

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Fostering Futures

**Mike Rowe Scholarship
Sponsors Co-op Lineman**

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**Understanding the
Southwest Power Pool**

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*Dirty Jobs star Mike Rowe with Work Ethic Scholarship recipient Tayden Wells at Mitchell Technical College
Submitted Photo*

Upcoming Power Cost Adjustment



Robert Raker
CEO/GM

Now that the holidays are behind us, it's back to reality as we hit the ground running in 2026. One of my responsibilities as CEO is to be upfront with our members when changes are coming — especially when those changes affect your electric bill. I've been talking about this for some time, and after careful review, we have landed on a **5.3% overall rate increase**.

The primary driver is power costs, which increased by approximately 10%, along with continued increases in local costs such as materials, insurance, and other operating expenses. 12381400

Beginning with February usage (which will be reflected on bills mailed in March), West River Electric will implement two adjustments:

- A Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) increase of \$0.006534 per kilowatt-hour, bringing our total PCA to \$0.0122, and
- A \$4.00 increase to the monthly base charge.

I want to explain what this means and why it's necessary.

Why a PCA?

West River Electric does not generate electricity — we purchase wholesale power on behalf of our members. The cost of that power is driven by fuel prices, generation costs, transmission expenses, and regional market conditions. Those wholesale power costs increased by roughly 10%, and the PCA is a direct pass-through with no markup by the Cooperative.

We've also been advised to expect an additional 8% increase in power costs next year. This part of our business is seeing significant change and continued upward pressure. The PCA helps manage that volatility while we work toward a more stable, long-term rate structure.

Why the Base Charge Increase?

The base charge helps cover the fixed costs required to serve every member — poles,

wires, substations, meters, crews, and system maintenance. These costs exist whether electricity use is high or low. The \$4.00 increase helps ensure those costs are shared fairly and that the Cooperative remains financially sound.

Just as important, it allows us to continue reinvesting in our system. When infrastructure investments are delayed, costs don't disappear — they accumulate and often show up later alongside declining reliability. That's not a tradeoff we're willing to make. In other words, we believe in investing ahead of the storm — not after it.

Reliability in the Real World

We were reminded of the importance of that approach during the recent wind event that brought gusts near 100 mph across our region. Many members saw the damage firsthand, including broken poles and downed lines. Because of continued system investment, our crews were able to stay ahead of much of the damage. 12309800

What many didn't see is that other cooperatives — particularly those serving heavily wooded areas — did not fare as well. West River Electric crews, alongside crews from neighboring cooperatives, worked through Christmas Eve to restore power in some of South Dakota's most challenging terrain.

I want to specifically recognize the work our linemen performed in support of Black Hills Electric following that storm. Neighbors helping neighbors is more than a saying — it's who we are as Cooperatives. That kind of response is only possible when systems are well-maintained and equipment is ready.

What This Means for You

These changes will impact members differently. The PCA will vary based on how much electricity you use, while the base charge applies evenly to all members. Together, these adjustments allow West River Electric to continue

providing safe, reliable service while avoiding deferred costs that can lead to much larger increases down the road.

In closing, I know no one likes to see a rate increase. Your Board of Directors and staff reviewed this decision carefully as part of the 2026 budget process, with a focus on long-term planning, reliability, and affordability.

Our commitment is to serve our members best interest and that means we openly communicate, plan responsibly, and make decisions that protect your Co-op over the long haul.

If you have questions about your bill, please don't hesitate to contact us. We're here to help.

\$0.0065 PCA Increase = Basin

There are three primary factors behind this rate increase:

- 1. Growth in Traditional Load** - Between 2018 and 2024, Basin only brought on 45 MW of power, yet their demand grew by 40%.
- 2. Increase in Planning Reserve Margins** - Basin has to build 136% to cover 100% of its loads according to Southwest Power Pool (SPP).
- 3. Investments in Reliability** - Basin has announced the building of the Bison Generation Station; a 1,490 MW natural gas-fired generation plant; and a 345 kV transmission line to run through western South Dakota.

\$4.00 Base Charge Increase = WREA

We continue to see increases in local costs, including essential materials like transformers, poles, and wire to name a few. Adjusting the base charge allows us to keep investing in our electric system and maintain the reliable service our members expect.

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
- Taran Eisenbraun
- Peter Blake
- Jason Habrock
- Steven Edoff
- Sue Peters

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FIVE WAYS TO SAFEGUARD YOUR HOME THIS WINTER

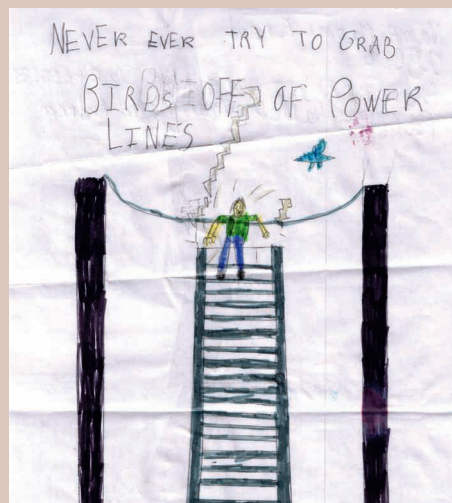
As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months.

Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season.

1. Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.
2. Inspect electrical cords. We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, extension cords or portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least three feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip. Speaking of power strips...
3. Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.
4. Clean the fireplace to improve safety and efficiency. There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning

also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.

5. Practice safety in the kitchen. As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.



Naomi Krcil, Age 8

Naomi warns readers to never, ever grab birds off power lines. Great job, Naomi! Naomi's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil from Dante, S.D.

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

Family Night FAVORITES

SAUERKRAUT BEEF BAKE

Ingredients:

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 can sauerkraut, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup instant rice
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 soup can water
- 2 tbsps. onion soup mix
- 1 small can sliced mushrooms (optional)

Method

Brown ground beef, drain excess fat. In large bowl, mix all remaining ingredients. Transfer to a greased 2-quart casserole or baking dish.

Cover and bake at 350°F for one hour or until heated through.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix Electric

MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. ground beef
- 6 oz. chili sauce
- 4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 1/2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. seasoned salt
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 tbsps. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. yellow mustard
- 1/2 cup BBQ sauce

Method

Preheat oven to 425°F.

Cook and crumble bacon.

In a mixing bowl, mix together all meatloaf ingredients except the BBQ sauce.

Divide the mixture into 8 round loaves. Press a small depression into the middle of the meatloaves.

Brush BBQ sauce on top of the meatloaves.

Bake for 25 minutes. Turn on broiler and brown the BBQ sauce for 2 to 5 minutes.

Kayla Beaner
Southeastern Electric

SMOKED MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 1.5 lbs. 93% lean ground beef
- 1 lb. ground pork
- 1/2 pkg. bacon
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 tps. Worcestershire sauce
- 1-2 tps. minced garlic
- 1/8 cup ketchup
- 2 tps. Heifer Dust (spice)
- 1/2 tsp. ground pepper
- 1/2 sweet onion, chopped
- 1/2 green pepper, chopped
- 1-2 carrots, chopped
- 1-2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1/2 carton mushrooms, chopped

Basting Sauce

- Cookies BBQ Ketchup
- Brown sugar Dry mustard
- Apple cider vinegar

Method

Turn Traeger to Smoke then set to 225°F and preheat for 15 minutes.

Combine the vegetables, drizzle with olive oil and microwave for about 2 minutes to soften. Cool for 10 minutes. Mix everything in a large bowl with hands. Form into a large loaf on parchment paper. Place bacon strips on grate pan. Gently flip loaf onto the bacon lined grate pan.

Place on grill and smoke for 45 minutes. Increase temperature to 325°F. Preheat for 10 minutes. Return to grill and insert probe. Cook until internal temperature reaches 160°F – about 1-2 more hours depending on size of loaf.

During the last 15-20 minutes, baste heavily with barbeque sauce mixed with brown sugar, ketchup, mustard and a little apple cider vinegar or apple juice.

Deb Prins
Cam Wal Electric

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

Picture by Elena Veselova from Shutterstock

Reliability Requires Investments



Amanda Haugen
Communications
Specialist

As your local power provider, West River Electric's mission has always been simple: serve our members' best interests while keeping the lights on. But behind every switch, every warm home and

every business that opens its doors is a complex system that requires constant care. Reliable electricity doesn't happen by accident. It requires ongoing investments in our local grid—through system repairs, maintenance, upgrades, and the integration of new technologies that help us operate smarter and more efficiently.

Much of the energy system we rely on today was built decades ago. While it continues to serve us well, age alone means that components must be repaired or replaced to maintain performance and safety. From poles and wires to transformers and substations, every part of the grid has a lifespan. Routine maintenance helps extend that lifespan, but eventually equipment must be updated to meet modern standards. These proactive investments reduce the likelihood of outages, shorten restoration times when disruptions do occur, and create a stronger backbone for our growing community. 12038300

The grid must be able to support increased demand while maintaining the reliability you as members expect. Strategic upgrades such as new substations to support our future load growth and burying of the lines along Radar Hill Rd that serve as a secondary feed to the Rapid City Regional Airport are essential to ensuring we can meet these needs both today and in the decades ahead.

At the same time, new technologies



are reshaping how we operate. Tools such as automated switching devices, drones, and integrated Scada systems allow us to detect problems faster and respond more effectively. These technologies can isolate problems, reroute power to minimize outages, and provide real-time data that helps us plan and maintain equipment more efficiently.

Implementing innovative technologies into the grid is not just a convenience—it is a necessity for ensuring reliability in an increasingly complex energy landscape.

While these improvements require thoughtful planning and financial investment, the return is significant. A stronger grid supports economic growth, improves service quality, and enhances

safety for our crews and community. Most importantly, it ensures that the essential power you rely on is available whenever you need it.

Our commitment to reliability runs deeper than infrastructure alone. It reflects our responsibility to the people and communities we serve. Every upgrade, every repair and every technology we deploy is an investment in your daily life—from the comfort of your home to the success of local businesses and schools.

We know that powering our community means preparing for the future, not just maintaining the present. By investing in our local grid today, we are building the foundation for a brighter, more resilient tomorrow.

Operation Round-Up Reaches \$210,955 in Local Impact



Amanda Haugen
Communications Specialist

West River Electric's voluntary program, Operation Round-Up, has given back \$210,955 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.

Operation Round-Up is a voluntary program that does just what the name implies. Each month, participating members elect to "round up" their electric bill to the nearest whole dollar. For Example, a member's monthly bill of

\$56.75 would be automatically rounded up to \$57.00, with the additional \$0.25 going to the Operation Round-Up fund. All donations are tax deductible and members are sent a summary of yearly contributions each January.

If you wish to participate in rounding up your monthly electric bill and help communities complete projects and thrive, please visit our website, www.westriver.coop, and sign up online under the "Membership" tab.

Where Does the Money Go?

Once a year, a five-person board of directors, separate from West River Electric's nine-person board of directors, meets to go through applications and disperse the funds. To qualify for funding, a non-profit group, organization or individual must have

a need or a charitable project they will use the funding for. One must fill out an application online at www.westriver.coop, under the "Membership" tab. Applications are open for submission and will close April 1, 2026.

2025 Operation Round-Up Recipients:

- CORE Freshman Impact: \$2,500
- Feeding SD Backpack Program: \$2,000
- Feeding SD Mobile Program: \$1,000
- Home Plate Collective: \$500
- Rapid City BMX: \$1,000
- Rural Meade Ambulance Service: \$1,500
- SD FFA: \$1,000
- St. Vincent DePaul: \$2,500



West River Electric Association, Inc.
Your True North Energy Connection
"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

Small donations every month from you, our members, adds up to BIG support for local communities.

Consider donating today to Operation RoundUP. You'll not only help non-profits, you'll help our local communities complete projects that benefit all.



Scan the QR code to contribute to the fun and to fill out a Project Application!
Project Applications open January 2, 2026!
The application window closes April 1, 2026.



FOSTERING FUTURES

'Mike Rowe Scholarship' Winner Kicks Off Career at Electric Co-op

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

For many high schoolers, figuring out the next steps after graduating is a time for making big decisions and answering tough questions. What do I want to do for a career? Should I go to a university or technical college? Will I be able to pay off all of this college debt?

Tayden Wells' mind was already made up following a great high school internship and a little bit of faith and support from others. Wells was awarded numerous scholarships, but none as prestigious – nor time-consuming – as the Work Ethic Scholarship from 'Dirty Jobs' star Mike Rowe.

Discovering the Passion

Growing up around linemen, Tayden had an early appreciation for their work, unpredictable schedules and the expansive grid of wires and poles that keeps everyone's lights on.

"As a child I'd be sitting in the house and all of a sudden, Dad would up and vanish," Tayden explained. "And I always wondered, what's he doing? Where's he going? Why is he going to work on a Saturday or in the middle of the night? And then finally it occurred to me that we rely on the power grid, and when the power goes out, linemen go to work."

Tayden's dad, Travis, is a lineman at Clay-Union Electric in Vermillion, S.D. Tayden recalls the long car rides on hunting trips with his dad and uncle – also a lineman – where the conversations would drift to the power lines outside the truck windows.

"I'd hear them talking, using linemen slang like 'distro' (distribution lines) and 'T-lines' (transmission lines)," Tayden said. "They really sparked my interest."

When Tayden's high school business teacher told students to think about internships, he knew exactly where he wanted to go.

It All Started With an Internship

Tayden's teacher made the call to Union County Electric Cooperative in Elk Point, S.D. After getting the green light from the board of directors, Tayden was cleared to shadow the crew for about 10 hours a week as he learned the ins and outs of the job.

"He was always looking for something to do, and he also asked a lot of questions and had an eagerness to learn," General Manager Matt Klein said about Tayden's work ethic. "When I saw that, I knew he would fit in well with the rest of our team."

Klein offered the high school senior a full-time summer



internship where he continued to expand his skills before heading to Mitchell, S.D., in the fall.

Mike Rowe's Work Ethic Scholarship and the S.W.E.A.T. Pledge

With his mind made up after the internship, Tayden's next step was to enroll in the power line program at Mitchell Technical College for a formal education – and find scholarships to help pay for it.

A straight-A student involved in athletics and extracurricular activities, Tayden applied for numerous scholarships, including the highly competitive Work Ethic Scholarship.

The scholarship, founded and administered by Mike Rowe and his foundation, offers millions of dollars to kids around the nation interested in pursuing trade careers.

Electricians, linemen, HVAC, nursing, culinary, automotive, even cosmetology – just no four-year bachelor's degrees.

"We promote skilled trades and want to get people into good-paying jobs without them drowning in debt," explained mikeroweWORKS President Mary Sullivan, who oversees the scholarship. "It's just heartbreaking seeing the amount of kids taking on college debt and graduating and aren't able to find jobs in their chosen field. Even more heartbreaking – but less reported – is the number of kids that drop out partway through the program with the debt and no piece of paper."

The scholarship's application process is different too – it's intensive, spanning several months and requires applicants to submit a video, answer questionnaires, gather references and think critically about the scholarship's curriculum.

The scholarship attracts thousands of applicants, but by the end, only the most committed, hardest working remain.

"We want to give scholarships to the kids who are passionate – they show up early, stay late and help others," Sullivan explained. "One of the recipients said he applied for 20 scholarships, and if you put all the other 19 into a bucket, ours still took more

time – but he said there was a level of pride in receiving it. High school kids today need to see 18-20 year olds who are successful, and the scholarship program allows us to meet students we believe are good representatives for the industry.”

Part of the curriculum includes the S.W.E.A.T. Pledge (Skill & Work Ethic Aren't Taboo) video series that walks students through 12 pledges Rowe designed to promote strong work ethic and foster successful careers, which include:

“I do not follow my passion. I bring it with me. I believe that any job can be done with passion and enthusiasm.”

“I deplore debt and do all I can to avoid it. I would rather live in a tent and eat beans than borrow money for a lifestyle I can't afford.”

After completing all of the curriculum and proposing a 13th S.W.E.A.T. pledge for a final project, Tayden was awarded \$16,000 to cover his education.

And when Rowe traveled to MTC in 2024, Tayden got the chance to thank Rowe face-to-face.

“Mike told me, from his mouth, that my scholarship was one of the highest amounts they gave out that year,” Tayden said. “That was very cool to hear.”

Rowe said Tayden stood out among thousands of applicants and embodies the qualities the scholarship promotes.

“Tayden checked all the boxes, and then some,” Rowe said. “His references were great, his attitude was great, his essay was great, and his comments about The SWEAT Pledge were spot on. His willingness to pursue a skill that's in demand, along with his attitude and work ethic, make him a perfect example of the qualities we're trying to encourage with our scholarship program. The country needs thousands more like him.”

Reflecting On the Journey

Tayden graduated from the power line program in 2025. He credits his success in part to his internship, saying the out-of-classroom experience set him up for a good year of training at MTC and a rewarding career with electric cooperatives.

“I kind of had the upper hand going into the program with my internship,” Tayden said. “I was able to see stuff before I went to school, so I kind of had a good understanding of the basics. But for kids coming in, some of them obviously struggle. I'm a very hands-on, visual learner, so because I was able to see it beforehand, the bookwork and the schooling really clicked a lot better with me.”

Today, Tayden is a full-time apprentice lineman at Union County Electric, where he continues to accumulate hours and complete coursework to earn his journeyman lineman certification. He encourages other young people not to overlook a career in the trades – or the Work Ethic Scholarship.

“With all of the talk about AI now, the trade jobs are always going to be there,” Tayden said. “Without oil fields we wouldn't have gas, and without electricity we wouldn't have lights. Mike realizes that the world revolves around the trades, and he wants to see kids strive and succeed because in the trades there are endless opportunities, just like any other job.”

Why is it so important that more young Americans enter the trades, and what does a shortage of skilled workers mean for the country?

For decades, the skills gap has been a tragedy of missed opportunity, both for students who weren't encouraged to consider a lucrative and viable path and the industries that rely on skilled labor. It still is. Today though, it's also a matter of national security. Not a week goes by that MRW doesn't get a call from an industry leader, desperate to hire skilled workers. The US Maritime Industrial Base told me they need 250,000 tradespeople to build nuclear subs. The automotive industry has over 100,000 openings for mechanics and collision repair techs. The energy industry needs half a million electricians, and the construction industry has so many openings they've stopped counting. The skills gap is real, and I can tell you that every CEO and every elected official I know are paying attention like never before.

What's one piece of advice you have for young people who are deciding their career path?

With regard to choosing a career, there's nothing more dangerous than dispensing advice to people you've never met. Same thing with choosing an education. We told an entire generation of kids that a four-year degree was the best path for the most people and then pressured them to borrow whatever it took to buy a degree, regardless of the cost. That kind of cookie-cutter advice was a colossal mistake and a big reason why we have millions of open jobs today that don't require a college diploma and lots of college graduates with a trillion dollars in student debt and no work in their chosen field. The only advice I generically offer to young people is to be very careful about “following your passion.” Just because you're passionate about something doesn't mean you can't suck at it. Obviously, it's important to be passionate about whatever you do, but passion – like work ethic - is a choice, and life is a lot easier when you figure out a way to be passionate about whatever it is you're good at. (People hate hearing that, by the way, but it's the truth.)

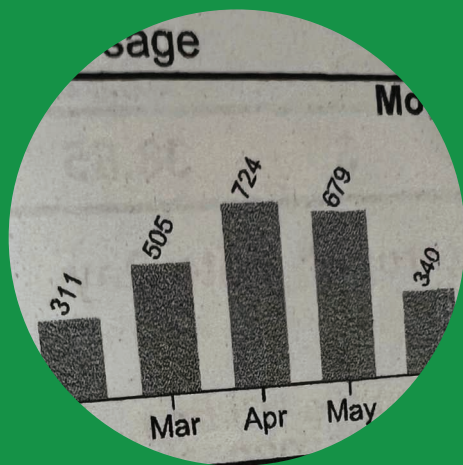
What do you see as the single biggest misunderstanding young people have about working in the trades today?

The trades are surrounded by dozens of stigmas, stereotypes, myths and misperceptions that dissuade people from giving them an honest look. I guess if I had to pick one, I'd point to the stubborn belief held by many parents that their kids can't make six figures working with their hands. It's laughably and demonstrably false. And fun to disprove. Also – the simple fact that the road to so many successful small businesses often starts with the mastery of a skill that's in demand. The number of successful entrepreneurs in the skilled trades is enormous, and more people need to understand that.

What can teachers, community leaders and co-ops do to better identify and support young people interested in a trade career?

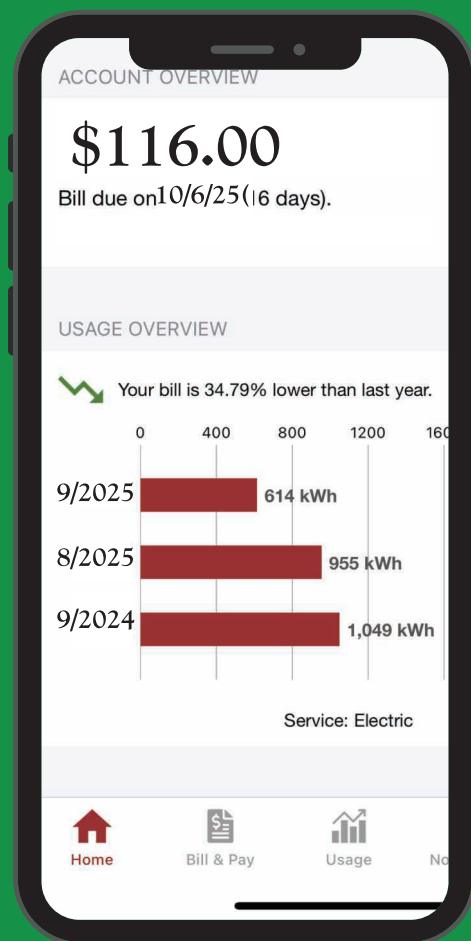
Start a “Career Reality Day” where local linemen, meter technicians and substation operators come in and talk real numbers. Not feel-good fluff, but actual wages, benefits, and career paths. When kids hear that a journeyman lineman can make \$80,000 a year without student loan debt, that gets their attention.





Monitor Energy Usage

View energy usage details, billing history, and make payments by downloading the SmartHub App to your tablet or mobile device!



2026 Electric Rates

West River Electric, like many other utilities, is facing rising costs to purchase and deliver electricity. Our last rate increase (March 2025) was brought by significant local material costs increases and an increase from our wholesale suppliers Basin Electric and Western Area Power Administration (WAPA). The 2026 rate increase comes from the same reasons but with a greater emphasis from our Wholesale Power Provider, Basin Electric. The cost of power that WREA buys to sell to you, the member, is rising at a threshold to where we cannot absorb the difference for 2026. That said, we're all feeling the squeeze, and we don't like rate increases any more than you do. Starting March 1, 2026, reflecting February usage, members will see the increase take effect. 11534000

What Is the Increase?

- A base charge increase of \$4.00 and a Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) increase of \$0.0065.

Why Are Rates Changing?

- Growth in traditional load-Between 2018 and 2024, Basin Electric only brought on 45MW of power, yet their demand grew by 40%.
- Increase in planning reserve margins- Basin has to build 136% to cover 100% of its loads account to Southwest Power Pool (SPP).
- Investments in Reliability- Members are using more electricity across the state and region, so Basin is having to build more generation and transmission assets. Basin has announced the building of the Bison General Station; a 1,490 MW natural-gas fired generation plan; and a 345kV transmission line to run through western South Dakota.
- Inflation and supply chain challenges have made everything from poles and wires to transformers and truck costs more expensive.
- West River Electric and our power suppliers are investing in reliability by replacing aging infrastructure and equipment.

Why Did the Base Charge go up?

- Roughly 74% of WREA's costs are uncontrollable. The base charge is part of what we can control to provide reliable electric service. This includes but not limited to maintenance, infrastructure upgrades, and reliability planning. Adjusting the base charge allows us to keep investing in our electric system and maintain reliable service our members expect.
- No matter how much electricity a member uses, there are fixed costs to provide electric service.

What is a PCA?

- It allows WREA to recover fluctuating wholesale power supply costs from our wholesale providers Basin Electric and WAPA.
- Demand for electricity, increased fuel prices to generate electricity and reliability planning all impact the PCA. 10864101

New Rate Schedule

Most members are subject to the Rural and Urban Residential Single-Phase rate. Adjustments have been made to the base charge and PCA charge.

Rate adjustments across all service types will take effect March 1, 2026, reflecting February usage.

Service Type	Rural and Urban Residential Single Phase	Small Commercial Single Phase (50 KVA or less)	Small Commercial Three Phase (50 KVA or less)	Large Commercial (51-250 KVA)	Large Commercial (251-1,000 KVA)	Large Industrial (1,000 KVA)
2026 Base Charge	\$38.00	\$38.00	\$47.00	\$76.00	\$107.00	\$107.00
2026 Energy Charge	\$0.1195 per kWh	\$0.0805 per kWh	\$0.0805 per kWh	\$0.0835 per kWh for the first 10,000 kWh all over 10,000 kWh is \$0.0685 per kWh	\$0.0835 per kWh for the first 10,000 kWh all over 10,000 kWh is \$0.0685 per kWh	\$0.0637 per kWh
2026 PCA	0.0122	0.0122	0.0122	0.0122	0.0122	0.0122

Note: this is a general snapshot and does not show all rate factors for every service type.

What Can Members Do?

- Utilize SmartHub to track your energy usage.
- Visit our cost comparison tool on our website. (Scan QR code)
- Call and talk to us about an energy audit.
- Turn your thermostat down a few degrees in the winter and up a few degrees in the summer.
- Add weather stripping and caulk around windows and doors to seal air leaks.
- Layer up- throw on a sweatshirt or extra blanket.



NOTE: 020-Urban Residential 2026 Rates

Detail Of Charges			
Base Charge			\$38.00
KWH Revenue	1,000 KWH	x 0.1195	\$119.50
Power Cost Adjustment	1,000 KWH	x 0.0122	\$12.20
SD State Tax 4.2%			\$19.29
Total This Meter			\$188.99

	Days Srvd	KWH/Day	Cost/Day	Avg High	Avg Low
This Month	30	104	\$13.49	44	23
Last Month	31	70	\$9.36	61	37
Last Year	30	80	\$10.17	51	27

Questions?

Phone: 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500

E-mail: ebill@westriver.coop

Website: www.westriver.coop



UNDERSTANDING THE SOUTHWEST POWER POOL

Basin Electric's trading floor connects the cooperative to the broader wholesale electricity market.
Submitted Photo

Frank Turner

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When looking at the entire electric grid, electric cooperatives are just one component in a much larger system. Understanding how that system works, and how power is planned and shared across the region, provides important context for decisions that affect reliability, long-term infrastructure investments and, ultimately, the cost of electricity.

Southwest Power Pool

Every electric cooperative in South Dakota operates within the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), a regional transmission organization that oversees the grid. Really, electric cooperatives are all essential pieces of a larger,

regional puzzle that keeps the lights on.

SPP manages a wholesale electricity market and operates transmission lines across all or parts of 14 Midwest states, including South Dakota.

In 2015, East River Electric Power Cooperative joined the Southwest Power Pool along with Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the Western Area Power Administration Upper Great Plains Region. This move allowed electricity generators in the state to participate in a larger regional market, making it easier and more efficient to buy and sell energy across the grid.

Electric cooperatives aren't the only utilities operating within this regional system. Investor-owned utilities and

municipal utilities also participate in the SPP, all feeding into the same wholesale electricity market. By sharing transmission lines and following the same market rules, these utilities help create a broader, more flexible grid, allowing power to move long distances to where it's needed most.

"SPP is like a traffic director of electricity, because it doesn't own any assets," said Kristi Fiegen, South Dakota Public Utilities Commissioner and chair of the Southwest Power Pool's Regional State Committee. "They direct traffic and work to make sure the transmission lines and generation are bringing electricity to about 18 million customers on a second-by-second basis. That supply has to equal the demand every single second."

Winter Storm Uri

Another important benefit of participating in SPP is its ability to support the grid during extreme weather or unexpected outages, when regional coordination becomes especially important. Because SPP manages electricity across such a large footprint, the system can draw on resources from far beyond state borders. For example, when a power plant in North Dakota goes offline for routine maintenance, electricity from another state can cover the gap. Likewise, during severe winter weather in the South, generation from the Dakotas can help support the southern part of the grid.

That system maintained regional reliability until Feb. 2021, when it was pushed to its limits by Winter Storm Uri, which caused widespread power outages across Texas. According to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 4.5 million people in Texas lost power during the storm.

“Winter Storm Uri woke up the entire nation, because we didn’t know how vulnerable we were,” said Fiegen.

The storm prompted SPP to reexamine how the grid maintains regional reliability during the winter. Part of that change involved increasing the reserve margin — the extra electric generation capacity kept on hand beyond what is normally needed — to help the system withstand extreme cold and unexpected outages. The goal, according to Fiegen, is to ensure enough power is available across the region, especially on the coldest days of the year.

“Since Winter Storm Uri, we have spent much of our time focused on resource adequacy policies,” Fiegen said, referring to SPP leadership and regulatory committees.

Reserve Margin

One significant change set to take effect in the 2026/2027 winter season is SPP’s adoption of a winter planning reserve margin, which increases the amount of generation required to be available during the winter season. The change will apply across the SPP footprint, including impacts to Basin Electric, which supplies power to cooperatives across South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Minnesota and much of the Midwest.

Through an increased winter reserve margin, the SPP aims to better prepare the entire SPP footprint for extreme weather and periods of unusually high electricity demand, helping ensure reliable power for homes, businesses and industries across the SPP footprint.

So, what does this mean for cooperative members in South Dakota? Valerie Weigel, senior vice president of Energy Markets and Dakota Coal Operations at Basin Electric, said higher reserve margins means Basin Electric needs to supply more generation capacity to the SPP market to meet expected peak winter demands, which affects Basin Electric’s wholesale rates for the cooperatives it serves.

“The increase in reserve margins means we need to build additional generation to ensure we have enough accredited resources to meet new planning requirements,” Weigel said. “As we look toward the rate increase in 2026, part of that increase reflects the cost of adding these resources to meet updated market requirements.”

Learning The Lingo

Transmission

High-voltage power lines and related infrastructure that move electricity long distances from power plants to local utilities. Transmission allows electricity to be shared across regions, especially during emergencies or peak demand.

Generation Capacity

The maximum amount of electricity that a utility’s power plant or portfolio of power plants can produce at one time. Capacity matters most during peak demand, when the grid is under the most strain. This may happen during extreme heat or cold, when people are using more electricity to heat or cool their homes.

Southwest Power Pool (SPP)

A regional transmission organization that coordinates electricity transmission and wholesale power markets across 14 Midwestern states, including South Dakota and Minnesota. SPP does not own power plants or transmission lines; instead, it manages how electricity flows across the regional grid.

Regional Transmission Organization (RTO)

A federally approved organization, like SPP, that operates the electric grid across multiple states. RTOs balance supply and demand, manage wholesale electricity markets and plan for long-term grid reliability.

Reserve Margin

The extra amount of generation capacity kept available above expected peak demand. This extra capacity helps the grid handle extreme weather, unexpected outages or sudden increases in electricity use.

2025 Year in Review



\$1M
in CAPITAL CREDITS
returned back to the
WREA membership

498
NEWLY Constructed
services

6
students joined our
new PowerUp Youth
Leadership Program

131,914
HOURS WORKED by our
great group of 58
employees

2
new Board
members welcomed
to the nine-person
board of directors.

\$12,000
in OPERATION
ROUNDUP funds
given to 8 local
non-profits

1,859
new membership
applications worked



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Rapid City, SD 57703
Monday – Friday: 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.
605-393-1500
Info@westriver.coop

WALL OFFICE

1200 W 4th Ave
PO Box 412
Wall, SD 57790
Monday – Friday: 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.
605-279-2135
Info@westriver.coop

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FEB. 20-22
Winterfest 2026
Lead, SD
www.leadmethere.org/winterfest

Photo Courtesy of Lead Area Chamber of Commerce

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.

JAN. 28
Hill City Garden Club
Why Farmers Markets Matter to Small Towns
1 p.m.
Super 8 Motel Conference Room
Hill City, SD

JAN. 30
Box Elder Ball
6 p.m.-8 p.m.
Box Elder Events Center
Box Elder, SD
605-390-9341

JAN. 30-FEB. 7
Annual Black Hills Stock Show
Central States Fairgrounds
Rapid City, SD
www.centralstatesfairinc.com
605-355-3861

JAN. 31
Raptors at the Greenhouse
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
2962 Jolly Lane
Rapid City, SD
Raptor Center: 605-519-2008
info@blackhillsraptorcenter.org

FEB. 4
Little Lives NICU Awareness Blood Drive by Vitalant
11 a.m.
Slumberland Furniture
Rapid City, SD
877-258-4825

FEB. 13
Fe"brew"ary
3:30-6:30 p.m.
Granite Sports
Hill City, SD

FEB. 14
Tour de Chocolate
Main Street
Hill City, SD

FEB. 18
Ash Wednesday/Lent Soup & Service
5:30 p.m. Meal
6:30 p.m. Service
Rapid Valley United Methodist
Rapid City, SD

FEB. 20-22
Winterfest
Fireworks, Parade of Lights, Bonfire, Snowshoeing
Lead, SD
www.leadmethere.com/winterfest
605-584-1100

FEB. 21
All Ability Skate
12-3 p.m.
Main Street Square
Rapid City, SD
disabilityaac@rcgov.org

FEB. 23-MARCH 1
Custer Restaurant Week
Custer, SD

FEB. 25
Hill City Garden Club
Back to Eden Organic Farming
1 p.m.
Super 8 Motel Conference Room
Hill City, SD

FEB. 28
Law Enforcement Special Olympics Polar Plunge
10 a.m. Check-In
Omaha St. Rapid Spa
Rapid City, SD

MARCH 7
Free Christian Men's Event
The Barn at Aspen Acres
8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Spearfish, SD
Register: RiseUpMen.com

MARCH 20-21
Badlands Quilters Getaway
Fri. 5:30 p.m. Start
Sat. 8 a.m. Start
Wall Community Center
Wall, SD
605-279-2807

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