

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Keeping the Lights On

**One Lineman's
Community Outreach**
Pages 8-9

**Commercial
Motor Vehicles and
Public Safety**
Pages 12-13



A Year in Review



Dick Johnson
General Manager

What a year 2023 we had! I enjoy doing this annual column as I peak into the mirror on our 2023 operations. The good, the bad, and the ugly. Most of it is good news but there may be a few nuggets of unwelcome news depending on your perception.

My first piece of good news is that our employees worked their tails off this year. It was extremely busy, but they worked so hard, and safely I might add, to get everything completed. Even though we needed to add employees to keep up, we did not do it, and they all put extra effort into each day to get the tasks accomplished in a timely manner. We are truly blessed.

Here are a few highlights:

- Seventh year with no rate increase
- Total margins were \$5.7 million compared to \$3.6 million in 2022.
 - Operating margins were \$3.2 million.
 - Basin bill credit from 2022 received in 2023 was \$1.1 million of the margins.
 - Rushmore and Basin capital credit allocations, which are “non-operating” revenues, were \$1.8 million. 11849400
- Added a new record of 903 new billed services.
- We constructed 958 new services.
 - Several large apartment complexes came on service in 2023.
- Total equity increased from 31.8% to 32.4%
- Kilowatt hour sales were about even from last year with revenues up 1.1%.
 - kWh sales in 2022 were 7% over the previous year so this averages at 3.5% over 2 years.
 - The increase in revenue and kwh was due to several commercial accounts coming on service.
 - Average usage for our rural members was 1,319 kWh which was down 4% from 2022. This lowered your average bill as well.

- Average usage for our town members was 958 kWh which was down 5.5%
- Over the last 5 years we have grown 13.2% in new services, yet our revenue has grown 10.4%
- New utility plant grew \$16 million or about 9.5% in 2023.
 - Last year was \$14.2 million at 9.3%
- Our total debt service, the principal and interest we pay to our lenders, totaled \$6.9 million.
- Worked 130,920 hours with payroll of over \$6.0 million.
- Retired \$1.2 million in capital credits.
 - 2022 was \$2.1 million retired.
 - Retired less trying to keep equity above target of 30%

The growth helps spread our fixed costs over more accounts, which helps all members. However, the cost pressures for material, supplies, transportation, and labor have pushed us to make a rate adjustment effective April 1st. Your April bill will reflect an average of about 6% increase on your bill. **To see how your bill could be affected, check out our Cost Comparison Calculator on our website.**

You can find more information about the rate adjustment in last month's Cooperative Connections and on our website. We are estimating that this adjustment will be good through all of 2025. However, cost pressures with our power suppliers may force us to look closely at our rates again next year.

I hope you all have a great spring. Please stay safe as your outside activities ramp up.



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 675-840)

Our Mission:

To serve our members' best interest.

Our Vision:

We will be a high performing co-op.

Our Values:

- 1. Safety
- 2. Accountability
- 3. Integrity
- 4. Innovation
- 5. Commitment to Community

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Board President: Andy Moon

Board of Directors

- Stan Anders – Vice President
- Jamie Lewis – Secretary
- Chuck Sloan – Treasurer
- Larry Eisenbraun
- Peter Blake
- Marcia Arneson
- Howard Knuppe
- Sue Peters

CEO and General Manager:

Dick Johnson –
dick.johnson@westriver.coop


Editor

Amanda Haugen –
amanda.haugen@westriver.coop

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of West River Electric Association. Members subscribe to *Cooperative Connections* as part of their electric cooperative membership for \$6 a year. West River Electric Cooperative Connections purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better living. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 per year. Periodicals Postage paid at Wall, S.D., and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to West River Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 412, Wall, SD 57790-0412.

Other correspondence to: West River Electric Cooperative Connections, 3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD 57703; telephone (605)393-1500, Exts. 6519, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393-0275; e-mail robert.raker@westriver.coop.

2023
Year in Review



West River Electric Association, Inc.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"
this institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer

\$1.2M
in CAPITAL CREDITS returned back to the WREA membership

\$8k
in SCHOLARSHIP funds awarded to 15 WREA member students

5.5%
decrease in members average kWh usage, which LOWERED your electric bill overall

958
NEWLY Constructed services

130,920
HOURS WORKED by our great group of 59 employees

\$13k
in OPERATION ROUNDUP funds given to 5 local non-profits

2016
is how long it has been since our LAST RATE ADJUSTMENT

Break Dirt Without Breaking the Law

As the warmer spring temperatures cause the ground to thaw, contractors and homeowners alike are likely to begin on projects that require some sort of digging.

By law, anyone who is digging in South Dakota needs to call 811 and have a locate ticket in their hand before moving any ground. If you're not the one that's digging and you've hired a landscaper to do the work instead, that landscaper should have a ticket in their name.

When someone calls 811, the call goes through a center in Dallas, Texas. That call center then notifies utilities in the area, according to South Dakota 811 Executive Director Codi Gregg.

An excavator or digger has to allow 48 hours for the utilities in the area they plan to dig into to come on site and mark the location of those underground utilities. On average, there are five to eight utilities notified per call.

If there's a potential loss of life or property, the allowed response time is shortened to a maximum of two hours during normal business hours.

"When the ticket goes in, the excavator is given a list of the utilities that are involved or are working or that are in that area where they're working," Gregg explained.

Those companies that own the utilities will make marks that identify the location. Those flags are also color coded according to the type of utility. As more and more overhead electrical lines are converted to underground lines, it's imperative that anyone who plans on doing a project that requires digging call 8-1-1 to avoid a dangerous and deadly situation.

"It's a free phone call for the excavator to make. There's no real reason for them not to make the phone call other than not being aware of it," Gregg said.

Kristie Fiegen, South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairwoman, echoed Gregg's comments, stating that making the call to 811 is the "most important and easiest call anyone can make before starting a digging project."

"This simple and imperative effort will help to prevent damages to vital underground utilities and safeguard critical services that our residents and economy depend on," Fiegen said. "During the 2024 construction season, I urge everyone to call 811 before you dig and protect all South Dakotans by abiding by our state laws and making safety our highest priority."

- Last year, there were 176,984 notices to the 811 Center of work occurring.
- South Dakota's 811 laws were established in 1993.
- In 2017, South Dakota 811 added damage reporting to our laws, stating if there was a damage, disturbance, or a dislocation of a utility – 811 was to be contacted to report the damage. It was also added that 911 was to be contacted first if there was a leak.
- Free accounts are offered upon request, allowing account holders to enter locate tickets themselves without calling an agent.
- A total of 1,944 utilities were reportedly damaged in 2023. Of that total, 375 excavators did not have a previous ticket.
- According to Common Ground Alliance's Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report, the annual rate of damages to buried infrastructure costs the U.S. a staggering \$30 billion every year and 60% of nationwide damages to underground utilities are caused specifically by professional contractors not contacting 811 prior to digging.



Don't Fly Drones Near Power Lines

Lyndon Kaski, Age 8

Lyndon Kaski warns readers to stay away from power lines when flying drones. Great advice! Lyndon's parents are Jonathan and Amanda Kaski, members of Kingsbury Electric Cooperative.

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.

SALSA SAVORY

FRESH SALSA

Ingredients:

4-6 med. to large tomatoes, seeded and chopped
 1 med. onion, chopped
 4 fresh jalapenos, seeded and finely chopped*
 1 clove garlic, crushed
 1 tbsp. dried parsley or fresh cilantro to taste
 1 tsp. salt

Method

*To prevent jalapenos from burning your fingers, lightly rub fingers with shortening, especially around fingernails.
 Serve with tortilla chips.

Linda Hubbard
 Rapid City, S.D.

LUANN'S FRESH SALSA

Ingredients:

4 med. tomatoes, peeled and chopped
 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
 1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper
 1-2 tbsps. jalapeno or other hot pepper, seeded and finely chopped
 1 tsp. salt
 pepper to taste
 1 tbsp. lime juice or red wine vinegar
 1-2 tps. catsup
 dash garlic powder
 dash cayenne pepper
 1-2 tps. sugar
 cilantro (optional)

Method

Mix all ingredients. Serve with any tortilla or corn chips for dipping. Will keep approximately 1 week in the refrigerator.

Nancy Stenson
 Fort Pierre, S.D.

TAMARIND PASILLA MANGO PINEAPPLE SALSA

Ingredients:

1 1/4 cups diced fresh pineapple
 1 large mango, pitted and diced (about 1 1/4 cup)
 1 small red onion, diced
 1 small red bell pepper, diced
 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro
 1 med. jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
 3 tbsps. fresh lime juice
 1 tbsp. honey
 4 1/2 teaspoons Tamarind Naturally Flavored & Pasilla Chile Seasoning

Method

Mix all ingredients in medium bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving. Stir before serving. Serve with tortilla chips or use to top tacos or nachos.

McCormick

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



How to Choose the Right Lightbulbs for your Home



Adam Daigle
Energy Services
Advisor

LED bulbs come in various wattages, providing homeowners with the flexibility in choosing the right brightness for different areas of their homes. The wattage of an LED bulb is a measure of its power consumption, and it correlates with the brightness of the light emitted.

Lower wattage bulbs, such as 4-6 watts, are suitable for areas where softer, ambient lighting is desired, such as bedrooms and living rooms. 11830700

Medium-wattage LEDs, ranging from 8-12 watts, work well for high traffic areas in your homes, like kitchens and hallways.

Higher wattages, such as 15 watts and above, are ideal for task-oriented areas where bright, focused lighting is crucial, such as reading nooks or workspaces.

In addition to wattage, the Kelvin (K) rating of an LED bulb indicates its color temperature. Warmer tones with lower Kelvin ratings, around 2700K-3000K, create a cozy and inviting atmosphere. These bulbs

work great in living rooms and bedrooms. For areas that require a more neutral or daylight-like light, bulbs with Kelvin ratings between 4000K-5000K, are preferable. Kitchens, bathrooms, and workspaces often benefit from the brighter and cooler light provided by these bulbs. The choice of LED wattage and Kelvin rating should align with the specific lighting needs desired in each room.

When considering the wattages and Kelvin ratings for LED bulbs throughout the house, it's essential to keep in mind the balance between functionality and atmosphere. A mix of lower, medium, and higher wattages, combined with appropriate Kelvin ratings, allows homeowners to create a well-lit and inviting environment.



When Your Power Goes Out, So Do We



Amanda Haugen
Communications
Specialist

When you think of first responders, what comes to mind first? Maybe it's Law Enforcement and EMT's? Or for some it may be firefighters or nurses? But what about the first responders who restore your power during a winter blizzard or that scorching 105-degree day in the summer? The first responders who step into the front line as your homes sit in darkness and silence. They're linemen.

Each year, on the second Monday in April, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) recognizes the dedication, bravery, and hard work these individuals do to keep our communities powered and connected. 11781200

Linemen are the backbone to keeping an essential part of our lives in working condition. Think about it for a moment. How often do you flip your light switch on and expect the lights to light up the room, or power

the TV or heat your curling iron? The immense value that electricity has on modern society is huge. It powers our homes, keeps businesses up and running, enables healthcare facilities to function, kids to learn in schools, and the linemen are the guardians of this essential resource. **I often think we forget just how valuable electricity is in our everyday lives.**

Linemen Appreciation Day serves as a reminder of the sacrifices and challenges linemen face daily. The countless hours of training, routine safety protocols, sleepless nights and working in adverse weather conditions to bring life back to normalcy when disaster strikes. They are the experts in their field, troubleshooting complex systems and implementing innovative solutions to enhance reliability and efficiency.

Moreover, the day offers an opportunity for communities to acknowledge the personal sacrifices made by linemen. They often spend extended periods away from their families, leaving holiday gatherings and shortening their weekends to ensure uninterrupted service for others. Their dedication to serve the member at the end of the line exemplifies their selflessness and doing what's in the best interest of the members.

In celebrating Lineman Appreciation Day, let us not only recognize the linemen but also their families; wives, kids, parents, grandparents, you name it, who stand by them through long hours and challenging circumstances supporting their profession. 11794000

The next time you flip the switch and power your day, take a moment to remember the linemen who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make it all possible. Their dedication and bravery powers our communities, reminding us that when your power goes out, so do we.





KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON

Elliot and Janaye Rayman at their second annual Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser.

One Lineman's After-hours Outreach

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Across the state, linemen are charged with keeping South Dakota's power going. It's a big responsibility: troubleshooting electrical systems, operating heavy equipment, and maintaining power lines. These workers are frequently asked to navigate high voltage and confront dangerous challenges in all kinds of extreme weather. In the face of these challenges, it takes a truly community-minded individual to ensure the community's lights stay on. Many of these crucial workers demonstrate their commitment to their community daily, both during and outside of work hours.

Butte Electric Journeyman Lineman Elliot Rayman, who has been with the cooperative for seven years, serves as just one example of an electric cooperative employee who has pulled extra hours for his local community of Spearfish, S.D. In addition to his role as a lineman, Elliot wears many hats in his community beyond just the hard hat of a co-op employee. He is a veteran of the National Guard, having served a deployment overseas. Elliot and his wife, Janaye, are also deeply involved in their community as the owners of Barefoot Fitness, a gym in the Spearfish community. Janaye, a cancer survivor, operates the gym and is an integral part of their community efforts.

Janaye and Elliot purchased Barefoot Fitness in 2018, fulfilling Janaye's long-standing dream of owning a gym. Shortly after their purchase, the couple learned that Janaye's cancer, previously in remission, had metastasized into Stage 4 breast cancer.

"In 2020, I had reoccurrence everywhere – brain, lungs, liver, bones," said Janaye. "Since then, I have been on a mission every day to heal and recover. It's also been my goal to help others every single day, day in and day out, and that's

what keeps me going. That's my job and it's what I love to do, so I'm not stopping."

"My wife is an inspiration to many people," added Elliot. "She is the strongest person I know."

Undeterred, Elliot and Janaye decided to press on and use their gym as a platform to engage with their local community. Despite Janaye's ongoing battle with breast cancer, the two started a new Barefoot Fitness tradition – an annual Memorial Day fundraiser to benefit South Dakota's gold star families, the families of fallen soldiers.

"After a few years of owning the gym, we decided we needed to give back to the community, because the community had really been there for us through everything," said Elliot. "We knew we had the ability and the platform to give back to the community through Barefoot Fitness, so we settled on a Memorial Day fundraiser that would benefit gold star families in our state."

This May, Elliot and Janaye will host their fourth Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser. Like previous years, the event will feature local catering from Spearfish businesses, such as Spearfish Brewing Company and Timmons Market. The event will also include an optional community workout for all ages.

"We kick off our day with the National Guard leading the pledge of allegiance and national anthem," said Janaye. "We do a prayer, and then we do our Memorial Day workout. It's a team workout that people are encouraged to complete with their family or friends."

According to Janaye and Elliot, the team workout is about more than just breaking a sweat. Instead, it's about remembering those who gave their lives for this country.

"You always hear about people doing things for veterans, but you never hear about the story on the other side of

that – the families," Janaye said. "A lot of times the family is forgotten so we really want to honor the families that also made a sacrifice."

At the end of the day, Elliot and Janaye said none of their efforts would be possible without the support they have received from the Spearfish community, the veteran community,

and the electric cooperative community.

"Butte Electric and the co-op world have helped us out so much," said Elliot. "The culture of the co-op community is huge: there is brotherhood – it's the way people help each other out. You just can't ask for a better group of people, and that's the same way with the veteran world."



Janaye and Elliot lead a community workout session, challenging participants to complete 300 weighted ball throws.

NNNN



West River Electric Association, Inc.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
PO Box 412
Wall, SD 57790-0412



Visit us at:
www.westriver.coop

Wall Office
1200 W 4th Ave
PO Box 412
Wall, SD 57790-0412
(605) 279-2135

Rapid City Office
3250 E Hwy 44
Rapid City, SD 57703-4726
(605) 393-1500

24-Hour Automated Attendant: (605) 791-6555

Jane Doe
123 Example St.
Rapid City, SD 57703

4 1826



Account Number 1234567890 Page 1 of 2

Statement Date 02/08/2024 Due Date 02/29/2024

BILLING SUMMARY		Cycle # 1
Previous Balance	\$	54.46
Payment 01/29/24	\$	54.46CR
Balance Forward	\$	0.00
Current Charges	\$	62.79
Amount Due	\$	62.79

DO NOT PAY – This will be paid through Auto Pay on 02/29/2024.

Balance forward amounts listed above in the "Billing Summary" may be subject to immediate disconnect.

A 1.50% finance charge may be added to all unpaid balances.

Messages

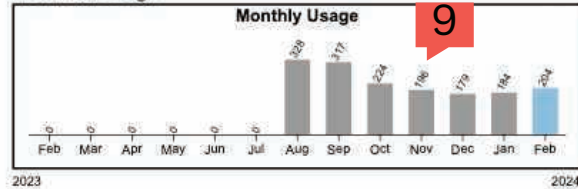
Why don't scientists trust atoms? Because they make up everything! To preview your upcoming bill changes, try our website's Rate Comparison Calculator. Statement details can be found on the back side of this statement.

Account 1234567890

Page 2 of 2

LOCATION: 12345 SERVICE DESCRIPTION: 123 Example St. RATE: 020-Urban Residential

Meter Reading Details	Meter 12345678	
Current Reading	02/04/2024	8,395
Previous Reading	01/04/2024	8,008
Master Meter Usage		387
Less Heat Meter Usage		183
Total Billed Usage		204
KW Demand Reading	02/04/2024	10.382
Total KW Usage		3.490

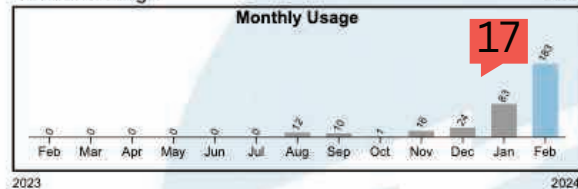


Detail Of Charges				
Base Charge				\$25.25
KWH Revenue	204 KWH	x 0.1167		\$23.81
Power Cost Adjustment	0	x \$0.00000		\$0.00
SD State Tax 4.2%				\$2.48
Box Elder 2%				\$1.18
Total This Meter				\$52.72

	Days Srvd	KWH/Day	Cost/Day	Avg High	Avg Low
This Month	31	7	\$1.58	34	13
Last Month	31	6	\$1.51	45	24
Last Year	0	0	\$0.00	38	17

LOCATION: 12345 SERVICE DESCRIPTION: 123 Example St. RATE: 008-Urban Resident Sub Heat M

Meter Reading Details	Meter 1234567 Heat	
Current Reading	02/04/2024	2,415
Previous Reading	01/04/2024	2,232
Total Usage		183
Total Usage		183
KW Demand Reading	02/04/2024	6.892
Total KW Usage		6.892



Detail Of Charges				
KWH Revenue	183 KWH	x 0.055		\$10.07
Total This Meter				\$10.07

	Days Srvd	KWH/Day	Cost/Day	Avg High	Avg Low
This Month	31	6	\$3.2	34	13
Last Month	31	3	\$1.5	45	24
Last Year	0	0	\$0.00	38	17

Understanding Your West River Electric Energy Bill

Use this guide to better understand the information on your monthly electric bill. Please contact our office if you have any questions regarding your billing statement. Our normal business hours are Monday-Friday, 7am-5pm. 11789800

1. Your account number
2. Statement date is when your bill comes out; due date is when your bill is due. You can make a payment anytime between those two dates.
3. Your billing Cycle. We have 5 different billing cycles.
4. Previous Balance is last month's bill amount.
 - a. Payment is when you paid last month's bill amount
 - b. Balance forward is if you didn't pay last month's bill fully and the remaining balance carried over into this month's amount.
 - c. Current charge is this month's bill amount.
 - d. Other charges and credits: if you are signed up for operation roundup or if you receive a bill credit. (additional line item that not everyone has on their bill)
5. Total amount due. Includes any balance forward and current charges.
6. Main Meter number.
7. Previous Reading is last month's usage. Current Reading is this month's usage.
8. Current month's usage subtracted from previous month's usage to get current billed kWh's.
9. Monthly usage throughout the year.
10. Total kWh's used x charge/kWh
11. Base charge.
12. Total base charge, kWh's, taxes.

13. How many days you were billed last month and current month. The average kWh used per day, average cost per day, high and low temps. For the month.
14. Sub Heat Meter (not everyone has a heat meter.)
15. Heat meter usage. Any usage on this meter from October-April gets subtracted from your main meter kWh's in #8 above.
16. Total heat meter kWh's x charge/kWh (heat rate is discounted)

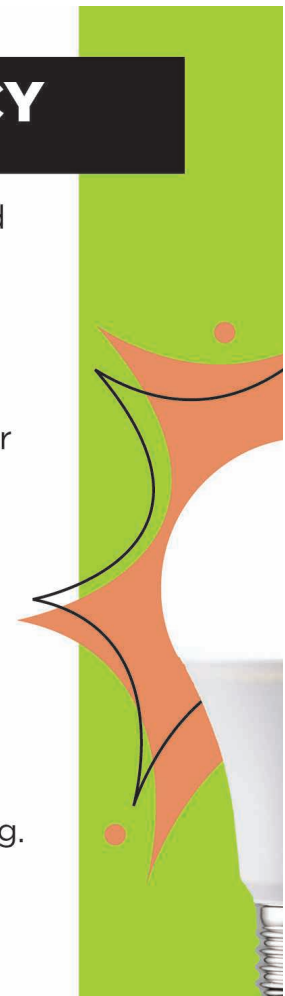
17. Monthly heat usage throughout heat time frame.
18. How many days you were billed last month and current month for heat usage. The average kWh used per day, average cost per day, high and low temps. For the month.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

Source: energy.gov





SDHP Trooper Megan Koch stands by her patrol vehicle. Koch works within the state's Motor Carrier Division. *Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel*

COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

When commercial motor vehicles come into the state of South Dakota, it's the job of the South Dakota Highway Patrol's Motor Carrier Division to ensure the drivers of those vehicles have the necessary paperwork, permits and documents.

The task is one of public safety.

Making sure the carriers are adhering to safe driving practices is just another way to ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be while driving on the state's roadways.

South Dakota Highway Patrol

Trooper Megan Koch is one of the officers who works within the motor carrier division.

"Our main focus is making sure the motor carriers or trucks are safe on the roadways and keeping everybody else safe. It helps them perform their job of carrying their property or passengers across the state lines and within the state. We help make sure that they can do that job," Koch explained.

Mainly, Koch works specifically with commercial motor vehicles that carry over a certain weight or property of monetary value within the state or interstate.

"When we do an inspection on a driver, we're checking a bunch of different things. Weight sometimes is one of them, but not always. It just depends on the situation," Koch said.

"They have to have certain paperwork with them and they are required to follow certain rules. It depends on what they're doing."

The dependent variables include whether a carrier is traveling with goods within the state or going out of the state and how far away they are from the hub, or where they leave every day or go home to every day.

Koch also checks their paperwork to ensure the drivers are within compliance of state law.

"They have to follow certain hours that they can work so that they don't get tired while driving. It's a big thing that we follow for safety," Koch said.

"We also check things like

equipment violations, headlights, taillights, tires, you know, stuff that makes them safe on the roadway and keeps them safe. We'll also check for things such as bad driving behavior, if they're not staying within their own lane, using blinkers, not properly stopping at stop sign – stuff like that. So, if we see something like that, we can initiate an inspection."

Koch, a Plankinton native whose father was a truck driver, said the division is typically checking brake lines and lights.

In South Dakota, there are four main ports of entry. The ports are located along Interstate 29 in Jefferson and Sisseton, and along Interstate 90 in Sioux Falls and Tilford.

Each carrier is issued a "safety score," which is assessed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

"That's based on whether or not they have the proper paperwork, if they're driving within their hours, if they have the proper equipment and whether or not they've received any driving or alcohol violations," Koch said.

If a driver has a high enough safety score, they aren't required by law to stop at a port for inspection.

Overall, it all comes down to keeping the roadways safe for everyone, regardless of what type of vehicle they are driving.

"These rules and laws are in place for a reason. They have to be extra alert and awake while they're driving and that all of their equipment works properly. If you're driving a very heavy, large vehicle, you need excellent brakes. You have to be able to stop in time. That is the main reason we're checking all these things. It helps everybody on the road."

The division also works

with rural electric cooperatives when oversized loads travel along the state's highway system, according to Lieutenant Austin Schmitz, District Four Assistant Commander with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Sometimes oversized loads require that overhead power lines be moved out of the way to let the carrier pass through.

"As a district we do work with a lot of the cooperatives such as East River Electric. We all get together when planning for oversized loads coming through our area," Schmitz said.

"They usually run the route first and let us know what lines they need to move."

That was the case when a massive generator was moved across the state. The generator was so heavy and huge that the truck carrying it could only travel 30 miles per hour. That truck was also equipped with over a hundred tires, Schmitz said.

"That generator came through Watertown a couple of years ago and we've got some more coming in two or

three years," Schmitz said, referring to the multi-million pound machines.

"The planning for those started last year. That equipment will be coming in through the Great Lakes on a ship. They'll pick them up there and then they'll move through our state then Wyoming, Montana, however they can go," Schmitz said.

The truck carrying the heavy equipment is too big to go across most bridges and overpasses, so finding a route that allows the machinery to snake across the country is tricky.

While moving huge pieces of machinery can be one of the more interesting parts of the job, it's the flexibility of the job that Koch enjoys most.

"I get to pick and choose where I want to go for the day. I get to do something a little bit different every day. Because, I mean, nothing is ever the same," Koch said.

"It's kind of nice to be able to do that and make the day what you want of it."



A SDHP officer has the latest technology at his or her fingertips to ensure trucks on South Dakota roads are operating safely. Photo Credit: South Dakota Highway Patrol

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

SHINING THE LIGHT ON WEST RIVER ELECTRICS DEDICATED EMPLOYEES



TREVOR SCHRYVERS
OPERATIONS
TECHNICIAN

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

I have been with WREA for 3 years.

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

I do anything from easement engineering, trench inspections, line inspections with a drone, and much more.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

The people I work with.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SINCE STARTING WORK AT WEST

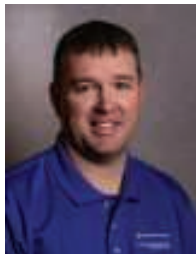
RIVER ELECTRIC? There's too many that come to mind but getting hired on always a great one.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WEST RIVER ELECTRIC IN THREE WORDS?

Engaging, supporting, welcoming.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GET UP AND GO TO WORK EVERY DAY?

Knowing I have a coop family who cares about me and a job to provide for my immediate family.



LANCE STEIGER
STAKING FOREMAN

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

I started as summer help in May of 2006 and was hired full time in October of 2006 as an apprentice lineman. In August of 2015 I moved into the staking department as a staking Technician and in April of 2022 I moved into the Staking Foreman position. So in total, 18 years.

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

Most of what I do is talk to members about their electric needs and figure out a way to get them power. I also help plan work projects trying to keep our system up to date for future projects or reliability for the members.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

I like working with the members to produce a plan that would best fit them and West River Electric.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SINCE STARTING WORK AT WEST RIVER

ELECTRIC? I don't think I would call it a good time but my biggest memory would be storm Atlas and the damage this did to our system and the community as a whole. It's nice when you get to turn members power back on when you know that is a highlight of their day during a difficult time. Also the amount of people that came together from multiple states to help restore power.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WEST RIVER ELECTRIC IN THREE WORDS?

Family and member driven

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GET UP AND GO TO WORK EVERY DAY?

"Family" without my immediate family and the coop family that has done so much for us makes you keep doing what you're doing, and strive to get better at work and at home.



West River Electric Association, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

“Powering You For A Brighter Future”



Try our cost comparison tool at www.westriver.coop

STAY INFORMED AND EMPOWERED ON YOUR COOP'S RATE ADJUSTMENT

Our Mission is to serve our members' best interest.

LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER

If you locate your account number anywhere in this issue of West River Electric's *Cooperative Connections*, you will be a winner. There will be five account numbers placed randomly throughout the publication. If you spot your account number and notify our office before the 10th of the next month, you will receive a \$10 credit on your next bill.

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC OFFICE HOURS

RAPID CITY OFFICE

3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD
Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
605-393-1500

WALL OFFICE

1200 W 4th Ave, Wall, SD
Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
605-279-2135

A night depository is available at both offices for your convenience.

SERVICE AND BILLING QUESTIONS?

Contact 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 during office hours. E-mail us at info@westriver.coop for questions on your account.

OUTAGE OR EMERGENCY?

Contact 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 in the event of an outage or other emergency. Our calls are answered 24/7.



APRIL 5-7, 2024
PBR: Unleash the Beast
Denny Sanford
PREMIER Center
Sioux Falls, 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.

MARCH 30
BHEC Community Easter Egg Hunt
 10 a.m.
 Hermosa Baseball Fields
 Hermosa, SD

MARCH 31
Easter Sunday Sunrise Celebration
 7 a.m.
 Mount Rushmore National Monument
 Keystone, SD

APRIL 2
Clay-Union Electric Ribbon Cutting & Open House
 3 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
 31321 SD Hwy. 19
 Vermillion, SD

APRIL 5
A Night at the Races fundraiser for Safe Place of Eastern SD
 6:30 p.m.
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 5-7
71st Annual Hayes Play: Under a Cowboy Moon
 7 p.m.
 Hayes Community Hall
 Hayes, SD

APRIL 12-14
The Farmer's Daughter 19th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 13
Front Porch 605 Shop Hop
 9 a.m.
 Groton, SD

APRIL 14
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 20
Healthy Kids Day
 10 a.m.
 Liberty Center YMCA
 Box Elder, SD

APRIL 20
Groton Firemen's Spring Social
 7 p.m.
 Groton Fire Station
 Groton, SD

APRIL 21
Fiddle & Popular Song
 2 p.m.
 Gayville Hall
 Gayville, SD

APRIL 26
Mitchell Technical College Alumni Cornhole Tournament
 6:30 p.m.
 World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 27
66th Annual Lions Pancake Jamboree
 7 a.m.
 Masonic Hall
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 27
Spaghetti Feed & Silent Auction for Black Hills Raptor Center
 4:30 p.m.
 Canyon Lake United Methodist Church
 Rapid City, SD

MAY 5
Opening Day
 Historic Prairie Village
 Madison, SD

MAY 11
Opening Day
 1880 Train
 Hill City, SD

MAY 18
Booth Day
 10 a.m.
 D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery
 Spearfish, SD

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