

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



South Dakota Art

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Grid Reliability

Back on the Soap Box



Dick Johnson
General Manager

By the time this hits your mailbox, February will be mostly over, and the Minnesota Vikings will have missed another Super Bowl. The thought of spring is approaching, but before we move on, I want to address a critical issue – grid reliability.

I recently attended one of the most painful meetings in my career at an electric utility. We met with our power supplier, Rushmore Electric, to discuss what we could do in the event of another Winter Storm Uri that occurred in February 2021. I still remember it like it was yesterday; Feb. 16, 2021, at 6:31 a.m. I was at work when I got the call that WAPA had been forced to cut the energy to our Weston Heights sub among with many others in the mid-section of our country. Why? A lack of generation. They needed to cut usage in order to save the entire grid from collapsing. This affected roughly 10% of our members and that incident highlights the importance of having a reliable power grid.

West River Electric has been working hard for 83 years to improve our system's reliability, including adding backup ties and underground infrastructure. Our reliability was 99.99% last year. However, when policy makers and anti-energy groups force the power generation business to curtail their fossil fuel and nuclear baseload generation options, I feel it sets our country back decades. While I support renewable energy, we also need a firm, baseload generation source, particularly during extreme weather conditions like the minus 60-degree wind chill in December 2022. Our coal and natural gas assets were running overtime to keep the lights on during that time.

Electricity is not just a luxury; it drives our economy and has significant defense implications. Countries like Russia and China understand this and are adding more fossil fuels to their energy mix as electricity runs at the heart of everything we do. The South Dakota Legislature recently introduced a resolution to study nuclear energy as a generation resource and economic development tool, which I hope will result in a clearer path for our energy future. Though I don't know the final outcome prior to this column, I am excited to see policy makers talking about it. West River Electric and our power suppliers are working tirelessly to ensure a smooth energy transition.

We bid farewell to two dedicated employees in January – Cheryl Walker, Manager of Information Technology (17 years) and Wayne Shull, Operations Superintendent in Wall (38 years) - who retired from West River Electric Association. We miss them and wish them and their families the best in their retirements. They were two very dedicated servants to you, our member owners.

Stay safe.

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

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 675-840)

Our Mission:

We are safety conscious, community oriented, and the trusted energy expert for our member owners.

Our Vision:

We will achieve an ACSI score of 90 by 2024.

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
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- Howard Knuppe
- Marcia Arneson
- Chuck Sloan
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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.

Cooperative Principle 2: Democratic Member Control



Amanda Haugen
Communications Specialist

Electric cooperatives are a unique type of utility company that are owned and operated by their members. In other words, they represent local control at its finest. Cooperatives were formed to provide electricity to rural and remote areas where traditional, investor-owned utilities have not invested. The second cooperative principle is an important aspect as it defines how these organizations operate to provide electricity to their members.

The second cooperative principle is Democratic Member Control. This states that electric cooperatives are controlled by their members through the democratic process. The members of the cooperative have an equal say in how the cooperative is run, regardless of how much electricity they use or how much they have invested in the cooperative.

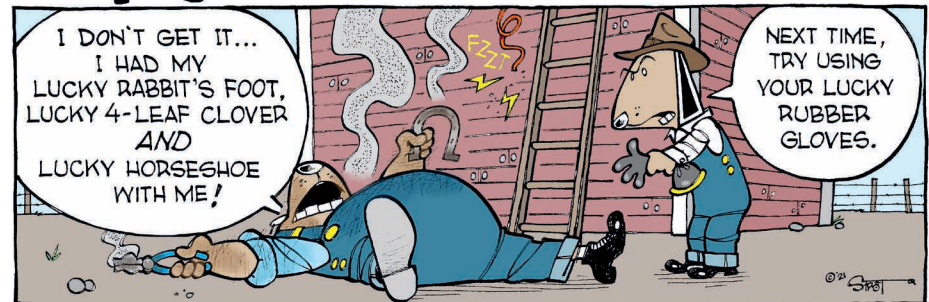
In practice, this principle is reflected in the fact that electric cooperatives are governed by a board of directors who are elected by the members. The board is responsible for making decisions on behalf of the cooperative, such as setting rates and policies. Additionally, the members of the cooperative have the right to vote on important issues, such as changes to the cooperative's bylaws or the approval of major investments.

Democratic Member Control is important for electric cooperatives because it ensures that the interests of all members are taken into account. This is particularly important in rural and remote areas, where a small number of large electricity users could otherwise dominate the decision-making process. By giving all members an equal say, Democratic Member Control helps to ensure that electric cooperatives provide reliable and affordable electricity to all members, regardless of their individual circumstances.

In conclusion, the second cooperative principle is a fundamental aspect of electric cooperatives. Democratic Member Control ensures that electric cooperatives are governed in the best interests of all members, and that the provision of electricity is equitable and affordable. This is essential for the continued success of electric cooperatives and for ensuring that they are able to provide reliable and affordable electricity to their members for many years to come. 10913700

Come back next month to read about the 3rd cooperative principle – Member's Economic Control.

Murphy



Spring Planting Safety

Farming equipment has become more massive and technologically advanced over time. While these welcome improvements help farmers cover more ground in less time, taller equipment and longer extensions can bring added challenges around power lines.

As farmers prepare to enter the fields for planting, we urge everyone working in the agricultural field to be alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines, poles and other electrical equipment.



Follow the 10-foot distance rule

To stay safe around overhead power lines, follow safe work practices at all times to help prevent serious and even deadly accidents. Start by making sure everyone knows to maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from power lines.

This 10-foot rule applies not only to the area underneath the power line, but to the full 360 degrees around it. Not only can electricity change paths if direct contact is made, it can also happen when someone or something gets too close to a power line, and the current jumps, also known as arcing.

Other precautions

In addition to the 10-foot rule, take these steps to help decrease the chances of an electrical-related incident:

- If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line, do not get out of the cab because you could be electrocuted. Instead, stay where you are and call 9-1-1 to dispatch the appropriate utility to deenergize the power.
- If it is not safe to stay in the cab due to fire or smoke, make

a solid, clean jump with both feet landing at the same time. Hop away with feet together as far as you can.

- If you come across an accident or incident near a downed power line, alert individuals (from at least 50 feet away) to stay in the cab or vehicle as long as there is no imminent danger. Call 9-1-1 and do not approach the scene.
- Have a daily meeting with staff to go over possible hazards. Map out and review routes where equipment will be moved and ensure it will clear power lines.
- Teach anyone working with or for you (including family members and seasonal employees) about power line awareness and proper clearance distance.
- When working around power lines, always use a spotter, who has a broader vantage point than the person in the cab.
- Visually inspect overhead lines, which may not meet height codes due to age or pole damage. If a wire is hanging low, never try to move it; instead, contact your electric utility for assistance.
- Lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.



Take care when plugging in appliances

Stella Nilson

Stella Nilson gives good advice on circuit safety. Overloading circuits is a major cause of residential fires, and she warns people to take care when plugging in appliances. Stella is the daughter of Kyle and Alision Nilson, members of Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake.

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.

SEAFOOD SPECIALTY

SEAFOOD PARTY DIP

Ingredients:

1 pkg. mock crab sticks
 1 pkg. mock crab pieces
 1 pkg. mock lobster
 1 pkg. salad shrimp
 1 can water chestnuts
 1 medium onion (optional)
 1 c. real mayonnaise
 2 pkg. Philly cream cheese
 Dried parsley, garlic powder, salt, and pepper to taste

METHOD

Grind crab, lobster, shrimp, and water chestnuts. Chop onion. Using a mixer, blend mayo and cream cheese until smooth. Add parsley, garlic powder, salt, and pepper to taste. Combine with seafood. Mix well and refrigerate. Serve with various kinds of crackers.

Kari Larson Reder, Warner, S.D.

WALLEYE CAKES

Ingredients:

8 oz. walleye (cooked, cooled, and flaked)
 1 1/2 c. mayonnaise
 4 eggs
 1 c. cooked wild rice
 1/2 c. Parmesan cheese
 4 green onions (chopped)
 1 sleeve saltine crackers (crushed)
 1 tsp. crushed garlic
 2 tsps. seasonings (salt, pepper)
 2 tbsp. oil or butter

METHOD

In large bowl, combine walleye, mayo, rice, onion, garlic, and cheese. Add eggs and seasonings. Fold in crushed saltines until the mixture is firm enough to form cakes. Fry in olive oil for 2-3 minutes on each side or until crispy. Serve with topping: 1/2 c. mayo, 1 tsp. garlic powder, and 1 oz. crumbled blue cheese. Mix together.

Dar Duncan, Milbank, S.D.

SHRIMP PASTA

Ingredients:

1 can (14 1/2 oz.) diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 can (6 oz.) tomato paste
 1 c. water
 2 tsps. sugar
 1 tsp. basil leaves
 1 tsp. garlic powder
 1 tsp. oregano leaves
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper
 8 oz. pasta, such as linguine or spaghetti
 1 lb. medium shrimp, peeled and deveined

METHOD

Mix tomatoes, tomato paste, water, sugar, basil, garlic powder, oregano, salt and red pepper in large saucepan. Bring to boil on medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low; simmer, uncovered, 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, cook pasta as directed on package, adding shrimp during last 3 minutes of cooking. Drain. Return pasta and shrimp to saucepot. Pour tomato sauce over shrimp and pasta. Toss gently to coat well. Serve immediately with shredded Parmesan cheese, if desired.

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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



ARE YOU READY FOR AN ALL-EXPENSE PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON D.C.?

West River Electric is sponsoring **two** high school Juniors or Seniors from our service territory to attend the **National Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour Event!**

WHO CAN APPLY?

Junior or Senior students whose parents are members of West River Electric.



Scan this QR code to submit an application today!


Deadline to apply is **APRIL 3rd**

This is an **all-expense** paid trip to Washington D.C. where more than 1,800 students from across the nation come together to learn about America's history and the role Electric Cooperatives play in developing strong rural communities. **Students are responsible for their own snack and souvenir spending money.**

This week-long even takes place **June 17-23, 2023.**



West River Electric Association, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

Questions? Call: 605-393-1500 or Email: info@westriver.coop



Teacher Scholarships available!


- ▶ Do you teach at a school served by WREA?
- ▶ In need of funds to support your Classroom?
- ▶ Scan the QR code to apply for funds!

▶ TEACHERS:

Funds must go towards a classroom project, supplies, or equipment.



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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity.

Source: energy.gov



Beat the Peak



Adam Daigle
Energy Advisor

If you look around your home, you likely have more devices and equipment that require electricity than ever before. Our connected lives are increasingly dependent on more electricity to function. At the same time, as demand for electricity rises, West River Electric must deliver an uninterrupted 24/7 power supply – regardless of market conditions or other circumstances.

As you would expect, based on your family’s habits, electricity use fluctuates throughout the day based on consumer demand. West River Electric must be able to provide enough electricity to meet the energy needs of all members during times of highest energy use or “peak hours.” These peak times are typically in the morning as people start their day and in the evening as people return to their homes.

What you may not know is that electric utilities, including

West River Electric, typically pay more for electricity – either from a power plant or from another utility with excess power – during those morning and evening “energy rush hours.” In addition, the demand for electricity is even higher when it’s especially cold outside, when heating systems must run longer to warm our homes.

If the “peak times” concept is a bit puzzling, here’s an easy way to think about it, and it’s similar to a major concert. We know costs go up when there is strong demand for tickets (or electricity), and both are subject to the basic economic laws of supply and demand. When a lot of people want the same thing, it’s more expensive. When they don’t, it’s cheaper – like a bargain matinee or an “early bird” special at a restaurant. 4797900

During peak periods, when the cost to produce and purchase power is higher, we encourage you to take simple steps to save energy. Such as turning your thermostat down a few notches, turning off unnecessary lights and waiting to use large appliances during off-peak times are all ways to save energy.

You can also save energy by plugging electronics and equipment such as computers, printers and TVs into a power strip, then turn it off at the switch during peak hours. If you have a programmable thermostat, adjust the settings to sync up with off-peak time periods. When we all work together to reduce energy use during periods of high electricity demand, we can relieve pressure on the grid and save a little money along the way.

Another benefit of this time-of-use approach to electricity use allows greater control over your bill. Reducing the peak impacts the power-supply cost to every co-op member. This is particularly noticeable as energy costs have risen across the U.S. Collectively, everyone conserving energy and making small changes can truly make a difference.

Remember, taking simple steps to save energy throughout the day and shifting energy intensive chores to off-peak hours is a smart choice for you and our community. Scan the QR code or visit our website to learn more about our peak energy times.



West River Electric Association, Inc.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

PEAK TIMES

By lowering your usage during the times in RED WREA will purchase less expensive electricity which helps to keep our rates lower

SUMMER
(June 1 - September 30)

WINTER
(October 1 - May 31)



TRASHYARD TREASURES

Lee Lindsley of Piedmont turns trash into treasure when he isn't on the clock working for the South Dakota Department of Transportation.

South Dakota Man Welds Junkyard Scraps Into Pieces of Art

Frank Turner

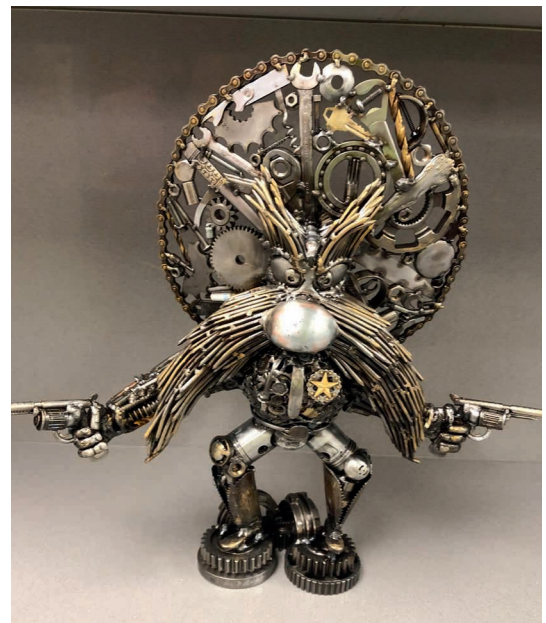
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Lee Lindsley has a real talent for welding trash into treasure. Given the time, Lindsley can sculpt even the most unwanted junkyard scrap – busted gears, rusted lug nuts and mangled bicycle chains – into an artistic masterpiece.

By day, Lindsley works as a region inspector for the South Dakota Department of Transportation in the Black Hills, but by night, he can be found in his shop putting hours of work into his metallic puzzles, welding them together piece by piece.

When not on the clock, Lindsley is busy tackling his next project, investing anywhere from 30 to 100 hours into each sculpture. The end result often portrays a snapshot of rural life in the Black Hills: a life-size hunting dog made from a mix of old tools and spent rifle rounds, a miniature snowmobile standing on a displaced piston and a gun-slinging Yosemite Sam with a beard fashioned from old nails.

“Metal sculpting is some-



Famous cartoon character Yosemite Sam is one of Lindsley's favorite metal creations.

thing that anyone can do if they put their mind to it,” said Lindsley. “All I do is throw parts of junk together.”

In many ways, Lindsley’s passion for sculpting and welding echoes the resourcefulness of the very artwork he makes. When Lindsley began his metal sculpting journey, he didn’t have a formal education or even a background in art to guide him. Instead, he relied on his welding skills and the bits of scrap he had available to make his remarkable artwork.

“It’s hard to put a price on these pieces, but if my artwork does sell, I want to donate a portion of the sale to a charity.”

It was Lindsley’s second cousin Chris Degen, a teacher at Mitchell Technical College, who inspired Lindsley’s first foray into metal sculpting four years ago. Degen recalls gifting Lindsley’s son, a former lineman, a simple lineman made from nuts and bolts during the holidays. The quirky Christmas gift became a catalyst for the two to start creating new projects and bouncing new ideas off each other. According to Degen, Lindsley just ran away with the idea.

“He went crazy with it,” Degen laughed. “Lee started making sculptures that went way above and beyond what I was doing. I would put an hour into my project, and he would put one hundred into his.”

Taking another step forward in his hobby, Lindsley began researching works and art pieces posted online by world-famous metal sculptors, including metal sculptors John Lopez – a South Dakotan – and Brian Mock, whose masterpieces provided Lindsley a roadmap of what can be accomplished.

Since embarking on his metal sculpting journey, Lindsley has completed more than 18 metal sculptures, and his hobby continues to blossom. For the first time ever, Lindsley put one of his sculptures

up for sale in A1 Al’s Pheasant Ranch in Emery S.D. Since November, Lindsley’s metal hunting dog has stood proudly in one of the ranch’s hunting cabins, waiting for a buyer, and although the dog hasn’t left the shelf just yet, Lindsley said he is

excited to see his work out in the open and visible to the public eye.

“It’s hard to put a price on these pieces, but if my artwork does sell, I want to donate a portion of the sale to a charity,” he said. “We will see what happens.”



Lindsley’s metal German shepherd sits proudly in his workshop.

Member Services Q&A

With Amy Thompson



Amy Thompson
Manager of
Member Services

How long have you been working with West River Electric?

I have been with WREA for 15 years.

What does your job entail?

I lead a team of 8 in the member services department. We cover everything from new memberships to billing and everything in between.

What do you love most about West River Electric?

I love that every decision is in the best interest of our members and the employees.

What is your favorite memory since starting work at West River Electric?

There are so many, but the one that came to mind 1st was doing

a ride along with the line crew after Altas. I rode in the snowcat across Rapid Creek out on Hammerquist Road. The water was pretty deep and flowing quickly from all the snow melting. It felt like it took forever to get across it. Once we got safely to the other side, I watched them set a pole and was able to attach the ground wire to a pole. It was pretty uneventful in the day-to-day life of a lineman, but it was an adventure for me and something I've thought of often.

How would you describe West River Electric in three words?

Doing what's right

What motivates you to get up and go to work every day?

That is easy – everything! It is easy to get up every day and come to work when you love what you do and who you work with. We are a fantastic group of people with the same passion for helping our members. 9559701

Don't Ignore Your Water Heater



Jared Stalley
Marketing
Representative

Your home's water heater is a vital component of your plumbing system, providing hot water for everything from cooking and cleaning to showering and bathing. However, many homeowners tend to ignore their water heaters until they experience a problem or need to replace it. This can lead to costly repairs or replacements, as well as inconvenience and discomfort. Below, we'll discuss why it's important not to ignore your water heater and how to properly maintain it. 10666600

Don't Ignore the Signs

Some common indicators that your water heater may be in trouble include:

- No hot water or only lukewarm water
- Strange noises coming from the tank
- Leaks or drips around the base of the tank
- Water that has a metallic taste or smell

If you notice any of these signs, it's important to address the issue as soon as possible. Ignoring the problem can lead to further damage or even complete failure of the water heater.

Inspected on a Regular Basis

One of the most important things you can do to keep your water heater in good working condition is to have it professionally inspected and serviced on a regular basis. A trained plumber can check for leaks, rust, and other potential problems, and make any necessary repairs or adjustments. They can also flush the tank to remove any sediment that has built up, which can improve the efficiency of the heater and prolong its life.

Insulate Your Water Heater

Another important step in maintaining your water heater is to ensure that it is properly insulated. This can help to keep the hot water in the tank hot for longer periods of time, reducing the need to reheat and saving you energy and money.

Watch the Temperature

You should also keep an eye on the temperature setting of your water heater. The United States Department of Energy recommends setting your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit to help reduce the risk of scalding while still providing plenty of hot water.

Mind Your Hot Water

In addition to regular inspections and maintenance, it's also important to be mindful of how you are using hot water in your home. For example, taking shorter showers, washing clothes in cold water, and using low-flow showerheads can all help to reduce the load on your water heater and prolong its life.

In conclusion, your home's water heater is a crucial part of your plumbing system, providing hot water for daily needs. But it's easy to ignore it until a problem arises. By being proactive and taking steps to maintain your water heater, you can avoid costly repairs, ensure that you have hot water when you need it, and prolong the life of the unit. Regular maintenance, proper insulation, keeping an eye on the temperature, and being mindful of your hot water usage are all important steps to take to ensure that your water heater stays in good working condition.



Construction Report

Matt Schmahl

Construction Manager

If you have been past the New Underwood area lately, you may have noticed the construction that has started on the south side of town in recent months. National Grid Renewables has begun construction on its 128-megawatt solar facility, which is the largest solar project to date in South Dakota. This facility will encompass nearly 1,499 acres and include approximately 340,000 solar panels. Other components that will be constructed include a collector substation, a transmission line to connect back into the nearby New Underwood Substation, electrical connector lines from the solar array units to the collector substation, access roads, and other associated electrical equipment.

National Grid Renewables has selected Ames Construction to construct the solar farm. The Wild Springs project is currently planned to begin commercial operation in late 2023. West River Electric's power supplier, Basin Electric, has contracted to purchase the electricity from the site and then will distribute it among all the cooperatives in the region.

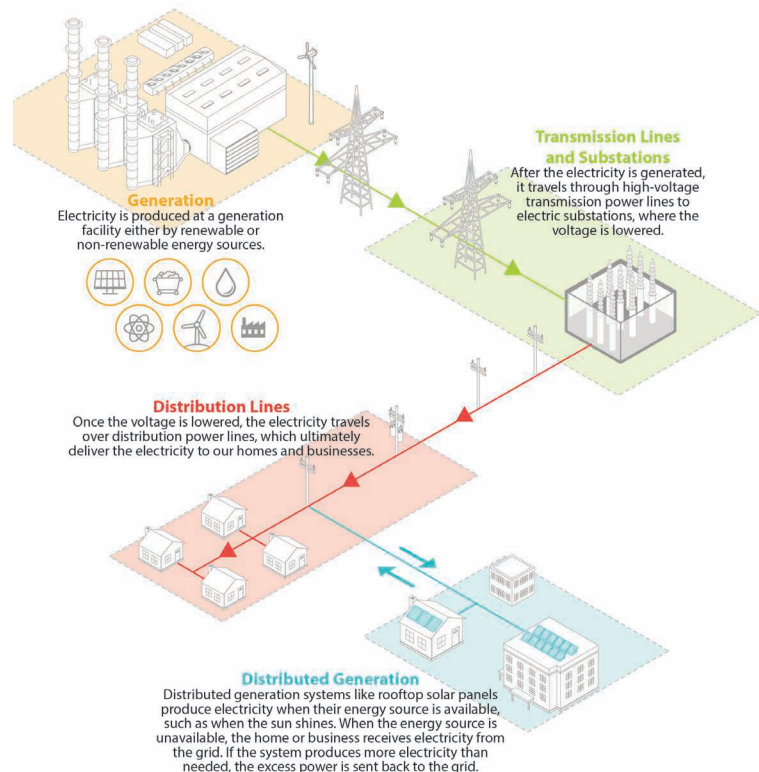
Many people inquire about how much a facility of this size will be able to serve. While this is an important question, it is also a more challenging one to answer. We must remember that each family's lifestyle is different from the next. Another factor is how the homes are heated and what type of appliances are used, whether gas or electric. With this in mind, we estimate that the Wild Springs facility could serve roughly 10,000 homes.

While this number is very high, it is essential to keep in mind the importance of base load generation. Base load generation is composed of turbines that run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, no matter what the conditions. This type of generation is typically produced from coal-fired, hydro, or gas turbines. While many factors determine how efficient solar energy is, the main factor to remember is that solar requires high sun output on the panel locations – cloud cover, time of day, time of year, all play a part in the output. Summer months are an excellent opportunity to take advantage of this valuable

asset from mid-afternoon to early evening. Solar is typically not viable for extreme cold weather events like the one we witnessed in December. Our highest usage times were in the early morning before most people left for work and in the evening when families were coming home after work. 10890600

As you can see, each asset that your cooperative utilizes fits well within our energy portfolio. Solar is an excellent option, but base load plants are still needed to ensure the reliability we expect, especially in extreme weather events.

HOW ELECTRICITY REACHES YOU



THE STORY OF DUDE DAD

Taylor and Heidi Calmus play with their kids (Theo, Juno and Otto) on a playset Taylor built. The family will welcome another baby in March.

Howard Grows More Than Corn

Tara Miller

Central Electric Cooperative

His kids may only know him as dad, but Jimmy Kimmel, the entire internet and 7 million followers can't be wrong – Howard native Taylor Calmus has evolved into a new-age celebrity. Better known as Dude Dad, Calmus is an accomplished actor, video producer, digital content creator, author, builder, television show host and comedian. Besides making regular appearances on Jimmy Kimmel Live, Calmus has also shared the screen with home remodeling experts Chip and Joanna Gaines, acclaimed actor Anthony Anderson and several YouTube stars.

Calmus is the son of Larry and Julie Calmus. He grew up west of Howard with siblings Zach and Maggie, and graduated from Howard High School in 2005. He now lives in Fort Collins, CO, but Calmus credits much of his creativity to his rural upbringing.

"Growing up in rural South Dakota was awesome because it forced us to create our own fun. My parents were big advocates of that. They would say, 'Go outside and

find something to do.' It enabled us to be creative," Calmus said.

His mom, Julie, agrees. "We were sticklers. We didn't let them play Nintendo or watch tv all day." Instead, the kids often spent time outside constructing BMX bike ramps, among other things.

Building Strong Connections

Now a dad himself, Calmus enjoys putting his ingenuity and building skills to work for his kids. "Building things with your kids is one of the best ways to bond with them," he said. "I've made carnival rides, backyard bike parks, multiple tree houses, a boat, just so many things. Being a dad gives you permission to imagine the impossible like kids do. It allows me to connect with them."

Calmus and his wife Heidi, who is originally from Fargo, have three children and another baby due in March. Heidi is often the subject of her husband's videos. Calmus puts his acting skills to work, sporting a long brunette wig as he comedically embellishes her life. Luckily, Heidi is a good sport, and they often share reaction videos in which she critiques his performance.

The couple went on tour this year, performing comedy shows as a team in North Dakota, South Dakota and Colorado. Calmus said without his wife, they would not have experienced this level of success. "Heidi believed in me before I did. Without her, Dude Dad wouldn't exist today."

The Evolution of Dude Dad

Success didn't happen overnight, Calmus explained. Early on, he would often pick up work doing set construction for tv shows and movie projects to make ends meet.

"When I moved away, I worked hard to make it in Hollywood as an actor, and I had some success," he said. "Then, when Heidi was pregnant with our second child, it was clear to me that I needed to do something more stable to support a family. That's when we created Dude Dad."

Mastering the Dude Dad brand took a great deal of time and commitment. Calmus constantly brainstormed new ideas for videos that would align with the brand and appeal to viewers. After all, the more views his content generates, the more income he earns from paid advertising on the various platforms.

A humble individual, Calmus doesn't necessarily consider himself famous. He said, "I think my content caught on faster in



Taylor and Heidi perform stand-up comedy as a team. They recently sold out shows in Fargo, Sioux Falls, and Fort Collins.

South Dakota because I have family here.”

But the numbers don't lie. Dude Dad content has more than 1 billion views on Facebook and roughly 150 million views on YouTube. So, his reach is far greater than just the state of South Dakota.

“With TikTok and other apps, there are a billion new creators every year, so it's a challenge all the time,” Calmus said. “Anybody can make videos online now, but not everybody can stand in front of an audience and perform comedy. It's been a fun and rewarding challenge. Now we get to see the people who are connecting with our content.”

Calmus authored a book entitled “A Dude's Guide to Baby Size” to help expectant dads understand their baby's size throughout pregnancy. He shares guy-friendly size comparisons for reference, such as a lug nut, a tape measure, a pound of ground beef and a football.

Giving Back

Because of his success, Calmus has been able to give back in unique ways. In 2019, he partnered with HGTV “Fixer Upper” star Chip Gaines to raise \$1.49 million for St. Jude's Children's Hospital. This partnership led to Calmus's television show, Super Dad, where he helps other dads build custom backyard play areas for their children.

Calmus is also a champion for Horizon Health Foundation's Smiles for Miles program. He helped the non-profit raise more than \$20,000 in a single day to provide free dental care for local kids.

Most recently, Taylor and Heidi performed

a live show in Fort Collins and donated the proceeds to a neighborhood family who sadly lost their father.

“He left behind two little kids who are friends with our kids, and we just wanted to be there for them however we could,” Calmus shared.

Making the Family Proud

Reggie Gassman, Calmus's uncle, is the Manager of Customer Electrical Services at Sioux Valley Energy in eastern South Dakota. He said he's proud of his nephew's accomplishments.

“When the kids were little, Taylor and Zach were already making home movies. His success creating videos doesn't surprise me at all,” Gassman said. “He takes something from normal, everyday life and sees it from a different angle.”

Gassman joked, “I told Taylor acting genes run in the family because I was named best actor in the junior class play. That's like the Emmys of Canova!”

Calmus said both sides of his family – Calmus and Gassman – are naturally funny and talented in different ways. While Gassmans are widely known for their baseball skills, his uncle Kurt (and his mustache) have famously inspired some of Dude Dad's most iconic characters.

He's Still Just Taylor

Despite his growing list of accomplishments, he's still the same guy his family knows and loves.

Calmus's mom Julie shared, “Since he was two years old, Taylor was always entertaining people and goofing around. His older brother Zach is just as clever, so there's always laughter when the family gets together. It's pretty cool he's been able to make a living doing that.”

She said when strangers recognize her son as Dude Dad, she chuckles. “He's still just Taylor to us.”

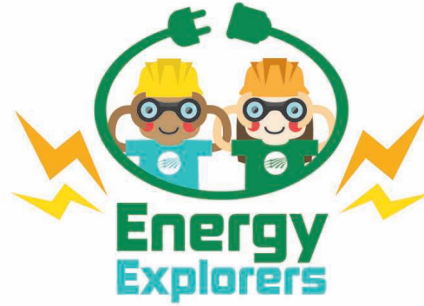


“Husbands of Target” is a viral video with more than 80 million views that Taylor developed in collaboration with other digital content creators.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY WORD SCRAMBLE

Electricity is essential for our daily lives, but it can also be dangerous if you don't play it safe!

Read the safety tips below and unscramble the bolded text to complete the phrase. Use the answer key to double check your work.



1. Never place extension **rdsoc** under rugs or carpet.

2. Make sure electrical cords are not **yrafde** or broken.

3. Smoke **maalsr** should be tested every month.

4. Place electrical cords in areas where you won't **itpr** on them.

5. Keep flammable items at least 3 feet away from space **shetear**.

6. Electricity and **rwtea** never mix.

Answer Key: 1) cords 2) frayed 3) alarms 4) trip 5) heaters 6) water

Employee Spotlight

Shining a Light on West River Electric's Dedicated Employees



Sanden Simons
Operations Superintendent

How long have you been working with West River Electric?

I accepted a 1000-hour position with WREA and started on May 16, 2000. That fall, I started full time as an Apprentice Lineman.

What does your job entail?

I oversee the Wall and Enning line crews.

What do you love most about West River Electric?

We have great consumers that appreciate what we do.

What is your favorite memory since starting work at West River Electric?

I have made a lot of memories over the years – most of them probably shouldn't be talked about here, or they are "you had to have been there" kind of stories.

How would you describe West River Electric in three words?

Number One Co-op

What motivates you to get up and go to work every day?

Knowing that we have a variety of work to do and have a good team to get the jobs done. Keeping power to the members at the end of the line and knowing I

have a good job to provide for my family.

We would also like to take this time to congratulate Sanden on his recent promotion from Line Forman to Operations Superintendent for Wall. His dedication to serve the members doesn't go unnoticed. Congratulations, Sanden!

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.



March 11, 2023
28 Below Fatbike Race
 7:30 a.m.
 Spearfish Canyon Lodge
 Spearfish, SD
 605-641-4963

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 1-7
"In Flanders Fields" Art Exhibit & Silent Auction
 Vermillion Public Library
 Vermillion, SD

MARCH 4
RVUMC Community Rummage and Bake Sale
 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
 5103 Longview Rd
 Rapid City, SD
 605-393-1526

MARCH 4
Annual Ag Day
 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
 Washington Pavilion
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 4
Hill City Arts Council: Live On Stage
 5:30 p.m.
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2810

MARCH 11
28 Below Fatbike Race
 7:30 a.m.
 Spearfish Canyon Lodge
 Spearfish, SD

MARCH 17-18
Badlands Quilters Weekend Getaway
 Wall, SD
 605-279-2020 or 605-279-2807

MARCH 18
Shriners Kids Fun Day
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Scherr-Howe Event Center
 Mobridge, SD
 605-845-2500

MARCH 18
Hill City Arts Council: Live On Stage
 5:30 p.m.
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2810

MARCH 21
Knee High Naturalist: Birds
 Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center
 Custer, SD

MARCH 24-25
Schmeckfest
 Freeman Academy Campus
 Freeman, SD
 605-321-7351

MARCH 30
"The Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest"
 5:30 p.m.
 South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-339-1203

MARCH 31-APRIL 2
70th Annual Hayes Play: Trouble in Tumbleweed
 Hayes Community Hall
 Hayes, SD
 605-280-6556

APRIL 1
East Dakota Chapter NWTX 30th Banquet
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-940-0702

APRIL 2-4
"The Psychic-a Murder Mystery of Sorts" Community Theater Performance
 Town Players Theater
 Watertown, SD
 605-882-2076

APRIL 21-22
Junkin' Market Days, Spring Market
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
 Expo Building
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-941-4958

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