A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

LACREEK ELECTRIC
SEPTEMBER 2025 VOL. 26 NO. 5

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Antler Shed Hunting

Photo submitted by Kelly O'Bryan

Reliabilty Report From the General Manager's Desk

Josh Fanning
General Manager

This summer has been a challenging one for all of us at Lacreek Electric—and for our members—due to Mother Nature's unpredictable temperament. Lightning has been the biggest culprit, striking across our service territory and keeping our crews on constant alert. When storms roll in, our linemen are often called out at all hours to track down problems and get the power flowing again. These aren't just quick fixes—storm-related outages can require hours of travel, careful inspection, and hands-on repairs before electricity is safely restored.

Along with lightning, hail and extreme winds have also made their mark, adding to the workload and the urgency. These conditions can cause unexpected outages, sometimes in multiple areas at once, stretching crews and resources thin. Even so, our linemen and support staff rise to the challenge time and again, working long hours in difficult conditions to make sure members aren't without power any longer than absolutely necessary. No one wants the lights back on more than we do, because every outage matters to us. We live here, we shop here, and our families depend on this power just like yours do.

I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you, our members, for your patience and understanding during these outages. We know how frustrating it can be to lose power, especially in the middle of your daily routines. Your kind words, waves from your front porch, and even just your understanding nods mean the world to our linemen when they're out working in tough conditions.

Rest assured, our crews are dedicated to getting the lights back on for every single member as quickly as possible, without compromising safety. The next time a storm rolls through, know that while you're seeking shelter from the elements, your Lacreek Electric team is already on the move, working to bring power—and a sense of normalcy—back to your home and community.

On behalf of all of us here at Lacreek Electric, thank you for your trust, your support, and your resilience. Together, we weather the storms—and together, we keep the lights on.

Josh Fanning
General Manager
Lacreek Electric Association, Inc.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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www.lacreek.com

June 2025 Board Meeting Highlights

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, South Dakota, on June 17, 2025, beginning at 4:00 P.M. The meeting was then called to order by President Brent Ireland, and the following Directors were present: Connie Whirlwind Horse, Jerry Sharp, Marion Schultz, Wade Risse, Hadley Livermont, Cole Lange, Troy Kuxhaus, Clarence Allen, and Scott Larson. Also present were General Manager Josh Fanning, Finance Manager Kasi Harris, Operations Manager Mike Pisha, Member Services/IT Jessica Cook, Work Order/Staff Assistant Sherry Bakley, and Administrative Assistant Ashley Turgeon. Absent were Directors Tom Schlack and Clifford Lafferty.

Items Approved:

- Administrative Assistant, Ashley Turgeon to Record Minutes
- May 2025 Board Minutes
- Meeting Agenda
- Operating Report for April
- Checks and Disbursements for May
- May Analysis of Investments
- List of New Members
- 78th Annual Meeting date approved for April 23rd. 2026
- Approval of General Manager, Josh Fanning as the Certifier and Finance Manager, Kasi Harris as the Security Administrator on RUS Resolution
- Donation to the Cooperative Family Fund

Items Discussed:

- Review of the 77th Annual Meeting - positives and negatives
- Reviewed Lacreek Electric Youth and Community Support Annual Balance Sheet
- **Work in progress:** Manderson FEMA-Mitigation project, Wanblee East Circuit FEMA Mitigation, Wounded Knee Dist. School, Bennett County Hospital, 2025 Reject Poles Staking.
- Three Summer Help Positions filled.
- Rushmore Board and Annual Meeting reported on by Josh and Clarence.
- **Manager's Report:** Office construction, GRIP1, GRIP2 and FEMA Grants, RST Utility meeting, Basin/WAPA rate pressures and large loads.
- Residential Rate Survey of all Cooperatives across the state for 2025
- Joint Membership
- RUS Forms 87 and 675 discussion, along with Yearly Conflict-of-Interest Forms

The Board and General Manager went into executive session. Upon returning, the board passed a motion to interview the two applicants for the West Oglala Lakota County seat on the Lacreek Electric Association Board of Directors.

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

Next Board Meeting - Tuesday, July 22nd, 2025 at 4:00 PM

Emergency Preparedness: Are You Ready for a Disaster?

Source: National Safety Council

National Preparedness Month, sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and held annually in September, is a good reminder that natural and man-made disasters can strike at any time. It's important to have a planned response when you're at work, on vacation or on the road.

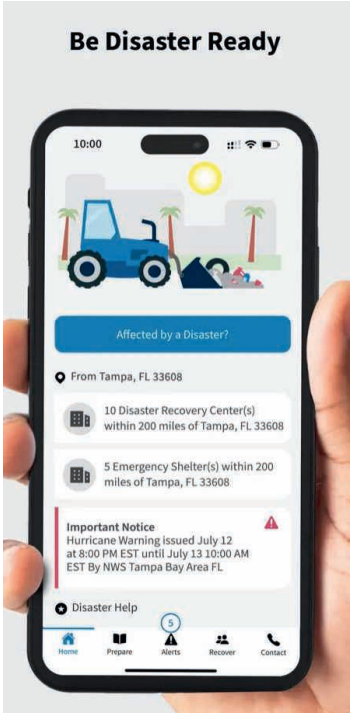
In 2022, 69,473 weather-related events resulted in 813 deaths and 1,718 injuries. Winter weather, heat, floods and hurricanes resulted in the most deaths that year, according to Injury Facts.

The National Safety Council offers safety tips specific on preparing for earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes, and how to minimize fire risks.

Federal agencies, like Ready.gov and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also are valuable resources for emergency preparedness. When you face a natural or man-made emergency, try to stay informed through radio, TV or the Internet. In some cases, however, cable, electric and cell phone service will be disabled, making communication nearly impossible. The National Safety Council recommends the following general precautions that apply to many disaster situations:

- Make sure at least one family member knows first aid and CPR.
- Download the FEMA app for resources, weather alerts and safety tips.
- Have a family communication plan in place; all members of the family should review and practice the plan.
- Have all family members' and other important phone numbers written down or memorized.
- Have an emergency kit in your car and at least three days of food and water at home.
- Be sure to store all important documents – birth certificates, insurance policies, etc. – in a fire-proof safe or safety deposit box.
- Know how to shut off utilities.

The official FEMA mobile app offers critical resources and real-time alerts to help you prepare for emergencies, stay safe during disasters, and navigate recovery afterward. With features like customizable emergency checklists, shelter locations, disaster recovery centers, and direct access to emergency alerts, the app is a comprehensive tool for personal and family safety planning.



"Don't drive tractors into power lines."

Darcy Welsh, Age 9

Darcy cautions readers while driving tractors near power lines. Great picture, Darcy! Darcy's parents are Ryan and Rachel Welsh from Oral, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Fruit SPECIALS

FROZEN FRUIT FIESTA

Ingredients:

1 6-oz. frozen orange juice concentrate
2 10-oz. frozen strawberries
2 cans pineapple with juice (1 tidbits, 1 crushed)
3-4 bananas, sliced
1/4 cup lemon juice
1 cup sugar
1 1/2 cup cold water

Method

Mix all together in a large bowl.

Freeze in individual cups. Set out at room temperature for 1-2 hours before serving.

Optional: pour sour or 7-Up on top before serving.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

PEACH RHUBARB CRISP

Filling:

3/4 cup sugar
3 tbsps. flour
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1/8 tsp. salt
3 cups rhubarb (sliced, fresh or frozen)
2 1/2 cups chopped fresh or frozen unsweetened peaches

Topping:

1/2 cup flour
1/2 cup oatmeal
1/2 cup brown sugar
3/4 tsp. cinnamon
1/8 tsp. salt
5 tbsps. butter (cold)

Method

Combine the filling ingredients and fruit. Transfer to a greased 11"x7" baking dish. In a small bowl, combine the topping ingredients; cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle over fruit. Bake at 375°F for 30 to 35 minutes until bubbly and browned.

*Recipe can be cut in half and bake in 8" x 8" pan.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix Electric

CHERRY ICE CREAM DESSERT

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cup Rice Krispies, crushed
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup melted butter
1 cup grated coconut
1/4 cup chopped nuts
1-quart vanilla ice cream
1 cup cherry pie mix

Method

1. Melt butter in frying pan. Add coconut and toast, stirring constantly as it burns easily. Cool
2. Add nuts, brown sugar and crushed rice Krispies. Mix together.
3. Press 2/3 of crumb mixture into a buttered 9x9 inch pan.
4. Soften ice cream and spread over crumb mixture then top remaining crumbs.
5. Freeze well. Cut in squares and top with cherry pie mix.
6. Can be served with any other toppings. Serves 6-8.

Rowena A. Wipf
Northern Electric

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Find Hidden Energy Users at Home

Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services Group

Out of sight, out of mind. It is easy to overlook the hidden energy users in our homes. Yet, every plugged-in device and ready-to-use appliance can lead to higher electric bills.

Let's see if we can find some hidden energy savings for you.

Your water heater could be using more energy than necessary. Storage water heaters heat water to a preset temperature. When hot water is used, cold water enters the tank, lowering the temperature, and the water is reheated to that preset level. If the water heater is set higher than needed, it wastes energy. Most water heaters are set to 140 degrees at the factory. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting the temperature to 120 degrees. This will save energy and reduce the risk of scalding. Do not set it lower than 120 degrees to prevent bacteria development in the tank.

Exterior security lights, porch lights and barn lights can use more energy than needed. If they are on every night, all year long, that adds up to 4,380 hours, or half the hours in a year. If those lights use outdated, inefficient technology, they waste energy. With that many hours, even a slight increase in efficiency can yield big energy savings. Switch to energy efficient LED bulbs. If lights need to stay on, consider upgrading to motion sensor lights so you aren't drawing energy all night.

Pools and hot tubs can also be big energy users. Since you don't see the pumps or heaters by design, it's difficult to know when they are operating and consuming energy. Pumps filter water to keep it clean and safe for swimming. Energy Star®-certified pumps run at lower speeds and can be programmed to match your pool's filtering needs, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. They can pay for themselves in two years, are quieter and can prolong the life of your pool's filtering system. Schedule your hot tub to a lower temperature when you're not using it to reduce energy use. If your electric utility offers time-of-use rates, consider scheduling accordingly.

Plug load is anything in your home that is plugged into an outlet. As we use more and more appliances and technology in our homes, plug load energy use increases. Find what is plugged in around your home. If you aren't using it, unplug it. For computer stations and entertainment centers, consider using smart power strips. These devices sense when energy is being used and turn peripheral devices on or off as needed.

Gaming consoles are another hidden energy user. Gamers often put them in rest mode when not in use. This allows them to complete updates and reduces start-up time for the next session. It also means they are still consuming energy even when not actively used. Powering off between gaming sessions can save energy. Ask the gamers in your life to power off. It may require a bit more time for updates, but every kilowatt-hour counts when it comes to saving energy.

It's easy to make a habit of powering down and unplugging once you identify everything drawing power in your home. For upgrades, reach out to your electric utility about available rebates to help cover costs.

Photo by Mary Howell

SOUTH DAKOTA SUNFLOWERS

Wild Dutchman Seeds a Nationwide Snack

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

If you're driving across central South Dakota in the summertime and you pass by a field of tall, bright sunflowers swaying in the breeze, there's a good chance you're a witness to the first step in those seeds' journey to being roasted, seasoned and packed into a bag of Wild Dutchman sunflower seeds.

One sunflower seed grower is Dakota Energy member Greg Bich, who's involved in just about every step from the farm-to-bag process for the iconic South Dakota brand.

Greg is a part owner of Southern Sun, the Huron-based company that processes, roasts and markets Wild Dutchman sunflower seeds for a nationwide audience of sweet-and-salty snackers.

Years ago, as a favor to his friend, local farmer and sunflower processor Danny Dale, Greg hauled loads of sunflower seeds up to Mound City for an up-and-coming operation known as "Wild Dutchman."

During these visits, Greg got to know the company's founders: father and son duo Wayne and Toby Vanderlaan.

"If you ever talk to the older farmers in this area, a lot of them have nicknames, and that's kind of what they went by," Greg explained. "Wayne Vanderlaan's neighbor was called 'The Crazy Norwegian', while the neighbor called him 'The Wild Dutchman.'"

What started as a part-time snack-making hobby for the Wild Dutchman and Toby had boomed into substantial business – one that was quickly outgrowing their batch-by-batch roasting set-up.

"They had all of these distributors calling them, and they couldn't really get production done, and he just really wanted some help," Greg explained. "I came back, and I talked to my sunflower seed processing plant partner, Danny Dale, and I told him I'd like to invest in this company, and we felt a need for an additional roasting plant and built it."

The rest is history; Greg and Danny took over some of the roasting and helped out Toby and his daughter, Shelby, with new packaging designs, highlighting the Vanderlanns' Dutch heritage with the iconic orange packaging.

With the additional processing capacity, the company continued to expand its growing footprint throughout the Midwest and beyond.

"It's hard for a little two-family-owned company to be competitive in the market, but since we have the seeds from start to finish, it kind of gives us an advantage over everyone else," Greg said.

Starting in December 2024, Greg and Danny took over full production of Wild Dutchman seeds in Huron.

"From that first load that we hauled up there to Mound City to the time we built the roasting plant was probably three years of building a friendship," Greg said. "Small town South Dakota is very different, and we honestly went into wild Dutchman with no contractual agreement besides a shake of a hand and a 'hey, we're in this together.'"

Today, as the Wild Dutchman brand continues its remarkable streak of success, Greg is elated seeing how a little small-town friendship, hard work, and faith can achieve so much.

"One of the greatest feelings I've had is being in a faraway place and seeing an empty bag of Wild Dutchman seeds blowing across the baseball field," Greg laughed. "It's those little things that are more satisfying than having a positive balance sheet or a huge profit."

Kelly O'Bryan of Winner shows off his impressive collection of deer and elk sheds alongside his shed-hunting Labrador, Skye.
Photos submitted by Kelly O'Bryan

SHED HUNTING

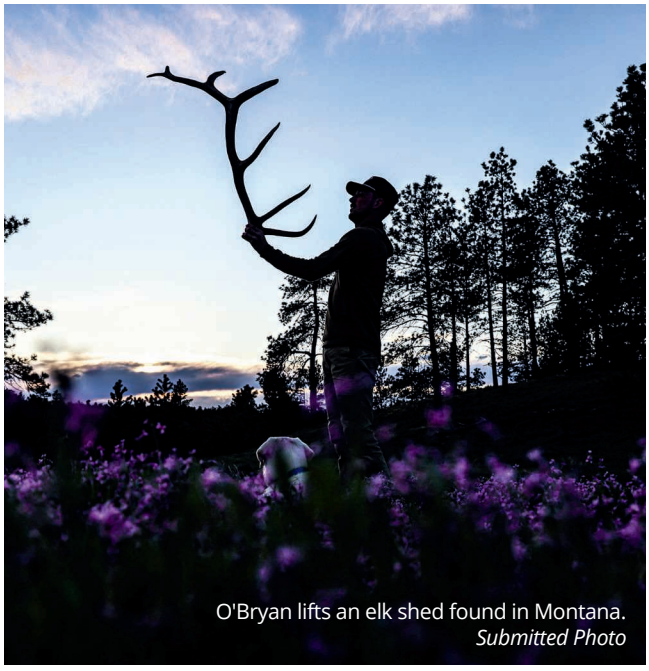
Prairie Miles and Antler Piles

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Rosebud Electric member Kelly O'Bryan of Winner regularly hikes mile after mile of open prairie in search of the perfect shed. But he isn't looking for a place to store his garden tools or lawnmower – instead, he's after antlers. Each spring, deer and elk naturally shed their antlers, leaving behind prized treasures for shed hunters like O'Bryan to find.

O'Bryan jumped into the shed hunting hobby in 2020, during the social distancing months of the pandemic, after a friend invited him on a shed hunt in Montana. When O'Bryan found his first deer shed, he uncovered more than just a pair of antlers – he discovered a new passion.

"It was during the time when you couldn't go out and do anything, so you just had to make your own fun and find stuff to do," he laughed. "I just fell in love with covering as many miles as I possibly could each season, trying to pinpoint sheds. It's just like an Easter egg hunt."



O'Bryan lifts an elk shed found in Montana.
Submitted Photo

Shortly after, O'Bryan fully committed to the hobby and added the ultimate scavenger to his team: a white lab named Skye. According to O'Bryan, it didn't take long for the dog to become an invaluable shed-hunting partner.

"I got Skye as a puppy, and I knew as soon as I got her, I

would train her to be a shed dog," he said. "I taught her to sit and stay while I hid sheds all around the house. When she found one, I would give her lots of positive reinforcement. She figured it out just like that."

Since then, O'Bryan and Skye have become seasoned shed hunters. In 2024 alone, the pair found 152 whitetail sheds, 25 mule deer sheds, nine elk sheds and 16 complete skulls – called "dead heads" – which resemble an English-style mount. Many of their best finds come from long days spent in remote country, often covering 10 to 15 miles in a single outing.

O'Bryan's collection of sheds has grown into an impressive heap of bone and tines that continues to grow each season. Like many in the shed hunting community, he has found creative ways to showcase his finds with his most festive being an antler-adorned
Christmas tree.

Others in the shed hunting community use their collection for art projects, crafting everything from knife handles to chandeliers. Some even trade or sell antlers to crafters, collectors, or pet product makers, giving shed hunting both recreational and economic appeal. Although O'Bryan does not sell his finds, he does cut up broken and damaged antlers for dog chews, gifting them to friends, family and his own favorite shed-hunting friend.

O'Bryan also has a few tips for beginners, drawn from miles of experience.

He says spring is the best time to search – antlers are freshly shed, and the grass is still short enough to give hunters a clear view. A good pair of binoculars is another must-have, helping spot antlers from a distance when the terrain allows for a higher vantage point.

And once you've found one shed, don't assume the hunt is over. Whitetail deer are often in groups and antlers are often dropped in pairs so it's worth taking the time to thoroughly scan the surroundings.

"You aren't going to be finding many sheds unless you are willing to put on the miles," he said. "The more you hike, the more you are likely to find sheds."

More photos of O'Bryan's collection and other hunting trophies can be found on his Instagram page: @db_huntin.

(Above) O'Bryan praises Skye for a lifetime of discovering antlers. (Below) O'Bryan and Skye show their white tail antler finds from a winter shed hunt. *Submitted Photo*

How To Read Your Electric Meter

Your electric meter is a device that tells you exactly how much electricity your household is consuming. Like the mileage display on your car, your electric meter tells you how much power your home has used ever since the meter was set up. There are different types of meters, but they all measure electricity consumption in kilowatt-hours and display total power used. While homeowners know they have an electric meter, they don't often know how to read it. So, in this article we will tell you exactly how to read your electric meter, in addition to answering other questions about electric meters!

Where is the Electricity Meter Located?

Before you check your meter, it's important to know where it is located. Usually the electricity meter is installed where the power lines enter your building. They are usually placed at either the side or the rear of your home. In some apartments, different electric meters will be grouped together.

What is The Meter Number?

Every meter has a unique meter number, in order to identify your home's power consumption and bill you for it. The meter number is usually located on the face of the meter, usually at the bottom. If you must submit a meter reading to your utility company, it is important to know what your meter number is.

How to Read Your Electric Meter

While it is not necessary to read your electric meter, it's very easy to do so. This is helpful to know if you would like to keep a personal record of your meter readings. Reading your electric meter is simple once you know what to look for. Most digital meters cycle through several screens automatically, showing your total kilowatt-hour (kWh) usage, the demand reading, and sometimes the date or time. The kWh delivered reading shows how much electricity you've used from the grid since the meter was installed, while the kWh received reading shows how much power you've sent back, such as from solar panels. By keeping an eye on your kWh usage, you can track how much energy you're using over time and better understand your monthly bill.

In addition to tracking usage, your meter also measures demand, which is shown in kilowatts (kW). Demand represents the highest amount of power you use at any single moment during your billing period. For example, if several high-energy appliances—like an air conditioner, water heater, and oven—are running at the same time, your demand will spike. This number matters because the demand charge on your bill is based on your peak usage, not your total kWh. By understanding both your kWh usage and your demand reading, you can make small changes to spread out appliance use and potentially lower your bill.

More Questions About Your Electric Meter? Contact your cooperative, Lacreek Electric! If you have more questions about how you can read your electric meter, get in touch with your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative, Lacreek Electric. Call us today at 605-685-6581!

DON'T FORGET TO CALL AND SUBMIT YOUR START READING **BEFORE** OCTOBER 1ST FOR YOUR HEAT METER FOR THE UPCOMING HEAT SEASON!

IS YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION UP-TO-DATE?

Ensuring that we have the most current and accurate information on your account is essential for providing you with the best possible service. We rely on up-to-date contact details to keep you informed about outages, maintenance, billing and other important notifications of service interruptions to help minimize any inconvenience.

HOW TO UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION

1. Member Service: Call our member service team at 605-685-6581. Our representatives will be happy to help you update your account information.
2. In-Person: Visit our office at 121 N. Harold Street in Martin, SD. Our staff will help you update your details on the spot.
3. Via E-mail: Send an email to lacreek@lacreek.com with the appropriate changes. We may ask additional questions to verify identity.
4. On the Back of Your Billing Stub: If you receive paper billing statements, you can submit any changes on the back of the billing stub and submit it with your payment.
5. SmartHub: You can choose the Contact Us option and let us know what information needs to be updated on your account.

Keeping your account information current helps us serve you better. We appreciate your cooperation and are here to assist you with any questions.

HARNESSING AI

Electric Cooperatives Explore What's Next for AI

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming an increasingly popular tool for many industries and even in our daily lives. It has the potential to bring many opportunities, and a few challenges, to electric cooperatives. But machine learning takes time, and cooperatives are still in the process of determining how AI can be effectively used.

Like any new technology, AI brings with it a mix of potential and uncertainty. It's a hot topic — sometimes exciting, sometimes a little intimidating. But for electric cooperatives, the focus isn't on the buzz. It's on the basics: What problems can it solve? What efficiencies can it create? And how do cooperatives make sure they are using it safely?

That measured, practical approach is what's guiding East River Electric Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supply cooperative which serves 25-member distribution systems in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota, as it explores how AI might support the operations of its member cooperatives now and into the future.

Right now, most electric cooperatives in South Dakota have not yet integrated artificial intelligence into their operations or systems. But that doesn't mean the technology is being ignored. Across the state, many co-ops are watching AI developments closely, asking questions, and exploring how these tools might be used in the future. The focus remains on learning first — before implementing anything that could affect system reliability or member service.

At East River Electric Power Cooperative, that learning process is already well underway. According to Jeff May, chief information officer with East River Electric, the co-op has spent the past several years researching what AI has to offer. Their approach has been to identify practical, secure applications that could help improve efficiency, support employees in their day-to-day work, and ultimately benefit members.

"With the explosion of AI applications and models for both personal and professional uses, we've been exploring ways that East River Electric and our members can harness the power of AI while making sure that our data is secure from a cybersecurity perspective," said May.

Because AI technology has the potential to interact with both internal systems and external networks, cybersecurity is a top priority. As South Dakota rural electric cooperatives look to adopt tools powered by AI and other tech, they will ensure their systems are safe from potential cyber threats. Strong digital defenses are essential for the safe use of any new technology.

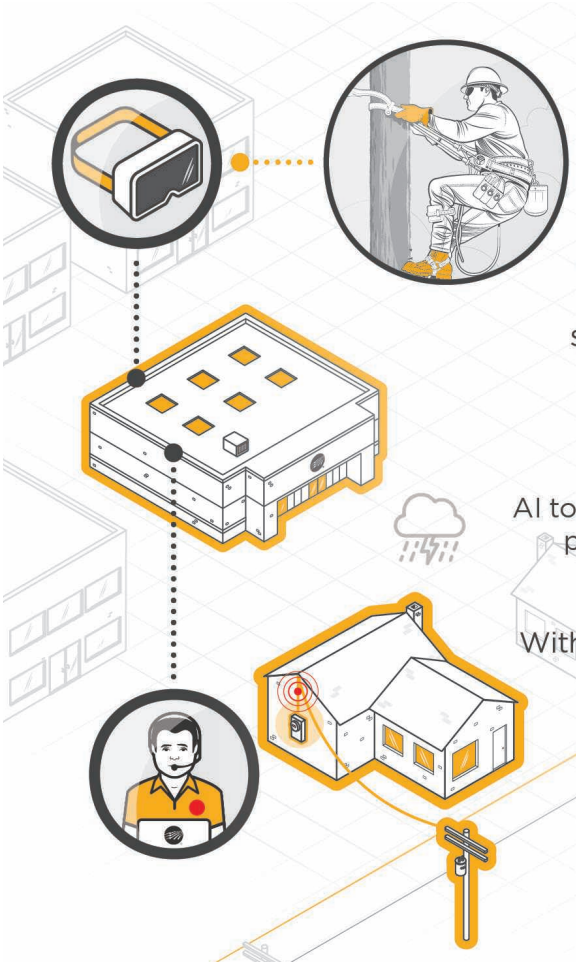
With safety in mind, May said East River Electric is actively partnering with Dakota State University graduate students to see how AI can be safely utilized by electric cooperatives. Together, East River Electric is working with the school to build an AI model that can predict electricity usage based on weather conditions and other factors to support the cooperative's load forecasting and rate forecasting capabilities. Although the technology is still in its infancy, May said he expects that someday AI will play a significant role in an electric cooperative's daily operations, including load forecasting, outage response and maintenance planning.

"It's difficult to predict how AI can be used for different types of jobs, but it will certainly become common throughout the organization as we learn all of the things AI can do," he said. "If it can be used to make our employees more productive and have a positive impact on the organization and our members, we will consider it. In some areas it could become commonplace within the next year, but throughout the cooperative it could take 3 to 5 years or more to be fully integrated in a safe and secure way."

Beyond grid operations, East River Electric is also trying out Microsoft CoPilot, an AI-powered assistant built into programs like Word, Excel, Outlook and Teams. A few employees are currently testing it to see how it might improve productivity and workflow, especially in communications and marketing departments.

Ultimately, if AI can streamline a process, predict an issue or improve service for electric cooperative members, May said it's worth considering. AI can be another tool in the cooperative tool belt that can make energy more reliable, services faster and operations more efficient.

"Over the next 5 to 10 years, AI's role in electric cooperatives is poised to grow significantly, driven by the need for efficiency, grid reliability and sustainability amid rising energy demands and technological advancements," said May. "Just the advancements that have been made in the last three years have been astounding to watch, and as more and more data centers and large language models are built in the coming years, it will become something that cooperatives likely use on a daily basis."



AI PUT INTO ACTION

Electric cooperatives are already using artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) for key tasks and activities. Looking ahead, co-ops see great potential for AI and AR as helpful tools for improving grid reliability and the services they provide to consumer-members.

SERVICES FOR MEMBERS

AI tools like chatbots can enhance member interactions and provide a tailored experience based on energy use data.

WEATHER FORECASTING

With the help of AI, weather forecasts will become more accurate, pinpointing areas to station utility crews.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Through augmented reality, or AR, lineworkers can experience interactive, lifelike trainings, rather than watching a video or webinar.

Photo by Jessie Tucker

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Is an EV Right for Your Needs?

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

As electric vehicle infrastructure improves in South Dakota, you may be wondering: is it finally time to jump on board the EV bandwagon?

EVs offer many lucrative benefits to their owners. They mark an end to the tedious oil changes, and you're likely to take on fewer expenses to maintain the vehicle — and that's all while you're getting the combustion engine-equivalent of 100 miles to the gallon.

It's a deal lucrative enough that EV registration has surged in the U.S. to more than four million vehicles on the road in 2024, with that number expected to grow exponentially over the next decade. Florida, Texas and Washington each already have more than 100,000 EVs registered, and California reports more than one million.

Meanwhile in South Dakota, it's still fairly irregular that you'll see an electric vehicle (with in-state plates) driving around your community. In fact, the South Dakota Department of Transportation records only about 1,400 fully-electric vehicles on the road, even as charging infrastructure increases.

"You do have range anxiety — that is something that happens," said Matt Hotzler, manager of H-D Electric Cooperative in Clear Lake, who regularly takes the co-op's Tesla Model 3 on business trips across the state.

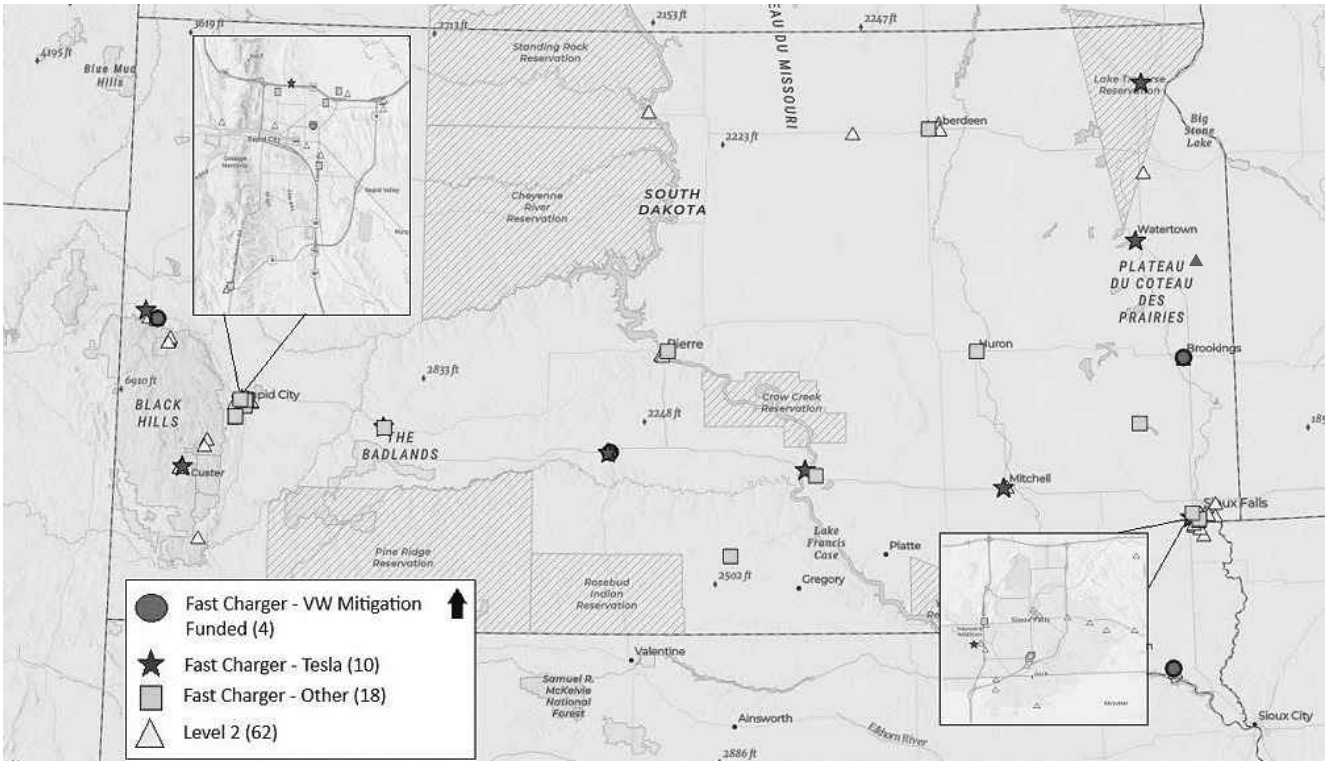
South Dakota's weather makes planning a trip in an electric vehicle a little more hands-on. Temperature, wind speeds, climate control and headlights all affect how frequently you have to stop to add some joules.

Luckily, the stops aren't usually long, Hotzler said, with his Tesla planning several stops along a route to do partial charges – about ten minutes at a time – before hitting the road again.

While the public charging stations are convenient for out-of-town travels, it's where one giant plus to owning an EV – low operating costs – begins to erode.

Jessie Tucker, manager of member services at West Central Electric Cooperative in Murdo, recalls his surprise on a trip last winter to Rapid City when he stopped to charge the co-op's Ford F-150 Lightning and discovered his charging rate was nearly 68¢ per kWh – more than five times what it would cost to charge at home. Driving 80 mph in the winter weather and averaging about 1.3 miles per KWh, Tucker calculated the combustion engine-equivalent would be about $9.41 per gallon.

"It would be tough for me to own one (personally) at this point," Tucker said. "If you're a daily commuter and you're getting home every night, then owning an EV does make sense. If you can charge overnight at your own house, it is still approximately half the cost of $2.85 fuel."



Electric Vehicle charging stations in South Dakota.
Graphic courtesy of South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

In western South Dakota, West River Electric Association offers members an EV charging incentive — with some stipulations.

"It's like the old cell phone plans where they would have unlimited nights and weekends," joked Adam Daigle, manager of communications and public relations at West River Electric in Wall.

"Members with an electric vehicle can pay $33 per month for unlimited charging on nights (9 p.m.- 7 a.m.) and on weekends. So in a sense, you can drive all month for $33."

The incentive is designed to encourage charging during off-peak times when there is less strain on the electric grid while also helping members interested in electric vehicles make the switch.

"I think EVs are great cars for commuting," Daigle said. "If you stay within range of that battery, where you don't have to hit a level three charger, they're fantastic."

Another factor to consider if you're thinking about an electric vehicle: you'll need somewhere indoors to charge it.

The lithium-ion batteries found in EVs will not charge as quickly in cold weather. Though many EVs have systems to warm the battery before charging, a heated garage is still the most convenient and efficient way to charge, and can prevent cold-weather charging degradation on your battery.

"When I drive my Tesla to work and it sits out in the really cold weather for a big part of the day – 8 to 10 hours – I do see some battery used during that time to keep things warm," H-D Electric's Hotzler added. "You have to be careful of the batteries getting so cold."

Another necessity: a 240-volt plug for level 2 charging. While you can charge an electric vehicle with a standard 120-volt outlet, it could take more than a day to reach a full charge.

After five years of driving the Tesla Model 3, Hotzler is a fan of the technology, and recommends it as a daily driver.

"I'd recommend an EV for a household using it for a back and forth commute – just not any extremely long trips," Hotzler said. "For an everyday driver, it works really well. They drive fast, they're zippy, there's hardly any maintenance. I've just had a really positive experience."

EV Charging Explained

Level 1 charging uses a standard 120-volt outlet. Level 1 charging is the slowest charging speed, adding about 3-5 miles of range per hour. This is not recommended, and is typically used in residential settings.

Level 2 charging uses a 240-volt outlet – the same as your stove or dryer. This is the more practical solution, adding about 12-30 miles of range per hour and is enough to charge many EVs overnight. This is recommended for residential settings. Many public charging stations also feature level 2 chargers.

Level 3 charging, or DC fast chargers, are the quickest way to charge, taking just a half hour to charge the battery to 80%. Using these chargers can cost as much or more than a tank of gas. Speeds range from 50 KW to 350 KW. These stations are placed along major highways, including I-29 and I-90.

Source: driveelectricsd.com, How-To Geek

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UNTIL OCT. 31
Wallace Dow, Prairie Architect Traveling Exhibit
Lake County Museum
Madison, SD
605-256-5308

SEPT. 5-7
James Valley Threshing Show & Tractor Club
Threshermen's Park
Andover, SD
www.jamesvalleythreshers.com

SEPT. 6-7
Hill City Quilt & Fiber Arts Show
Hill City School Gym
Hill City, SD
www.heartofthehillsquilters.com

SEPT. 7
Farmer Tractor Parade
1 p.m.
Tractors, Cars & Food
Farmer, SD

SEPT. 7
Homesteader Day Celebration
Pioneer Demonstrations
1-4 p.m.
Beaver Creek Nature Area
Valley Springs, SD

SEPT. 13-14
Harvest & Kuchen Festival
Delmont, SD
www.twinriversoldiron.org

SEPT. 13-14
South Dakota Senior Softball Tournament
Huron, SD
605-295-2039
www.southdakotaseniorgames.org

SEPT. 19
Veterans Stand Down
SD Military Alliance
8:30-11:30 a.m.
1600 W. Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD

SEPT. 19-20
Holiday Arts Fall Craft Show
Davison Cty Fairgrounds
Mitchell, SD
605-770-8136

SEPT. 26-28
Coal Springs Threshing Bee Featuring Horse-Drawn Equipment
Meadow, SD
605-788-2229

SEPT. 27
Your Race, Your Pace
9:30 a.m.
Wylie Park
Aberdeen, SD

SEPT. 27
Wheelin' To Wall Cycling Event
Wall, SD
www.wheelintowall.com

SEPT. 27
Ag Day
Roundup Arena
Belle Fourche, SD

OCT. 3
DSU Architecture Walking Tour
3-4 p.m.
Lake County Museum
Madison, SD

OCT. 10-11
Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vendor Show
Sat. 12-6 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Philip, SD
605-441-1060

OCT. 25
Breast Cancer Survivors' Luncheon
10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Blessed Sacrament Parish Hall
Rapid City, SD
RSVP: 216-536-3683

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.