A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

LACREEK ELECTRIC
AUGUST 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 4

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Preserving Our Past

Historical Society Unveils New Cultural Heritage Center
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Note From Your General Manager



Josh Fanning
General Manager

As we turn the calendar to August, it's hard to believe we're already well into another year. It seems like just yesterday we were preparing for our Annual Meeting, and now our communities are gearing up for county fairs, back-to-school activities, and before long, another harvest season. The months certainly have a way of flying by.

The first half of 2026 has kept all of us at Lacreek Electric busy. While we were fortunate to have a mild winter that allowed our crews to continue construction and system improvement projects, Mother Nature quickly reminded us that every season brings its own challenges. Early summer storms tested our system with high winds, heavy rain and lightning, resulting in outages across portions of our service territory. Through it all, our line crews worked long hours in difficult conditions to safely restore power as quickly as possible. I want to sincerely thank our employees for their dedication and thank our members for the patience and understanding you've shown during these events.

Those storms also serve as a reminder of why we continue investing in our electric system. Reliability remains our highest priority, and this year we've continued replacing aging infrastructure, upgrading equipment and improving the overall resilience of our distribution system. 1313000406 These projects are made possible in part through the federal Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (GRIP) program. This funding allows us to accelerate improvements that will strengthen our system for years to come, helping reduce outages and improve reliability across our large rural service territory.

As we've worked to strengthen the system, we've also spent time helping members better understand their electric service. One topic we've received more questions about this summer is electric demand. While most of us are familiar with paying for electricity we use, demand is a little different. Demand measures the highest amount of electricity being used at any one time. Large appliances running simultaneously, such as air conditioners, electric water heaters, clothes dryers, ovens, irrigation equipment or shop machinery, can create a high demand even if they're only operating for a short period.

Managing demand isn't about using less electricity, it's about using electricity more efficiently. By spreading out when major appliances are used, members can often lower their monthly costs without sacrificing comfort or productivity. Our Member Services team is always happy to answer questions, explain demand charges or review your account and usage patterns. Providing information and resources that help our members make informed decisions is just one more way we strive to serve you.

As summer continues, many of us will spend time at county fairs, rodeos, 4-H events and community celebrations. These gatherings remind us what makes rural South Dakota such a special place to call home. We are proud to support these events because they reflect the cooperative spirit and strong communities that have always been at the heart of Lacreek Electric.

Before we know it, combines and tractors will once again be rolling through our service territory. As harvest season approaches, I encourage everyone to make safety a priority. Whether you're moving large equipment, working around overhead power lines or traveling our rural roads, taking a few extra moments to plan can prevent accidents. If you ever notice a damaged pole, a downed power line or another electrical hazard, please contact Lacreek Electric immediately. Always assume a downed power line is energized and stay well away until our crew arrives.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and all of us at Lacreek Electric, thank you for allowing us the privilege of serving your family, farm, ranch or business. We appreciate the trust you place in us every day. We look forward to continuing to invest in our system, strengthen our communities and provide the safe, reliable electric service you depend on.

Have a safe and enjoyable rest of your summer, and best wishes for a successful harvest season.

Sincerely,
Josh Fanning
General Manager

May 2026 Board Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Lacreek Electric Association, Inc. was held at the Cooperative office in Martin, South Dakota, on May 26th, 2026, beginning at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by President Brent Ireland. Directors present included Michel Melvin, Angela Rascher, Connie Whirlwind Horse, Troy Kuxhaus, Scott Larson, Hadley Livermont, Cole Lange, Wade Risse, Marion Schultz, Tom Schlack and Jerry Sharp.

Also in attendance were Josh Fanning (General Manager), Kasi Harris (Finance Manager), Mike Pisha (Operations Manager), Sherry Bakley (Work Order/Staff Assistant), Ashley Turgeon (Administrative Assistant) and Victoria Graves from USDA RUS.

Discussion Highlights

The Board welcomed Victoria Graves, USDA RUS General Field Representative, who introduced herself and discussed the loan extension process. Directors reviewed scholarship award amounts and agreed to continue evaluating the program in future years. Reports were received on system operations, including pole testing, right-of-way clearing, substation maintenance, ongoing line improvements, safety, employee training, and the arrival of a new digger truck. General Manager Josh Fanning updated the Board on union negotiations, wildfire mitigation planning, a potential large-load/data center opportunity, funding discussions with Onward Learning, and upcoming meeting schedules. Directors also discussed the Zone 6 Board vacancy and plans for upcoming industry meetings.

Board Action

The Board approved the reorganization of officers and committee assignments following the Annual Meeting, appointed Ashley Turgeon to record the meeting minutes, approved the April Board minutes and meeting agenda, authorized the USDA Assurance Agreement and Z47 Loan Extension Resolution, accepted the March Operating Report and April Analysis of Investments, approved April checks and disbursements and the list of new members, accepted the Equipment Committee's recommendation to purchase two vehicles, rescheduled the June Board meeting to June 23, 2026, and designated voting delegates for the CFC Annual Meeting.

The next regular Board meeting will be held June 23, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.

FIND YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER

~ Worth $60 This Month ~

A member's account number has been hidden somewhere in this newsletter. If you find your account number, call the office before August 7th, 2026, and you will receive a $60 credit on your next month's billing. If no one finds their account number, the credit will be $70 in the next issue.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LACREEK ELECTRIC

USPS No. 018-912)

Board of Directors
Brent Ireland - President
Troy Kuxhaus - Vice President
Cole Lange - Secretary
Scott Larson - Treasurer
Hadley Livermont . Michel Melvin
Angie Rascher . Wade Risse . Tom Schlack .
Marion Schultz . Jerry Sharp
Connie Whirlwind Horse

Management Staff
Josh Fanning - General Manager
Mike Pisha - Operations Manager
Sherry Bakley - Work Order/Staff Assistant
Kasi Harris - Finance Manager
Jessica Cook - Member Service/IT
Ashley Turgeon - Administrative Assistant

Office Personnel
Member Service Representative:
Lisa Jensen . Tawnni Risse
Billing/Member Service Representative:
Terri Gregg . Katrina Fish
Right of Way Specialist:
Amy Pisha
Accountant:
Cody Larson

Operations Personnel
Jesse Byerley - Line Foreman

Journeyman Lineman:
Jordon Bakley . Les Cuny . Kody Hagen
Matthew Kruid . Lonny Lesmeister
Garrett Metzinger . Aaron Risse . Trace Scott
Damon Wangerin

Apprentice Lineman:
Tee Allen . Burke Beer . Riley Meis . Spencer
Morrison . Ryan Porch . Chayson Schofield
Ryan Pettit - Staking Specialist
Henry Johnson - Warehouseman
Justin Smokov - Maintenance Man

Mailing: This publication is mailed the 15th of the month prior to the issue date. Layout is at least three weeks prior to mailing. LACREEK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly by Lacreek Electric Association, Inc., PO Box 220, Martin, SD 57551 for its members. Families subscribe to Lacreek Electric Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Subscription information: Lacreek Electric cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for $12 annually. Periodical postage is paid at Martin, SD and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Lacreek Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 220, Martin, SD 57551; telephone (605) 685 - 6581; fax (605) 685 - 6957



DRONE SAFETY AROUND POWER LINES

As unmanned aerial systems (UAS) increasingly populate recreational and professional skies, safety remains paramount – especially near critical infrastructure such as overhead power lines. Today we reaffirm that drones should be flown in open spaces away from electrical lines and substations to prevent power outages and dangerous debris that can threaten public safety.

A drone colliding with a power line can cause outages and, if lines are downed, create serious electrical hazards for anyone nearby. Touching downed lines or debris that has fallen on fences, trees or other objects can result in severe injury or death. If you encounter downed power lines, immediately call 911 and notify emergency personnel and the utility company.

To ensure safe and compliant drone operations, follow federal registration and business-approval requirements, and stay informed about local, state and community regulations. FAA safety guidelines remain essential: Inspect your drone for damage before each flight and repair any issues prior to use. Fly at or below 400 feet unless FAA authorization or an allowed exception applies. Maintain visual line of sight; do not fly beyond it. Avoid airports, manned aircraft, stadiums and crowds of people. Do not fly for unapproved commercial purposes without FAA authorization. Refrain from flying in bad weather, including low visibility or high winds. Never fly recklessly or endanger others; violations can result in fines and penalties.

It is encouraged that drone operators plan routes that maximize safety and minimize proximity to power infrastructure. Responsible pilots, adherence to FAA guidelines and awareness of local rules can prevent outages, injuries and potentially tragic consequences. For more information on legal requirements and best practices, consult FAA resources and your local utility providers.

Together, we can enjoy the benefits of drone technology while safeguarding our communities and critical electrical infrastructure.

As drone use expands, operators should build safety into every mission from the outset. Calibration, pre-flight checklists, and robust maintenance programs help catch issues before takeoff. Operators are encouraged to use situational awareness tools, such as real-time weather updates and wind assessments, to adjust flight plans accordingly. Community education events and outreach can foster a responsible culture among hobbyists and professionals alike, reinforcing the shared responsibility to protect power networks and nearby residents. By prioritizing safety, we preserve access to this transformative technology for all.



"Call 811 before you dig – always."

Laina Nelson, age 10

Laina reminds members to always call 811 before digging. Thank you for sharing your picture, Laina! Laina's parents are Nathan and Kristen Nelson – members of H-D Electric.

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.



Family FAVORITES

Picture by Paulo Vilela and Shutterstock.

PARTY IN A PAN

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside.
Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted. Makes 9x13 inch pan.

Kathy Zomer
Douglas Electric

WALLEYE WITH HORSERADISH SAUCE

Ingredients:

2 lbs. walleye fillets
1 cup Lawry's Herb & Garlic marinade
1 tsp. Lawry's Season Salt
1 tsp. lemon pepper
1/4 cup butter
2 tbsp. horseradish
2 tsp. dill

Method

Marinate fish in herb & garlic marinade for 30 minutes. Drain. Sprinkle with season salt and lemon pepper. Bake fish until it flakes. Melt butter in saucepan. Remove from heat and add horseradish. Spoon onto fillet after cooked. Sprinkle on dill and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

BBQ MEATBALLS

Ingredients:

Meatballs

3# ground beef
1 can (12 oz.) evaporated milk
1 cup oatmeal
1 cup cracker crumbs
2 eggs
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. chili powder

Sauce

2 cups ketchup
1 cup brown sugar
1/2 tsp. liquid smoke, or to taste
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/4 cup finely chopped onion

Method

Mix all meatball ingredients together and shape into meatballs. Place meatballs in a baking dish.
Mix all sauce ingredients together and pour over meatballs. Cover and bake at 350˚F for one hour. The meatballs can be made ahead of time and frozen for several weeks. This makes a large batch, so it can be divided into smaller batches and frozen.

Karen Soulek
Charles Mix Electric

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

EFFICIENCY MATTERS FOR COMFORT



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services Group

Everybody wants a comfortable home. Did you know energy efficiency upgrades not only help you save energy, but can make your home more comfortable, too? If you find yourself continually returning to the thermostat on cold winter days or unable to find relief from heat on summer days, these are signs your home needs an efficiency upgrade.

No matter the home, energy efficiency upgrades often start with the same basic principle: Keep outside air from coming inside and keep conditioned inside air from leaking out. Insulation, air sealing, duct sealing and heating, ventilation and air conditioning upgrades can dramatically improve the comfort of your home.

A fully insulated home, including attic, walls and floor, is more comfortable. It's like a blanket for your home. Air sealing is a lesser-known efficiency upgrade that keeps air from entering and exiting the home through cracks and gaps. Some air sealing can be done from inside the home, such as using expanding foam around plumbing pipes and drains under sinks, adding gaskets to outlets on exterior walls, caulking around windows or weatherstripping around doors.

Attics and crawl spaces offer additional opportunities to reduce air leakage and increase comfort. In the attic, sealing gaps around top plates, open soffit areas, cove ceilings and balloon framing can help keep conditioned air where it belongs. In the basement or crawl space, seal around plumbing pipes and drains, vents and electrical wires. If you need help, contact a local contractor.

As a self-proclaimed energy geek, you probably aren't surprised that my first move when my husband and I bought our first home years ago was to air seal and insulate. We sealed and insulated the attic, walls and rim joists in the basement. The difference in comfort was instant. Our house felt cozier and much more comfortable. The temperature swings from the furnace cycling on and off were dramatically reduced. The home felt warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.

Another benefit from insulation was a surprising reduction in noise from outside. We lived about 15 minutes away from the airport and close to a busy road. When the windows and doors were closed, we could no longer hear the airplanes, and the traffic noise was almost unnoticeable.

Duct sealing can also improve the comfort of your home. Your ductwork delivers heated or cooled air in a forced-air HVAC system. If there are disconnections or leaks in the ducts, the air you paid to heat or cool may not end up where you want it. Disconnects and leaks can cause hot or cold spots in the home. An HVAC professional can inspect or test your ducts to make sure they are connected and sealed properly.

Air sealing and duct sealing can also improve the air quality in your home. Air leakage between the conditioned area of the home and the attic or crawl space can introduce dust, pollen, mold or other allergens you don't want to breathe. Reducing air leakage can reduce the chance of these things circulating throughout your home.

Upgrading to a heat pump can also boost comfort and efficiency. Heat pump technology is often about three times as efficient as electric resistance heat because it uses refrigerant to move heat instead of creating it. If you're upgrading from electric or gas heat, a heat pump can efficiently heat and cool your home, making it comfortable year-round.

If you already have a heat pump or any forced-air HVAC system, annual maintenance and regularly changing your filter maximize system operation and comfort.

Consider improving your home's comfort by completing these energy efficiency upgrades. Your family – and energy bills – will thank you.

WHO POWERS YOU?

For Dean Kueter, Community Service and Cooperative Values Run in the Family

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When something needs to be done in a small town, it often starts with someone willing to take the lead.

In Montrose, Dean Kueter has often been that person. Through years of involvement in local organizations, veterans' projects, school efforts and community work, Kueter has built a reputation as someone willing to step up.

That work did not go unnoticed. Tara Miller, manager of communications at Central Electric Cooperative and a former Montrose Area Foundation board member, saw Kueter's impact and nominated him for the fifth annual regional Who Powers You? contest.

Hosted by the region's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, the contest recognizes local people and organizations making a difference in their communities. Kueter, a Southeastern Electric Cooperative member, was selected as Southeastern Electric's finalist.

"You do those things because you see there's a need and you want to make a difference in your community," Kueter said. "It was meaningful to be recognized for that."

In her nomination, Miller highlighted Kueter's work with the Montrose Area Foundation, his leadership with the local American Legion Post, his 20 years with the Montrose Fire Department and his passion for education and accessibility.

Kueter grew up outside nearby Humboldt and later served as superintendent for the Montrose School District before joining the Cornbelt Educational Cooperative. He is entering his 14th year with the education cooperative, which serves nine school districts by providing special education and related services, including speech therapy.

"It's really a high-need area," Kueter said. Demand for specialized services continues to grow, while schools struggle to find qualified people for those roles.

Much of Kueter's volunteer work has centered on places and organizations that bring people together. He currently serves as commander of the local American Legion Post, which he said is more than a veterans organization in Montrose. It serves as a gathering place for the community, hosting dances, birthday parties, anniversaries, graduations and other events.

"It truly is a community hub and community center for everyone," Kueter said.

The post is improving the Veterans Memorial on Main Street through fundraising, new statues and landscaping. The Montrose Area Foundation has also supported local causes ranging from the fire department to school projects, youth programs and the swimming pool.

"People are oftentimes more than willing to help," he said. "They just need to be asked, and they want their time to be valued. So, if you call on them to come help with something, you need to make sure you have a job for them to do."

For Kueter, the cooperative connection extends beyond his own contest recognition. His family has also been honored through Southeastern Electric Cooperative's Touchstone Energy programs.

Both of Kueter's children, Kellen and Hallie, have been active in their school, church and community, taking on leadership roles through FFA, student council and the National Honor Society while also volunteering with local organizations.



Dean Kueter, a Southeastern Electric Cooperative member and Montrose-area community leader, was selected as a finalist in the regional Who Powers You? contest.

Kellen was named a Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week, received a 2024 Southeastern Electric scholarship and was later selected as Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year. Hallie was also named a Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week.

"Obviously, it's a proud parent moment," Kueter said. "Anytime your kid gets any type of recognition, it makes you feel good as a parent."

Kueter said he knows many people connected to Southeastern Electric, including lineworkers and family members who work in the electric cooperative world. As a member-owner, he said the cooperative connection is part of the broader network of relationships that tie rural communities together.

"I'm surrounded by great people who work hard to improve our community," Kueter said. "It takes a lot of people working together to have successful projects. I am just glad to be a part of the team doing this positive work in our community."



A PAST FIT FOR THE FUTURE

A new lobby welcomes visitors to the Cultural Heritage Center. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

Cultural Center & State Museum Reopens After Extensive Renovation

Jacob Boyko
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After more than two years spent closed for renovation, South Dakota's state museum and cultural center is back up and running to share the story of South Dakota and its people with visitors from across the state and beyond.

The iconic museum built into the Pierre hillside held its grand reopening July 1 in time for the nation's 250th birthday, showing off new exhibits, a gift shop and an expansion that includes a larger meeting room and more space for its archives.

For Museum Director David Grabitske, the reopening marks a new chapter for the South Dakota State Historical Society, which oversees both the museum and state archives housed there. But it also honors the first laws set forth by the Dakota Territory's first territorial legislature, outlining specific steps and functions for historical preservation for untold future generations of its citizens.

According to Grabitske, many of the first Dakotan settlers were determined to preserve the history they were making day by day as settlers on the vast American frontier.

"The first three acts [by the territorial legislature] were all about transferring property at the end of life – it's all about inheritance," Grabitske explained. "The fourth act of the territory created the historical society. In my mind, the fourth act goes along with those first three acts; it's about how we give things to the future."

Establishing a historical society demonstrated confidence that there would be a future for the Dakota Territory – complete with a permanent population that would live, grow and prosper there.

"We have a mantra around here," Grabitske said. "We collect today for tomorrow's history."

What that sentiment has amounted to is a sprawling collection of more than 17,000 cubic feet of paper, 50 terabytes of data on its servers, and more than 35,000 individual objects.

"The very first collections that arrived were in 1863, and we still have those in our library," Grabitske said. "They were library books – 514 of them in 11 boxes."

In the process of collecting and disseminating information, historical societies at the time would collect and make copies of books to trade with other historical societies to expand their collections and diffuse knowledge across a wider area and reduce the risk of losing records to fire.

You'll find those 160 years' worth of books, deeds, contracts and reports



On the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Little Bighorn, Curator of Collections Katy L. Schmidt holds a can found on the battlefield. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

throughout the high-ceilinged, climate-controlled archive wing of the building – but you'll also find objects that aren't necessarily old or inherently valuable.

"The reason we add something into our collection is because it's historic, and what we mean by historic is it has significance and integrity," Grabitske explained. "Something being 'old' just fixes it in time. What makes something historic is that it is significant – it tells the story of people in South Dakota, and it has integrity, which means a certain completeness to tell that story."

To illustrate the point, Grabitske described a recent addition to the museum's collection – a painted tire with the words "no hunting."

"You see these things going down the road [in South Dakota], and we realized we were missing [one for the museum]," he explained. "We found one near Timber Lake which had a story. The lady who gave it to us (family of Dorothy Dopp, courtesy of the Timber Lake & Area Museum) had put it up in 1967 and she had faithfully painted it over the years and knew the dates she had painted it. We don't need 400 of these tires – we need one to represent the whole state."

Visitors to the museum this summer can experience the first three rooms of the updated exhibits. These sections house a welcome area, 'What is History?' exhibit and a gallery. The remaining sections are slated for completion in December 2026 and will feature exhibits on South Dakota's environment, people, politics, conflicts and more.

For more information on the Cultural Heritage Center and the South Dakota State Historical Society, visit history.sd.gov.



An exhibit showcasing the famous people of South Dakota. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



This plaster doll (left) was gifted to South Dakota by Japan in 1927 to commemorate the United States' 150th birthday. Fifty years later, for the nation's 200th birthday, Japan gifted South Dakota another doll (right). *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



Museum Director and South Dakota State Historical Society Assistant Director David Grabitske walks through the extensive art archive, revealing a painting of an electrical lineman working through a winter storm. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



Grabitske demonstrates the new movable shelves installed over tracks within the floor. This upgrade will maximize the available archival space. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

WASHINGTON D.C. YOUTH TOUR

Youth Tour 2026

Thirty-three teens representing 19 South Dakota electric cooperatives traveled to the Washington, D.C., area June 14-20 for the 2026 South Dakota Youth Tour.

The program traces its roots to a 1957 speech by Lyndon B. Johnson, who urged electric cooperatives to send young people to the nation's capital so they "can actually see what the flag stands for and represents." Since South Dakota sent its first group in 1963, more than 1,350 students have represented the Rushmore State on the trip. This year's delegation joined Youth Tour students from 44 other states.

The 2026 group visited many of Washington, D.C.'s most historic and impactful sites, including Arlington National Cemetery, where rows of white headstones tell the story of generations who served and sacrificed for the country. The group continued exploring themes of patriotism and national history throughout the week, viewing the Declaration of Independence at the National Archives and touring the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, where much of the nation's paper currency is produced.

Students also met with South Dakota's congressional leaders at the U.S. Capitol, including U.S. Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds. Together, the group toured many of the nation's most treasured landmarks, including the U.S. Supreme Court and several presidential and war memorials.

At the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center, students concluded their trip with NRECA-led events, where they heard from Youth Day keynote speaker Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic medalist in U.S. men's wheelchair basketball, who shared a message about perseverance and leadership.



Lacreek Electric's Youth Tour trip winner, Holly Stehlik, pictured here with the Washington Monument in the background

"The trip was an amazing time," said Amelia Giese from Clear Lake, S.D., with H-D Electric. "I had so much fun meeting so many new people and experiencing so many new aspects of the world. I'm going to go home and talk to everyone and say, 'You need to sign up for this because you will make lifelong friends and have a life-changing experience.'

'Watt' do I need to know about how much electricity my appliances use?

Determining how much electricity your appliances and home electronics use can help you understand how much money you are spending to operate them. Electricity is measured in units of power called watts, and one watt is a joule of energy used or produced per second.

The power consumption of small devices is usually measured in watts, while the power use of larger devices is measured in kilowatts (kW) (1 kW equals 1,000 watts). Knowing how much electricity an appliance uses and how much the electricity costs can help you decide whether to invest in a more energy-efficient appliance or make other cost-saving decisions, such as unplugging appliances when not in use. Becoming watt savvy is also helpful if you are considering purchasing a generator.

There are several ways to estimate how much electricity your appliances and home electronics use:

See the Data Plate

Appliances usually have data plates located on the back or inside the door. They tell you how many amps, watts and volts are needed to power the appliance. If your appliance does not list watts for some reason but does list the number of volts and amps, you can multiply them to get the number of watts.

Review the EnergyGuide Label

The EnergyGuide label, a yellow-colored sticker or tag found on new products, provides an estimate of the average energy consumption and cost to operate the specific model of the appliance you are considering. The FTC requires the label, and the dollar amount is the estimated yearly operating cost based on the national average cost of electricity.

Use a Monitor or Meter

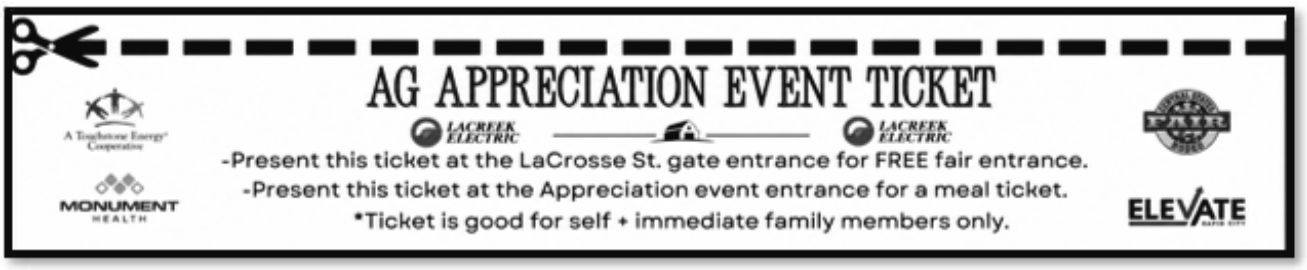
Wattage meters are affordable instruments that are easy to use and can measure the electricity usage of any device that runs on 120 volts. To put it to work, just plug the monitor into the electrical outlet and then plug the device into the monitor. The monitor will display how many watts the device uses. If you want to know how many kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity a device uses over a length of time, just leave everything set up and read the display later. Some monitors even allow you to plug in your utility's cost per kWh rate to determine how much that specific appliance costs you over a certain length of time.

Install a Whole-House System

Whole-house energy monitoring systems provide more detailed data on your home's energy use (as well as the ability to measure the energy use of 240-volt appliances). The features of these systems vary, and the cost and complexity depend on the number of circuits you want to monitor, how detailed the feedback is and the type of features available. The monitors are often installed directly into the main breaker panel of the home, and some require an electrician to install. Some monitors must be connected to your home's wireless network, with data being viewed on a computer or smartphone, while others come with a dedicated display. In addition to providing information on the energy consumption of your appliances, this type of monitoring system helps you understand where and when you use the most energy, allowing you to develop strategies to reduce your energy use and costs.

Comparing an Older Appliance to a Newer One

Now that you know how to measure the energy used by your appliances and home electronics, you can visit EnergyStar.gov to access information that can help you decide if you should upgrade to newer, more efficient models. ENERGY STAR provides energy use data on specific products that have earned the ENERGY STAR rating. You can compare this information to your current appliances' energy use to see if an upgrade is worth your while. EnergyStar.gov also provides tools that allow you to select and compare specific models to one another.



CO-OP SUMMER OUTREACH

Join Us at S.D. State Fair, Dakotafest, Minn. Farmfest

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Attention all co-op members! If you're heading to the South Dakota State Fair, Dakotafest or Farmfest this summer, stop by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booths for some great family fun and a chance to win a prize!

Make sure you fill out your coupon on the back of this magazine and bring it with you to the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair or Dakotafest for your chance to win one of two electric grills sponsored by Karl's TV & Appliance.

South Dakota State Fair – Sept. 3, 2026

South Dakota's electric cooperatives will host the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron, Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026.

This one-day event will feature a slew of energy-themed activities, from bucket truck rides lifting you more than 50 feet above the state fairgrounds to an interactive pole climbing demonstration complete with real spiked boots and climbing gear that linemen use every day on the job. We've also partnered up with South Dakota One Call to remind you to always call 811 before you start digging – but your kids are welcome to use our mini excavator in our sandbox to uncover buried treasure!

While you're here, check out our on-site displays for select highly efficient, all-electric heat pumps and mini-splits, water heaters, yard tools and more!

Find our booth near the Horticulture Building.

Dakotafest – Aug. 18-20, 2026

You'll want to stop by the South Dakota Touchstone Energy Cooperatives building at Dakotafest in Mitchell, Aug. 18-20!

Join us for fresh-off-the-grill brats, oven-baked cookies and freezie pops as you learn about the latest in home energy savings and efficiency. We'll have other cool stuff for you to check out, including an automatic lawn mower, a solar panel display and an EGO Power+ Portable Power Station.

Minnesota Farmfest – Aug. 4-6, 2026

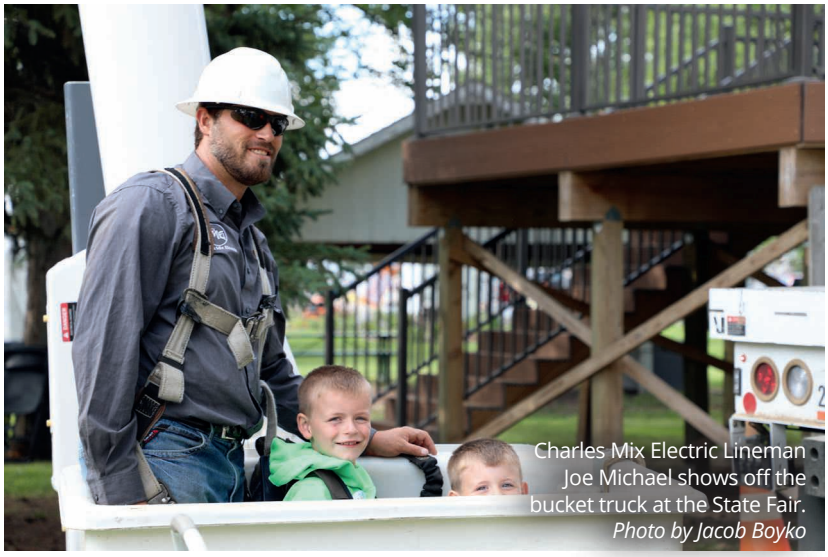
Minnesota members, come visit your electric cooperative at Minnesota Farmfest near Redwood Falls, Aug. 4-6, 2026. Members may enter a raffle drawing for one of five battery-operated yard tools. We'll even have the high-voltage trailer on site for a live demonstration to remind visitors to be safe around overhead and buried power lines.



Kids perfected their utility pole climbing skills at the South Dakota State Fair. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



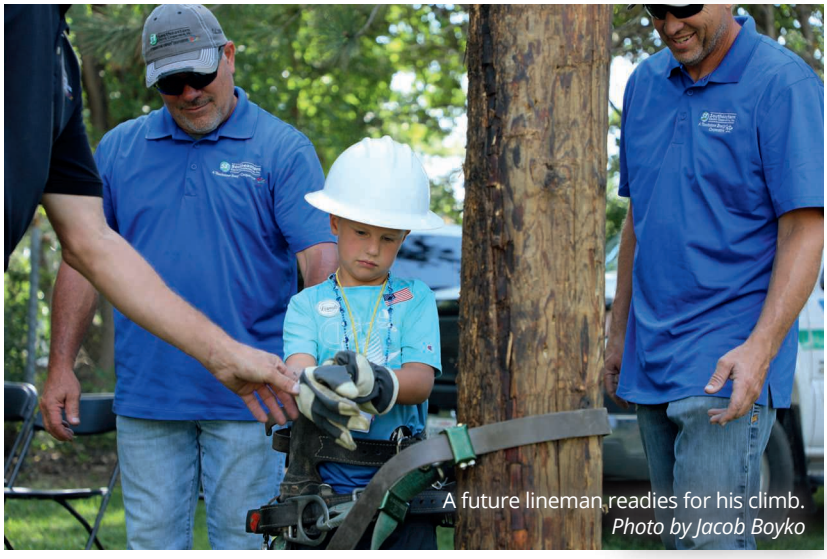
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives host a booth at Dakotafest in 2025. *Submitted Photo*



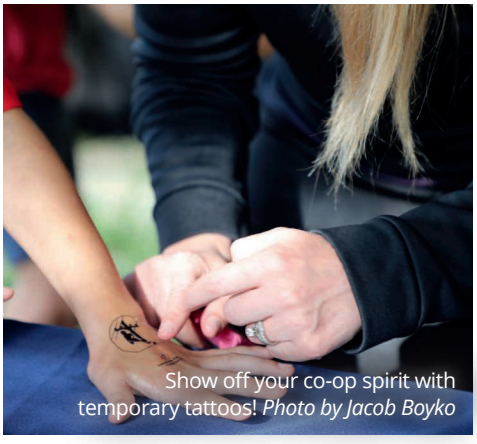
Charles Mix Electric Lineman Joe Michael shows off the bucket truck at the State Fair. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



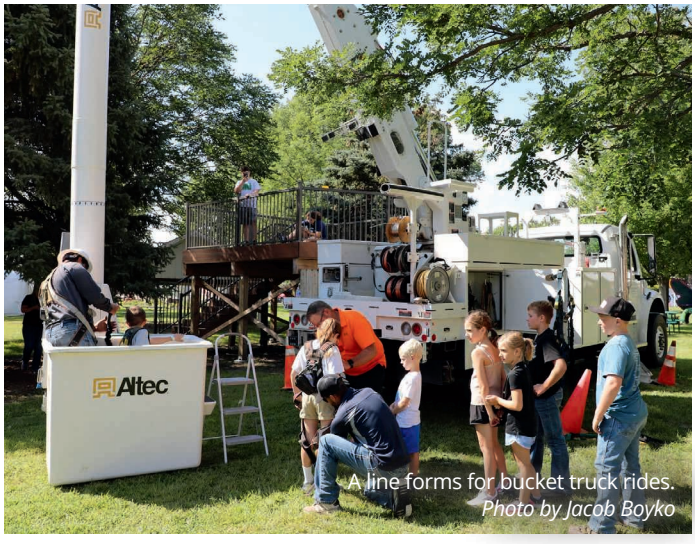
Fairgoers get a lineman's view of the State Fair! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A future lineman readies for his climb. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



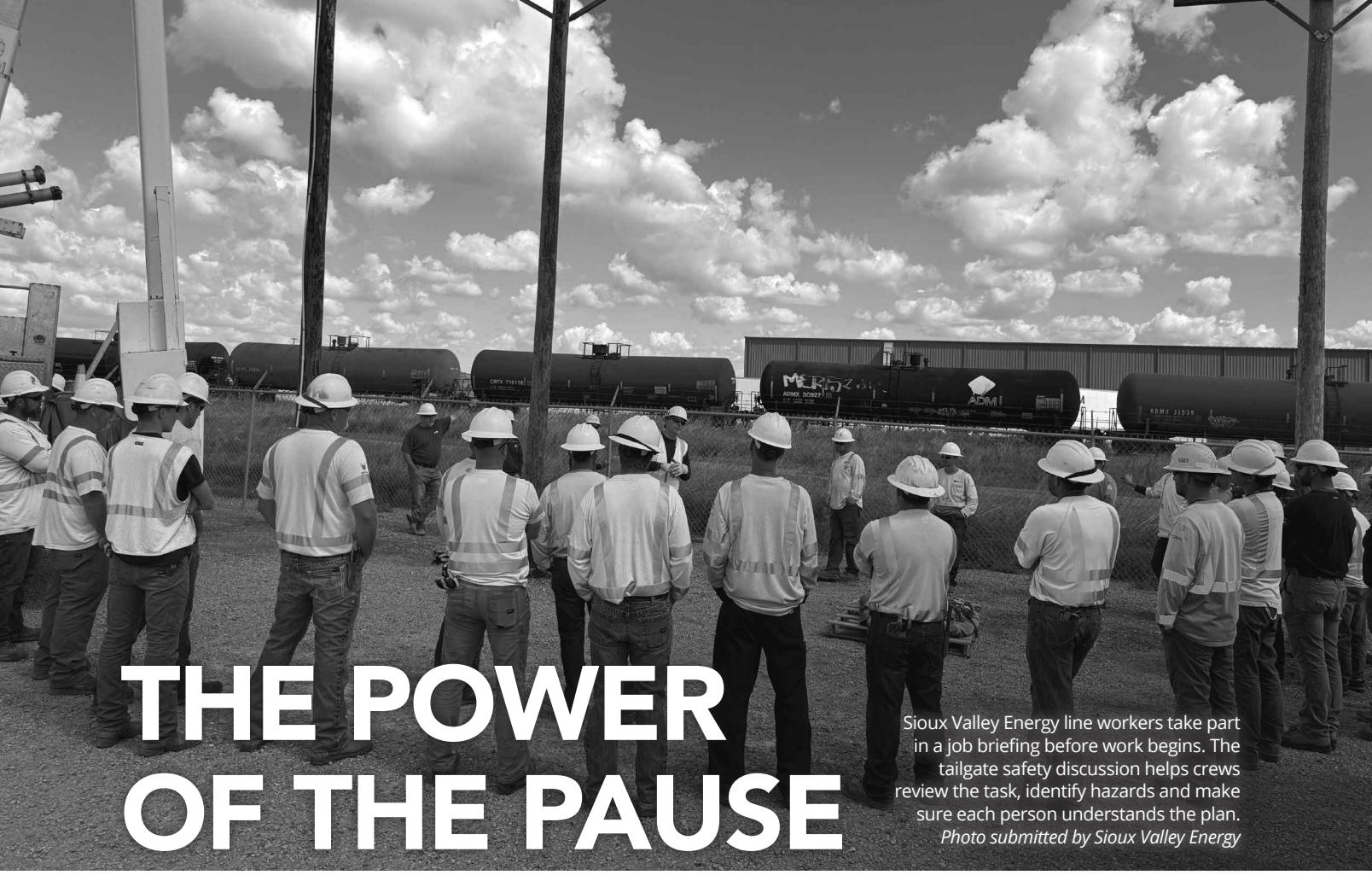
Show off your co-op spirit with temporary tattoos! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A line forms for bucket truck rides. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



Booth visitors can win prizes by playing Plinko. *Submitted Photo*



THE POWER OF THE PAUSE

Sioux Valley Energy line workers take part in a job briefing before work begins. The tailgate safety discussion helps crews review the task, identify hazards and make sure each person understands the plan. *Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy*

How Job Briefings Help Co-ops Think Through Safety

Frank Turner
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Before an electric cooperative line crew begins work, the job starts with a pause.

The pause may only take a few minutes, but for crews working around energized equipment, changing weather and other hazards, those few minutes matter.

Before the first step of the job, line crews gather for a tailgate safety session – a documented pre-job briefing where they identify the task, hazards, protective equipment and plan.

For Travis Denison, manager of safety at Sioux Valley Energy, that conversation is one of the most important tools crews have to fight complacency.

"It forces our professionals to stop and go through the steps of the job they're going to do and identify the hazards with each of those steps," Denison said.

Despite the casual name, a tailgate safety session is not a public demonstration or a quick conversation at the back of a pickup. It is a documented briefing used by crews before work begins. The goal is to slow down and communicate, making sure that everyone is focused on the work in front of them.

"These are jobs that our crews do every day, but all of a sudden something in the environment can change. There can be hazards that the crew didn't talk about or recognize, and somebody can get hurt," Denison said. "That job briefing or tailgate session is made to stop the crews, make them aware of their surroundings, talk about the job and each of the hazards, and discuss how they're going to protect themselves."

Denison's focus on safety also runs in the family. His brother, Joe Denison, is a loss control professional with SDREA – the same role Travis previously held before joining Sioux Valley Energy. Both came to safety work after years around line crews and firsthand experience with the risks of electric utility work.

"We were both linemen," Travis said. "The more experienced you get as a lineman, the more you recognize the mistakes you made as an apprentice. You see the shortcuts that maybe you made yourself or that you see other linemen make."

So how does a tailgate safety session actually work? The details change with the job, but the idea is the same: slow the job down before it starts.

For instance, if a crew is conducting a pole top rescue training, the briefing begins before anyone climbs. The crew identifies the emergency location, the people involved and who is leading the job and the protective equipment required.

Then they talk through the work itself. If the crew is practicing a mock mayday call or using a rescue manikin, they also talk through what could go wrong during the training. Someone could strain a muscle. A climber could make blunt contact with a pole or hardware. A falling object could injure someone below. Even a knife or hook could create its own hazard if people are not paying attention.

"We list the job, the steps of the job, the personal protective equipment we'll use and the energy sources," Travis said. "We talk about anything to do with the job before we start, so everybody's on the same page."

For Denison, the value of a job briefing is not limited to line crews. Members do not need a formal briefing form before starting work at home or on the farm, but they can use the same pattern to stay safe – name the job, look at the location, identify the equipment involved and talk through what could go wrong.

At home, that might mean looking up before raising a ladder, checking for power lines before trimming trees or calling 811 before digging a post hole, planting trees, building a deck or installing a sign.

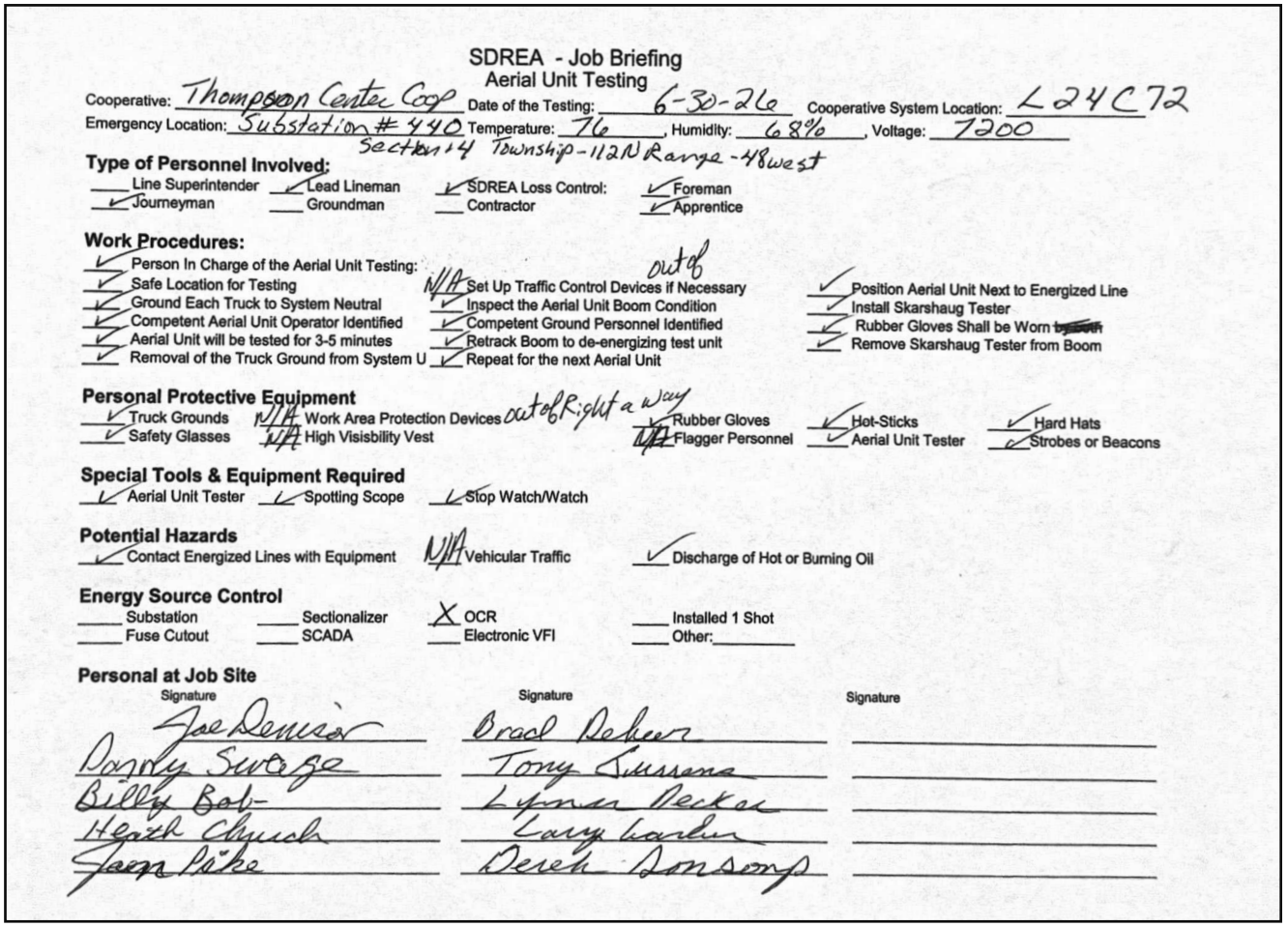
That message is especially important on the farm, when large equipment may operate near overhead power lines.

"Be aware of the power lines," he said. "Have that talk. Communicate. Make the people you are working with aware of the potential dangers around them."

Sioux Valley Energy has also worked to carry that message to members through radio ads, videos and public outreach. The cooperative has shared reminders about overhead power lines, green boxes, construction work and the importance of locating underground utilities before digging. At times, Sioux Valley Energy has also partnered with Southeastern Electric Cooperative on public safety messaging.

Denison said the goal is similar to a crew's tailgate session: get people thinking before something goes wrong.

"Think about what you're doing," Denison said.



SDREA - Job Briefing
Aerial Unit Testing

Cooperative: Thompson Center Coop Date of the Testing: 6-30-26 Cooperative System Location: L24C72
Emergency Location: Substation # 440 Temperature: 76, Humidity: 68% , Voltage: 7200
Section 14 Township-112N Range-48west

Type of Personnel Involved:
___ Line Superintender ✓ Lead Lineman ✓ SDREA Loss Control: ✓ Foreman
✓ Journeyman ___ Groundman ___ Contractor ✓ Apprentice

Work Procedures:
✓ Person In Charge of the Aerial Unit Testing:
✓ Safe Location for Testing — N/A Set Up Traffic Control Devices if Necessary out of — ✓ Position Aerial Unit Next to Energized Line
✓ Ground Each Truck to System Neutral — ✓ Inspect the Aerial Unit Boom Condition — ✓ Install Skarshaug Tester
✓ Competent Aerial Unit Operator Identified — ✓ Competent Ground Personnel Identified — ✓ Rubber Gloves Shall be Worn ~~by Each~~
✓ Aerial Unit will be tested for 3-5 minutes — ✓ Retrack Boom to de-energizing test unit — ✓ Remove Skarshaug Tester from Boom
✓ Removal of the Truck Ground from System U — ✓ Repeat for the next Aerial Unit

Personal Protective Equipment
✓ Truck Grounds — N/A Work Area Protection Devices out of Right a way — ✓ Rubber Gloves — ✓ Hot-Sticks — ✓ Hard Hats
✓ Safety Glasses — N/A High Visibility Vest — N/A Flagger Personnel — ✓ Aerial Unit Tester — ✓ Strobes or Beacons

Special Tools & Equipment Required
✓ Aerial Unit Tester ✓ Spotting Scope ✓ Stop Watch/Watch

Potential Hazards
✓ Contact Energized Lines with Equipment — N/A Vehicular Traffic — ✓ Discharge of Hot or Burning Oil

Energy Source Control
___ Substation ___ Sectionalizer X OCR ___ Installed 1 Shot
___ Fuse Cutout ___ SCADA ___ Electronic VFI ___ Other:_____

Personal at Job Site

Signature	Signature	Signature
Joe Denison	Brad Beheen	
Danny Swarge	Tony Sussana	
Billy Bob	Lyman Decker	
Heath Church	Cary Larson	
Jason Pike	Derek Donsomp	

This mock SDREA job briefing form, created for illustration, shows how line crews may document pre-job planning before aerial unit testing. The example highlights the kinds of details crews review before work begins, including location, personnel, work procedures, protective equipment, tools, energy controls and potential hazards.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your Email Address: _____

Dakotafest – Find us in the Touchstone Energy Building!
S.D. State Fair – Find us in the Horticulture Park!



AUG. 18-20
Dakotafest
2300 E. Spruce St.
Mitchell, 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.

JULY 25
Evergreen Garden Club Flower Show
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD

JULY 29-AUG. 2
Fall River County Fair
Edgemont, SD

AUG. 1-2
Family Camping Weekend
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

AUG. 4
National Park Fee-Free Day

AUG. 6-9
Custer County Fair
Hermosa, SD

AUG. 7-16
Sturgis Motorcycle Rally

AUG. 8-9
South Dakota Senior Games
Events for People Ages 50+
Huron, SD
Register by July 26
SouthDakotaSeniorGames.org
605-295-2039

AUG. 15
Mt. Rushmore Rodeo
6 p.m.
Palmer Gulch Resort
Hill City, SD

AUG. 15
Sunflower Festival
Highmore, SD
605-478-0123

AUG. 15
8th Annual Black Hills Super 6 Mountain Bike Race & Trail Run
8 a.m.
Big Hill Trails
Spearfish, SD
Register: nhcasa.org

AUG. 21-22
Custer Crazy Days
10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Downtown
Custer, SD

AUG. 21-29
Central States Fair & Rodeo
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

AUG. 22
Community-wide Rummage Sale
Custer, SD

AUG. 23
Annual Duck Race
10 a.m. Worship Race
11:30 a.m. Dakota Band Music
Lintz Ranch, 13973 SD Hwy 36
Hermosa, SD

AUG. 26
Evergreen Garden Club Potluck
11:30 a.m.
Tracy Park
Hill City, SD

SEPT. 1-6
20th Annual Sturgis Mustang Rally
Sturgis, SD
SturgisMustangRally.com

SEPT. 3
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives at the South Dakota State Fair
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
State Fairgrounds – Horticulture Park
Huron, SD
605-224-8823

SEPT. 19
Free Christian Men's Event
Host: Courageous Man
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
The Monument
Rapid City, SD
Register: RiseUpMen.com

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