

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

## Caring for Caregivers

**Exploring Family  
Caregiving Services**

Pages 8-9

**Emergency Training**

Pages 12-13

# The Ripple Effect On Your Rates



**Chris Larson,**  
General Manager

When it comes to electricity, there are a lot of moving parts and pieces (both literally and figuratively). That complex system needs to be maintained and upgraded to continue the reliability you expect today, and that work comes at a cost.

Clay-Union Electric is one of many electric utilities throughout the nation that are facing increasing rate pressures this year and likely into future years.

Nationally, according to the Energy Information Administration, electricity prices have increased between 13 and 18% since 2022 and that trend is expected to continue.

When you peel away all the complexities and unique situations present with each electric utility, you will get to the core of the issue, and that stems from skyrocketing electrical demand from consumers. Many (if not most) electric utilities do not have the needed generation and transmission to support that demand for a variety of reasons. One of the causes is that traditional base-load generation (think coal plants) have been shut down in different parts of the country with no adequate replacement. Of course, that is a vast simplification of the issue but hits at the core because generation and transmission must be built to support the demand and that comes at a cost.

We are anticipating a fairly significant cost increase from our wholesale power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative. There are four basic drivers of that increase:

**1. HIGHER DEMAND FOR ELECTRICITY** – There is a lot of talk about huge data centers sucking up all the electricity... and while they certainly do use a lot of energy, this isn't the load growth I am referring to. The electricity demand that our power suppliers are working to support is from our traditional membership – residential, farm, commercial, and industrial. Not mega load data centers. To meet this need Basin Electric will need to invest \$10.6 billion in the next 10 years.

**2. ANTICIPATED LOSSES BY DAKOTA GASIFICATION COMPANY (DGC)** – DGC is a for-profit subsidiary of Basin Electric Power Cooperative; it owns and operates the Great Plains Synfuels Plant near Beulah, North Dakota. The Synfuels Plant gasifies lignite coal to produce gases and liquids. It produces fertilizers, solvents, phenol, carbon dioxide, and other chemical products for sale. Commodity prices are down in 2025 and are expected to stay that way for some time, which impacts the demand for the inputs and products that DGC produces – suppressing profits.

**3. THE NEED TO BUILD EXTRA GENERATION AND TRANSMISSION TO MEET HIGHER RESOURCE ADEQUACY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SOUTHWEST POWER POOL** – That is a mouthful, but in essence, it means that Basin Electric is required to build extra generation and transmission in case of an emergency. Think back to

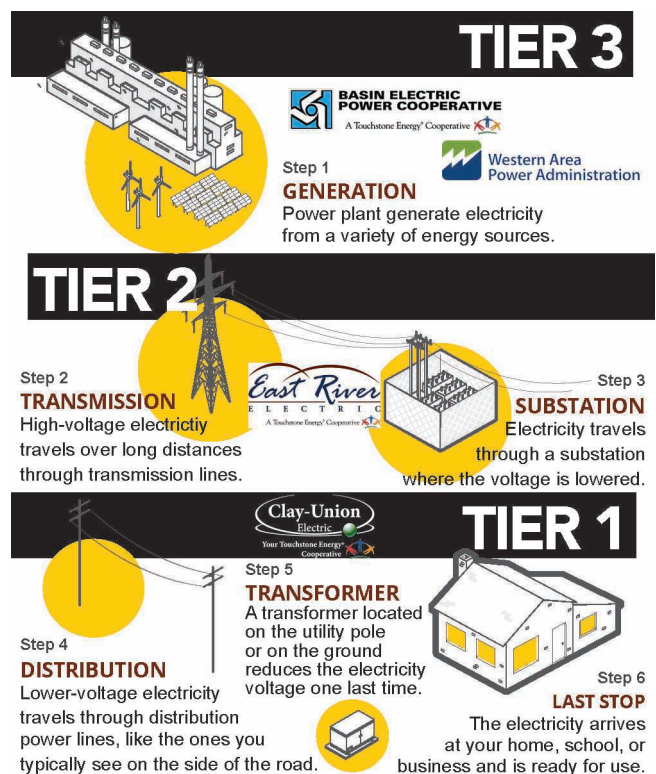
the unexpected winter outages in February of 2021. A lot of things went wrong...extreme cold that spread down to Texas along with generating plant outages at the same time. There simply wasn't enough electricity being generated to meet the demand, which is why our transmission operators had to shut off power to some members. This is why all Regional Transmission Organizations (RTOs), like SPP, are requiring extra generation and transmission be built as a reserve (above and beyond what is needed for existing members and anticipated growth).

**4. INVESTMENTS IN RELIABILITY** – Basin Electric will need to make significant investments in existing facilities to make sure they can continue to generate electricity and have enough capacity in the system to serve today's members along with expected growth.

This is a lot to digest, but as I mentioned, our goal is to provide you with as much up-to-date information about the 2026 rate increase as we can. Basin Electric's Board of Directors met in September to set rates, and East River will meet in October. After that we will have the details, we need to set our budget here at the local level and give you a better idea of what next year's rates will look like.

**Thank you again, for allowing us to provide your electric service needs.**

**Chris Larson, General Manager**  
[clarson@clayunionelectric.coop](mailto:clarson@clayunionelectric.coop)



## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### CLAY-UNION ELECTRIC SPARKS

(USPS 116-800)

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Monday through Friday  
7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
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## Director Sought for District #5

Jim Ryken District #5 resigned his position on the Clay-Union Electric Board as of April 8, 2025. Thank you Jim for over 36 years of dedicated service.

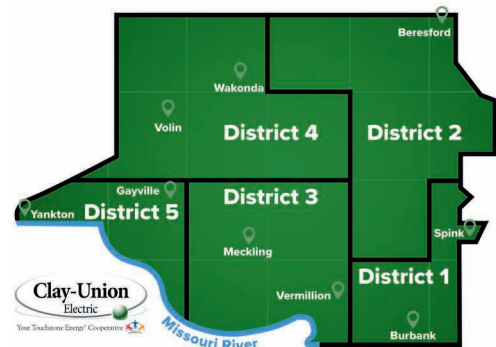
Clay-Union Electric By-Laws state that the Board of Directors, by a majority vote of the remaining directors, shall select a new director to fill the vacant director position, provided however, that the successor meet the following qualifications of office.

A. No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director or hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who:

1. Is not a member in good standing and bona fide resident in the area served or to be served by the Cooperative and of the district they are to represent; or
2. Is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members of the Cooperative;
3. Has been convicted of, plead guilty to or no lo contend-ere to, or received a suspended imposition of sentence for any felony offense;
4. Attends less than two-thirds (2/3) of the monthly board meetings during the past year;
5. Was employed or whose spouse was employed by the Cooperative during any time within the past five (5) years;
6. Is currently employed by the Cooperative or has an immediate member of the family employed by the Cooperative;
7. Lacks the capacity to enter into legal contracts or otherwise meet the requirements of the office.

If you live in District #5 and would like to be considered, please submit a letter of qualifications and why you are interested in serving on the Clay-Union Board of Directors to:

Clay-Union Electric  
%Chris Larson  
P.O. Box 317  
Vermillion, SD 57069



### YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS

|                                       | August 2025 | Year To Date |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Number of Consumers.....              | 3,907       | 3,920 Avg.   |
| Electric & Other Revenue.....         | \$888,877   | \$6,749,329  |
| Total Cost of Service.....            | \$823,278   | \$6,898,930  |
| Operating Margins.....                | \$65,599    | \$(149,601)  |
| Other Margins.....                    | \$10,133    | \$84,230     |
| Total Net Margins.....                | \$75,732    | \$(65,371)   |
| kWh Purchased.....                    | 5,899,031   | 55,020,233   |
| Cost of Power.....                    | \$448,480   | \$3,786,823  |
| kWh Sales.....                        | 5,571,038   | 52,358,509   |
| Residential Average Usage.....        | 1,263       | 1,327        |
| Residential Average Monthly Bill..... | \$183       | \$179        |

# 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

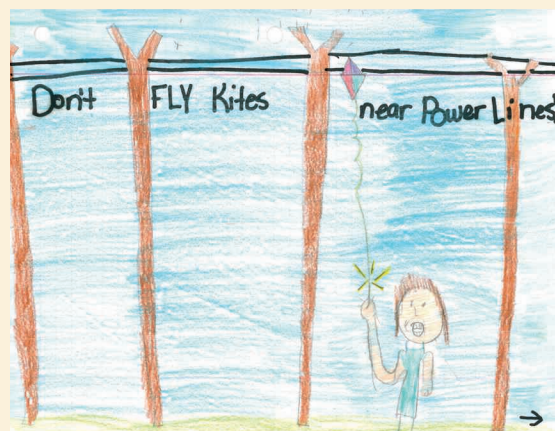
Candles and fireplaces are popular during the holiday season, but they also raise the risk of home fires, especially when combined with the extra decorations and greenery that fill many homes in December. According to the National Fire Protection Association, candles cause an average of

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.

# JIM RYKEN RECEIVES EMINENT SERVICE AWARD FROM EAST RIVER ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATIVE

Jim Ryken was presented with East River Electric Power Cooperative's highest honor, the Eminent Service Award, during the organization's 75th annual meeting Sept. 3, 2025, in Sioux Falls. The award is given annually to individuals who have made significant contributions to East River and the cooperative movement.

As a member-owner of Clay-Union Electric Cooperative, Ryken served for 36 years on the Clay-Union Electric board of directors and for 27 of those years he served as the representative for Clay-Union on the East River board of directors. He was seated on the Clay-Union board in 1989 and was seated on the East River board in 1998. Jim was elected board secretary in the year 2000, and in 2008 he was elected president of the board. Jim stepped down from the Clay-Union and East River boards this past spring after 16 years as president for East River.

"The East River Electric Board of Directors thanks you for your service to the cooperative and your leadership in advancing rural electrification in our region. The leadership you have provided on the board of directors, serving as secretary for 8 years and president of the board for 16 years helped to ensure consumers across the region have received safe, reliable and affordable electric power for decades. For these and your many other contributions to East River Electric, its member systems and consumers, we recognize you for your dedication and friendship with our highest honor," said Board President Alan Vedvei in announcing the award.

Jim's passion for electric cooperatives and helping better the lives of his community are inspiring. He led East River through two general manager searches during his tenure as East River's board president and oversaw incredible growth in the system over those years. Since Jim took over as president, East River's peak demand rose 57 percent. He oversaw changes to East River's load management program, the Transmission System Upgrade Plan, and several other key initiatives that have strengthened East River as an organization.

His commitment doesn't stop there. He has always served as a strong advocate for public policies that benefit and impact our industry, maintaining close ties



Jim and his wife Margo have two children and reside in Clay-Union's service area, where they farm south of Gayville and have long been active in community and civic initiatives.

with legislators and participating in cooperative visits to Pierre, Washington, D.C., and legislative fly-ins through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

*East River Electric Power Cooperative is a wholesale electric power supply cooperative serving 24 rural electric cooperatives and one municipally-owned electric system, which in turn serve more than 137,000 homes and businesses. The company's 42,000 square mile service area covers the rural areas of 41 counties in eastern South Dakota and 22 counties in western Minnesota.*

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Full Name: CoBank

Complete Mailing Address: 6340 S. Fiddlers Green Circle, Greenwood Village, CO 80111

National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corp. (CFC): 20701 Cooperative Way, Dulles, VA 20166

USDA Rural Development Utilities Service (RUS): STOP 1510, RM 5135, 1400 Independence Ave, Washington DC 20250-002

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☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

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# CARING FOR CAREGIVERS

## Exploring Structured Family Caregiving Services for South Dakota's Caregivers

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto: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](https://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.”



## UNCLAIMED CAPITAL CREDIT CHECKS

The following list of people have capital credit checks that were undeliverable. If you know someone on this list, please have them contact us at 605-624-2673.

*Thank you for your assistance in locating these members.*

|                            |                       |                                   |                                   |
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| ADAM, ROLAND/SUSAN         | COOK, GLEN/CAROL      | HA, LEWIS                         | KRIER, DARLENE/EUGENE             |
| AKERS, TOM                 | COTTRELL, ROBERT      | HAMBURG, VICTOR                   | KTTW TELEVISION                   |
| ALBERS, CHRIS              | CROCKETT, MICHAEL     | HANSEN, YVETTE                    | KUCERA, J. ELOISE                 |
| ALEXANDER, JERRY           | CURTIS, GEORGE/LOLA   | HANSON, STEVE                     | KUIPERS, KYLE                     |
| AMES, RANDALL              | CUTLER, DR. SUSAN K   | HAWTHORNE, JOHN/<br>CORALEE       | LAFRENTZ, RICHARD/<br>YVETTE      |
| ANDERSEN, GORDON           | DARLAND, SONYA        | HEIN, ANGEL                       | LANGLEY, JAMES                    |
| ANDERSON, DAVID DICK       | DART, KEVIN           | HENDRICKSON, GUY                  | LANGLOIS, MARTIN J                |
| ANDREE, CHAD               | DAVIS, CLYDE          | HEWITT, ESTHER                    | LEETCH, FRED                      |
| ARN, SUZIE                 | DAVIS, JERRI          | HI WAY USED CARS                  | LEWISON, PATRICIA                 |
| ARTS GARBAGE SERVICE       | DELANEY, BERNICE      | HOFER, RANDY A                    | LEWISON, STANLEY                  |
| AVENELL, RANDY             | DUBOIS, BRUCE         | HOLLAND, LARRY                    | LIGHT, JERALD                     |
| BAKER, ROBERT              | DUNHAM, DAN/JAN       | HOLMES WELDING                    | LIPPERT, MYRNA                    |
| BALES, GENE/PAM            | DURHAM, TOM R         | HOLOCH, DUANE                     | LUBBEN, CURTIS/VALERIE            |
| BANCROFT, DARYL            | DVORACEK, STEVEN      | HORACEK, CHARICE                  | LUECHTEFELD, TOM                  |
| BARNHOUSE, TROY            | DWYER, DOUG           | HOTZ, GERALD                      | LUFT, JOHN                        |
| BARTELS, MICHAEL           | EASTMAN, NICK/LORETTA | HUGHES, SHIRLEY                   | MARCOTTE, ROGER                   |
| BAUMGART, CAROL            | EINREM, CHARLES D     | HUMPAL, GARY                      | MARONEY, TAMI                     |
| BBC RENTALS                | EKEREN, LINDY         | IRVINE, PAM                       | MARTIN, LORI                      |
| BERGQUIST, DARIN/<br>SHERI | ELLIS, EDWIN R        | IRWIN, GEORGE W                   | MCFARLAND, T./<br>KAMPHAUS, HENRY |
| BITTNER, CHAD              | ENGEN, EVELYN         | IVERSON, JOHN/DOROTHY             | MCGUIRE, SHARON                   |
| BOUCK, JACKIE              | ERICKSON, LEO         | JEPSEN, GARY                      | MEAD, BRAD/<br>LARSON, BRAD       |
| BOCK, KRISTI               | ERICKSON, MELINDA     | JERTSON, WAYNE                    | MEIRS, MARY                       |
| BROOKS, ANNETTE/JOHN       | ERICKSON, RICHARD     | JOHNSON, ALEASA                   | MELSTAD, KORRY                    |
| BROTHERHOOD                | FECHNER, CHRIS        | JOHNSON, ANDREA                   | MENARD, RYAN                      |
| BOXING CLUB                | FELBER, RONALD/JUDY   | JOHNSON, ERIC                     | MILLER, MICHAEL F                 |
| BROWN, NANCY L             | FISCHER, JAMES        | JOHNSON, KURT                     | MILLER, MURL                      |
| BUBBA'S BAR & GRILL        | FISHBACH, VICTOR B    | JOHNSON, TIM                      | MINIHAN, ANDREW                   |
| BUCHMANN, HAROLD R         | FLOTTMEYER, ROBERT    | JOHNSON, VIRGIL                   | MORTENSON, DANIEL/<br>BECKY       |
| BUCKANAGA, HARRY           | FLYNN, VICKI          | JOHNSTON, STACEY                  | MOULTON, PAT/DARLYS               |
| BURBACH, ROBERT/AMY        | FRAZIER, ALLEN        | JUTTELSTAD, MARK                  | NAUERTZ, JAMES/JOAN               |
| BURLINGTON                 | FREDERICKS, NORMAN    | KAPLER, TODD/<br>MCCOLLAR, JACQUE | NELSEN, STACY                     |
| NORTHERN RAILROAD          | FREESE, ROBERT/JACKIE | KARLEY, RAY                       | OIEN, LARRY                       |
| BUTLER, DAVID              | FREUND, BECKY         | KARST, MICHAEL/KRISTI             | OLSON, DONALD G                   |
| CANNON, NELL               | FULLENKAMP, MARIE G   | KELLEY, JAMES/MELINDA             | OLSON, LARRY                      |
| CAPASSO, JOSEPH M          | GALL, BEN             | KELLEY, LONNIE                    | ORR, TOM/ANDREA                   |
| CARGIL, FSC                | GENERAL SERVICE       | KELLEY, MILDRED                   | PAMIDA INC. #03241                |
| CARLSON, CAROL             | COMPUTER, INC         | KENNEDY, DAVID/<br>TRACY HEILMAN  | PATTEN, PAMELA                    |
| CARTER, LARRY              | GLOVER, LEANNA        | KERN, ZACHARY/SANDRA              | PEACOCK, JULIE                    |
| CHECOTS, DON               | GOEDEN, PATRICIA K    | KIRCHER, JAN                      | PECKHAM, DAVE                     |
| CLARK, MIKE                | GRABER, TERRY         | KLEINSASSER, KEVIN/<br>HEATHER    | PERMANN, ROBERT                   |
| COLE, KEVIN                | GRANT, MIKE           |                                   |                                   |
| COLLINS, CYNTHIA K.        | GREGOIRE, KARY        |                                   |                                   |
| COLOROSO, EARLA            | GUKEISEN, MIKE/DAN    |                                   |                                   |
|                            | GURNEY, ELIZABETH     |                                   |                                   |

PETERSON FAMILY FARM  
PIERCE, MARK/MARILYN  
POKORNEY, JANICE  
RAMSEY, ANN  
RARRAT, FRED  
RASMUSSEN, SCOTT  
RATCLIFF, LYN  
REINSCHMIDT, JOHN  
RICHARDSON, AL  
RIDGWAY, ROBIN  
RINGSRUD, RONALD H  
ROHRER, LARRY  
ROSENBAUM, ARVIN  
ROTH, DARRIN  
RUSSAU, WILLIE T  
SAGE, NANCY  
SAILORS, MATT  
SALO, MARILYN  
SATTLER, MIKE/CHELLE  
SCHMID, DEB  
SCHMIDT, MERLE/HOLLI  
SCHNEIDER, TERRY  
SCHULZ, LAYNE D  
SCOTT, SHIRLENE K  
SEARLS, JACK  
SHUTT, DAN  
SICARD, KAREN  
SIMPSON, GUY  
SKIBA, HARRY/TERRY  
SMILSKY, DAVID/SHELLEY  
SORENSEN, JAMES H  
SOULEK, LARRY  
SPAUGH, KURT A  
SPENCER, JULIAN/KRISTY

SPENCER, MARK  
SPENCER, WM  
SPINK CAFE  
STANLEY, PATRICIA  
STENE, RICHARD W  
STERNQUIST, SHERIDAN  
STEVENS, SCOTT  
STOLZ, KEVIN  
STRAATMEYER, LORI  
SWANSON, KERRY/  
CARMEN  
TERRELL, MARY  
THORSON, CAROL  
TRI STATE RADIO  
TRUCK TOWNE CAFE  
TUCKER, JIM  
UHING, JEAN  
VANCLEAVE, DAVID/CHRIS  
VOLIN COMMUNITY CAFE  
WAHL, EDDIE/JENNIFER  
WALKER, JENNIFER  
WALTER, VERLIE  
WEINANDT, MYRON  
WEINANDT, STEVEN/KARA  
WELCHEL, TOM  
WIESE, MIKE/GINA  
WILD BILL'S (HAY JUDES)  
WILLIAMS, FLOYD/KARA  
WILLIAMS, JAMES R.  
WISTE, ERIC/MISSIE  
WOFFORD, GLEN/JACKIE  
WORTMAN, BRIAN  
ZIMMERMAN, DARREL  
ZURCHER, MYRON

## A Glimpse Through Our Eyes



Sometimes we need to replace a meter if it's getting old or not working properly. Most of the time, this only takes about 10 minutes. But in some cases, like when fencing or other obstacles are around the poles, meters, or transformer pads the job can take a couple of hours and may require more than one lineman/electrician. Obstructions like this can cause longer power outages.

If you're ever unsure about working around our equipment, just give us a call. We'll be happy to talk through the best option for both you and our equipment.





# LINEMENS' TRAINING READYED CREW FOR CHAINSAW ACCIDENT

(From left) When Brandon Schmiege 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](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

Perched within the manlift on a bucket truck, Brandon Schmiege 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.”

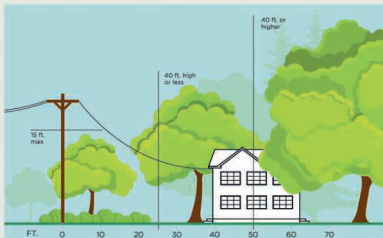
To help prevent those worst case scenarios, electric cooperatives continually scrutinize safety training and workplace incidents. Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative is sharing this story with its members-owners and fellow cooperatives to promote preparedness for unexpected incidents like this one,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

## 3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

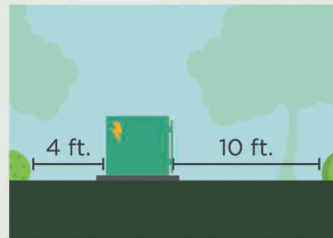
Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them.

**Here’s how you can help:**

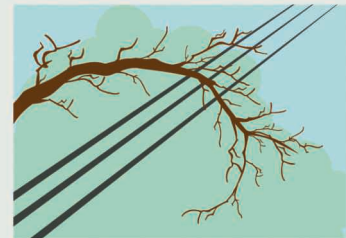
**1. Plant trees in the right place.** Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



**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.**

## Clay-Union Electric Corporation Board Meeting Summary

AUGUST 29, 2025 • VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA

The board meeting was called to order on August 29, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. by board President Tom Larsen. The meeting was held in the conference room at the Clay-Union Electric Headquarters.

In attendance were Tom Larsen, Sara Schulte, Chris Kinney, and Mike Slattery. The board seat for District #5 is vacant. Attending staff members included Chris Larson, Beth Bottolfson, Alan Gauer and Jackie Williams.

**Agenda (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the agenda as presented.

**Visitors to Be Heard** – Kris Dolan, CFC; Max Kinney, Student **Invitation to attend the Board Meeting (Action)** A motion was made, seconded, and carried to invite Max Kinney, student at Beresford, to observe the proceedings of the Board of Directors.

**Approval of Minutes from the July Board Meeting (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the July board minutes held on 7/18/25.

**Approval of Minutes from the July Executive Session (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the July executive session minutes held on 7/18/25.

**Check List & Electronic Funds Transfer** – The board reviewed the EFT/ACH payments, and the monthly check list as presented.

**New Members and Refunds (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the new members, refunds and credit deposits as presented.

**Early Retirement of Capital Credits (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the Early Retirement of Capital Credits as presented.

**Contracts (Action)** – A motion was made seconded and carried to approve the Electric Service Contracts as presented.

**Policy Review** – None

**Work Order and Special Equipment Summary** – None

**REED Loan** – None

### Management Reports:

**A. Manager's Report** - Manager Larson provided reports on the monthly activities:

**August Board Meeting** – The date of September 22nd, 2025, was set as the next regular board meeting to begin at 8:30 a.m.

**East River REED/MAC** - The REED Board met on August 4th for the monthly meeting via video conference with the MAC meeting being on August 5th in Sioux Falls.

- Manager Larson gave an overview of the Basin information on the proposed rate increase for 2026.

**SD Line Patrol** - Virtual meetings have started in planning the SD Line Patrol poker run scheduled for September 2025. B-Y, Union and Clay-Union will host the event.

**Federated Rural Electric Insurance (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and approved to appoint Chris Larson as

the delegate for the director's election at the NRECA regional meeting in September.

**City Annexation (Action)** - A motion was made, seconded, and approved to authorize Tom Larsen, to sign the agreement to finalize the transfer of service rights on the Marv Tract 1 property north of Walmart, North of Hwy. 50 bypass.

**CoBank Election** – Manager Larson reported on the candidates running for the Board of Directors.

**CFC Director 6 Candidates** - Manager Larson reported on the candidates running for the Board of Directors.

**NRECA Region 6 meeting** - The NRECA Region 6 meeting is September 23-25 in Madison, Wisconsin. Manager Larson is the delegate.

**East River Annual Meeting** - The East River Annual Meeting is on September 3rd at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Sioux Falls. Mike Slattery is the delegate, and Tom Larsen is the alternate.

**Basin Electric Annual Meeting** – Manager Larson, Director Slattery and staff summarized the Basin Electric Annual Meeting held on August 12th, 13th, and 14th in Bismarck, ND.

**Clay County Fair** - The member/community appreciation event was held on August 8th as part of the Clay County Fair.

**Economic Development** – A discussion was held regarding several economic development concerns/opportunities in our service territory.

**Cooperative Hall of Fame** – Manager Larson attended the Cooperative Hall of Fame banquet on Monday August 4th in Sioux Falls. Dick Johnson, retired West River Electric CEO, was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

**B. Administrative Report** – Manager of Finance and Administration Bottolfson reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Billing Activity
- July 2025 Financials
- NRECA Renewal Rates
- Energy Rate Increase for 2026
- Capital Credits, General Retirements
- Loan Advance

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**C. Operations Report** – Operations Manager Gauer reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Monthly department work summary
- New Service
- Retired Service
- July Outage Report
- Damage to Clay-Unions System
- Service Upgrades
- Wiring

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**Financial Report** – Manager of Finance and Administration Bottolfson reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Actual to Budget
- Balance Sheet
- Interest Income
- Irrigation Sales 2020-2025
- kWh Sales Report
- Large Power

- Line Loss
- Operating Statement
- Power Bill
- Summary of Purchased Power
- Wiring Income & Expense

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**Legal Report** – None

**Strategic Planning** – None

**Safety Meeting Minutes** – The July and August Safety Meeting Minutes and a report from Federated Rural Electric Insurance was posted to the website for the board to review and discussed during the meeting.

**Cyber Security** – The July Cyber Security report from East River IT was posted to the website for the board to review and was discussed during the meeting.

**Video and/or Meeting Reports** –

- East River Report
- East River Financials
- Basin Reports

**Calendar** – The board reviewed the September 2025 calendar.

**Executive Session** – The board went into Executive Session at 12:25 p.m., Executive Session was adjourned at 1:24 p.m. There was no action taken.

**Adjournment** – There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and carried, to adjourn the meeting at 1:25 p.m.

**Thomas Larsen, President**

**Sara Schulte, Secretary**

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

### TIP OF THE MONTH

With the holiday season approaching and more time spent in the kitchen, consider ways to save energy in the heart of your home. When possible, cook meals with smaller, energy efficient appliances, such as toaster ovens, slow cookers and air fryers. When using the range, match the size of the pan to the heating element. Keep range-top burners and reflectors clean so they reflect heat more efficiently. After your holiday meals are complete, load the dishwasher fully before starting the wash cycle. *Source: energy.gov*



## Outage Reports

| Date | Time       | Township       | Members | Cause          |
|------|------------|----------------|---------|----------------|
| 8/1  | 1:00 p.m.  | Riverside/Star | 29      | Unknown        |
| 8/2  | 9:30 p.m.  | Vermillion     | 77      | UG Fault       |
| 8/5  | 12:30 p.m. | Marindahl      | 4       | Member Caused  |
| 8/9  | 11:30 a.m. | Prairie Center | 1       | UG Fault       |
| 8/15 | 5:45 p.m.  | Star           | 1       | Equip. Failure |
| 8/27 | 2:00 p.m.  | Riverside      | 2       | Contractor     |

## Office Hours and Due Dates

Our office hours are Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please remember your **PAYMENT DUE DATE is the 20<sup>th</sup> of EACH MONTH**. Your payment must ARRIVE in our office on the 20th to avoid any penalties. Please allow mailing time as we go by the received date, **NOT the postmark**. If the 20th falls on a weekend or holiday, payment is due the following business day. If payment is still not received by the first of the following month, a \$30 collection fee will be applied and a disconnect notice will be mailed. If disconnection for nonpayment occurs, all past and current energy charges, a reconnect fee and sufficient credit deposit will be required before the meter can be reinstalled.

## FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, WE ALSO ACCEPT THESE PAYMENT OPTIONS:

### Online Billing:

www.clayunionelectric.coop  
Set up your user profile to manage your account, pay your bill and receive billing notification emails.

**Bank Draft:** Have your payment automatically deducted from your checking or savings account on the due date.

**Recurring Credit/Debit Card:** Have your payment automatically deducted from your card on the due date.

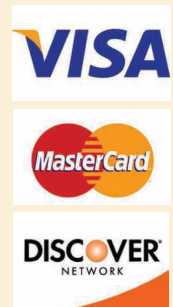
**By Phone:** Call in your credit/debit card payment.

**In Office:** We accept cash, check, money order or credit/debit card.

**By Mail:** Send check or money order with your payment slip.

**Drop Box:** Located on the right side of our main entrance at 31321 SD Hwy 19.

**There are no additional fees to use any of the above payment methods.**



**Collection Fee ..... \$30**  
**Trip Charge-Reconnect Fee**  
**During Business Hours..... \$75**  
**Dishonored Payment ..... \$40**

**Delinquent Accounts (gross rate)**  
**10 percent on the first \$200 plus 2 percent on the balance.**



### **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](http://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.

### **NOV. 1**

#### **Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show**

10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Dakota Christian School

Corsica, SD

605-366-7940

### **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 St.

Fairburn, SD

### **NOV. 1-2**

#### **The Black Market/**

#### **Formerly Benson's Flea Market**

Sat 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.

Sioux Falls, SD

### **NOV. 3**

#### **American Legion**

#### **Pancake Breakfast**

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

1600 W. Russell St.

Sioux Falls, SD

605-336-3470

### **NOV. 7-9**

#### **Hill City Girlfriends' Weekend**

Information on Facebook Page

Hill City, SD

### **NOV. 8**

#### **TNT's Gifts & Goodies Galore**

10 a.m.-2 p.m.

510 S. Main St..

Dimock, SD

### **NOV. 8**

#### **Lutefisk Supper**

4:30 p.m., 5:45 p.m., 7 p.m.

Call for Reservations

Lake Campbell Lutheran Church

Volga, SD

605-690-4868 – Cheryl

605-693-4325 – Charlotte

### **NOV. 8**

#### **More Than a Meal Gala**

5:30 p.m.

Aberdeen, SD

Tickets: 605-229-4741

### **NOV. 14-15**

#### **Junkin' Market Days**

Fri. 4-7 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Ramkota Exhibit Hall

Sioux Falls, SD

### **NOV. 15**

#### **Club 14 Craft + Vendor Fair**

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Hendricks Public School

Hendricks, MN

605-690-5586

### **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.

Canyon Lake Activity Center

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. 29**

#### **Gregory Mid-Winter Fair**

9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Gregory Memorial Auditorium

Gregory, SD

605-295-4345

### **DEC. 14**

#### **A Poker Alice Christmas**

2 p.m.

Gayville Music Hall

Gayville, SD

605-760-5799

### **DEC. 14**

#### **Celebration of the St. Lucia Tradition**

3 p.m.

Dalesburg Lutheran Church

Vermillion, SD

[ron@dalesburg.org](mailto:ron@dalesburg.org)

**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.**