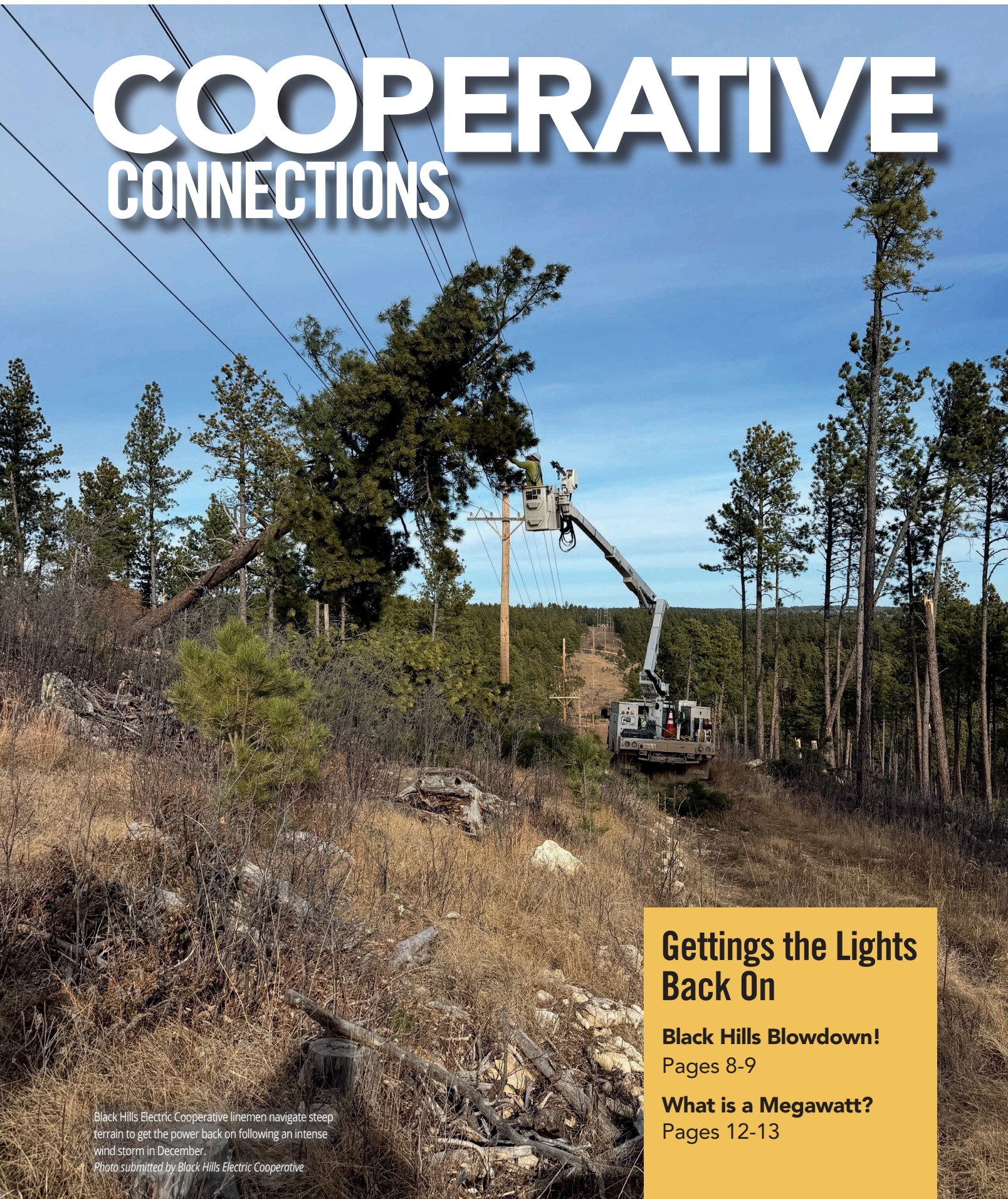


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Gettings the Lights Back On

Black Hills Blowdown!
Pages 8-9

What is a Megawatt?
Pages 12-13

Black Hills Electric Cooperative linemen navigate steep terrain to get the power back on following an intense wind storm in December.
Photo submitted by Black Hills Electric Cooperative

Reliability, Costs, and Planning: Showcasing the Cooperative Difference



Robert Raker
CEO/GM

Before getting into system updates and planning, I want to recognize an important transition at West River Electric. After 35 years of service, our Operations Manager, Mike Letcher, will be retiring.

Mike has been part of this Cooperative through decades of storms, growth, and change. On a personal note, he also played a meaningful role in mentoring me as I worked my way up through the organization and into the CEO role. His steady leadership, practical judgment, and deep understanding of this system shaped not only how the work gets done here—but how leadership looks in action. His decisions have shaped much of the reliability that we enjoy today and into the future.

West River Electric is stronger because of Mike's career. On behalf of our employees, board, and members, we thank him for his service and wish him the very best in retirement.

Reliability Isn't an Accident

Hopefully, by the time this reaches your mailbox, we've had some relief from the relentless wind. I'm often accused of looking at things through rose-colored glasses, so people ask me: what's the silver lining in all this wind?

From our perspective, it reinforced why long-term investment matters.

With more than 2,500 miles of power lines spread across nearly 4,500 square miles of western South Dakota, damage during extreme weather is inevitable. Many of you saw it firsthand—broken poles, damaged lines, and difficult conditions across the region. Because of continued reinvestment in our system, our crews were able to stay ahead of much of the damage and restore service as quickly and safely as possible. Reliability doesn't happen by accident, and it doesn't come for free. But it's not something we're willing to compromise.

Why We're Talking About Costs

You've also heard from us about wholesale power costs and upcoming rate changes. Those conversations aren't easy, but they're necessary.

Wholesale power costs increased significantly over the past year, and local costs—materials, insurance, and labor—continue to rise. Our responsibility is to address those pressures transparently and deliberately, rather than delay decisions and create larger problems for members later. A major contributor to these increased costs is growth and the need for generation

resources that are available 24/7. Much of the generation built in the last years have been wind and solar, and now it's time to start putting steel in the ground to build out natural gas generation. That generation can respond quickly when the sun goes down or when the wind stops blowing. However, these increased costs can also be contributed to increasing and maintaining reliability. 2572200

The decision to go down this path is reviewed carefully by your locally elected Board of Directors with long-term stability—not short-term convenience—in mind.

Planning for What's Next

Looking ahead, we're focused on disciplined planning. That includes strategic planning, a cost-of-service study, and preparing our next four-year Work Plan to ensure the system keeps pace with growth. Just as important, it means making sure members are paying their fair share.

That principle is especially important as we evaluate large emerging loads, including AI data centers. Your Board has drawn a clear line: any data center that would seek to be on our service must fully cover the cost of the infrastructure it requires through Aid to Construction. This ensures existing members will not bear that risk. 2997303

It's also important to understand the broader reality. These loads like AI data centers don't disappear, they're likely to relocate in another state—where they still draw power from the same regional markets our wholesale supplier serves. From a supply-and-demand standpoint, they affect costs in an indirect way. AI and data centers are being brought up at all levels of politics and we have to remain engaged to ensure policy decisions don't undermine reliability or local control. In my short tenure as CEO, we've had to intervene when proposed policies would have created unintended consequences and driven up costs for members.

If we're not paying attention to these issues, someone else is—and they're speaking on your behalf. Our Cooperative stays engaged, so your interests are protected.

The Cooperative Difference

At the end of the day, West River Electric exists for one reason: to serve our members' best interests. Your board lives here. Our employees live here. And the decisions we make show up not just on a balance sheet, but in the reliability of your service and the strength of the communities we call home.

Thank you for your trust and engagement with your Cooperative. We don't take it lightly—and we'll continue to communicate openly as we plan for the future, together.

Teacher Scholarships

Amanda Haugen
Communications Specialist

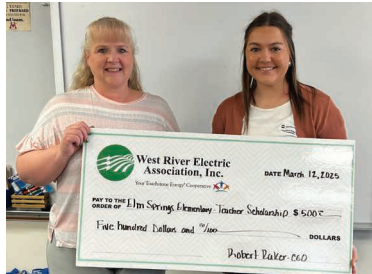
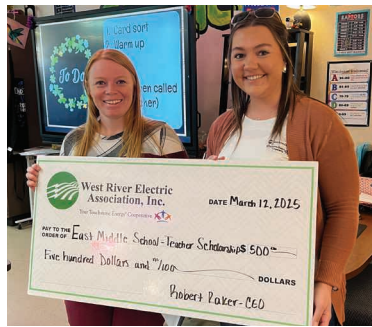
Teachers play a powerful role in shaping our communities. They are often the first to spark curiosity, encourage confidence, and create an environment where students feel supported, motivated, and excited to learn. Every day, teachers show up for our kids — in the classroom, at activities, and often long after the school bell rings.

At West River Electric, we believe supporting education means supporting the people who make learning possible. Just as we proudly invest in our students through post-secondary scholarships, we also want to recognize and support the dedicated teachers who help power student success at every stage.

WREA's Teacher Scholarship program is designed to support teachers as they enhance their classrooms with a new fun and exciting way to get students excited to learn. It serves as a goal of strengthening opportunities for local students.

To be eligible, teachers must work at a school located within West River Electric's 4,500 square mile service territory, or at a school that serves a significant number of students from WREA member households. This ensures the program directly benefits the communities and families we serve every day.

If you know a teacher who goes above and beyond for their students, has found a new and fun way to teach, and needs some funding to help fund the supplies, we encourage you to help spread the word and tell them to apply. We have teacher scholarships available to help end the 2025-2026 school year on a good note and we would love to put them into the hands of the educators who are helping shape the future of our communities.



Scan to apply

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

CEO and General Manager:

Robert Raker – robert.raker@westriver.coop

Editor

Amanda Haugen – amanda.haugen@westriver.coop

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

Other correspondence to: West River Electric Cooperative Connections, 3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD 57703; telephone (605)393-1500, Exts. 6564, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393- 0275; e-mail amanda.haugen@westriver.coop.

Ensuring Drone Safety Near Power Lines

As drones continue to gain popularity for recreational and commercial use, their integration into our daily lives should not lessen the consideration of safety – particularly when it comes to flying near power lines. The intersection of drone technology and electrical infrastructure necessitates adherence to safety protocols, regulations, and best practices to protect both pilots and the integrity of electrical systems.

Power lines are essential components of our electrical grid, delivering energy to homes and businesses. However, they can pose serious hazards for drone operators. Collisions with power lines can cause significant equipment damage, leading to costly repairs or replacements. More critically, such incidents can disrupt service for hundreds of members, creating outages that could last for hours or even days.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has established regulations governing drone use, including restrictions on flying in proximity to power lines. According to FAA guidelines, drone pilots must always maintain a visual line of sight with their aircraft and avoid flying over people. When operating near electrical infrastructure, it is crucial to adhere to the regulations pertaining to altitude and no-fly zones.

Drone operators should also be familiar with state and local laws, as some municipalities have designated specific areas as no-fly zones, particularly near critical infrastructure like power facilities. Understanding these regulations is not only a legal requirement but also an essential step in ensuring the safety of all involved.

Best Practices for Safe Operations

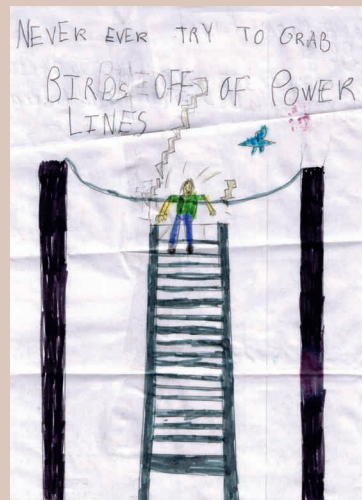
To minimize risks when flying drones near power lines, operators should adopt several best practices:

1. **Pre-Flight Planning:** Before taking off, thoroughly assess the flight area. Identify the location of power lines, potential obstacles, and any relevant no-fly zones. Consulting local maps and aerial photography can aid in understanding the landscape.
2. **Maintain Safe Distances:** When operating near power lines, always keep a safe distance. The FAA recommends a separation of at least 500 feet from energized power lines to avoid potential collisions. Keeping a safe buffer not only protects the drone but also mitigates risks to nearby electrical infrastructure.

3. **Use Technology Wisely:** Many modern drones come equipped with GPS and obstacle avoidance systems that can aid in safe navigation. Utilize these features and ensure that your drone's software is updated to reduce the likelihood of malfunction.
4. **Operating in Controlled Conditions:** Avoid flying drones in poor weather conditions such as high winds, rain, or reduced visibility. Harsh weather not only affects flight stability but can also lead to loss of control over the drone, increasing the risk of accidents.
5. **Emergency Procedures:** In case of a malfunction or loss of control, having an emergency plan in place is vital. Be prepared to communicate with local authorities if a drone becomes entangled in power lines or presents a safety concern.

As the popularity of drones continues to soar, awareness around safety protocols, especially near power lines, has become increasingly critical. By understanding the risks involved, adhering to regulations, and implementing best practices for safe drone operations, pilots can ensure the protection of themselves, others, and vital electrical infrastructure. Responsible drone use fosters innovation while ensuring safety remains paramount in our evolving technological landscape.

"Never ever try to grab birds off of power lines!"



**Naomi Krcil,
Age 8**

Naomi warns readers to never EVER grab birds off of a power line. Great picture, 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.

Scrumptious SALADS

MACARONI SALAD

Ingredients:

2 cups macaroni (cooked, drained, rinsed and cooled)
 2 or more cups of carrots (chopped or shredded)
 1 small chopped onion (optional)
 1 cup chopped green pepper (optional)

Dressing

1 cup mayonnaise (Hellmans)
 1/4 cup vinegar
 1/2 cup sugar
 7 oz. sweetened condensed milk
 1/4 tsp. salt
 1/4 tsp. pepper

R. Gregg Fritz
 H-D Electric

KARI REDER'S POTATO SALAD

Ingredients:

7-8 lbs. potatoes, Yukon gold or red
 1 dozen eggs
 1 med. sweet onion
 2 cups Mayo
 1 tbsp. cream
 1/4 cup of apple cider vinegar
 1/2 cup of sugar or splenda
 1 1/2 tbsps. mustard
 2 tbsps. celery seed
 Celery salt, salt and pepper to taste

Method

Boil potatoes and eggs, peel and dice. Add the chopped onion. Mix together mayo, cream, apple cider vinegar, sugar, mustard, celery seed, celery salt, salt and pepper. Mix all together well and refrigerate.

Kari Reder
 Northern Electric

SUMMER GARDEN PASTA SALAD

Ingredients:

1 lb. thin spaghetti, broken into 1" pieces
 1 pt. cherry tomatoes, halved
 2 med. zucchini, peeled & diced
 2 med. cucumbers, diced
 1 green pepper, diced
 1 red pepper, diced
 1 - 16 oz. can sliced black olives, drained

Dressing:

1 - 16 oz. bottle Italian dressing
 1/4 cup parmesan cheese
 1 tbsp. sesame seeds
 1 tsp. paprika
 1/2 tsp. celery seed
 1/2 tsp. garlic salt

Method

Cook pasta; drain. Drizzle with 1-2 tsps. olive oil. In large bowl, combine pasta, tomatoes, zucchini, cucumber, peppers and olives.

Whisk dressing ingredients together. Pour over salad ingredients and toss to coat.

Cover and refrigerate for three hours.

Jane Ham
 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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

It's SMART TO USE SMARTHUB



Amanda Haugen
Communications Specialist

SmartHub is a powerful tool designed to simplify your experience. By providing convenience in managing your electric account and ways to pay on the go, SmartHub offers a wide range of benefits. 3170000

1. Account Management

- a. Members can easily view and manage their account from anywhere, at any time. This includes viewing past and current billing statements, monitoring usage, and making payments securely online.

2. Usage Monitoring

- a. SmartHub provides detailed reports into your energy consumption in 15 minute intervals. Members can track their daily, weekly, and even monthly usage patterns, helping them to pinpoint areas where they could conserve energy to help reduce costs.

3. Payment Convenience

- a. Members can set up automatic payments, reducing the risk of late fees, and ensuring their account stays in good standing. The option to choose different payment methods adds further flexibility.

4. Notifications and Alerts

- a. SmartHub allows members to receive customized notifications and alerts about billing, outages, and other account-related activities. These alerts help members stay informed and proactive about their energy consumption and account status.

5. Outage Reporting and Updates

- a. In the event of power outages, SmartHub allows members to report outages quickly. This feature enhances communication and trust as members stay informed on the restoration efforts.

SmartHub empowers members to take control of their account, efficiency, and reliability, making it a valuable tool for managing their energy usage and account as a whole. Through its convenience and user-friendly platform, SmartHub offers a simpler, and more informed member experience.

Energy Efficiency 101



Jared Stalley
Marketing Rep

We all have our favorite season. Some people love crisp, cool weather and bundling up under a favorite blanket, while others prefer the warm temperatures summer brings and all fun outdoor activities that go with it.

But there's one thing we can all agree on: high bills are never fun. West River Electric is here to help you find ways to manage your home energy use and keep winter bills in check.

Mind the Thermostat

This is one of the easiest ways to manage your home energy use. We recommend setting your thermostat to 68 degrees (or lower) when you're home. When you're sleeping or away for an extended period of time, try setting it a few degrees lower to heat your home when you're away or sleeping and less active.

Another simple reminder: layers still work. A sweater or cozy blanket can go a long way on cool evenings and help you avoid turning the thermostat up.

Let the Sun Do Some of the Work

Spring sunshine can be a powerful (and free) energy source. On sunny days, open curtains and blinds on south-facing windows to let natural heat warm your home. When the sun goes down and temperatures drop, close them again to keep that warmth inside.

Seal in Comfort

Winter can be tough on your home. March is a great time to check doors and windows for drafts. The Department of Energy estimates that air leaks account for 24% to 40% of the energy used for heating and cooling a home. Caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors is another simple, cost-effective way to increase comfort and save energy. If you can feel drafts while standing near a window or door, it likely needs to be sealed.

A Fresh Start for Your Heating System

If you haven't already, changing your furnace filter is one of the easiest ways to improve



efficiency and indoor air quality. Clean filters help your system run more smoothly and use less energy. 3220100

Spring is also a good time to schedule HVAC maintenance. A quick tune-up ensures your heating system finishes the season efficiently and helps prepare your cooling system for warmer days ahead.

Energy Efficiency Isn't Just Seasonal

Some energy-saving habits work year-round. Washing clothes in cold water, washing full loads in your dishwasher or washer, turning off lights when you leave a room, and unplugging unused electronics can all help reduce energy use — no matter the season.

With longer daylight hours, take advantage of natural light and turn off unnecessary lights when you can.

Looking Ahead Together

At WREA, we're always looking for ways to help you use energy wisely and affordably. Small steps taken now can make a meaningful difference — both on your energy use and your monthly bill.

As spring slowly settles in, keeping winter efficiency in mind can help you stay comfortable, save energy, and be ready for the warmer months ahead.



Intense wind left the crossarm of a broken three-phase pole hanging after a holiday storm.
Photos submitted by Black Hills Electric Cooperative

GETTING THE LIGHTS BACK ON

Black Hills Electric Cooperative Works Tirelessly Following Holiday Storm

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

In the early morning hours of Dec. 18, powerful winds swept across western South Dakota, leaving much of the Black Hills without electricity. The outage included the home of Bill Brisk, manager of operations at Black Hills Electric Cooperative.

Through wild winds, Brisk set out for his office at the cooperative at 3 a.m., where he discovered that the windstorm was unlike anything he had seen in his 36 years with the cooperative.

“We get wind in the Hills,” Brisk said. “But nothing like that. In all of the time that I’ve been at the cooperative, I’ve never seen wind that strong.”

Wind gusts were later estimated at more than 100 mph, tearing through the Black

Hills with unprecedented force.

When Brisk arrived, the scope of the damage became clear. Nearly the entire system was down, and more than 11,000 of the co-op’s approximately 11,500 meters were without power. By daybreak, more than 96% of Black Hills Electric Cooperative’s system was dark, the largest outage event in the cooperative’s history.

Although an influx of outage calls from members came in around midnight, Brisk made an early and critical decision; crews would not be sent out while the storm was still raging.

“We began receiving calls around midnight, but I did not have our crews go out, just for the fact that it was just too dangerous,” Brisk said. “Trees were breaking off, conditions were hazardous, and I didn’t want to put our crews in any

dangerous situations.”

Instead, crews waited for daylight, when conditions allowed for safe assessment – the first step of getting the lights back on.

Assessment almost always begins with reporting from the community. Due to an overwhelming call volume during storm events, local reports of outages are forwarded to Basin Electric Power Cooperative’s Security and Response Services. These services relay important updates to electric cooperatives. Dispatchers communicate with linemen via push-to-talk radios and cell phones, tracking linemen from the time they leave the shop until the outage has been restored.

In addition to local reports, linemen also conduct their own assessments. That morning, linemen reported countless uprooted and snapped trees, downed poles and even wires lay broken across forest floors and roadways. In some areas, trees fell into other trees, creating dangerous conditions for anyone working below.

“I believe this was one of the worst storms in our cooperative’s history, including winter storm Atlas,” said Brisk.

As the assessment was underway, line

crews worked to bring downed substations back online first, then main three-phase feeders, followed by smaller distribution lines that bring power directly to homes and businesses. That order helps restore electricity to the greatest number of members as quickly as possible.

In the Black Hills, terrain adds another layer of complexity. Many lines run through dense forest, steep canyons and areas far from maintained roads.

“This isn’t square-mile territory,” Brisk said. “You might have to drive five or six miles just to get around a canyon.”

By midday Dec. 18, it was decided the damage was too widespread for Black Hills Electric to tackle alone. Brisk reached out to Mark Patterson, South Dakota Rural Electric Association’s manager of loss control, to request mutual aid from neighboring cooperatives – reinforcing a long-standing cooperative tradition built on neighbors helping neighbors.

Within hours, assistance began mobilizing. Crews, trucks and equipment arrived from across western South Dakota. Six electric cooperatives and a contractor ultimately sent help, bringing 55 additional linemen to the Black Hills. Those crews came from Butte Electric Cooperative, Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative, Lacreek Electric Association, West Central Electric Cooperative, West River Electric Association, Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative and Kainz Power Lines, a local contractor based out of Custer.

“I had each operations manager of the responding cooperatives call me and ask what we needed,” Brisk said. “We asked for bucket trucks, digger trucks, chainsaws, attachments for skid steers, and extra line crews, and they sent everything we asked for.”

Days began early and ended late with crews often working 12 to 16-hour shifts. Brisk emphasized safety repeatedly to the crews as they worked among unstable trees, high winds and rugged terrain.

Behind the scenes, the restoration effort extended beyond the field. Office staff coordinated logistics and prepared meals. Lunches were packed daily for crews heading out before dawn. Supplies

were tracked, equipment was staged and communication updates were shared with members.

“It wasn’t just the line crews,” Brisk said. “Everybody stepped up.”

As crews continued working and Christmas approached, it appeared unlikely that power would be fully restored in time for the holiday. The visiting crews made it clear they were willing to stay through the holiday.

“All the outside crews said they weren’t leaving,” Brisk said. “They stayed to help us finish.”

By Christmas Eve, most members had power for the holiday and visiting crews were able to return home. Even still, Black Hills Electric crews continued limited work through the holiday, work that continues today.

“To be truthful, we are still cutting trees, setting poles and repairing lines from this storm,” said Brisk.

The storm was later designated a FEMA-eligible event, requiring detailed tracking of labor, equipment and materials.

Looking back, Brisk said the restoration efforts relied heavily on cooperation and dedication among crews from the assisting cooperatives.

“It’s good to know you’ve got great neighbors,” he said. “When you need help, they come.”



An assisting lineman from West River Electric Cooperative installs a ground on the line to be further worked on.



Damage from the storm not only affected poles, but also uprooted trees.

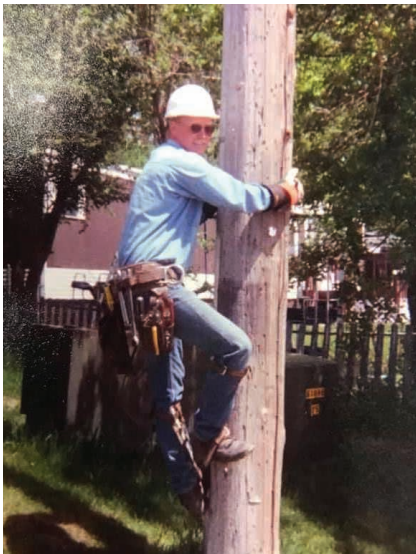


Bill Brisk, manager of operations at Black Hills Electric Cooperative, gives a morning briefing, updating the cooperative and assisting crews with storm recovery assignments.



Happy Retirement, Mike!

Mike Letcher began his career as a lineman with Douglas Electric in October of 1991, later making his way to West River Electric in April of 1993. He continued working as a lineman but quickly found his way to leading the Operations Department as Manager



of Operations. When asked what he appreciated most about working for WREA, he mentions the people he's had the chance to work with over the years. "It's always been a great place to work because of the fantastic employee group," he says. 3603500

After 35 years in the field, Mike gained a wealth of knowledge and insight. He shares some key pieces of advice to linemen who are just starting their careers: "Listen to the old guys so you don't have to make the same mistakes they did, and don't be afraid to ask questions if something doesn't seem right. Always try to be the best you can. And above all, you chose a great career; be proud of that."

One would assume that after a career like Mike's, his retirement would be filled with rest and relaxation. However, if you know Mike, that's not quite the case. "Not sitting on the couch watching TV, that's for sure! I plan on traveling quite a bit, seeing my kids and



Mike Letcher, Manager of Operations

grandkids. As well as skiing, riding dirt bikes, and exploring places I haven't been to yet. My wife started a new business, Kleanfarmsolutions.com, so I may be busier than I was when I was 'working,'" he says.

Mike hung up his hard hat and swapped out a bucket truck for a dirt bike on February 13, 2026. Congratulations, Mike, on a well-respected career and a much-deserved retirement. You left a mark at WREA that will not be forgotten. We wish you well in this next chapter of your life.

4 Best Bets to Stay Cyber Safe

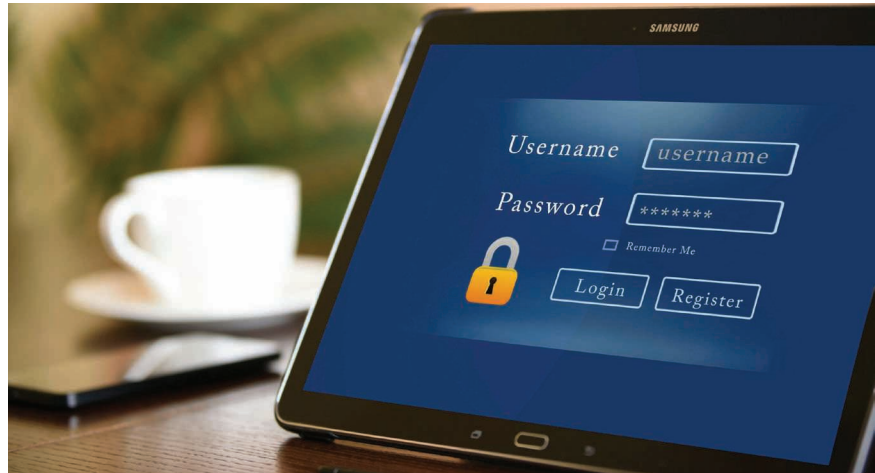
Gerri Johnston

Manager of IT

Protecting yourself online doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. A few simple habits can dramatically reduce your risk of falling victim to cybercrime. While you can never be "hackproof," you can become resilient in the online world.

At the heart of online safety are four essential behaviors the National Cybersecurity Alliance call the Core 4. These simple steps will help shield your personal information, protect your online accounts and keep your devices secure.

1. Use long, unique, and complex passwords. Your passwords are the first line of defense between a criminal and your sensitive information. Here's how to have amazing passwords:
 - Every password must be long, unique and complex. Nowadays, every password should be at least 16 characters long, which significantly overwhelms password-cracking programs. Use a random mix of letters, numbers and symbols.
 - Don't reuse passwords. Every account needs a unique password. Unfortunately, making small changes, like adding numbers or switching out an S with a \$, doesn't count as a unique password.
 - Use a password manager to store and generate strong passwords. If you're wondering how to manage so many unique, long passwords, the answer is a password manager! There are many free, secure options. Password managers are the safest way to store your passwords. If you prefer to keep a password notebook, treat it like cash.
2. Enable multifactor authentication (MFA). Multifactor authentication (sometimes called 2FA) adds an extra security layer by requiring something more than just your password to log

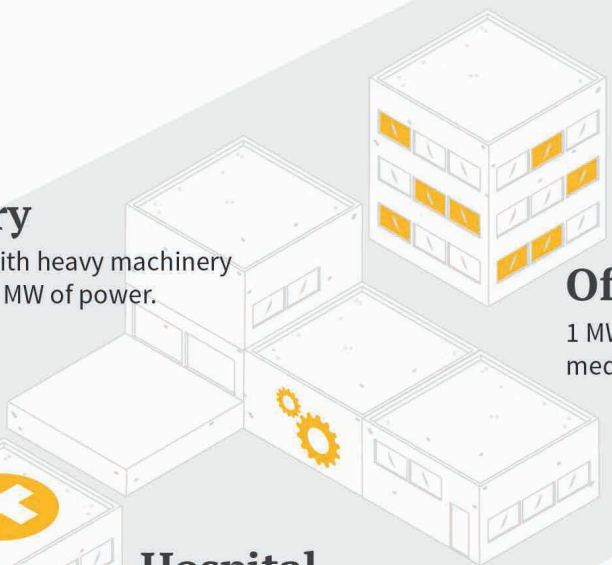


- in. Think of it as using two locks on your digital door instead of only one. This could be:
 - A one-time code sent to your phone
 - A biometric scan like a fingerprint scan or FaceID
 - A physical security key
 - Enable MFA on your accounts—especially email, banking and social media. It's a simple way to supercharge the security on your accounts. Also, never share MFA codes with anyone—this includes not sharing them over the phone, through texts or via email. Only scammers will ask for MFA codes.
3. Keep software updated. Software updates don't just bring new features. They often fix security flaws that criminals exploit. It usually takes a few minutes, but updates are worth it. Here are some tips:
 - Turn on automatic updates when possible for your devices and apps. You can usually find these options in your Settings menu.
 - Install updates promptly for your operating systems, browsers, antivirus tools and apps.
 - Don't click Remind Me Later—the security is worth it.
 - Remember your phones, smartwatches and tablets are
- computers, so keep these devices updated as well!
4. Look out for phishing and scams. Phishing remains the most common online threat. Criminals send fake emails, texts or social media messages to trick you into revealing sensitive information or clicking malicious links. These messages aim to get you to click before you think by playing your emotions. Scammers will even call you! Here's how to look out for phishing and scams:
 - Be highly skeptical of unexpected messages, especially those urging immediate action or asking for personal details.
 - Phishing emails can light up positive emotions ("You've won our sweepstakes!") or negative ones ("You've been hacked!").
 - Don't click suspicious links or download unexpected attachments.
 - Report phishing attempts to your email provider, social media platform or IT department.
 - If you're unsure if a message is legit, ask a friend, coworker or family member. A second set of eyes can be invaluable in spotting scams.

What Can You Do With 1 Megawatt?

Factory

Facilities with heavy machinery can draw 1 MW of power.



Big Box Stores

1 MW will power a typical large retail store.

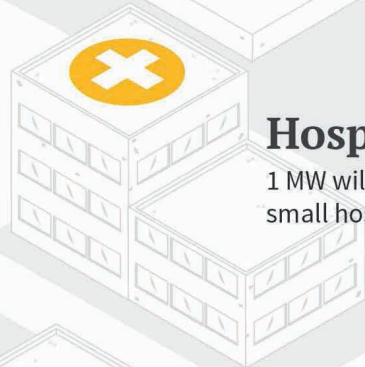


Office Building

1 MW can power several medium-sized office buildings.

Hospital

1 MW will power a small hospital.



Power Plant

Typical outputs:

Coal: 500 MW to 1 GW

Gas: 50 MW to 1 GW

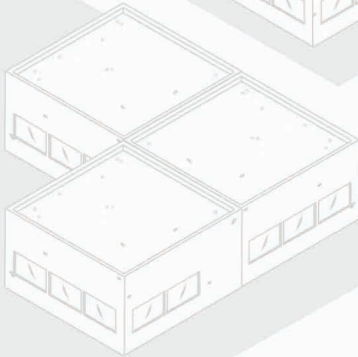
Nuclear: 500 MW to 1.5 GW

1 MW is 1 million watts of power.



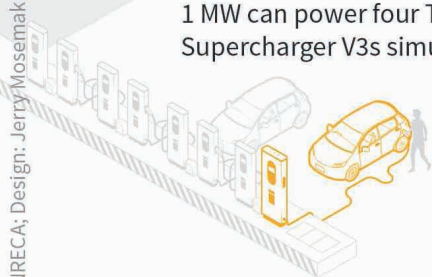
School

0.5 MW will power a medium-size public school.



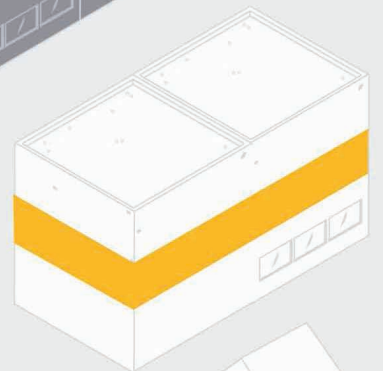
EV Charging

1 MW can power four Tesla Supercharger V3s simultaneously.



Data Center

1 MW will power one small data center.



Other facilities that can draw up to 1 MW of power:

- High-speed rail
- Large farms
- Wastewater treatment
- Stadiums

Residential

1 MW can power 750 to 1,000 homes.



WHAT IS A MEGAWATT?

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

If you're a regular Cooperative Connections reader, you've probably seen the term "megawatt" countless times. From articles about new power generation facilities, energy-saving tips, major infrastructure projects or energy policy, megawatts come up again and again. But what does a megawatt actually mean?

Watts, Kilowatts, Megawatts & More

A megawatt is a unit of power that measures the speed at which energy is generated or used at a given time. A megawatt is 1,000 kilowatts (KW), or 1 million watts.

You may recognize watts from the labels on everyday household items like light bulbs and phone chargers. These numbers indicate the amount of power the device draws while operating.

Here are the wattages for some common household items:

- LED Light bulb – 5-20 Watts
- Refrigerator – 350-800 Watts
- Desktop PC – 100-800 Watts
- LED Television: 30-300 Watts
- Microwave – 700-1,200 Watts
- Hair Dryer – 1,500-2,000 Watts
- Clothes Dryer – 1,800-5,000 Watts

At East River Electric Power Cooperative, the generation and transmission cooperative that sells power to member co-ops in Eastern South Dakota and Western Minnesota, Jennifer Gross uses a modified bicycle to help put power into perspective.

The bike is stationary – the pedals power a small generator wired to several different kinds of light bulbs. Gross, who is East River's education and outreach coordinator, says the "pedal power bike" demonstrates energy use in a tangible way and highlights the difference of energy-efficient products.

"It's actually quite difficult for the person pedaling to generate electricity consistently for more than a few minutes," Gross said.



Jennifer Gross demonstrates energy generation and consumption. Submitted Photo

"When they're pedaling to power the inefficient, old-school incandescent light bulbs, they can pedal for about one minute and not even keep it at 200 watts the whole time."

The electric grid experiences the most strain during peak demand times – the hours before and after work and school when most people are home doing laundry, watching TV etc.

In communities with hundreds to thousands of homes and businesses, electricity demand grows large enough to be measured in megawatts – the unit equal to 1,000 KW.

Your electric co-op's electricity is generated by Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which was formed in the 1960s by electric co-ops in the upper Midwest to generate electricity for co-ops. Serving over 3 million consumers across nine states, Basin generates power from its owned and leased assets, which include coal, natural gas, solar and wind. Basin's generation capability is so massive that it's measured in gigawatts – the unit equal to 1,000 MW.

Basin reports a maximum generating capacity of about 8,427 MW – or 8.427 GW. That figure reflects every available generation resource running at full output, including the oil-fueled peaking units used during times of high demand, along with purchases from the Western Area Power Administration and the Southwest Power Pool energy market.

On an even larger scale, the total installed generation capacity in the U.S. reaches the terawatt level, totalling about 1.3 TW, which is equal to 1,300 GW, 1.3 million MW or 1.3 billion KW – enough to simultaneously run about 1 billion hair dryers!

$$\begin{aligned}
 &1 \text{ Million Watts} \\
 &= \\
 &1,000 \text{ Kilowatts} \\
 &= \\
 &1 \text{ Megawatt} \\
 &= \\
 &1/1,000 \text{ Gigawatt}
 \end{aligned}$$

Your Co-op's Megawatts

As a co-op member, you're a part-owner of Basin Electric's generation resources. Here's a look at several of those facilities.



Antelope Valley Station
Beulah, N.D. • 1984
900 MW • Coal



Bison Gen. Station
Epping, N.D. • 2030
1,490 MW • Nat. Gas



Pioneer Gen. Station
Williston, N.D. • 2013
822 MW • Nat. Gas



Crow Lake Wind
White Lake, S.D. • 2011
172 MW • Wind




Wild Springs Solar
New Underwood, S.D.
2024 • 114 MW • Solar

SERVING YOU.

Being there, every minute, of every day. As your hometown electric cooperative, it's not just our way of doing business, it's our way of life. And as a West River Electric member, that means value that goes far beyond the energy we provide, value you can't really put a price on.



**West River Electric
Association, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Scan to set your preference




Want to save your co-op money and clear your paper clutter?

Sign up to receive your monthly Cooperative Connections magazine in your email! By doing so, you not only help the co-op save on printing and postage, but you also clear your monthly paper clutter in your mailbox.



West River Electric Association, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER

There are five (5) account numbers placed randomly throughout the publication. If you locate your account number anywhere in this issue of the Cooperative Connections, you will be credited \$10.00, towards your next bill. You must notify our office by the 10th of the following month to receive your credit.

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC OFFICE HOURS

RAPID CITY OFFICE

3250 E Hwy 44
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

*This email is not monitored on nights or weekends and it is not for reporting outages. To report an outage please follow the instructions below.

OUTAGE OR EMERGENCY?

Our calls are answered 24/7. In the event on an outage, please report it via the SmartHub app, texting OUT to 855-939-3719, or by calling our office at 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500.



MARCH 7
Ag Day
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Washington Pavilion
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-6000

Washington Pavilion Photo

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 5
SD Jazz Festival
 7:30 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, 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 7
Southern Hills Holistic Fair
 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
 Mueller Civic Center
 Hot Springs, SD

MARCH 7-8
The Black Market
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Expo Building
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-332-6004

MARCH 14
St. Uhro Finnish Festival
 11 a.m. Main Street Parade
 12 p.m. Community Ctr. Lunch
 Lake Norden, SD
 605-881-1758

MARCH 14
Community Church Rummage Sale & Bake Sale
 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Rapid Valley United Methodist
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 14-15
Philip Area Annual Rod & Gun Show
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sun. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
 American Legion Hall
 Philip, SD
 605-859-2135

MARCH 15
Youth Fundraiser - Green Pancakes & Ham
 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
 Rapid Valley United Methodist
 Rapid City, SD

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

MARCH 28
Coteau Prairie Masters Gardeners Ready, Set, Grow
 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Codington Cty. Extension Cplx.
 Watertown, SD

MARCH 29
Palm Sunday Ham Dinner & Silent Auction
 11:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
 Rapid Valley United Methodist
 Rapid City, SD

APRIL 3
Bachelors of Broadway: Gentlemen of the Theatre
 7 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, SD

APRIL 5
Easter Sunrise Service
 7 a.m.
 Mount Rushmore
 605-391-9156

APRIL 9
McCrossan Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest
 Jimmy Buffett Tribute
 Polynesian Paradise Dancers
 Sioux Falls, SD
 www.mccrossan.org

APRIL 9-11
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Heritage Celebration
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237
 www.schmeckfest.com

APRIL 18
Brookings Quilt Show XII
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Admission: \$10
 Dakota Bank Center
 Brookings, SD
 605-690-3246

APRIL 18
Tri-Valley Chorus 75th Annual Show
 4 p.m.
 Centerville, SD

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.