

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Caring for Caregivers

Exploring Family
Caregiving Services

Pages 8-9

Emergency Training

Pages 12-13

Thankful Today, Preparing for Tomorrow



Robert Raker
CEO/GM

November always feels like a turning point. One week we're enjoying crisp fall days, and the next it feels like winter has arrived overnight. At our house, that means my wife and I have already made our first giant bowl of chili and spent a Sunday watching football. It also means blowing out the sprinklers, throwing down some grass seed, and tackling the never-ending "honey-do list" before the first big snow hits.

It's not so different at the co-op. At West River Electric, this is the season of preparation. Our crews are wrapping up projects to harden the system so that when the cold winds blow, the lights and heat stay on. Reliability is our top priority, and I'm proud of the work our team puts in every day to make sure of it. 9847600

Looking further out, we know wholesale power costs are set to increase. Basin Electric has already projected a 10% increase in 2026, followed by another 8% in 2027. We can't prevent those changes, but we can manage them. That means

being smart about when and how we use power, finding efficiencies, and making sure new growth pays its fair share instead of passing costs along to you.

We don't yet know the exact numbers for what that means at West River Electric. We're working diligently on our 2026 budget, and local costs are rising as well. Until we have the full picture, we can't give you a final figure—but we are committed to being transparent every step of the way.

As Thanksgiving approaches, I'm reminded of how much we have to be thankful for. I'm thankful for our employees, who show up in every kind of weather to keep the power on. I'm thankful for our board of directors, who give their time and guidance. And I'm thankful for you, our members, who place your trust in this cooperative year after year.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who came out to our fall events. It's always good to meet members face-to-face and hear what's on your mind. Your voices guide the decisions we make, especially as we prepare for the challenges ahead.

Stay warm, stay safe, and from my family to yours, have a Happy Thanksgiving.

Robert Raker | CEO

Understanding the 2026 Rate Increase



In September, the Basin Electric Board of Directors authorized a Class A rate increase of approximately \$6 per megawatt-hour, or 10%, beginning Jan. 1, 2026. We understand and recognize the impact this has on our members and their communities. This decision was not made lightly. Basin Electric is thoughtfully working to balance our goals of reliability, financial performance, and affordable rates.



Growth in traditional load

To serve this growth, Basin Electric is investing in new generation and transmission projects, which are at higher costs than our existing fleet.



Commodity price variability

Fluctuations in commodity prices affect the cost of fuel for Basin Electric and sales revenue at our subsidiaries.



Increase in planning reserve margins

Southwest Power Pool will require Basin Electric to have higher capacity reserves, increasing capital expenditures, operating costs, and purchase power.



Investments in reliability

Basin Electric will continue to make investments in system reliability, including upgrading existing facilities and reducing outage cycle times.



Smart Choices Start with the Right Contractor



Adam Daigle

Manager of
Marketing and
Communication

Solar energy is increasingly popular among homeowners and businesses looking to reduce electricity costs. But while solar can be a smart investment, choosing the right contractor is essential to avoid costly mistakes.

Before signing any agreement, it's important to do your homework. A trustworthy contractor should be licensed, insured, and experienced in solar installations. Ask for references, compare multiple quotes, and make sure the terms are clear and fair. 10717900

Unfortunately, some contractors make promises that sound too good to be true, like eliminating your electric bill altogether. In reality, while solar can significantly reduce your energy costs, it might not erase them entirely. West River Electric purchases excess energy you produce at our avoided cost, not at retail prices, which means your savings may be more modest than advertised.

Before your solar system can operate, you must complete West River Electric's

interconnection process. This includes submitting an application with electrical diagrams, installing a lockable disconnect switch, and obtaining a state and/or city wiring permit depending on your location. A reputable contractor should guide you through these steps and ensure compliance with all local requirements.

If you're unsure about any part of the process, contact West River Electric before signing a contract. Our team can help clarify expectations and requirements, so you're not left in the dark.

There are also red flags to watch for when evaluating contractors. Be wary of anyone who pressures you to sign immediately, refuses to provide proof of licensing or references, is vague about costs or timelines, or asks for large cash payments. Contractors who promise unrealistic savings or avoid questions about permits and utility requirements should raise serious concerns.

Solar energy can be a powerful tool for sustainability and savings, but only when approached with care, clarity, and the right partners. Make informed choices, ask the right questions, and ensure your solar journey starts on solid ground.

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

Marcia Arneson

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.

Stay Safe This Holiday Season: Tips for a Merry and Accident-Free Celebration

The holidays bring families together with twinkling lights, festive meals and cozy traditions. But they also bring seasonal risks that can turn celebrations into emergencies if precautions aren't taken. Local safety officials are reminding residents to keep safety in mind when cooking, decorating, and entertaining this year.

Extension Cords

With more lights and electronics plugged in during the holidays, extension cords are often stretched to their limits. Experts urge homeowners not to overload outlets and to replace any cords that are frayed or damaged. Only outdoor-rated cords should be used outside, especially in snowy or wet conditions.

Families should avoid running cords under rugs or across doorways where they can overheat or become tripping hazards.

Turkey Fryers

Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners have grown to include deep-fried turkeys, but safety must come first. Fryers should only be used outdoors, on a flat surface and far away from buildings, garages or wooden decks. Fire officials caution that a partially frozen or wet turkey can cause oil to boil over and ignite, leading to severe burns or home fires.

A fire extinguisher rated for grease fires should always be kept nearby, and fryers should never be left unattended while in use. One distracted moment can cause a disaster.

Ladders

From hanging lights to topping off the tree, ladders are part of the holiday routine. Falls are among the most common seasonal injuries, so ladders should be set on level ground and never leaned against unstable surfaces. Having another person hold the ladder is strongly advised.

Candles and Fireplaces

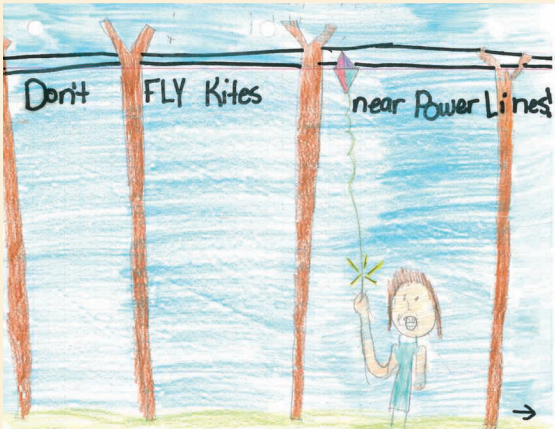
Candles and fireplaces are popular during the holiday season, but they also raise the risk of home fires, especially when combined with the extra decorations and greenery that fill many homes in December. According to the National Fire Protection Association, candles cause an average of

46% of fires in December each year. Never leaving a flame unattended and incorporating a few safety rules can prevent a devastating fire.

Lights and Decorations

Before hanging holiday lights, inspect strands for cracked socket, frayed wires or loose connections, and replace any damaged sets. Outdoor lights should always be weather-rated, and lights should be turned off before bedtime or when leaving the house. Timers and smart plugs can help make this easier.

Decorations should be securely fastened to prevent them from tipping or falling, especially in homes with children or pets. Heavy ornaments should be placed higher on the tree, out of reach of small hands and wagging tails. Fire officials also recommend choosing flame-resistant or non-combustible decor whenever possible and keeping all decorations away from heaters, fireplaces or open flames.



"Don't fly kites near power lines!"

Kristen Vanden Berg, Age 11

Kristen cautions readers on the dangers of flying kites near power lines. Great picture, Kristen! Kristen's parents are Andy and Geraldine Vanden Berg from Corsica, 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.

Holiday SIDE DISHES

CORN CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

2 15 oz. cans whole kernel corn, drained
 15 oz. can cream corn
 1/2 cup butter, melted
 1 box Jiffy cornbread mix
 1/2 pt. whipped cream

Method

Combine whole kernel corn, cream corn, butter, Jiffy cornbread mix and whipping cream. Mix thoroughly. Pour into greased 8.5"x11" pan and bake at 350° F for 40-45 minutes.

Sharon Houchin
 Central Electric

BETTER THAN STUFFING

Ingredients:

1 box chicken/turkey stuffing mix
 Chicken broth
 Celery
 Carrots
 Onions
 1 stick herbed butter (or make your own)
 2 cups chicken/turkey gravy

Method

Prepare stuffing according to directions but substitute water with broth. Dice and sauté celery, carrots (total of two cups) and onions in herbed butter. Fold into stuffing. Put into baking pan and top with gravy. Poke gravy into stuffing – just a little bit. Don't completely mix. Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes and broil briefly at the end.

Valerie Marso
 Oahe Electric

RAW VEGETABLE SALSA

Ingredients:

2-4 medium cucumbers, cubed
 2-4 medium tomatoes, cubed
 1 small onion or 1/2 of a white or yellow onion sliced
 1 tsp. salt
 1 tbsp. sugar
 2 tbsps. apple cider vinegar
 Additions: black pepper to taste, chopped basil, or chopped green bell pepper.

Method

Place cubed tomatoes and peeled cucumbers into a bowl. Add sliced onion.

Mix in remaining ingredients and stir. Marinate for several hours or overnight.

This salad keeps for 3-4 days refrigerated.

Raw Vegetable salads full of electrolytes, vitamin C and fiber.

Laurie Wernke
 Southeastern 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.

Picture submitted by Laurie Wernke.

Home Lighting 101



Amanda Haugen
Communications
Specialist

Lighting is something most of us don't think much about—until it's wrong. Maybe the living room feels too dim for reading, or the kitchen lights cast an odd yellow glow. We often grab whatever bulb or fixture looks good without considering how it will actually perform in the space. But with a little planning, you can make your home brighter, cozier and more energy efficient.

Watts vs. Lumens

When you're shopping for lightbulbs, it's easy to focus on watts, but watts only measure how much energy a bulb uses. When it comes to brightness, what really matters is the lumen count. Lumens measure the actual light output. For example, an 800-lumen bulb gives off about the same amount of light as an old-fashioned 60-watt incandescent bulb. (You've likely replaced all incandescent bulbs with long-lasting, energy efficient LEDs, but if not—it's time to make the switch!)

A helpful rule of thumb: higher lumens mean brighter light, while lower watts mean less energy consumed. Remember to check wattage ratings for fixtures and only install bulbs that meet the fixture's wattage safety requirements. 11259000

Color Temperature and Consistency

Light bulbs also vary in color temperature, which ranges from warm yellow to cool white or even bluish tones. This detail often

gets overlooked—until you replace one bulb and notice the new light doesn't quite match the others. If mismatched tones drive you crazy, consider buying and installing bulbs of the same brand and wattage in a room at the same time. That way, the look stays consistent, and you won't be stuck hunting for a perfect match later.

Dimmers and Switches

Installing dimmers instead of standard on/off switches can be a game changer. Dimmers give you more control over brightness, help save energy and create a more comfortable atmosphere. Not all bulbs are dimmable, so double check labels before buying.

While you're thinking about switches, consider whether you have enough of them—and in the right places. A light you can only turn off from one end of a hallway quickly becomes annoying. For new installations or upgrades, it's best to hire a licensed electrician to ensure everything is wired safely and efficiently.

Fixtures: Form Meets Function

Bulbs are only part of the equation—fixtures matter too. Each type serves a purpose. Ambient lighting, like sconces or glass-covered ceiling fixtures, provides general illumination. Task lighting, like pendants, desk lamps or track lighting, focuses light where you need it most.

When choosing a fixture, think beyond looks. Ask yourself: does this light provide the right amount of brightness for the space? A beautiful chandelier might look perfect over the dining table but leave the rest of the room too dim. Alternatively, an oversized fixture could flood the room with more light than you need, wasting both energy and money.

Smart Lighting: Energy Efficiency Meets Convenience







Smart lighting adds another layer of control for illuminating your home. But the real magic is convenience. With smart bulbs, you can adjust brightness, set schedules or even change colors—all from your phone or a voice assistant like Alexa or Google Assistant. Want the lights to dim automatically for movie night? Or to turn on before you get home? Smart bulbs make it easy.

Smart lighting also lets you personalize your space. You can go classic with warm white tones or experiment with colors to set the mood—anything from a soft glow for winding down to vibrant hues for a party. Remember, smart bulbs still rely on power from your wall switch, which needs to stay in the "on" position for remote controls to work. If you prefer using a physical switch, consider pairing smart bulbs with a smart light switch. Many of today's smart switches also come with motion detectors, adding another level of efficiency and convenience.

Good lighting doesn't just make your home look better—it makes it feel better too. With a little planning, you can create spaces that are welcoming, functional and energy efficient. Whether you stick to traditional bulbs and fixtures or explore the flexibility of smart lighting, thoughtful choices today will brighten your home for years to come.

Home Lighting Guide

The following information outlines recommendations for home lighting, however, additional options for bulbs, fixtures and spaces in your home may be available. Sources: Home Depot, Alcon Lighting

Room/Area	Recommended Lumens	Fixture Types	Smart Tips
 Living Room	15-30 per sq. ft. 150 sq. ft. room 2,250 - 4,500 lumens	Ceiling fixtures, can lighting, lamps/ accent lighting	Use smart bulbs to adjust color temp and control remotely.
 Kitchen	30-40 per sq. ft. 100 sq. ft. room 3,000 - 4,000 lumens	Recessed ceiling lights or flush mounts	Smart switches can be used to control zones (dining vs. prep); undercabinet motion lights offer late-night illumination.
 Dining Room	10-20 per sq. ft. 100 sq. ft. room 1,000 - 2,000 lumens	Pendant or chandelier fixture	Smart, dimmable bulbs allow various levels of brightness for ambiance.
 Bedroom	10-20 per sq. ft. 120 sq. ft. room 1,200 - 2,400 lumens	Ceiling fixtures or recessed lighting	Motion sensors are great options for nighttime use.
 Bathroom	50-80 per sq. ft. 60 sq. ft. room 3,000 - 4,000 lumens	Over-vanity fixtures and/or recessed lighting	Cool LED bulbs provide brighter light for shaving, applying makeup, etc.
 Porch/Home Entry	100-200 per sq. ft. 100 sq. ft. entry 10,000 - 20,000 lumens	Wall lanterns, ceiling mount and/or floodlights	Motion-activated flood lights and/or smart outdoor bulbs are energy efficient and boost home security.

Discover D.C., Discover Your Voice: Youth Tour 2026



Amanda Haugen
Communications
Specialist

Every generation leaves behind a legacy, footprints that shape the future. The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is your chance to do the same. For over 60 years, electric cooperatives have sent high school students to Washington, D.C., to discover their voice, step into history and begin writing the story only they can tell.

This once-in-a-lifetime experience isn't just about seeing the nation's capital. It's about preparing students to lead, to grow and to make their mark on the world.

What's in it for students?

Delegates from West River Electric's service territory will join more than 1,800 students from across the country in Washington, D.C., June 14-20, 2026. During the trip, students will:

- Develop leadership skills through hands-on experiences and workshops
- Strengthen their resumes with a nationally recognized program that stands out to colleges and employers 12373300
- Connect with peers from 44 states, building friendships that last long after the trip
- Meet with elected officials and learn how government impacts their communities
- Experience history up close by visiting world-class museums and monuments
- Learn about cooperatives and how they support rural communities across America

The best part? All expenses—travel, lodging, meals, and program costs—are covered by West River Electric Association. The program is coordinated by South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Don't Let This Opportunity Pass By

Applications for Youth Tour will be open from September 26 – December 12, 2026. If you know a high school Junior or Senior who is ready to grow as a leader and take the next

step in their journey, encourage them to apply today.

For details, visit our website, www.westriver.coop, or check out our social media channels. 2662200

This is more than a trip—it's a chance to leave your mark.

2026 June 14-20

YOUTH TOUR

Join students from across South Dakota for a free, once-in-a-lifetime trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by your electric cooperative. Contact your electric cooperative for more details and application information!



CARING FOR CAREGIVERS

Exploring Structured Family Caregiving Services for South Dakota's Caregivers

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

November is recognized nationally as Family Caregivers Month, a time to honor the essential role of caregivers and highlight the resources available to them and the loved ones they support.

Yet, families face a growing challenge: how to care for aging loved ones when services are often far from home. Nursing homes or assisted living centers may be located hours away, and even when they are nearby, the cost or availability of space can present real barriers.

One answer has been the Structured Family Caregiving program, launched by the South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) in 2019.

According to Heather Krzmarzick, Director of the Division of Long-Term Services and Supports within DHS, the program is one of many resources at DHS that are

Several resources are available for caregivers in South Dakota through the Department of Human Services.

Photos by Homecare Services.

available to help older adults and their caregivers. It provides training, coaching, ongoing support and even a modest stipend to those offering significant care for an older adult in the home.

“Structured Family Caregiving serves caregivers who live with their family member and provide substantial care for them, including personal care, supervision, medication management and other things, such as managing finances and transportation for necessary appointments and community activities,” Krzmarzick said.

In many ways, the program echoes the electric cooperative story. Just as co-ops once brought electricity to rural areas that were otherwise overlooked, the program helps families meet a need that might otherwise go unserved. In places where nursing homes or assisted living centers are many miles away, the program gives families a practical way to continue care at home, often the place where people feel most comfortable.

“Structured Family Caregiving is important because it

supports the vital work of family caregivers, strengthens families and improves outcomes, especially in underserved or isolated regions,” she said. “The program honors South Dakota’s values of strong families, independence and community.”

In addition to expanding community-based care options to rural areas, the program allows families to potentially prevent or delay the move to a nursing home and reduce the economic burden that often comes with that transition. Krzmarzick said DHS also offers other programs for those that may need a little extra assistance to remain safely in their homes but don’t require the intensive services of a nursing facility.

“Each caregiver has unique needs and preferences,” she said. “As such, the services and supports are designed to meet the varying needs of each caregiver and help care for a person at home as long as possible.”

To be eligible for the program, the care recipient must be 65 or older or

18 or older with a qualifying disability and meet both functional and financial criteria to qualify for the program.

Since its creation, the program has grown steadily, giving more families the tools to succeed. Krzmarzick said it has allowed many older adults and adults with disabilities to remain in their homes while supporting family caregivers with knowledge, training and a small amount of financial assistance.

Agency Director Steven Novotny with Homecare Services of South Dakota, Inc., one of many in-home care providers in the state, said that few other programs reach and serve those who need care quite like the program.

“Structured Family Caregiving has the unique ability to serve consumers in every community across our state, large or small. Under this program, individuals can receive care from a trusted family member or friend, which allows them to remain independent and living in their community,” he said. “Our caring staff at Homecare Services of South Dakota have seen

firsthand the positive impact on families when we are able to provide support and training to the caregivers that are stepping into what is often a challenging role caring for a loved one.”

Krzmarzick said the Structured Family Caregiving program is just one of many support options that DHS offers individuals and their caregivers in South Dakota. Resources are available online at dhs.sd.gov or through Dakota at Home, South Dakota’s Aging and Disability Resource Center, at 1-833-663-9673.

“All caregivers, not just those utilizing the Structured Family Caregiving Program, may access free training and resources to help improve confidence in their caregiving abilities, reduce stress and prevent burnout,” Krzmarzick said. “Caregivers may also be eligible for other programs that offer respite options. Our Dakota at Home specialists are dedicated to helping you find services and supports to meet your specific needs or the needs of a family member.”



Equipment and Vehicles up for Bid

West River Electric has the below items for sale by sealed bid. Bids will be accepted until 5 p.m. Friday, November 14, 2025. Sealed bids can be sent to any WREA office. All items are sold "as is" and WREA reserves the right to reject any and all bids. Bids will be opened at the November 17, 2025, Board Meeting.

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



2013 Ram 3500 4x4 | 116,796mi

Item #206

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____



1980 Case 580c Backhoe w/ diff lock | 2,129.8hrs

Item #254

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____



Bobcat 709 backhoe attachment with rear outriggers

Item #3

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____



1965 Hogg and Davis Reel and pole trailer

Item #4

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

we're grateful for your membership
today and everyday.



**West River Electric
Association, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative

“Powering You For A Brighter Future”

West River Electric offices **will be
closed Nov. 27-28.**
To report an outage please do so
via SmartHub or by calling
605-279-2135 or **605-393-1500.**

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

1. Publication Title: West River Electric Cooperative Connections
2. Publication Number: 6 7 5 - 8 4 9
3. Filing Date: 10/01/2025
4. Issue Frequency: Monthly
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 12
6. Annual Subscription Price:
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®): P.O. Box 412, Wall, SD 57790
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): P.O. Box 412, Wall, SD 57790
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank):
Publisher (Name and complete mailing address): Amanda Haugen, 3250 E. HWY 44, Rapid City, SD 57703
Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Amanda Haugen, 3250 E. HWY 44, Rapid City, SD 57703
Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address):
10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)
Full Name: West River Electric Association, Inc. Complete Mailing Address: P.O. Box 412, Wall, SD 57790
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box: None
Full Name: Rural Utilities Services (RUS) Complete Mailing Address: 1400 Independence Way Washington, D.C. 20260-1666
Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) Complete Mailing Address: 2101 Cooperative Way, Herndon, VA, 20171-3025
12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:
 Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
 Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

13. Publication Title: West River Electric Cooperative Connections
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 10/01/2025

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation

		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)			
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	14,179	14,324
	(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies) and Outside the Mail		
	(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails, Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®		
	(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)		
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))		14,179	14,324
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541		
	(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541		
	(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)	105	104
	(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)		
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))		105	104
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)		14,284	14,428
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))		50	50
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		14,334	14,478
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)		99.26	99.28

*If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

16. Electronic Copy Circulation

		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies			
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		14,179	0
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		14,284	14,428
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c x 100)			

I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership
 If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the 11/01/2025 issue of this publication. Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Amanda Hauger | Communications Specialist Date: 10/01/2025

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).



LINEMENS' TRAINING READYED CREW FOR CHAINSAW ACCIDENT

(From left) When Brandon Schmieg cut his forearm, fellow linemen Tristan Hall, Luke Koval and Brian Davis knew exactly how to respond.
Photo submitted by Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative.

When a Routine Day of Trimming Trees Turned Critical, Cooperative Employees Were Prepared to Help

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Perched within the manlift on a bucket truck, Brandon Schmieg methodically sawed away large tree branches near overhead power lines, dropping them to the ground more than 50 feet below.

It's nothing out of the ordinary, explained the 19-year veteran lineman from Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative in Milbank, South Dakota. After a while, you become accustomed to the work – and its hazards.

From the bucket he was standing in, Brandon reached with

his chainsaw for one of the last few cuts he'd need to make. But as he began the cut, the chainsaw kicked up and he lost control. Steadying himself and throwing the brake on the saw, Brandon looked down at his left arm. He'd been badly cut.

"I saw quite a bit of blood right away," Brandon said. "My first thought was that I needed to get down fast."

Gathering his strength and trying his best to stay calm, Brandon maneuvered his bucket down through the tree limbs back to the ground where linemen Brian Davis, Luke Koval and Tristan Hall noticed something wasn't right.

"I think we all sensed something happened," Brian explained. "The way he was coming down like that, and he'd just fueled up the saw, so we were wondering what had happened."

Luke ran to go shut off the woodchipper, which was drowning out Brandon's yelling. As the engine died, they finally heard Brandon yell, "Call for help!"

Brian raced to the truck to radio back to the office in Milbank, calling in a “Mayday” along with the crew’s location.

With a first-aid and tourniquet kit in hand, Brian sprinted toward Brandon, where Tristan and Luke had removed Brandon’s safety harness and wrapped a towel over the wound on Brandon’s forearm and applied pressure to slow the bleeding.

As the team secured a tourniquet tightly around Brandon’s upper arm, the crew kept in touch with the office by cell phone. The office staff, having called 911 as soon as they heard ‘Mayday,’ worked together to relay the street address and details of the injury to emergency dispatchers.

Seeing the urgency of the situation, the team placed Brandon in the service pickup and Tristan began driving him to the hospital. As the linemen were driving back into town, the ambulance met them and took Brandon to the hospital in Milbank where they stabilized him and discovered he’d severed two arteries in his forearm. He was then transferred to

Sioux Falls and underwent surgery.

Luckily, Whetstone Valley Electric and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association had conducted first-aid training for linemen just several weeks before. The instruction included CPR, AEDs, tourniquets and wound care.

“Regular first-aid training and keeping first-aid supplies on hand is so important because our linemen are often out somewhere rural,” explained Joe Denison, SDREA’s loss control professional and certified paramedic for the Arlington and Lake Norden ambulances. “If we have to wait 30 minutes for an ambulance, that can be too late.”

Whetstone Valley Electric General Manager Dave Page says despite the incident, he finds it encouraging that the employees followed procedure — maintaining clear communication with each other and with 911, administering first aid on site, and knowing exactly what to do each step of the way.

“It wasn’t only the training that was provided, but it was the attention that

these guys gave to that training - where it stuck, and their response was automatic,” Dave said. “In addition, the Mayday training that we do here at Whetstone went a long way to help us all stick to the plan and see a successful outcome.”

Now back on the job, Brandon credits his safe outcome to the co-op’s focus on regular safety training and having first aid supplies in the vehicles.

“I don’t think the makeshift towel tourniquet would have stopped the bleeding,” Brandon said, looking down at the scar on his forearm.

Brian added, “I don’t want to think about the outcome if we didn’t have a plan in place.”

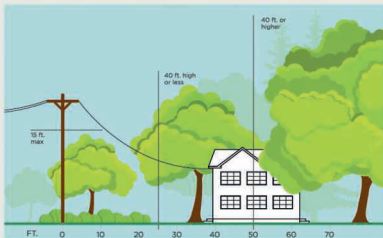
To help prevent those worst case scenarios, electric cooperatives continually scrutinize safety training and workplace incidents. Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative is sharing this story with its members-owners and fellow cooperatives to promote preparedness for unexpected incidents like this one, and overall encourage a culture of safety awareness.

3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

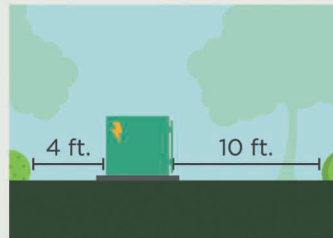
Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them.

Here’s how you can help:

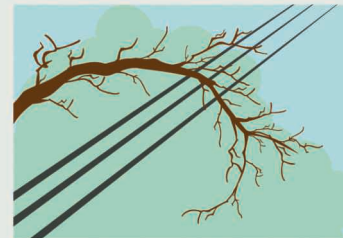
1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



2. Don’t block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



Trimming improves safety for all.

Let’s work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.

Powered by Purpose

Amanda Haugen
Communications Specialist

In October, electric cooperatives across the country take time to celebrate National Co-op Month and reflect on the unique advantages of being part of a cooperative. It's also the perfect time to thank you—the members who make it all possible. For us, it's not just a celebration. It's a chance to reaffirm the values that guide everything we do.

Unlike investor-owned utilities, West River Electric doesn't exist to make profits for distant shareholders. We exist to serve you—our members, our neighbors and our communities. That purpose is what sets us apart. It's why we were founded, and it's what continues to drive every decision we make.

At its core, being a cooperative means we are member-owned and locally controlled. That's not just a tagline; it's the very heart of our business model. Members have a voice in how our co-op operates. You elect board members who live right here in our service area and understand the unique challenges and opportunities our communities face. Decisions aren't made in corporate boardrooms hundreds of miles away; they're made here at home, by people who care about the same things you do.

This local accountability means we can stay focused on what matters most: delivering reliable, affordable electricity and providing real value to the people we serve.

We do that by investing in essential infrastructure upgrades and technologies that strengthen our local grid and improve electric service. We work hard to manage costs and keep rates as low as possible—because we know how much rising prices affect families and small businesses in our area. And when storms hit or outages occur, West River Electric crews are here and ready to respond quickly, because we live here too.

But our commitment doesn't end at the power lines.

Co-ops were built to meet community needs, and that purpose extends well beyond delivering electricity. Whether we're supporting local schools, sponsoring youth programs or partnering with volunteer organizations, we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life in the places we serve. Community support isn't an afterthought—it's part of our mission.

We're also planning for the future. As electricity demand grows due to new technologies and economic development, electric co-ops are working to ensure

we continue to meet those needs with a balanced, reliable energy mix. We know our members care about affordability and dependability, and we're committed to delivering both.

That's the power of the cooperative difference. That's what it means to be powered by purpose.

This National Co-op Month, I encourage you to take pride in your cooperative membership. You're not just a customer—you're an owner, a stakeholder, and a vital part of a larger effort to keep our community strong, connected and energized.

Thank you for the trust you place in us. We're proud to be your local electric cooperative.



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.

Learn more by scanning the QR code!

West River Electric Association, Inc.
The Endless Energy Connection
 "Helping You Get A Brighter Future"

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.



NOV 22, 26, 28-29

Christmas Tree Sales

Nov. 22: 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Nov. 26: 5-8 p.m.

Nov. 28-29: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

6B Seed And Supplies

Alpena, SD

www.6Bseedandsupplies.com

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.

OCT. 25

Hill City Children's Boo Bash & Pumpkin Festival

Hill City, SD

OCT. 25

Lions Club Bingo

5 p.m. Food, 6 p.m. Bingo

Hill City Center

Hill City, SD

OCT. 31

Hill City Main Street Merchant Trick-or-treat Boys & Girls Club Annual Halloween Carnival

Hill City, SD

NOV. 1

Reliance Christmas Carousel

9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Reliance, SD

605-730-1462

NOV. 1

Spearfish Senior Center Fall Craft Fair & Bake Sale

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Spearfish, SD

605-642-2827

NOV. 1

Black Hills Meat Fest

2-4 p.m.

Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall

Rapid City, SD

NOV. 1

Fairburn Community Ctr. Bazaar

5:30 p.m.

Linn Street

Fairburn, SD

NOV. 2

Annual Turkey Dinner & Silent Auction Fundraiser

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Tickets In-Person or Online

Rapid Valley UMC

5103 Longview Rd.

Rapid City, SD

605-393-1526

NOV. 7-9

Hill City Girlfriends' Weekend

Information on Facebook Page

Hill City, SD

NOV. 9

Kadoka Holiday Festival

10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Kadoka City Auditorium

Kadoka, SD

605-488-0151

NOV. 15

Dueling Pianos Playing for Permanency

5:30 p.m.

Holiday Inn & Convention Center

Spearfish, SD

605-722-4558

NOV. 16

An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving

2 p.m.

Gayville Music Hall

Gayville, SD

605-760-5799

NOV. 22

Lille Norge Fest

8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Viking Hall

2900 Canyon Lake Dr.

Rapid City, SD

NOV. 28

Snacks With Santa

2-4 p.m.

Hill City Center

Hill City, SD

NOV. 28-29

Kris Kringle Vendor Fair

Fri. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sat. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Hill City High School

Hill City, SD

DEC. 2

SunCatcher TRA Chilli Cook-off & Dessert Silent Auction

5 p.m.

Moose Lodge

841 E. St. Patrick St.

Rapid City, SD

info@suncatchertra.org

DEC. 5-6

Christmas in the Hills

Mueller Center

Hot Springs, SD

605-890-2974

DEC. 7

KCBA Hometown Christmas

10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Kadoka City Auditorium

Kadoka, SD

605-488-0151

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.