



Cooperative Connections

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DIRT on
Underground
Damages

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with a
Lineworker

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Know what's **below.**
Call before you dig.

Member Satisfaction

90 X 5 Initiative Launched



Tim McCarthy, GM/CEO

tim.mccarthy@siouxvalleyenergy.com

Member satisfaction... It's a goal we strive for each day when our lineworkers head out into the field; accountants start crunching numbers; customer service representatives answer calls; and electricians wire systems and install load management. Sioux Valley Energy has a solid history of working hard to meet and exceed the needs of its members. We routinely ask members for their feedback in the form of surveys. One of those surveys is the American Customer Satisfaction Index or ACSI.

According to ACSI.org, "The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the only national cross-industry measure of customer satisfaction in the United States. The Index measures the satisfaction of U.S. household consumers with the quality of products and services offered by both foreign and domestic firms with significant share in U.S. markets."

By conducting an ACSI survey each year we are able to compare our members' satisfaction with other utilities. It gives us an idea of how an "average" utility ranks in their customers' eyes. However, average is not good enough for Sioux Valley. We strive to be above average--it's what our members deserve.

Nationally, the average ACSI score for a Touchstone Energy Cooperative is 78; Municipal utilities average a 72 and Investor Owned Utilities rate at a 75. Sioux Valley Energy has an ACSI score of 86--well above the national average for any utility group. That score tells us that on average, our members are satisfied with the service and product (electricity) that they receive.

While a score of 86 is high and is very strong for the utility industry--we want to do even better for our members. We have set a goal of 90X5... in other words, attaining an ACSI score of 90 within five years. We know it will be challenging but we are going to work hard to provide an even more satisfying member experience.

How do we plan to do that? Well, first of all we plan to listen to YOU... the member. "Pop-up" picnics will be held throughout our service territory this summer. This will be an opportunity for you to speak directly to the Cooperatives' management and Board. It will be a casual event, but we want you to attend if possible so you can tell us how we can enhance your member experience.

We also are working on launching a blog/vlog so that we can address issues that don't always get covered at a meeting or in a newsletter. We often get individual questions from members that are likely on the mind of others--the blog/vlog will allow us to get that information out to others!

Another exciting initiative that you will see this year is the addition of a live chat support option through SmartHub. Live chat will allow members to easily contact a customer service representative via the internet and chat with them in real time. We see this as a convenient option for members, in addition to all of our other customer communication methods.

We are ready to exceed our members' expectations by earning an ACSI score of 90. You will see initiatives continue to roll out throughout the year, so keep an eye on our website, Facebook and here in the magazine.

In closing, thanks to everyone who has taken the time to attend our district meetings and as construction season begins to ramp up this spring--please be watchful for utility workers!

Sioux Valley Energy

Cooperative Connections

(USPS No. 497-440)

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Sioux Valley Energy is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Free Trees Available to SVE Members

Earth Day Celebration



Earth Day is celebrated on **April 22nd** and in recognition of Sioux Valley Energy's commitment to community and caring for the environment initiatives, the Cooperative will purchase a limited number of bare-root trees for members to plant.

The give-away event* will take place the week of April 24-27 (Tuesday-Friday) at each of the Co-op's service centers in Colman, Brandon and Pipestone. Members can stop by one of the offices during the hours of 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. to pick up two trees--

Hackberry and Black Hills Spruce. There will be 700 trees in total available to the membership and they will be given out in a "first-come, first-served" basis. So once the trees are gone; they are gone!

In Spring of 1970, Senator Gaylord Nelson created Earth Day to bring the issue of pollution to national attention. Twenty-two million Americans demonstrated in different cities and Congress authorized the creation of a new federal agency, EPA, to promote ecology and awareness for the growing issues related to air, water and soil pollution.

***Give-away event is dependent upon weather, shipment dates and availability.**

Pellman's Win Freezer

The winners of the freezer for the 'Chill with Refrigeration' Home Energy Makeover Contest were Terence and Michelle Pellman of Brandon.



Power Tools and Equipment Safety

Many do-it-yourself projects involve the use of power tools. Working with power tools requires skilled instruction and training. They can be deadly if not properly used or maintained.

The most common scenario for power tool-related electrocutions is when the equipment comes in contact with live electrical wires while it is being used.

Facts and Statistics:

- According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), there are nearly 400 electrocutions in the United States each year.
- Approximately 15 percent of electrocutions are related to consumer products.
- 8 percent of consumer product-related electrocutions each year are attributed to electrical accidents with power drills, saws, sanders, hedge trimmers and other electric power tools.
- 9 percent of consumer product-related electrocutions each year are caused by accidents involving the use of lawn and garden equipment and ladders, which come into contact with overhead power lines.

Power Tool Safety Tips:

- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) with every power tool to protect against electric shocks.
- Do not use power tools with an extension cord that exceeds 100 feet in length.
- Never use power tools near live electrical wires or water pipes.
- Use extreme caution when cutting or drilling into walls where electrical wires or water pipes could be accidentally touched or penetrated.
- If a power tool trips a safety device while in use, take the tool to a manufacturer-authorized repair center for service.
- When working with electricity, use tools with insulated grips.
- Appropriate personal protective gear should be worn when using power tools.
- Do not use power tools without the proper guards.
- When using a wet-dry vacuum cleaner or a pressure washer, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid electric shock.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

- Safeguards on outdoor electric tools are there for a reason. Make sure that they are always in place before operating.
- Invest in the safety goggles, hearing protection, dust masks, gloves and other safety gear as recommended for each tool. A few dollars now are well worth the lifetime of good sight and hearing that they are protecting.
- Wear the appropriate clothes for the job. Wearing sandals while mowing the lawn is just asking for trouble.

Source: safeelectricity.org

Five Easy Ways to

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

Every Day

1. Conserve water by taking showers instead of baths.
2. Turn off all lights when you leave a room.
3. Bring your reusable bags to the market and other stores when shopping.
4. Go paperless. Pay as many bills as possible online.
5. Ditch the car and walk when possible.

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Spring is coming! Don't fly kites near power lines."

Taylor Brooks, 7 years old

Taylor is the daughter of Tyson Brooks, Lake Andes, S.D. He receives his internet service through Charles Mix Electric Association, Lake Andes.

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.

Appetizers and Beverages

Jalapeno Poppers

- | | |
|---|--|
| 18 fresh jalapenos cut in half (stems intact if possible), seeds and membrane cleaned out (wear gloves) | 18 slices thin bacon, cut in halves |
| 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese | Bottled barbecue sauce |
| 2/3 cup grated Cheddar cheese | Toothpicks |
| 2 green onions, chopped | Rubber gloves or plastic bags for working with the jalapenos |

In a bowl, combine cream cheese, cheddar cheese and chopped green onion mixing gently. Stuff the pepper halves with the cheese mixture. Wrap bacon slices around each pepper half, covering as much of the surface as possible and do not stretch the bacon. Secure the bacon with a toothpick and then brush the surface of the bacon with barbecue sauce. Place on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake at 275°F. for 1 hour or until bacon is done. Serve hot or room temperature.

Note: These can be assembled a day in advance, kept refrigerated and then baked or baked, frozen and reheated prior to serving. Experiment with different cheeses or jellies instead of barbecue sauce.

Judy Mendel, Doland

Mocha Freeze

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 2 cups vanilla ice cream, softened | 1 T. chocolate syrup |
| 1/4 cup cold strong coffee | 1/2 cup crushed ice |

Combine ingredients in blender; blend well. Makes 4 servings.

Becki Hauser, Tripp

Triple Berry Special

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 cup frozen strawberries | 1/2 cup buttermilk |
| 1 cup raspberries | 1-1/2 cups strawberry yogurt |
| 1 cup blueberries | 2 T. honey |
| 1 cup milk | 2 T. flax meal |

Combine ingredients in blender; blend well.

Hannah Schoenfelder, Cavour

Southwest Chili Cups

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1/2 lb. lean ground beef | 1 tsp. McCormick® Garlic Powder |
| 1 (15 oz.) can black beans, drained and rinsed | 2 (8 oz. each) pkgs. corn muffin mix |
| 1 (8 oz.) can tomato sauce | 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese |
| 4 tsp. McCormick® Chili Powder | 3/4 cup sour cream |
| 2 tsp. McCormick® Oregano Leaves, finely crushed, divided | 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions |

Brown beef in large skillet on medium-high heat. Drain fat. Add beans, tomato sauce, chili powder, 1 tsp. oregano and garlic powder; mix well. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Prepare corn muffin mix as directed on package, adding remaining 1 tsp. oregano. Spoon batter into 12 greased and floured or paper-lined muffin cups, filling each cup 2/3 full. Spoon beef mixture into each cup, gently pressing into batter. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 400°F. for 12 minutes or until edges of muffin cups are golden. Cool 5 minutes in pan on wire rack. Top each cup with sour cream and green onions. Makes 12 servings.

Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 317, Total Fat 13g, Sodium 659mg, Cholesterol 67mg, Carbohydrates 38g, Protein 12g, Dietary Fiber 3g

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Orange Julius

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1/2 cup water | 1 T. sugar |
| 1/2 cup milk | 1/4 tsp. vanilla |
| 1/3 cup frozen orange juice | 6 ice cubes |

Combine ingredients in blender; blend well.

Fay Swenson, Rapid City

Please send your favorite casserole, dairy and dessert recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2018. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Enter this month's contest and watch for next month's challenge to enter to win another valuable prize!

12 MONTH CHALLENGE TO SAVE MONEY AND WIN BIG!

You Could be a Winner!

The **Energy Makeover Contest** gives you 12 chances to win valuable prizes to enhance efficiency and conservation efforts in your home or business. Each month we will focus on a new topic to help you learn how little changes can help you save big!

The information gathered will help Sioux Valley Energy continue to educate our members about energy saving practices, safety, and to ensure the programs we offer meet your needs.

ENTER FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A DELTA 5-SETTING H2O-KINETIC WATER EFFICIENT WATERSENSE CERTIFIED SHOWER HEAD AND POWER COST MONITORING EQUIPMENT!

THE POWER COST MONITOR ALLOWS YOU TO SEE THE AMOUNT OF ELECTRICITY YOUR HOME IS USING FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT AND THE DIFFERENCE IN ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION CAUSED BY TURNING ON AND OFF VARIOUS ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES IN YOUR HOME.

Please complete the entry below and mail to Sioux Valley Energy, Energy Makeover Contest, PO Box 216, Colman, SD 57017. The entry is also available online at www.siouxvalleyenergy.com. One entry per member. Challenge Month Seven entry must be received by April 30th to be eligible for the drawing.

Avoid the Energy Rush

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Account Number: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Do you currently participate in any load management programs?
yes no

If yes, which ones? water heater air conditioner irrigation

Do you plan to make any changes to reduce energy usage during on-peak hours? yes no

If yes, what? (circle all that apply) *do some daily chores on off-peak hours like running the dishwasher or doing laundry; *use timers on appliances or electronics; *use a power strip to shut off items when not in use; *use a programmable thermostat; *shut off the lights when no one is in the room

I would like more information on:

Sealing/Insulation Guide Heat pump rebate Residential LED program Commercial/Ag LED program Weatherization Program Yard Light rebate Residential Water Heater Energy Audit Electric Heat Rate Electric Car Charging Rate Time of use Rate Energy Tips Commercial/Ag Water Heater Third Party Irrigation Rebate

CHALLENGE MONTH SEVEN

AVOID THE ENERGY RUSH

Did you know that WHEN you use electricity matters as much as how much electricity you consume? It's no surprise that electricity use fluctuates throughout the day based on consumer demand and electric co-ops must be able to provide enough electricity to meet the energy demands of their members during times of highest energy use, also known as "on-peak hours."

The bill that Sioux Valley Energy receives from power suppliers is split between two main components: energy and demand. The energy charge is for all the electricity used (consumed) in the month which is measured in kilowatt hours. The demand charge (which is measured in kilowatts) is for a 30-minute period in the month where consumption is at its highest (peak). The electric system has to be built to support the maximum amount of demand. For example, in a 24-hour period a typical home is using electricity all day and night--that represents kilowatt hours. On the other hand, the demand charge would be based on the time period the system is peaking...when the heat is on; when you are washing clothes, cooking and running the vacuum all at the same time. The system typically peaks in the morning or early evening--this coincides when most people are getting ready for their day and when they get home from work. Approximately 50 percent of Sioux Valley's cost of power is based on a 30 minute peak each month or just six hours per year!

To reduce peak energy demand and save money, Sioux Valley Energy now offers a residential time of use rate to encourage electricity use during off-peak hours when electricity is less expensive to provide. Similar to saving money by attending a matinee, you can keep more money in your wallet simply by using electricity during an off-peak time period. Load management programs are also available for electric water heaters, central air conditioners/heat pumps, and irrigation systems. Contact SVE for more information at 800-234-1960.

This month's challenge: Early-morning hours, when people often start their day, and evening hours, when people return to their homes after work are common times for on-peak hours. To reduce peak energy demand, try performing some of your daily chores like running the dishwasher or doing laundry during off-peak hours. Plug electronic equipment such as computers, printers, TVs and power tools into a power strip, then turn it off during peak hours. Turn off the lights when no one is in the room. Put technology to work for you - considering using a programmable thermostat and automatic timers to run water heaters and other appliances.

Scholarship Winners

Twenty-three graduating high school seniors were awarded college scholarships from Sioux Valley Energy and its power suppliers this year. The majority of scholarship funds came from Sioux Valley Energy's Operation Roundup® program, with additional monies from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, L&O Power Cooperative, and the Rodney Park Memorial Scholarship.

Debra Biever, Sioux Valley Energy Director of Customer and Employee Relations, says 60 students applied for the \$14,000 worth of scholarships available through Sioux Valley Energy.

"Applications were judged on the basis of grades, ACT or SAT test scores, work experience, school activities, volunteer community service and an essay question," said Biever.



Alyssa Fick



Amanda Haugen



Aric Meinerts



Bethany Malsam



Blake Kontz



Bryn Tvedt



Cade Ver Steeg



Dean Fuerstenberg



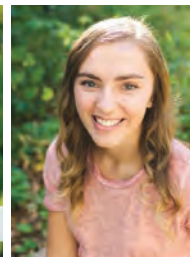
Elijah McMahon



Emilie Bartels



Ethan Geraets



Faith Burch



Grady Gullickson



Hannah Hendrick



Jayden Pittman



Jensina Davis



Kianna Thelen



Kristen Neumann



Ryan Fick



Shaina Schwebach

AWARD RECIPIENTS

\$250 Scholarship:

Shania Schwebach-Madison High School

\$500 Scholarships:

Grady Gullickson-Flandreau High School

Elijah McMahon-West Central High School

William Gunderson-Brandon Valley High School

Hannah Hendrick-Brandon Valley High School

Faith Burch-Brandon Valley High School

Alyssa Fick-Brandon Valley High School

Cade Ver Steeg-Luverne High School

Aric Meinerts-Luverne High School

\$750 Scholarships:

Jensina Davis-Brookings High School

Amanda Haugen-Flandreau High School-Technical School

Blake Kontz-Flandreau High School-Technical School

Taelor Smith-Madison High School

Kristen Neumann-Chester High School

Bethany Malsam-Brandon Valley High School

Shelby Linn-Brandon Valley High School

Kianna Thelen-Brandon Valley High School

Dean Fuerstenberg-Hills-Beaver Creek High School-Power Line Scholarship

\$1000 Scholarships:

Bryn Tvedt-Sioux Valley High School-Basin Scholarship

Jayden Pittman-Baltic High School

Ethan Geraets-Chester High School

Ryan Fick-Garretson High School

Emilie Bartels-Luverne High School- L & O Scholarship



Shelby Linn



Taelor Smith



William Gunderson

Know what's below Call **811** before you dig.



April is set aside as National Safe Digging Month, designed to raise awareness of safe digging practices and the need to call 8-1-1 before any digging projects.

Underground Excavation Damages Cost **\$1.5 BILLION**

Common Ground Alliance

www.cga-dirt.com

Damage to underground utilities from digging activities carries a hefty price tag.

Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the stakeholder-run organization dedicated to protecting underground utility lines, people who dig near them, and their communities, released its comprehensive 2016 Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report in 2017.

The report, which is the sum of all 2016 data submitted anonymously and voluntarily by facility operators, utility locating companies, one call centers, contractors, regulators, and others, estimates that the total number of underground excavation damages in the U.S. last year rose 20 percent from the year prior, to approximately 379,000, and conservatively cost direct stakeholders at least \$1.5 billion. The 2016 DIRT Report benefited from a record-high number of event record submissions as well as a record-high Data Quality Index score (a measurement of the completeness of data submissions), yielding the most comprehensive analysis of damages to buried facilities ever compiled.

Data from 2016 informed CGA's first-ever estimate of the societal costs associated with underground



One easy call gets your utility lines marked and helps protect you from injury and expense.

Safe Digging Is No Accident: Always Call 811 Before You Dig

Visit call811.com for more information.



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.

facility damages in the U.S. As estimated by a very conservative model accounting only for stakeholders' direct costs related to a damage, 2016 damages alone cost approximately \$1.5 billion in the U.S. This estimate does not include property damage to excavating equipment or the surrounding area, evacuations of residences and businesses, road closures and/or traffic delays, environmental impacts, legal costs, injuries or deaths. Customers and users of underground facilities were most impacted, shouldering just over 30 percent of the total societal costs, and emergency responders absorbed more than 23 percent.

While the 2016 damage ratio, which measures damages per 1,000 one call transmissions, increased 14 percent from 2015, construction spending has risen such that the ratio of damages to construction spending has dramatically declined since 2004 (the first year the DIRT Report was issued), and estimated damages have stabilized into the 300,000-400,000 range since 2010 despite increased construction activity in the interim.

"The substantial estimated economic impacts of damages to underground facilities across the U.S. likely do not come as a big surprise to damage prevention advocates who are dedicated to reducing that figure – along with the very human impacts these damages can have – on a daily basis. Nevertheless, we hope that the 2016 DIRT Report's analysis of the \$1.5 billion in societal impact is eye-opening to both the industry and the public at large, and provides clear evidence that reducing damages is solidly in the public interest," said Sarah K. Magruder Lyle, president

and CEO of CGA. "The latest DIRT Report also examines damage prevention paradigms in other countries for the first time, which is an opportunity to consider how this information can help us can work toward our goal of zero damages."

Other significant findings from the 2016 DIRT Report include that damages caused by a failure to call 811 prior to digging have fallen to a record-low 16 percent, part of an encouraging long-term trend.

2016 damages alone cost \$1.5 billion in the United States.

Once again, CGA has made an interactive DIRT Dashboard accessible to the public through its website, allowing users to view and manipulate the data through the lens of a specific element, e.g., damages by state, root cause analysis, etc. It contains a series of dashboard visualizations that allow users to sort information through additional filters, giving damage prevention stakeholders a powerful tool for drilling down into the areas where they feel they can have the biggest positive impact. Added this year are the capabilities to filter several dashboards by state or year (inclusive of 2015 and 2016 data), as well as a new dashboard that centers around the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) determinations on the adequacy of state damage prevention programs.

"CGA's Data Reporting and Evaluation

Committee has worked tirelessly to recruit quality data submissions and explore new areas of analysis to inform the 2016 DIRT Report as part of its pursuit to provide damage prevention advocates and the public with comprehensive, relevant information," said Bob Terjesen, Data Committee co-chair from National Grid. "DIRT data is more accessible than ever with the interactive DIRT Dashboard hosted on the CGA website, making it possible for any stakeholder to explore the unique ways each of us can have an impact on the staggering \$1.5 billion in societal costs caused by damages to buried utilities, and on protecting the people who work near them."

The complete DIRT Annual Report for 2016 is available for download at www.commongroundalliance.com, and stakeholders interested in submitting data to the 2017 report or establishing a Virtual Private Dirt account should visit the DIRT site at www.cga-dirt.com.

About CGA

CGA is a member-driven association of nearly 1,700 individuals, organizations and sponsors in every facet of the underground utility industry. Established in 2000, CGA is committed to saving lives and preventing damage to North American underground infrastructure by promoting effective damage prevention practices. CGA has established itself as the leading organization in an effort to reduce damages to underground facilities in North America through shared responsibility among all stakeholders. For more information, visit CGA on the web at <http://www.commongroundalliance.com>.

Key Takeaways

This year's DIRT Report highlights several key takeaways that demonstrate that despite the increase in damages submitted to DIRT, the industry continues to make progress in several key areas:

- Estimated total U.S. damages increased 20 percent, from 317,000 to 379,000.
- Since 2010, damages have stabilized into the 300,000-400,000 range despite there being a rebound in construction spending.
- Damages per 1000 transmissions increased 14 percent, from 1.54 in 2015 to 1.76.
- However, the rate is lower than the 2013 and 2014 rates of 2.07 and 1.84 respectively, indicating a long-term trend of

improvement.

- The ratio of damages to construction spending has declined dramatically from 0.63 damages per million dollars of construction spending in 2004 to 0.41 in 2016.
- Call before you dig awareness remains consistent with historical findings at 45 percent (survey taken June 2017).
- The societal costs associated with underground facility damages in the U.S. in 2016 are estimated at \$1.5 billion. This is a minimum estimate based on routine costs for stakeholders directly connected to a damaged facility. It does not include costs such as property damage, evacuations, road closures, environmental impacts, lawsuits, injuries, and fatalities

EMPOWER

Youth Leadership *Making Your Mark on The World!*

Deadline to apply:

**Friday,
May 11th**



EmPOWER youth Leadership

WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE TO **YOU?**

Sioux Valley Energy encourages you to apply for the opportunity to learn and EmPOWER yourself with a leadership skill-set through excitement and collaboration! Learn what makes cooperatives unique and how their business model EmPOWER's members and communities to succeed. You will also have opportunities to travel and earn scholarships!



**OPPORTUNITIES
TO GROW!**

**College and
Future
Preparation**

**Scholarships
and Travel**

Explore Careers

FOUR FUN-FILLED PROGRAM DAYS FOCUSING ON:

- Cooperative Business Model
- Self Confidence/Awareness
- Financial Future
- College and Career Prep
- Professional Networking

- Personal Strengths
- Communication
- Friendship
- Teamwork
- Leadership



TO APPLY:

- Be a sophomore or junior during the 2018-2019 school year.
- Apply online at:

empoweryouthleadership.com

Questions? Ask your guidance counselor or email AMY.VOELKER@SIOUXVALLEYENERGY.COM or call 800-234-1960



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CO-OPS, COMMUNICATION & CAREERS

EMPOWER

EmPOWER Youth Leadership participants took part in their third session; learning about co-ops, communication and careers. 'Oh My Cupcakes' founder, Melissa Johnson spoke to students about pursuing their dreams and the importance of listening to others while Carrie Law offered seminars on the cooperative business model and public speaking. The current Advisory Council also led a workshop entitled "Speak Up, Listen Up." Additionally, more than 15 professionals from various career fields participated in a netweaving exercise where students met with them one on one to learn about future job prospects. The next session will be held March 30th in Colman where students will explore post-high school education opportunities, learn about financial planning and gain experience in how to prepare a resume and conduct a job interview.



The 2018-19 EmPOWER Advisory Council was elected in February. New leaders include:

Josie Scholte, Hills; Lucy Fods, Colton; Grace Johanson, Flandreau; Emilie Staeffler, Luverne; Julia Ferguson, Steen; Elizabeth Hofer, Estelline and Samantha Wiseman, Crooks.

Also pictured in green is the current Advisory Council:

Emma Eichelberg, Brandon; Morgan Johnson, Madison; Jacinda Hustoft, Luverne; Lauren Laphorn, Pipestone; Bethany Malsam, Brandon; Alex Miller, Brandon and Garrett Satterly, Colman.





A DAY WITH A LINEWORKER

Cooperatives' Dependable Problem Solvers

Paul Wesslund

NRECA Contributing Writer

Larry's typical day as an electric co-op lineworker actually started the night before. He was getting ready for bed when a woman reported her power was out. It was Larry's weekly overnight to be on call, so the co-op truck was already in his driveway. He drove it to the woman's house, ID'd a problem in the base of the meter, installed a temporary fix until an electrician could get out the next day and returned home two hours later. He would report for work at the co-op office by 7:30 the next morning.

"I like hunting down problems," said Larry. "I know I'm doing something the members can't do themselves. They depend on us."

Larry's like a lot of electric utility lineworkers, said Mark Patterson, director of safety and loss control for the South Dakota Rural Electric Association.

"There are more people who can't do this work than can do it," said Patterson. "It takes specific skills and intestinal fortitude. They're a 'get it done' type of personality."

Larry isn't like a lot of lineworkers, he is a lot of lineworkers. He's actually not a real person, but a combination of the real people interviewed for this story about a typical day for a lineworker.



Following procedure

Larry started his day in a room with the rest of the lineworkers, leafing through stacks of paper – checklists, maps, work orders – planning the day’s work. They compared notes, asked who was familiar with the area they were headed to and analyzed last night’s college ball game.

In addition to taking time to coordinate the plans and paperwork, these guys (there are a few women among the more than 15,000 co-op lineworkers around the country) need to keep track of a lot of equipment. Neatly organized shelves in the warehouse hold saws, drills, climbing hooks, insulated work poles, trash cans and binoculars. They need to be wearing safety gear or have it close at hand – hard hat, safety glasses, fire-retardant uniforms, steel-toed shoes, regular work gloves, hot-line safety gloves.

One more delay kept the crews from driving off to their first jobs, and it was probably the most important reason of all – the weekly safety meeting.

The co-op’s safety coordinator opened the meeting. He said that while catastrophic contact with electric current is always top concern, today’s meeting would focus on avoiding “slips, trips and falls that can cause very big issues.” A safety specialist from the state co-op association told the group that he disagreed with the common idea that a lineworker’s job is dangerous: “It’s hazardous and unforgiving, but it doesn’t have to be dangerous if you follow

the right procedures. We have the tools, the rules and the knowledge that can keep it from being dangerous.”

By mid-morning, the convoy was ready. Three lineworkers drove three trucks: a service truck, a bucket truck pulling a trailer with a large spool of wire and a digger truck with a huge auger on top and pulling a trailer carrying a backhoe. They headed across the county for the day’s job – moving a ground-mounted transformer 500 feet up a hill, closer to an underground connection to a new barn.

“It’s going to be muddy out there after the rain we’ve had,” said Larry. “When you’re working on underground connections, mud is not your friend.”

They’re a ‘get ‘er done’ type of personality.

We neared the site by late morning. To avoid interrupting the field work, the team stopped for an early lunch. Over burgers, I asked Larry about his training and his typical day.

We don’t say ‘hurry up’

“There’s nothing routine,” he said. A work plan might get changed because someone crashed their car into a utility pole. Tomorrow he would be presenting a safety demonstration to a group of elementary school students. He told about the satisfac-

tion of traveling out of state to help repair hurricane damage.

When the caravan arrived at the work site, the trucks drove up the packed, crushed-rock driveway, avoiding the soft ground on either side.

The three lineworkers gathered near the front of one of the trucks for what a lot of co-ops call a “tailgate meeting” and this co-op calls a “job briefing.” They read through forms, noting the address, cross street, job and account number. All three men signed the form.

They broke their huddle and de-energized the lines they would be working on, calling to let the office know the power had been cut. The next step was to use the backhoe to dig around the new connection pipes sticking out of the ground, making room for a ground-mounted transformer.

When the backhoe finished digging around the new transformer location, it drove down to the old transformer site. The crew unhooked the electric connections then chained the transformer to the backhoe’s loader bucket to be carried up the hill. But to keep the backhoe from getting stuck in the mud on the trip up the hill, the trucks had to be backed down the driveway to clear the way for the backhoe to drive up on firmer ground.

Two of the crew pulled new wire underground, then cut and spliced the two-inch diameter wires into the transformer box. They secured the connections before cleaning up the work site.

On the return trip, the convoy visited the truck stop to top off the gas tanks. Back at the co-op, they checked the paperwork for the next day’s jobs, then stocked the trucks with the equipment they would need for an early start.

Before we said goodbye, I asked Larry what thought of the time it took to follow all the procedures of their work day.

“We don’t think, ‘this is taking a long time,’” he said. “We just think, ‘this is how you do it. We don’t say, ‘hurry up.’ We look out for each other.”

Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

National Lineworker Appreciation Day April 9, 2018

More than 15,000 electric cooperative lineworkers serve on the front lines of our nation’s energy needs, maintaining 42 percent of electric distribution lines.

Lineworkers perform intricate work, often in dangerous conditions, to ensure we receive the safe, reliable power we depend on.





West River Electric Association board secretary Jamie Lewis shares his story.

YOUNG, PROFESSIONAL AND RURAL:

South Dakota Leaders Talk of How to Connect

Brenda Kleinjan

brenda.kleinjan@sdrea.coop

Two South Dakotans – one an electric cooperative employee and the other a co-op director – took to the national stage to discuss what it takes to attract and keep young professionals in rural America.

Courtney Deinert, communications manager at Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell, S.D., and Jamie Lewis, secretary of the board of directors at West River Electric Association in Wall, S.D., were two of four speakers on a panel entitled, “Attracting and Retaining Young Professionals to Rural America.” The panel was moderated by Adam Schwartz of the Cooperative Way and was one of the sessions held at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn., Feb. 25-28. Other panelists included a college student from Wisconsin and a Kentucky dairy farmer/lobbyist/trial lawyer.

Deinert had a unique story to tell.

As a high school senior, she received a scholarship from her local electric cooperative, Charles Mix Electric Association in Lake Andes. She used the



Jamie Lewis speaks with cooperative leaders from Wisconsin.

scholarship money to pursue an undergraduate degree in English at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion and her master's degree in adult and higher education.

"I like to think that scholarship has come full circle for my hometown co-op. I work at a neighboring co-op and I get to collaborate between my hometown co-op and my current cooperative on projects," Deinert said.

She said the investment made by her cooperative was important but the co-op's follow up left an impression.

"Just because a high school student isn't interested in becoming a lineman or an accountant doesn't mean they won't play a role in your cooperative someday," she told those gathered.

She stressed the follow up with area youth is important.

"They do want to help. They do want to be involved and they WILL come back to rural America if we help them with that follow up," she said.

In 2013, at 23 years old, Jamie Lewis was elected to the board of directors of West River Electric Association in Wall, S.D.

He is arguably one of the youngest electric cooperative directors in the nation.

"I had just come out of college and an older director approached me and said, 'I have a job for you if you're interested. Run

Just because a high school student isn't interested in becoming a lineman or an accountant doesn't mean they won't play a role in your cooperative someday.

for the West River Electric board," Lewis recounted. Lewis graduated from South Dakota State University with a degree in animal science and minors in agribusiness, ag marketing and business. He returned home to work in the family's family ranch and help with the family's insurance business.

"It was a contested election and I was lucky enough to be elected. I was then selected to be board secretary," said Lewis.

He then set his sights on running for a national cooperative board.

"I was later elected to the Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange board of directors," Lewis said. Federated is the insurer of many of America's electric cooperatives.

Lewis noted that his fellow directors are not typically in his age demographic.

"Most of them have kids or grandkids older than me," Lewis said. The age difference can be a benefit, he said. "Sometimes I look at the issues a little different from the others."

"Being part of the co-op allowed me to come back to rural America and be part of that," he said.

The panelists all agreed that being able to be connected via Internet is essential in keeping people in rural America.

"The internet for this generation is what electricity was 80 years ago," Schwartz noted during the panel.



Courtney Deinert, communications manager at Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell, S.D., spoke of getting youth involved in cooperatives.

March 22-25

Green Earth Players presents
KOLD Radio - Whitefish Bay,
Palace Theatre, Luverne, MN,
507-283-4339

April 5

McCrossan's Wildest Banquet
Auction in the Midwest
featuring A Night Out with
the PBR, 5:30 p.m., Arena,
Sioux Falls, SD, Tickets:
\$75 each, 605-339-1203,
www.mccrossan.org

April 6

SPURS Spring Dance, Dakota
Events Center, Aberdeen, SD,
Tickets available at the Hitch
'N Post or by calling
605-226-1099

April 6-8

Professional Bull Riders Built
Ford Tough Series, Sioux Falls,
SD, 605-367-7288

April 7-8

Spring Zonta Vendor and
Craft Show, Northridge Plaza,
Pierre, SD, 605-222-1403,
bkstand@pie.midco.net

April 25-29

Black Hills Film Festival, Hill
City, SD, 605-574-9454

April 28-29

Bike Show, Ramkota
Convention Center,
Aberdeen, SD, 605-290-0908

May 5

Consignment Auction,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

May 6

Opening Day, Prairie Village,
Madison, SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org



May 13

1880 Train Mother's Day
Express, Hill City, SD,
605-574-2222

May 18-19

Sioux Empire Film Festival,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

May 18-20

State Parks Open House and
Free Fishing Weekend, Pierre,
SD, 605-773-3391

May 18-20

Tesla Road Trip Rally, Custer,
SD, 605-673-2244

May 28

Season Opening and 50th
Anniversary of Brookings
County Museum, Noon to
5 p.m., City Park, In concert
with that, there will be a
grand opening of the Trygve
A. Trooien Horse-Drawn
Museum that is now a part
of the six-building county
museum complex, prizes,
drawings, tours,
refreshments, Volga, SD,
Contact Chuck Cecil at
cfcecil@swiftel.net

June 3

Prairie Village Pageant,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

June 7-9

Senior Games, Sioux Falls, SD,
Contact Nicole Tietgen at
605-665-8222

June 8

Northern Bull Riding Tour,
Prairie Village, Madison, SD,
800-693-3644,

June 15-16

Czech Days, Tabor, SD,
www.taborczechdays.com,
taborczechdays@yahoo.com

June 16

Holy Rocka Rollaz concert,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

June 24

Variety Show, Prairie Village,
Madison, SD, 800-693-3644,

July 10-15

4th Annual 3 Wheeler Rally,
Deadwood, SD, 605-717-7174,
www.d3wr.com

August 11

Ninth Annual Camaro Fun
Days, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.,
Parade Line-up at 9 a.m.,
Cruise at 3 p.m., Pioneer
Park, Brookings, SD, Contact
Terry 605-695-1560 or Calvin
605-690-1057

August 18

Outside Christian Concert
featuring Turkey Creek Revival
Band, Faith Lutheran Church,
511 S Main St., Humboldt, SD,
605-363-3700

**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.**