

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



(left to right) Rosebud Electric Directors Dennis Purvis and Boyt Young and Butte Electric CEO Matt Sleep serve a homemade meal to legislators, state employees and Capitol visitors in South Dakota State Capitol.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

## Co-ops at the Capitol

**Every Voice Counts**  
Pages 8-9

**Easements Bring Safety and Reliability**  
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A woman and a child are looking up at a Christmas tree decorated with lights and ornaments. The woman is wearing a blue coat and a red beanie, and the child is wearing a blue and orange striped jacket and a blue beanie. They are both holding coffee cups. The background is filled with warm, glowing lights.

MAY YOUR DAYS  
BE MERRY AND BRIGHT!

This holiday season, we'll keep the lights twinkling and the cookies baking.  
Happy holidays from your cooperative family at Basin Electric!



**BASIN ELECTRIC  
POWER COOPERATIVE**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS**

**BON HOMME YANKTON ELECTRIC**

(USPS No. 018-973)

**Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, Inc**  
 PO Box 158  
 134 S. Lidice St.  
 Tabor, SD 57063

**Office Hours:**  
 Monday through Friday  
 7:30am - 4:00pm

**Pay by Phone, call:**  
 1-855-941-3507

**To report an outage, call:**  
 Local call from Tabor, Tyndall, and Yankton:  
 605-463-2507

**NOTICE:** Electric bills must be paid by 10:00am on the 20th of each month to avoid a \$10 late fee.

**Board President:** Dave Sykora

**Board of Directors**

- Rick Cheloha - Vice President
- Brian Brandt - Secretary
- Robert Ruppelt - Treasurer
- Paul Voigt
- Tom Boyko

**General Manager:** Stephanie Horst

**Operations Manager:** Ken Carda

**Office Manager:** Nicole Einrem

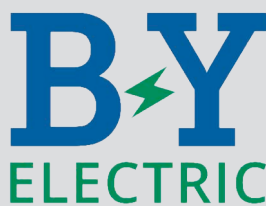
**Members Service Advisor:** Aaron Melichar

**Editor:** Chantelle Jungemann

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, Inc, PO Box 158, 134 S. Lidice St., Tabor, SD 57063-0158. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living. Subscription information: Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals postage paid at Tabor, SD 57063.

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# NOVEMBER BOARD MEETING

The November board meeting was held on November 19, 2025 at 8:00 am. Directors present were Dave Sykora, Rick Cheloha, Robert Ruppelt, Paul Voigt, Tom Boyko and Brian Brandt. Others present were the attorney, management staff and guest employee.

**THE BOARD APPROVED THE CONSENT AGENDA:**

- October 2025 Regular Board Meeting Minutes
- Capital Credits to Estates - \$7,016.82
- Review New Members & Cancellations
- Review Closed Work Order Inventory - #922 - \$21,859.96
- Review Special Equipment Purchases - None

**THE BOARD REVIEWED AND ACCEPTED FOLLOWING REPORTS:**

- Member Service Report
- Operations & Safety Report
- Office & Financial Reports
  - 2025 Capital Credit Retirement Plan
  - 2026 Final Operating Budget
- General Manager Report
- East River Cyber Security/IT Report

- SDREA Report - none
- East River Report

**OTHER GOVERNANCE**

- Approved New Rates Effective January 1, 2026
- Approved Updated Operation Round Up® Application
- Appointed SDREA Annual Meeting Voting Delegate/Alternate (Ruppelt/Cheloha)
- Appointed SDREA Board Director (Brandt)
- Set 2026 Annual Meeting date as August 18, 2026.
- Enter/Exit Executive Session - None
- Next Meeting date set for Wednesday, December 17, 2025, at 8:00 am.

FINANCIAL REPORT	OCTOBER		YTD
	2024	2025	2025
<b>TOTAL ELECTRIC REVENUE</b>	<b>\$836,334</b>	<b>\$909,425</b>	<b>\$10,442,300</b>
<b>COST OF POWER</b>	<b>\$432,431</b>	<b>\$523,119</b>	<b>\$6,130,420</b>
<b>TOTAL COST OF SERVICE</b>	<b>\$875,463</b>	<b>\$902,642</b>	<b>\$1,187,830</b>
<b>KWHS PURCHASED</b>	<b>6,640,314</b>	<b>6,917,298</b>	<b>83,843,054</b>
<b>RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE KWH</b>	<b>1,085</b>	<b>1,120</b>	
<b>RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE BILL</b>	<b>\$152</b>	<b>\$159</b>	

**Welcome New Members**

Utica

Carson Dagley

Robert Hauss

Tabor

Darrell & Kathy Pepper

Mickayla Ryder & Tyler Vanruren

Tom & Mary Bartunek

Tom & Michelle Schaefer

Mission Hill

Jason Verdecruysse

Springfield

Schanlae Colony

Yankton

Alexis Spady

Andrea Skinner

David Poppe

Jeff & Nancy Vavra

Jose A Cordeiro

Kyle Smith

Paul & Rachel Fries

Yankton Storage

# Tree Trimming Safety

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. South Dakota's electric cooperatives strive to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages nationally can be attributed to overgrown vegetation.

Overgrown vegetation and trees also pose a risk to power lines. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose grave danger to families. If children can access those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor like a tree. A proactive approach also diminishes the chances of fallen branches or trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for line workers to restore power.

If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can be-

come overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

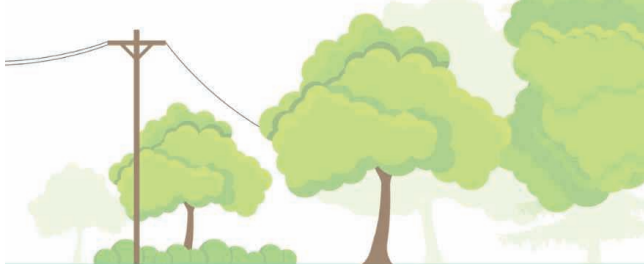
When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 ft. or smaller) should be planted at least 25 ft. from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 ft.) should be planted at least 50 ft. from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. from the transformer door and 4 ft. from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please contact your local electric cooperative.

We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.

## BENEFITS OF TREE TRIMMING

- ✓ Improves service reliability
- ✓ Speeds up restoration time
- ✓ Keeps crews & communities safe



### "Watch for overhead power lines."

Jacob Ymker, Age 10

Jacob reminds readers to watch out for overhead power lines. Great job, Jacob! Jacob's parents are Mark and Marion Ymker from Armour, 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.

# Heart-Warming DESSERTS

## APPLE BREAD

### Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tsps. cinnamon
- Mix in small dish & set aside.*
- 2 eggs (room temperature)
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 cup melted butter or margarine
- Mix together in a bowl and add:*
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 cups chopped apples

### Method

Pour 1/2 of the batter into a greased and floured bread pan. Sprinkle 1/2 of the cinnamon and sugar mixture over it. Add remaining batter and top with remaining cinnamon sugar mixture.

Bake at 350° for 45-60 minutes.

**Grace Klein**  
Sioux Valley Energy

## PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE DESSERT

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup heavy whipped cream
- 8 oz. cream cheese, whipped
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 can pumpkin puree
- 1 tbsp. pumpkin pie spice
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 pkg. cheesecake pudding mix

### Method

Beat 1 cup heavy whipped cream and set aside.

In a separate bowl, mix and beat the cream cheese, sugar, brown sugar, pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla, and cheesecake pudding mix.

Fold the whip cream into this mixture and spread in a graham cracker crust

Refrigerate two hours before serving plus add a spray of whip cream and sprinkle cinnamon on top.

(Optional) add chopped pecans or walnuts.

**Susan Forma**  
Union County Electric

## CHERRY COCONUT BARS

### Ingredients:

#### Crust

- 1 cup flour, sifted
- 1/2 cup butter
- 3 tbsps. powdered sugar

#### Mixture

- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3/4 cup chopped nuts
- 1/2 cup coconut
- 1/2 cup red maraschino cherries, quartered

### Method

Mix together flour, butter and powdered sugar. Spread in 8" square pan. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until it is a delicate brown.

In a bowl, mix in the remaining ingredients in the order given: eggs, sugar, baking powder, flour, salt, vanilla, chopped nuts, coconut, maraschino cherries.

Spread this mixture over the crust and bake again for 25-30 minutes. cool and cut into squares.

**Barbara Anderson**  
Lake Region 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 by Elena Veselova from Shutterstock

# The Everyday Value of Electricity



**Stephanie Horst**  
horst@byelectric.com

Every now and then, it's good to pause and think about the things we rely on every day but don't always notice. Electricity is one of them. It's there when we wake up, when we cook supper, when we charge our phones, and when we wind down at night. It's such a steady part of our lives that we hardly think about it unless something doesn't work.

The truth is, we've all come to expect that when we hit the switch, the lights come on. And at B-Y Electric, we take that expectation seriously. Reliable power at a fair price has always been our promise.

With our 2026 rate change, our residential energy charge will be 11.59¢ per kilowatt-hour. To put that in perspective, the 2024 South Dakota average is 11¢, and the 2024 U.S. average is 12.99¢. And depending on where you live, the picture changes a lot—my sister out in southern California pays 34¢ per kilowatt-hour.

So, when you hear stories on the national news about soaring electric bills, keep in mind

that many of those reports are coming from the coasts where prices are some of the highest in the nation. Here in the Midwest, Basin Electric and our cooperative system have done a great job keeping power affordable for the long haul.

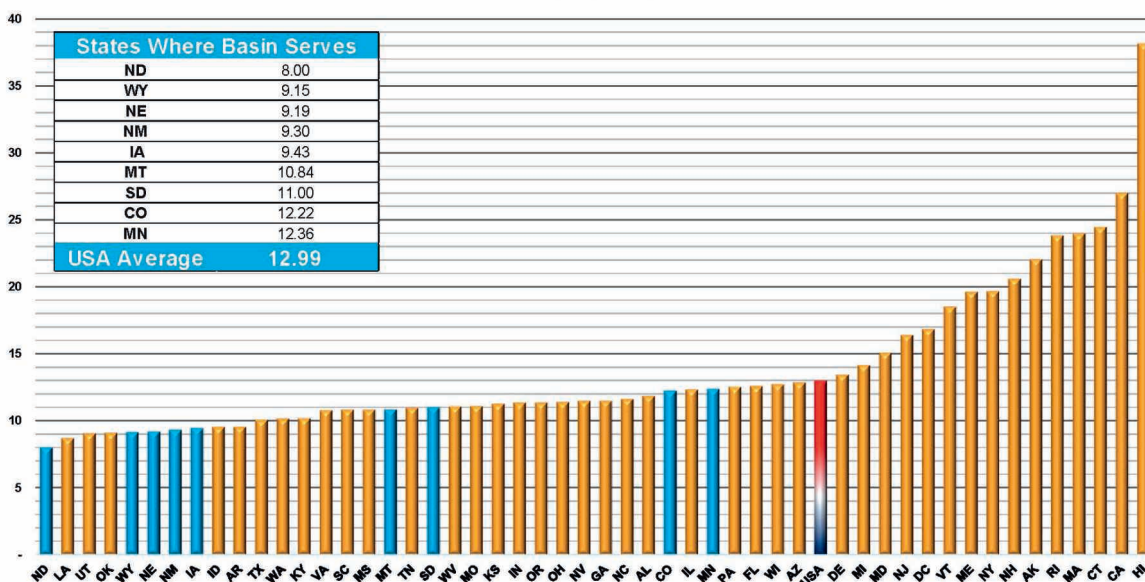
And yes, prices are going up—every utility in the country is facing higher costs. But even with this increase, we're still well below what most Americans pay. More importantly, we're investing in reliability, upkeep, and the future of your electric system so that your kids and grandkids can enjoy the same dependable service you do today.

Electricity continues to be one of the best bargains in your home. It keeps your life running smoothly, and we're proud to deliver it with the care and commitment you expect from B-Y Electric, your cooperative.

Have a safe and blessed Christmas and Happy New Year.

## 2024 Average Price of Electricity By State (cents/kWh)

Source: EIA



# Bon Homme Yankton Electric 2026 Rate Schedule

Starting January 1, 2026, our members will see an increase in electric rates due to higher costs from our power providers, East River and Basin Electric, and rising expenses to maintain safe and reliable power. Some members will see a slight change in the facility charge and adjustments to energy (KWH) and demand (KW).

We understand that rate increases are difficult, and we are committed to keeping costs as low as possible while providing safe, dependable power.

Rate Code 01 and 02 - Policy 50-01: Single Phase, 37.5 kva and under and Single Phase Pivot		
	Current	New
Facility Charge	\$ 50.00	\$ 55.00
KWH	\$ 0.1035	\$ 0.1159
Water Heater Credit	\$ (6.00)	\$ (6.00)
Electric Heat Credit/Heat KWH	\$ (0.0465)	\$ (0.0465)

Rate Code 03 - Policy 50-03: Single Phase 50-99 kva, Three Phase under 75 kva and Three Phase Pivot		
	Current	New
Facility Charge	\$ 60.00	\$ 65.00
KWH	\$ 0.1135	\$ 0.1259
Water Heater Credit	\$ (7.00)	\$ (6.00)
Electric Heat Credit/Heat KWH	\$ (0.0465)	\$ (0.0465)
Monthly Minimum Bill/KVA	\$ 1.25	\$ 1.25

Rate Code 58: Single Phase Irrigation		
	Current	New
Facility Charge	\$ 50.00	\$ 55.00
Peak Demand/KW	\$ 5.50	\$ 5.50
Coincident Demand/KW	\$ 18.40	\$ 20.52
Energy/KWH	\$ 0.0670	\$ 0.0670

Rate Code 08 - Policy 50-08: Large Load Three Phase 75-499 kva, Single Phase 100+ KVA		
	Current	New
Facility Charge	\$ 60.00	\$ 65.00
Peak Demand/KW	\$ 16.10	\$ 18.00
Energy/KWH	\$ 0.0600	\$ 0.0600
Water Heater Credit	\$ (6.00)	\$ (6.00)
Electric Heat Demand Credit/Heat KW	\$ (10.47)	\$ (11.70)
Monthly Minimum Bill/KVA	\$ 1.25	\$ 1.25

Rate Code 54: Three Phase Irrigation		
	Current	New
Facility Charge	\$ 60.00	\$ 65.00
Peak Demand/KW	\$ 8.00	\$ 8.00
Coincident Demand/KW (Uncontrolled)	\$ 18.40	\$ 20.52
Energy/KWH	\$ 0.0670	\$ 0.0670

## 2026 Rate Increase Drivers





The South Dakota State Capitol  
in Pierre, S.D.  
Photo by Frank Turner

# CO-OPS AT THE CAPITOL EVERY VOICE COUNTS

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Electric cooperatives carry a wide range of responsibilities to the members they serve. Beyond keeping the lights on, co-ops represent their communities, focus on member needs and help strengthen the places they call home. But behind the scenes, cooperatives also stay actively involved in legislative discussions to stay engaged in the decisions that shape how they serve their members.

According to Steve Barnett, general manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, legislative efforts help protect reliable electricity, keep costs manageable and support rural communities across South Dakota.

“While it’s important that we stay involved in the topics that are relevant to our industry, it’s really about sharing our values and telling our story,” Barnett said. “Being involved means being engaged and aware of the challenges and issues coming up in the 2026 Legislative Session,”

In addition to SDREA’s internal

leadership, legislative efforts are supported by the association’s lobbying team in Pierre, led by Darla Pollman Rogers of Riter Rogers LLP. Rogers and her colleague, Ellie Bailey, have been involved with SDREA’s legislative work for more than two decades.

“A key component of this work involves relationship building with legislators to establish trust and credibility,” Rogers said.

Rogers noted that member engagement strengthens the cooperative voice during session and throughout the year. “The grassroots approach is huge for co-ops,” she said. “Hearing from members across the state and from different cooperatives helps strengthen our overall impact.” Rogers added that one of the best ways members can get involved is by getting to know their local legislators or attending Co-op Day at the Capitol to observe the process firsthand.

With the next session approaching, several topics are already drawing the attention of not only electric cooperatives but utilities across the

state. One of the proposals SDREA is following closely is Rep. Kent Roe’s data center bill, identified as Draft HB 31.

“We’re seeing an increase in interest from large data center developers looking to site facilities in cooperative service territory,” said Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer at East River Electric Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supply cooperative which serves distribution co-ops in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. “We have been providing input on the data center bill to make sure the law would fit within our process and require data centers to invest in generation and transmission infrastructure to serve them, so we can protect our current cooperative consumers from the risk of building generation to serve these large consumers. At the end of the day, we’re not going to put our member-owners at risk, and engaging with lawmakers working on that issue is very important to our cooperative network.”

The association has also been working

with investor-owned utilities on wildfire mitigation legislation, which stands out as another priority for South Dakota cooperatives.

“Wildfire risk is a growing concern, and this proposal gives utilities a clear, consistent way to plan ahead. At its core, this legislation is about preparedness – making sure utilities have a plan and have reviewed it with their governing authority. By strengthening infrastructure, improving vegetation management, and coordinating closely with communities, the framework helps protect public safety while supporting the reliable service South Dakotans depend on,” Black Hills Electric General Manager Walker Witt said.

Cooperative members also have an important role in legislative advocacy. Their engagement helps ensure that rural needs and perspectives reach decision makers. Barnett encouraged members to stay active by reaching out to local lawmakers in their districts and attending local legislative forums and cracker barrels. These are formal town hall style gatherings where legislators answer questions and update the community.

“Members can contact legislators in their respective districts via email or by telephone,” Barnett said. “Attending cracker barrels is also a good way to stay engaged. These opportunities give members a chance to hear updates, ask questions, and share how policy decisions affect their communities.”

Barnett also noted the importance of staying alert during the legislative process, particularly when a bill is significantly amended. He explained that when a bill gets “hog housed,” it means it has been changed so much that the original version is no longer recognizable. “A hog housed bill is changed or amended significantly, to the point where a person may change their position on the bill,” he said. “Tracking these changes is essential to understanding the real impact a proposal may have if it becomes law.”

Barnett said SDREA will continue to represent the interests of both cooperatives and rural communities across the state. At the end of the day, it’s all about providing dependable electricity and keeping the lights on.



Gov. Larry Rhoden takes a picture with members of the electric cooperative network at Co-op Day at the Capitol last February.

*Photo by Jocelyn Johnson*

## STAYING INVOLVED

### Co-op Day at the Capitol

Electric cooperatives’ efforts to engage local legislators extend far beyond traditional lobbying. Every February, cooperatives from across the state gather for a light-hearted dinner at the South Dakota State Capitol to break bread with lawmakers, provide attendees industry updates and sit in on legislative committee meetings.

Last year, South Dakota cooperatives continued their time-honored tradition of serving pulled pork sandwiches and cowboy beans prepared by Ken Gillaspie, who formerly served as a director for East River Electric and as board president for Oahe Electric, and Roger Crom, a former loss control manager at SDREA.

The next Co-op Day at the Capitol is scheduled for Feb. 17, 2026.

### Legislative Banquets

In addition to Co-op Day at the Capitol, select electric cooperatives across the state host legislative banquets as a means of communicating the latest legislative environment with both their members and local lawmakers. Many times, these events provide a free meal to attendees and include updates on both the successes and challenges for the co-op.

Reach out to your local cooperative to learn more about local Legislative Banquets, Co-op Day at the Capitol or the latest legislative news affecting cooperatives. The co-op network is more than happy to engage.



ANTELOPE VALLEY

## 2026 BASIN TOUR

Registration is now open for members interested in learning more about where your electricity is generated. Basin Electric Power Cooperative is open for tours and we are taking advantage of this. This FREE opportunity for our members will be held June 8-10, 2026. We will be traveling with members from Clay-Union Electric and Union County Electric. If you are interested in attending this tour, please fill out the form below and send to:  
Bon Homme Yankton Electric Attn: Chantelle Jungemann | PO Box 158 | Tabor, SD 57063

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(If registering as a couple/double, include both names.)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration is due by April 1, 2026 to: Chantelle Jungemann - [cjungemann@byelectric.com](mailto:cjungemann@byelectric.com)



## Tis The Season



Bon Homme Yankton Electric is excited to participate in the Mead Museum Hall of Trees where over 80 decorated trees are on display. This year's foyer theme is 1950s Red Carpet Christmas.

Starting the day after Thanksgiving and through the month of December, these unique, beautiful Christmas trees can be viewed on on all 3 floors of the historic 1909 building. The community is able to vote on their favorite. Our tree continued our 80th celebration.

## Dont miss out on this Opportunity!



## Apply for 2026 Scholarships

B-Y Electric is now taking applications for one \$2,500 and two \$500 academic scholarships for the 2026-2027 school year.

The \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship is in its 35th consecutive year and is funded by Basin Electric Power Cooperative of Bismarck, ND.

B-Y Electric is offering the two additional \$500 scholarships. These scholarships are designed to recognize and encourage the academic and community achievements of the students in our area.

Applicants must be a dependent of an active electric member and must be students enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate or graduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational-technical school.

Scholarship recipients will be chosen on a combination of SAT/ACT scores, overall grade point average, work experience, participation in school and community activities, a personal statement of career goals, a written recommendation letter, and an essay relating to cooperative business.

For more information and for a scholarship application form, contact Bon Homme Yankton Electric, your school's guidance counselor, or visit our website: [www.byelectric.coop/scholarships](http://www.byelectric.coop/scholarships). Applications must be returned to Bon Homme Yankton Electric, PO Box 158, Tabor, SD 57063 by 4:00pm on Friday, February 13, 2026. Winners will be announced in March 2026.

### Statement of Non-Discrimination

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).



South Dakota law allows electric cooperatives to place poles along public rights-of-way without needing an easement. Shown here, East River Electric's transmission lines north of Pierre are built within the right-of-way. In cases where the rights-of-way are crowded, have obstacles, or are otherwise not suitable for poles or line work, a co-op may seek an easement outside of the right-of-way.  
*Photo by Jacob Boyko*

# EASEMENTS BRING SAFETY, RELIABILITY

## Why More Room Makes Sense for Co-ops, Line Crews & Members

**Jacob Boyko**  
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Serving rural members means maintaining thousands of miles of power line – and finding the space to safely build and access it. At your local electric cooperative, building, maintaining and repairing thousands of miles of infrastructure is a logistical challenge, but each and every piece of the system has its role in a functioning and reliable electric grid.

That's why easements, or agreements to use and access private land, are essential for co-ops and their members. At East River Electric Power

Cooperative, the generation and transmission co-op serving 25 member distribution systems in South Dakota and Minnesota, Engineering and Planning Services Manager Jon Aus works directly with co-op members to get easements for power lines.

In 2025, most cooperatives prioritize building lines along the public right of way – the area between the road and fence lines along roadways – instead of along quarter lines like they have historically, back when rights-of-way were cluttered with telephone and other overhead lines.

“That’s where we like it from an access and maintenance perspective,”

Aus said of rights-of-way. “Nowadays, when we develop a route for a line, we pick the roads we want to zigzag down to get from Point A to Point B.”

Placing infrastructure along roads improves accessibility for crews and speeds up outage response time, especially when mud or snow are a factor, Aus added. But the trade offs are a workspace limited to the shoulder and ditch and overall limited access to the infrastructure.

That’s where easements make all the difference. When a co-op member allows an easement, the co-op will set poles back just several more feet away from the road right-of-way onto private land, and crews can cross behind the fence when they need to access the poles. The impact on private land is minimal, but it’s a massive benefit for the line crews.

“Having an easement allows crews to work on the backside of the structures,” Aus said. “If you don’t get an easement and you don’t have any access rights, they’re stuck working everything from the ditch and the roadside.”

Engineers are meticulous when mapping routes for new lines, Aus added, noting the lengthy process for engineers as they consider pole placement, obstacles, hazards and community impact.

“At the onset of any project, we’re evaluating the impact of our routing,” Aus continued. “Public impact is right up there on our priorities along with reliability and maintenance. We don’t go down routes we foresee to have challenges with public impact.”

Distribution cooperatives see similar challenges on the ground. In southwest South Dakota, Black Hills Electric Cooperative System Coordinator Jesse Sorensen aims to manage a system that’s not only reliable and affordable, but also built on cooperation with members.

“Very rarely do we have someone reject giving an easement,” he said. “We’ve had very good luck sitting down with members and explaining everything to them that there are hundreds – if not thousands – of landowners that allowed easements so we could get electricity to this property.”

He continued, “The biggest concerns from landowners are about losing their trees or the aesthetic value of their property, and we’ll work with landowners by rerouting lines to prevent cutting prize trees or installing lines in prime views.”

At East River Electric, Aus’ team fields similar questions from landowners, usually concerning specific pole placement and whether poles will interfere with field access, an approach or operation of large machinery. He says it’s usually something the engineers can accommodate because ultimately, co-ops want to leave members’ land as good or better than they found it.

“We’ll even work with landowners to pay to replace any trees we have to remove if we obtain an easement from them,” Aus said.

As the co-op steadily grows and expands its transmission system, East River Electric General Counsel Danny Brown stresses that the co-op relies on voluntary easements, and in its 75-year history has never used eminent domain to obtain an easement.

“Eminent domain is not something we ever want to use,” Brown explained. “We try to educate and work with the property owners the best we can. At the end of the day, an easement is voluntary, and if we can’t make it work from the right of way, we have to start thinking about changing our route.”

But opting for alternate, less-efficient routes is a concession that can severely impact system reliability and leads to a higher price tag for co-op members to pay. Fortunately, Aus and Sorensen said most landowners understand the value of working with their cooperative for themselves and their community.

“There have been several times when landowners have said, ‘Absolutely, bring that line through here,’” Aus recalled. “They want to improve their reliability, or they know that they just need more electricity in that area for whatever they might be doing on their property. Most of the time we’re welcomed with open arms.”

That willingness helps keep cooperative power moving across the countryside.



When a co-op obtains an easement to build a line along a road right-of-way border, the line is placed several feet away from the right-of-way border. In this photo, the right of way border is about at the fence line, with the poles placed several feet behind the fence.

On this route, East River Electric has an easement for 30 feet behind the fence line for when line crews need to maintain or repair the line, giving crews more room to work and better access to the structures.

*Photo submitted by East River Electric.*

# 2025 SE SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE FORUM: YANKTON SD

Bon Homme Yankton Electric attended this year's Legislative Forum in Yankton, SD on Monday, November 24, 2025. The Rural Electric Cooperatives in Southeastern SD hold this annual legislative forum to share with our district representatives on the electric industry, upcoming legislative issues concerning electric cooperatives and also provides the opportunity and time to discuss some of these issues.



Bon Homme Yankton Electric directors and staff, along with directors and staff at Clay-Union Electric, Union County Electric, Southeastern Electric and East River Electric, met with legislators in Yankton to discuss issues that may arise during the 2026 Legislative Session.



Chris Studer, Chief Member & Public Relations at East River Power Cooperative, giving an industry update.



Steve Barnett, SDREA General Manager



Representative Julie Auch of District 18 questions the Electric Cooperatives with some of her concerns with large electric loads wanting to come into our service area.



Senator Lauren Nelson of District 18 addressing the Electric Cooperatives with some of the issues she is pressed with in relationship to electric providers.



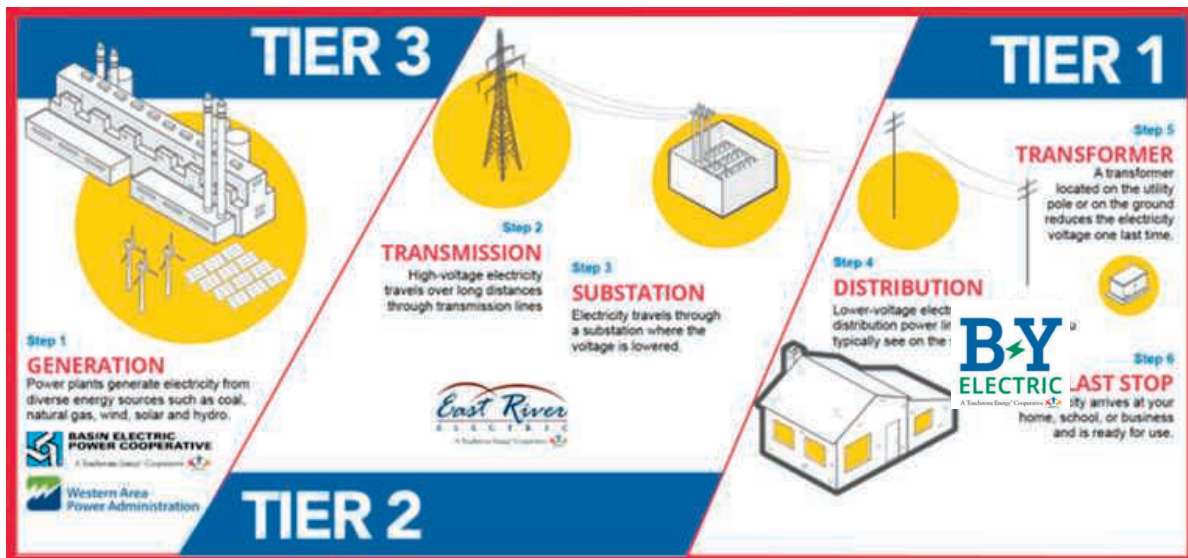
General Managers from Bon Homme Yankton Electric (Stephanie Horst), Union County Electric (Matt Klein), Southeastern Electric (Chad Kinsley) and Clay-Union Electric (Chris Larson) address year to date numbers and specifics going on in their cooperative.

**BON HOMME YANKTON ELECTRIC:**

Member Meters: 4,162  
 Total Assets: \$41,300,000

Miles of Line: 1,302  
 – 49.5% Underground  
 – 50.5% Overhead

Member Density: 3.2 meters per mile of line



## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



### UNTIL JAN. 6

#### Garden Glow

5-9 p.m. (Closed Dec. 24-25, Jan. 1)  
SDSU McCrory Gardens  
Brookings, SD  
[www.sdstate.edu/mccrory-gardens](http://www.sdstate.edu/mccrory-gardens)

*Photo Courtesy of Travel South Dakota*

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.

### UNTIL DEC. 26

#### Christmas at the Capitol

8 a.m.-10 p.m. (Holidays Included)  
South Dakota State Capitol  
Pierre, SD  
605-773-3178  
[christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov](http://christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov)

### DEC. 20-21, 23-24, 27-28

#### 1880 Train Holiday Express

Hot Chocolate, Santa  
Hill City, SD  
[www.1880train.com](http://www.1880train.com)  
605-574-2222

### DEC. 31

#### New Year's Eve Bash

Doors Open at 5:30 p.m.  
American Legion  
Sioux Falls, SD  
Tickets: 605-336-3470

### JAN. 6-8

#### Dakota Farm Show

USD Dakota Dome  
Vermillion, SD  
[www.dakotafarmshow.com](http://www.dakotafarmshow.com)

### JAN. 10

#### Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament

1 p.m.  
Meadowood Lanes  
3809 Sturgis Rd.  
Rapid City, SD

### JAN. 20

#### Prohibition & the Pig

Lake Cty. Museum Fundraiser;  
Prohibition-Era Bootlegging  
6 p.m.-7:30 p.m.  
\$60 per ticket  
The Office Bar & Grill  
Madison, SD  
605-256-5308

### JAN. 22

#### Gentleman's Quartet: Instrumental

7 p.m.  
Johnson Fine Arts Center  
Aberdeen, SD

### JAN. 23-24

#### Pro Snocross Races

Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1876

### JAN. 30-FEB. 7

#### Annual Black Hills Stock Show

Central States Fairgrounds  
Rapid City, SD  
[www.centralstatesfairinc.com](http://www.centralstatesfairinc.com)  
605-355-3861

### FEB. 1

#### The Great Lake County Hotdish Competition

11:30-1:30 p.m.  
St. Thomas School Gym  
Madison, SD  
605-256-5308

### FEB. 7-8

#### The Black Market/Formerly Benson's Flea Market

Sioux Falls, SD  
605-332-6004

### FEB. 13-16

#### 12th Annual Frost Fest

Brookings, SD  
605-692-7444

### FEB. 20-22

#### Winterfest

Fireworks, Parade of Lights,  
Bonfire, Snowshoeing  
Lead, SD  
[www.leadmethere.com/winterfest](http://www.leadmethere.com/winterfest)  
605-584-1100

### FEB. 21

#### Bellator Titans Casino Night Fundraiser

6-11 p.m.  
City Lights Bar & Event Center  
Aberdeen, SD

### FEB. 22

#### C Street Brass

4 p.m.  
Johnson Fine Arts Center  
Aberdeen, SD

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