education

Scott Waltman

Many high school graduates in South Dakota are veering from the traditional path to college and a four-year degree.

Career and technical education classes continue to grow in popularity with school districts expanding their offerings and academies and seeing more students interested in those classes.

During the 2021-22 school year, there were 25,282 South Dakota public school students taking some type of career or technical training class, according to information from the South Dakota Department of Education. That number includes students who took more than one class.

Those are the most recent complete numbers available from the state.

More and more, those classes get young people prepared for jobs that offer

good wages and benefits. The perception of what, decades ago, was called “tech school” has changed, and the number of students taking classes that focus on agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, and architecture and construction continues to rise.

In recent months, the Aberdeen Public School District expanded its A-TEC Academy on the campus of Central High School. The project cost roughly \$3.6 million.

New spaces for agriculture, family and consumer sciences, networking, and broadcast courses were added, though the district offers other career and technical education classes.

The agriculture program is especially popular, said Scott Pudwill, the district's A-TEC Academy director.

Before the expansion, he said, all of the ag classes were in one room. Now, ag

classes have a multipurpose space with tables and sinks and the academy has a new greenhouse.

Students were starting to put plant beds together at the end of September and, Pudwill said, the kids will be able to monitor them during the winter months with the new facility.

He said ag classes average about 105 students per term, which is nine weeks. The automotive program is almost as popular with about 400 students taking classes over the course of a school year, he said.

Career and technical education classes are also popular in the Harrisburg School District, said Breanne Lynch, the district's career and technical education coordinator.

Harrisburg offers classes in 13 of the 16 clusters the state has, she said, and about half of the 1,700 students in grades nine through 12 take career and tech classes.

If you included internships, work-based learning and other options, about 90% of high school students have a career or technical education-related class or experience during their four years, Lynch said.

The district continues to offer more

options. For example, Lynch said, a home builders academy opened in 2019. That first year, students built a full house. Now, they are working on tiny homes that will eventually go to veterans, she said.

In Aberdeen, A-TEC students have built cabins for the city's Wylie Park campground.

Both districts have partnerships with their local home builders associations.

Harrisburg's automotive program teams with Schulte Subaru in town. As is the case with many career and technical education classes, that gives students the chance to get hands-on experience.

Lynch said that when Schulte buys cars at auction, students have the chance to diagnose what problems there might be. They also do basic work like change the oil on district staff cars. That gives them experience in what it's like to work at a quick stop, she said.

Harrisburg students in the business management and administration cluster operate the Roar Store at the school. It offers snacks and drinks to students when meals aren't being served, Lynch said. For managing the store, including tasks like working with wholesalers to purchase products, the kids are paid in Roar Bucks they can spend at the store.

The aim of all of the career and technical education classes is to prepare students for the workforce, Lynch said. Workforce development is a prime focus of state leaders, she said.

Aberdeen Central's A-TEC Academy had a shop before the expansion. But students will get to try their hand at something new this school year.

The auto curriculum now has three electric cars, Pudwill said. Students will be able to build them, then the vehicles can be taken apart and used in future years.

Once finished, the cars will look somewhat like a dune buggy, he said. But they can be licensed and driven on streets and roads.

Even if students who take career and technical education classes choose another profession, they'll still have the skills to, for

example, make home or vehicle repairs, Pudwill said.

For those who go onto a postsecondary school, many of the programs are one or two years, Pudwill said. So students get into the workforce quicker while accruing less debt than they would at a traditional four-year college or university, he said.

Bobbie Jo Donovan is the college and career readiness manager for the Rapid City Public School District and past president of the South Dakota Association for Career and Technical Education. The number of high school students taking those courses is certainly on the uptick, she said.

One of the biggest challenges is finding qualified, certified teachers to lead the classes, she said.

Sometimes there's a community member with a strong background in a profession who isn't certified but would make a good teaching candidate, Donovan said. The state has programs to help those folks, who, because of their career experience, can often offer a wealth of knowledge to students, she said.

So many careers can start in high school with career and tech classes, Donovan said, and school districts want to be able to help those young people, she said.

Lynch said the Harrisburg district also offers opportunities to students in kindergarten

through eighth grade. Career learning can begin as early as age 4, so keeping students interested and curious in career and technical education options will pay dividends in the future, she said.

"We also know that students who take multiple CTE classes are more engaged in learning and see a higher graduation rate," said Nancy Van Der Weide, public information specialist with the state Department of education.

"Statewide, 82% of high school students graduated on time in the 2021-22 school year, but 94% of students who were actively involved in CTE graduated on time," she said.



Harrisburg students working on a car in the automotive class. Photo courtesy of Harrisburg School District



Students in the Harrisburg School District's home builders academy have built a full house. Photo courtesy of John Klemme



Nov. 2-4
Huron Ringneck Festival and
Bird Dog Challenge
 Huron, SD
 605-352-0000

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.

OCT. 24-28
Grey Goose Halloween Display
 6 p.m.
 19988 Grey Goose Rd.
 Pierre, SD

OCT. 28
Hill City Children's Boo Bash and Pumpkin Festival
 Hill City Visitor's Center
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2368

OCT. 28-29
Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association
 Ramkota Hotel Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-731-9155

NOV. 3
Plankinton Service Club Fun Night
 7 p.m.
 Aurora County Ag Building
 Plankinton, SD

NOV. 4-5
Benson's Flea Market
 W.H. Lyons Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 5
American Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast
 8:30 a.m.
 S.D. Military Heritage Alliance Building
 Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 5
Turkey Dinner/ Silent Auction
 11:45 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

NOV. 10-12
Christmas at the Barn
 10 a.m.
 Groton, SD

NOV. 10-11
Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 11
Sisseton Area Merchants & Crafters Holiday Extravaganza
 Sisseton, SD

NOV. 12
Lutefisk, Lefse & Meatball
 4-7 p.m.
 Trinity Lutheran Church
 Chamberlain, SD
 605-730-0553

NOV. 24
Parade of Lights
 7 p.m.
 Dakota Avenue
 Huron, SD

NOV. 25
Mid-Winter Fair
 Gregory Auditorium
 Gregory, SD
 605-830-9778

NOV. 30-DEC. 3
Hatchery Holidays
 D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery
 Spearfish, SD

DEC. 2
6th Annual Holiday Party, Tour of Homes, Silent Auction
 4 p.m.
 Olive Grove Golf Course
 Groton, SD

DEC. 8-9
Alexandria's Winter Festival
 5 p.m.
 Alexandria, SD

DEC. 8-9
Junkin' Market Days
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Center
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-941-4958

DEC. 17
Christmas Cantata
 3 p.m.
 Hermosa United Church of Christ
 Hermosa, SD

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