

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Hurricane Aid

**Linemen Help
Restore Power After
Hurricane Helene**
Pages 8-9

First Responders
Pages 12-13

An Attitude of Gratitude



Dick Johnson
CEO/GM

As I was pondering my November Thanksgiving column, I tried to find the right quote. I saw one that caught my eye: “Always Have an Attitude of Gratitude.” How true that is; we have become so polarized with politics and so many other issues and “noise” around us, that I feel we have lost our focus on how lucky we all are to live in this country. We need to have a positive attitude and be kind to everyone around us.

“Always Have an Attitude of Gratitude”

We are seeing so many challenges in our industry right now. We have large electricity users like data centers knocking on our doors wanting substantial amounts of electricity. We have a push from our regulators to install more intermittent resources like wind and solar and taking away our dependable always-available electricity sources. Builders and homeowners are installing rooftop solar at a rapid pace in our area. This makes it difficult to have rates that are fair to all members, whether they have solar or not. My attitude could surely shift from looking at the “glass half full to the glass being half empty.” However, these struggles for everyone have given me even more reason to be grateful for what I have and the people around me. We have smart colleagues in our cooperative family that will continue to work hard to do what is right for the member at the end of the line, not an investor somewhere other than locally. 376400

“Always Have an Attitude of Gratitude”

I am grateful for our employee group. They worked safely another year with no major accidents. They have worked hard to adopt a strong culture of safety to make sure everyone gets home safely each day. They have worked as hard as I have ever seen with all the growth we have experienced. This growth has presented challenges with getting everything completed timely for our members, getting material timely, and getting things in the office completed and billed. They have a definite attitude of gratitude towards our members, and I have a profound appreciation for them.

“Always Have an Attitude of Gratitude”

It is easy to have an attitude of gratitude for

our cooperative way of business. We are a member owned, not for profit cooperative. We showed two examples of the power of cooperative membership when we retired over \$1 million in capital credits to our members, not investors. The second example is we elected a new member-owner to represent you at the table from District 1 to replace the retiring director. Yes, we are grateful.

“Always Have an Attitude of Gratitude”

How can we not help have an attitude of gratitude with the growth we are experiencing? The growth presents many challenges, but we need to be grateful because many cooperatives are stagnant or seeing decreased sales. This growth allows us to spread more of the fixed costs of our business to more members of our cooperative. This growth allows us to keep our rates steady in the future.

“Always Have an Attitude of Gratitude”

Helping to keep my attitude positive is to work with a Board that is second to none. During these stressful times of growth and the lack of adequate generation, they have allowed us flexibility to make decisions to keep the coop moving forward seamlessly.

“Always Have an Attitude of Gratitude”

How can I not have an attitude of gratitude with my support team of my wife, two daughters and son-in-law? They continue to provide the strength to get up each day with a positive attitude of gratitude and work hard with the employee team to provide world class service our members expect. I do not know what I would have done in my cooperative career without them.

“Always Have an Attitude of Gratitude”

In closing, my Thanksgiving wish is that you spend each day with an attitude of gratitude towards your family, co-workers, and people around you with whom you interact with every day. Take the time to say thank you and be kind. We never know what others are going through. One of my favorite sayings is “not every day is good, but there is good in every day.” My hope is you find that “good in every day.”

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family. Please stay safe!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dick".

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
- Steven Edoff
- Sue Peters

CEO and General Manager:

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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. 6564, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393-0275; e-mail amanda.haugen@westriver.coop.



Item #264

2011 Ram 3500 Dually | 6.7Cummins | 129,514mi

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____



Item #290

2015 Chevy 3500 Dually | 6.6Duramax | 140,923mi

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____



Item #1

2016 18' Titan Tilt Trailer | 14' tilt | 4' stationary

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____



Item #2

Brand FX fiberglass utility box off 2011 Ram 3500 dually

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____



Bid: \$ _____

Equipment & Vehicles Up for Bid

West River Electric has the above items for sale by sealed bid. Bids will be accepted until 5 p.m., Thursday, December 12, 2024. Sealed bids can be sent to and WREA Office. All items are sold "as is" and WREA reserves the right to reject any and all bids. Bids will be opened at the December 16, 2024, board meeting.

The following vehicles/equipment can be seen at our Rapid City office at 3250 E. Hwy 44. Please ask for Mo or Mike. If you would like to submit an online bid, you may also do so via our website, www.westriver.coop, under the "Your Coop" tab.

ENJOY A SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON

From late November to mid-January, when families gather, parties are scheduled and travel spikes, safety should be top of mind. Following is tried-and-true advice to ensure your family remains safe and injury-free throughout the season.

Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared

If you're traveling this year, be sure your vehicle is in good running condition, get plenty of rest and be prepared for any emergency. Traveling by car during the holidays has the highest fatality rate of any major form of transportation based on fatalities per passenger mile. Hundreds of people die every year in crashes on New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, according to Injury Facts. Alcohol impairment is involved in about a third of these fatalities.

Stay safe on the roads over the holidays – and every day:

- Prepare your car for winter and keep an emergency kit with you.
- Get a good night's sleep before departing and avoid drowsy driving.
- Leave early, planning ahead for heavy traffic.
- Make sure every person in the vehicle is properly buckled up no matter how long or short the distance traveled.
- Put that cell phone away; many distractions occur while driving, but cell phones are the main culprit.
- Practice defensive driving.
- Designate a sober driver to ensure guests make it home safely after a holiday party; alcohol or over-the-counter, prescription and illegal drugs can cause impairment.

Decorate Safely

Decorating is one of the best ways to get in a holiday mood, but emergency departments see thousands of injuries involving holiday decorating every season.

When decorating follow these tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Keep potentially poisonous plants – mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis – away from children.
- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled “fire resistant.”
- If using a live tree, cut off about two inches of the trunk to

expose fresh wood for better water absorption, remember to water it, and remove it from your home when it is dry.

- Place your tree at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources, making certain not to block doorways.
- Avoid placing breakable ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower tree branches where small children can reach them.
- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors, and choose the right ladder for the task when hanging lights.
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections.
- Follow the package directions on the number of light sets that can be plugged into one socket.
- Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights, and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow.
- Turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house.

Source: National Safety Council



**“Don’t Spill Water on Electronics...
It Could Start a FIRE!”**

Bethany Langworthy, Age 9

Bethany Langworthy warns readers to be careful with water around electronics. Thank you for your picture, Bethany! Bethany's parents are Kristina and Edward Langworthy, members of West River Electric.

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

Family FAVORITES

CREAM CHEESE AND CUCUMBER SPREAD DIP

Ingredients:

1 large cucumber, grated
1 tsp. onion, grated
8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
3/4-1 cup mayonnaise
Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Grate cucumber and onion on several thicknesses of paper towels, squeeze out all the water. Place in a bowl. Blend other ingredients, adding enough mayonnaise to make it a spreading consistency. Serve with crackers or chips.

Mary Ann Klarenbeek
Harrisburg, S.D.

GRANDMA GRACE'S FROZEN FRUIT SALAD

Ingredients:

8 oz. Cool Whip
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1 cup sour cream
3/4 cup sugar
Dash of salt

*Mix all thoroughly until
sugar is dissolved.*

9 oz. can pineapple, crushed
and drained
Small jar maraschino cherries
(halve or chopped if desired)
2 sliced bananas (halve or
quarter slices if desired)
1/4 cup chopped walnuts

Method

Mix thoroughly. Pour into 8x8 or 9x9 container. Cover and freeze. Thaw 10-15 minutes to allow cutting into serving portions.

My mother, Grace Alley, first made this salad for holiday meals. It has become a family favorite, and we always have it for one of our holidays.

Mary Harris
Glad Valley, S.D.

LEMON ROSEMARY GLAZED HAM

Ingredients:

1 bone-in spiral-cut ham,
about 10 lbs.
1 1/4 cups honey, divided
2 tsp. lemon extract
1 1/4 tps. whole rosemary
leaves, crushed, divided

Method

Preheat oven to 325°F. Place the ham on its side in roasting pan. Mix 1 cup of the honey, 1 1/2 tps. of the extract and 1 tsp. of the rosemary in small bowl until well blended. Brush 1/2 of the honey mixture over ham, gently separating the slices so mixture can reach middle of ham. Cover loosely with foil.

Bake 1 hour, basting occasionally with pan drippings. Remove foil. Brush with remaining honey mixture. Bake 45 minutes longer.

Meanwhile, mix remaining 1/4 cup honey, 1/2 tsp. extract and 1/4 tsp. rosemary in small bowl. Serve with ham along with the pan drippings.

McCormick.com

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



Annual Meeting Recap

Amanda Haugen
Communications Specialist

West River Electric's 85th Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, Oct. 12, 2024, at the Wall Community Center. The meeting started with everyone standing and saluting the flag as Athena Simons, daughter of Sanden and Elaine Simons of Wall, sang the national anthem. Our theme this year was Powering Generations: 85 Year of Service. We will continue to serve our members' best interest to ensure we collectively move forward towards a brighter future for the next 85 years and on.

Board President Andy Moon guided the meeting through the normal business procedures. He highlighted the retirement of \$1 million in capital credits, the exponential growth we have seen throughout the cooperative in the past year, and the need for a possible rate adjustment looking into the upcoming year. Moon ended with an update on our main power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, and announced Dick Johnson's successor, Robert Raker, upon his retirement in January.

Legal counsel Greg Erlandson guided the membership through the board election process and voting of District 1 director to fill the seat upon Howard Knuppe's retirement. The

membership re-elected two incumbent directors on the Board of Directors, Andy Moon, District 3, and Stand Anders, District 2. Steven Edoff, of New Underwood, was elected to represent District 1. He will serve a three-year term which will run until October of 2027. Steven and his wife, Michelle, raised their five children on a small acreage just east of his hometown, New Underwood. He currently works for a financial cooperative as a financial officer and has grown to understand the tremendous value that being a member-owner of a cooperative brings to our communities. Most of his professional work experience has been in banking and budget analysis. 382403

Steven served six years in the regular Army where he was deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012 to Afghanistan as a member of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and served as a gunner on a M777 howitzer. After his time in the Army, he and his wife moved back home to South Dakota to raise their family. This allowed him to join the South Dakota Army National Guard where he served another six years before deciding to hang up his combat boots and focus more of his attention on his family and work.

He attended Black Hills State University majoring in accounting and when he's not busy with work, he enjoys



Taylee Dart is one seven local students awarded a \$500 scholarship.



Howard Knuppe is recognized for 36 years to the Board of Directors.

volunteering and helping people out however possible. Steven is currently a member of the New Underwood Community Church, VFW Post 9120, American Legion Post 256 and the Wall Volunteer Fire Department. He also enjoys chasing his kids around to football, wrestling, baseball, and rodeo events. Steven wishes Howard well in his retirement and looks forward to serving the cooperative as the District 1 Director.

The Board would like to thank the other candidate for their interest in the cooperative and running for the position.

Dick Johnson, CEO of West River Electric, went over various happenings at your cooperative. First, he went over some key points in history that have led us to where we are now, serving our members for 85 years. He touched on another year of having a clean audit and the continued growth in apartments, homes and businesses across our service territory. He then touched on always-available generation, the EPA power plant rule, solar and reliability. Dick finished his speech with recognition and thanks to Howard Knuppe on his 36 years of service to the Board, as well as thanking the membership, employees, and his family for their dedication and trust in him as the leader of West River Electric. Because of them, he was able to help power the generations for 85 years and set an outline for the next 85 years and on.

Attendees of the meeting were able to receive a meal ticket to their favorite restaurant in Wall, have a chance to win door prizes, and receive an update on their cooperative. Every year, high school or college students have a chance at one of six \$500 scholarships, just for attending the annual meeting. This year we gave out seven as we had such a great turnout of students. West River Electric has three opportunities for students to have a chance at one of the scholarships; Member Appreciation Day, Annual Meeting, and the end of the school year in the spring.

The board would like to thank all who attended their annual meeting. Please stay safe and healthy and we will see you next year for the 86th Annual Meeting. 392301



Dick Johnson is recognized for 30 years of service to the cooperative.



Andy Moon
District 3

Stan Anders
District 2

Steven Edoff
District 1

Congratulations to Andy and Stan on their re-election to the Board and welcome Steven for District 1 Director.

"The quality of a director is service before self."

Charles "Chuck" Sloan
Board of Director (District 2),
West River Electric



HURRICANE AID

Linemen Help Restore Power After Hurricane Helene

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Linemen from five of South Dakota’s rural electric cooperatives traveled to the Southeastern U.S. in October to help restore power along Hurricane Helene’s path of destruction.

The 18 linemen left Oct. 2 for Pickens, South Carolina, where Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative faced over 64,000 meter outages and more than 800 broken poles in Helene’s aftermath.

Zach Hansen, a lineman from West River Electric Association, didn’t think twice before he volunteered to go along.

“It’s just the co-op way,” he said. “There are people in need down there who lost their houses – lost their lives – and this is something we know we can do to help. It’s kind of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

The linemen stayed at a crowded base camp with dozens of other utility workers from all across the country. They slept on cots in a large, open army-sized tent, but with their busy schedules, they didn’t spend

much time there anyway. Most days, the linemen woke at 5:30 a.m. for breakfast and worked in the field until supper at 8 p.m.

The work also presented unfamiliar challenges for the linemen; each time the crew needed to repair damaged infrastructure, they’d first have to start the labor-intensive process of clearing through debris and trees toppled by Helene’s heavy wind gusts.

“When we have blizzards and ice storms in South Dakota, it’s hard work – and you’re trying to stay warm,” Hansen explained. “But out here, there’s a lot more chainsaw work and fixing wire breaks. It’s not just straight miles of line lying down like we’re used to at home.”

By Oct. 9, fewer than 1,000 meters in Blue Ridge Electric territory remained offline, and the South





Dakota crews were dismissed to begin the 1,200-plus mile journey home.

But as the South Dakota convoy – which included bucket trucks, skid steers and ATVs – moved north, another call came in.

Jefferson Energy Cooperative in Wrens, Georgia, also faced catastrophic damage to their distribution lines, with 100% of their service territory without power after the storm. On Oct. 9, as South Dakota’s linemen were driving home from South Carolina to reunite with their families, still over 10,000 homes and businesses remained without power.

Just like before, South Dakota’s rural electric cooperatives answered the call.

“When our line superintendent called me that morning and asked me how we felt about going to Georgia, I said, ‘well, we’re right here, so we might as well go in and help,’” Bon Homme Yankton lineman Gunnar Dally said. “If they need help, we’re more than willing to come.”

The stop in Wrens delayed the linemen’s return home by about a week, but the appreciation from the communities helped keep spirits high.

“When we were on breaks, there were people stopping to thank us for helping,” Dally said. “A lot of them were very surprised when we said we were from South Dakota.”

Hansen recognized another subset

of heroes: the families.

“The unsung heroes of storm jobs are the people we leave behind,” he said. “My wife is at home with six kids taking care of the ranch while I’m gone. If we didn’t have those people, we couldn’t go out and do the things we needed to do. They are the real heroes.”

SDREA General Manager Steve Barnett thanked the linemen for volunteering to help with the storm restoration efforts and for embodying

the values of South Dakota’s rural electric cooperatives.

“These 18 linemen gave up time at home with their families to help people in need they’ve never met in a place they’ve never been,” Barnett said. “Their selfless actions reflect what we stand for as a family of cooperatives, as South Dakotans, and as fellow Americans. We thank them for their work, their spirit and their dedication to keeping the lights on – at home, and in South Carolina and Georgia.”



FINANCIALS



Rushmore Athletics Booster Club.



Rural Meade Ambulance Service.



Rapid City Club for Boys.



Black Hills Raptor Center.

Small Change Making Big Differences

Amanda Haugen

Communications Specialist

West River Electric's voluntary program, Operation Roundup, has given back \$142,015 since 2002 when it was first incorporated. Because of members like you, communities and non-profit organizations within the 4,500 square mile territory have been able to thrive.

398600 Operation Roundup is a voluntary program that does just what the name implies. Each month, we "round up" the electric bills of participating consumers to the next highest dollar. For example, a consumer's monthly bill of \$56.75 would automatically be rounded up to \$57.00, with the additional 25 cents going to the Operation Roundup fund. All donations are tax deductible, and consumers are sent a summary of yearly contributions each January.

If you wish to participate in rounding up your monthly electric bill and help the communities you live in continue to thrive, please scan the QR or visit our website, www.westriver.coop

and sign up online under the "Membership" tab.

Once a year, the five-person board of directors, separate from West River Electric's board of directors, meets to disperse the funds to the community. To qualify for funds, a non-profit organization, group, family, or individual must have a need or charitable project they will use the funds for. To apply for funding, one must also fill out an application, located on our website under the "Membership" tab. **Applications open January 2, 2025.**

Operation Roundup recipients for 2024 include:

Rural Meade Ambulance Service.....\$2,000
 Black Hills Raptor Center, Inc.....\$1,200
 Rapid City Club for Boys.....\$2,500
 Rushmore Athletics Booster Club.....\$500

Not Pictured is Central Meade County Community Center (\$2,500), Youth in Science (\$2,000), and Union Center Wrestling Club (\$500).



Win a Trip to Washington D.C.



Amanda Haugen
Communications
Specialist

West River Electric will once again sponsor two high school juniors and seniors on an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. Each June, over 1,800 high school juniors and seniors travel to Washington, D.C., to participate in the Rural Electric Youth Tour. Throughout the week, participants will explore Washington, D.C., learning about government, cooperative philosophy and rural electrification. The students are selected and sponsored by their local rural electric cooperatives with the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) coordinating the trip for South Dakota students.

Tour highlights include the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, U.S. Capitol, Ford's Theatre, Arlington National Cemetery, Mount Vernon, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Iwo Jima Statue, National Archives, U.S Supreme Court, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial among other exciting sites. Students will also participate in a briefing with the South Dakota Congressional Delegation and a river boat cruise across the Potomac River. 283600

Who is Eligible? All area high school juniors and seniors whose parents are members of West River Electric.

What Does It Cost? West River Electric, along with the other participating local electric cooperatives fully fund the tour. The tour covers each participant's transportation, accommodations, meals, entertainment, and sightseeing events. Students are required to provide their spending money (for snacks, souvenirs, etc.).

When is it Held? The weeklong trip will take place from June 15-21, 2025. Participants will meet for an orientation meeting on Sunday, June 15 at the Brandon Golf Course. The group will bus to Minneapolis and then fly the next morning to D.C. on Monday, June 16, and return to South Dakota on Saturday, June 21. A commercial bus will be used for transportation while in D.C.

How do I Qualify? Each Entrant must fill out an application, by scanning the QR code below or going to www.westriver.coop, and submit an essay of 250 words or more on the following topic: "What does the electric cooperative mean to you?"

Applications are due by December 30, 2024.



High School Seniors or College students,

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!



Applying is **EASY and FREE!**
*Must be a member of WREA



Deadline to Apply is January 29, 2025, by 5pm



STAYING SAFE

First responders put out a fire near Belle Fourche. Photo submitted by Butte Electric Cooperative.

Butte Electric Cooperative Connects With First Responders

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

October marks First Responders Month, a time to honor the dedication and courage of those who rush toward danger to keep their communities safe. This fall, electric cooperatives across the country expressed their gratitude to these everyday heroes who are always prepared to protect lives and the essential infrastructure that supports local neighborhoods.

Day or night, regardless of the weather, first responders answer the call, whether it's battling a blaze or responding to a medical emergency. When it comes to keeping the community safe, their collaboration with local electric co-ops is key for both local residents and the first responders themselves. Together, they work to ensure that emergencies are managed quickly, effectively and, most importantly, safely.

In September, Butte Electric further strengthened its ties and

communications with local first responders following an eventful summer by hosting a series of safety demonstrations for emergency crews in Meade and Butte Counties and the U.S. Forest Service.

"Earlier this year we faced several incidents that resulted in exposed power lines near first responders," said Matt Sleep, chief executive officer of Butte Electric. "In one case, we had a situation west of Spearfish where strong winds brought down a billboard, exposing lines that sparked and started a fire."

Both Butte Electric and the local fire department responded to the emergency, de-energizing the lines and containing the small grass fire. In a separate incident, a driver suffered a medical emergency and crashed into an electrical pedestal. Although the driver died in the accident, the actions of first responders and the electric cooperative prevented further injuries. The incident, among others, prompted Butte Electric to take proactive steps in preparation for the next possible emergency.

"We wanted to both educate responders and build some rapport, so when they see a power line, they know who to call and that they are comfortable getting in contact with us," said Sleep.

Butte Electric employees organized and led a hands-on safety training using the South Dakota Rural Electric Association's high voltage demonstration trailer, a specialized tool



that highlights the very real dangers of electricity. During the session, linemen demonstrated how electricity can arc, or jump, from one connection to another, always seeking the easiest path to the ground.

The training is one that linemen across the state have facilitated, which includes a memorable demonstration involving a grapefruit to show how contact with electricity impacts organic material. On the outside, the grapefruit appears undamaged after contact with an electrified line but cutting it open reveals it's been cooked from the inside.

The training left an impression with Trevor Papenfuss, an assistant fire management fire officer who has served with the U.S. Forest Service in the Spearfish area for more than 30 years. Papenfuss was just one of roughly 30 U.S. Forest Service members who attended the demonstration.

"We deal with incidents involving electricity at least once a year, if not more," Papenfuss said. "Butte

Electric provided us with a lot of valuable information and a powerful demonstration. Seeing a grapefruit burn from the inside out makes a big impact and impression of just how dangerous live electricity can be. Several of our new wildland firefighters attended and they took away information that will stay with them for a long time."

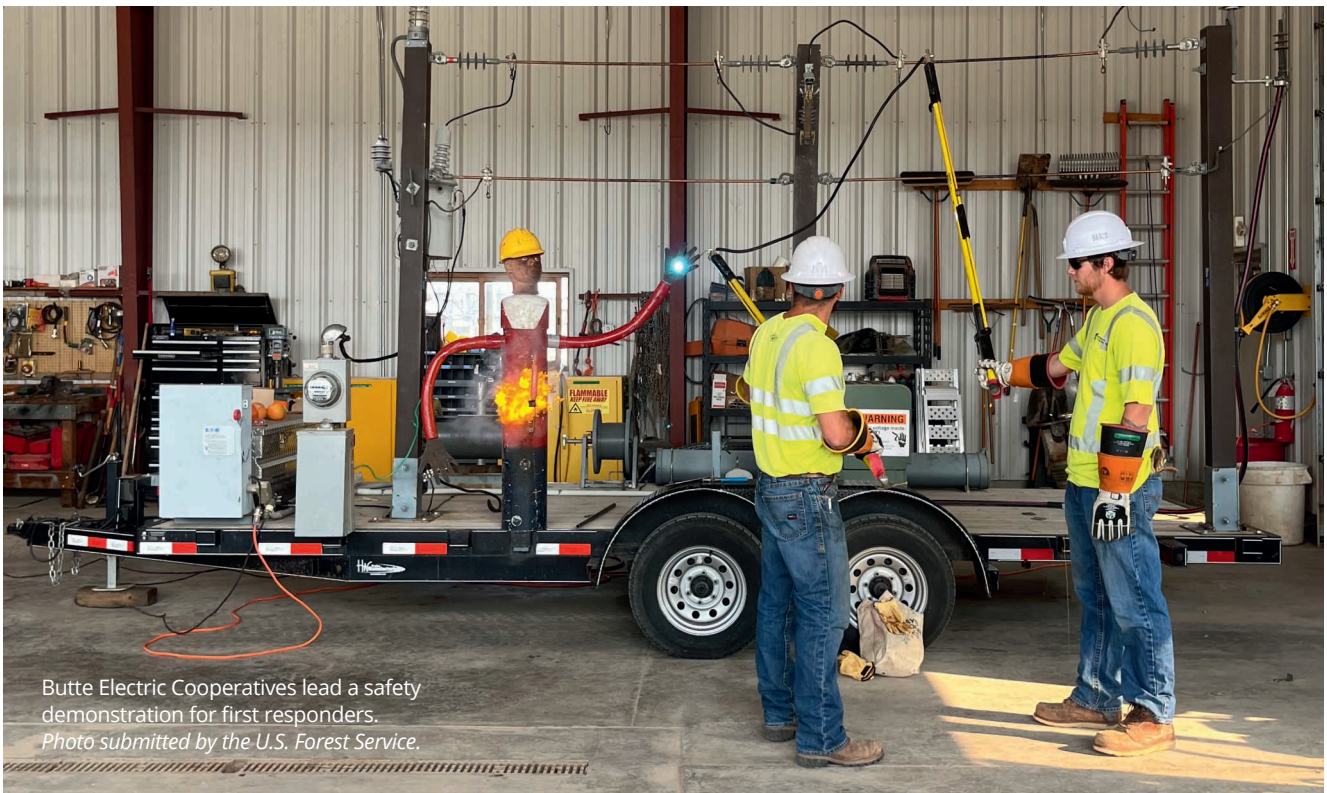
In a separate training tailored to the Sturgis Fire Department, Volunteer Fire Chief of the Sturgis Fire Department Scott Lensegrav said the training was impactful for his fellow volunteers. In addition to noting the value of the demonstration, Lensegrav highlighted the importance of maintaining a strong line of communication between electric service providers like Butte Electric and the fire department, especially during an emergency.

"In a situation involving power lines or electricity, the first thing we do is communicate with dispatch to try and figure out whose power line is involved in the emergency," said Lensegrav.

"The training was just another step in building good communication between our department and utilities. It was also great to have the refresher for our volunteers who have been with us for years and a good learning tool for the new volunteers that are coming into the service."

Looking forward, Sleep plans to continue strengthening the relationship between local first responders and Butte Electric for a safer future in their service area.

"It's all about building relationships and familiarity so that first responders know who to talk to and don't hesitate to call," said Sleep. "We deeply appreciate our first responders and want to help them however we can. These emergency personnel and volunteers are what make our communities great, and we just want to play our part in keeping them and our neighborhoods safe."



Butte Electric Cooperatives lead a safety demonstration for first responders.
Photo submitted by the U.S. Forest Service.

Giving Back the Cooperative Way

Amanda Haugen

Communications Specialist

The holiday season brings a spirit of generosity and compassion. It's a time to reflect on our many blessings and uplift those in need. While this is certainly a special time of year, cooperatives like West River Electric are deeply rooted in giving back to their local communities year-round.

Our mission is to serve our members' best interest. Our purpose is people—the members we're proud to serve. That's why we organize tailgating events, have energy efficiency at top of mind, and do everything we can to ensure you, the member-owner, have reliable power when you need it most, helping to make a positive, meaningful impact for our community. You help us power that purpose, too. West River Electric's Operation Roundup program is made possible through members' participation in "rounding up" electric bills to the next dollar amount. Your generous contributions help support local charitable organizations and projects to better the community.

Another way West River Electric gives back is by investing in tomorrow's leaders. Through scholarship opportunities, the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program, the School Supply Drive, and the Electric Cooperative Youth Excursion program, we aim to empower students for a brighter future. When we invest in our local youth, we strengthen the fabric of our community.

As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, we believe in giving credit

where credit is due—to the members who shape our co-op. One of the ways we do this is through capital credits. Because West River Electric operates at cost, we give cash back to our members rather than outside investors or shareholders.


Here's how capital credits work:

Members use the electricity we provide and pay their monthly bills, and we track their business with the co-op over time. West River Electric pays all operating expenses throughout the year, and if any operating revenue is leftover, we allocate it as capital credits. When financial conditions permit, the co-op's board of directors votes to pay capital credits back to the members. We apply your credit to your energy bill or send you a check in the mail if you have moved off service with us.

Over the years, West River Electric has returned \$22,677,335 to our local members. Capital credits are just one of the many benefits of co-op membership. Giving back to our local members instead of outside parties is one of the many aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses.


Our members guide every decision we make and are the reason our co-op exists. To us, you're more than a customer. This holiday season, we hope you're proud to be part of a community-focused co-op that puts people before profits.

From your friends at West River Electric, we hope you have a bright, blessed holiday season.

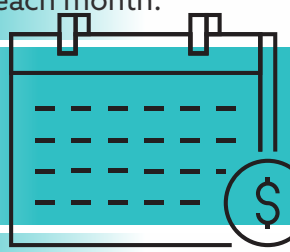


HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK


Electric co-ops are not-for-profit and operate at cost. Capital credits are a financial benefit of co-op membership.




1. Members pay their electric bills, and we track how much you pay each month.



2. The co-op pays operating expenses throughout the year and sets aside any leftover revenue.



3. When financial conditions permit, the co-op board votes to retire (refund) capital credits to the members.



4. We send members their share of capital credits as a bill credit or check.

LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT

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. 11854400

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC

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. 11874400

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.



From our lines to your homes, we wish you a holiday season of Joy and a New Year of endless possibilities.

From all of us at
West River Electric Association, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

OUR OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED THE FOLLOWING DATES:

Tuesday Dec. 24th | All day
Wednesday Dec. 25th | All day
Tuesday Dec. 31st | 11am-5pm
Wednesday Jan. 1st | All day

We're Grateful for Your Membership.

Our offices will be closed
Thursday, November 28,
and Friday, November 29,

in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.
We are incredibly grateful for your membership as our team spends this special time with loved ones.

From our co-op family to yours, we hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving!



DEC. 7
Santa at the Zoo
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Great Plains Zoo
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-7003

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.

NOV. 29-DEC. 29 (WEEKENDS)
1880 Train Holiday Express (Spiked! 21+)
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2222
 1880train.com

NOV. 29-DEC. 29 (WEEKENDS)
1880 Train Holiday Express (Spiked! 21+)
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2222
 1880train.com

NOV. 29
Parade of Lights
 Parade of Lights
 7 p.m.
 Chamberlain, SD

NOV. 30
Mid-Winter Fair
 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Gregory Memorial Auditorium
 Gregory, SD
 605-830-9778

NOV. 29-DEC. 29
Trees & Trains Exhibit at SD State Railroad Museum
 Hill City, SD
 605-665-3636

DEC. 1
A Christmas Carol
 2 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-624-2859

DEC. 1-31
Olde Tyme Christmas at participating businesses, Lane of Lights Viewing
 Hill City, SD

DEC. 5
Christmas on the Prairie
 4 p.m.
 Main Street
 Miller, SD

DEC. 5
Holiday Festival of Lights
 4 P.M.-7:30 P.M.
 Yankton, SD
 605-665-3636

DEC. 6-8, 13-15
A Sherlock Carol
 Dec. 6-7, 13-14, 7:30 p.m.
 Dec. 8, 15, 2:30 p.m.
 Corson, SD
 mightycorson.com

DEC. 7
KJAM Parade of Lights
 5:30 P.M.
 Madison, SD
 605-256-4514

DEC. 7
Rapid City Garden Club 63rd Annual Wreath & Centerpiece Sale
 8 a.m.- 1 p.m.
 Creative Arts Building at CFS
 800 San Francisco St.
 605-343-0710

DEC. 7
Newell Festival of Trees
 9 a.m. – Doors Open
 11:30 a.m. – Community Lunch
 4 p.m. – Auction
 Newell City Hall
 Newell, SD

DEC. 8
Aberdeen Community Concert Association Fund Raiser 2024 Medora Magical Christmas Memories Tour
 3 p.m.
 Aberdeen Civic Theater
 Aberdeen, SD
 605-228-0946
 aberdeencommunityconcerts.com

DEC. 13
Birthday in the Barn
 Live Nativity
 Rainbow Bible Ranch
 6:30 p.m.
 Sturgis, SD
 rainbowbibranch.org
 605-923-6056

DEC. 7-31
Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens
 5 p.m.-9 p.m.
 Brookings, SD
 605-688-6707

JAN 11
Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament
 Meadowood Lanes
 Rapid City, SD
 605-393-2081

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