

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



The Days of '76 Rodeo

**A Century of Grit and
Glory**

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A Message from Our New Manager



Steve Tilton,
General Manager

Members,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Steven Tilton, I go by Steve, and I am honored to serve as the new manager of your cooperative. I would like to share a bit about my background.

I grew up in Winner, South Dakota, and returned there after attending utility line school at Northeast Community College in

Norfolk, Nebraska. After graduation, I began my career with Rosebud Electric Cooperative as an area serviceman and later became an area foreman. In 2017, I decided to pursue my goal of becoming a cooperative manager. I returned to school, earned a business degree, and soon after joined Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative.

At Cherry-Todd, I served as Administration and Operations Support Manager, working closely with both internal teams, outside crews, the General Manager, and the Board of Directors. This experience gave me a strong understanding of how a cooperative operates as a whole.

To broaden my industry knowledge, I joined Missouri River Energy Services (MRES) in Sioux Falls as an Energy Scheduler. In that role, I worked with a team responsible for marketing power generation from a fleet of power plants that used natural gas, wind, hydro, coal,

and oil resources into the regional markets of Southwest Power Pool (SPP) and Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). We also performed start-stop operations on these generation assets to ensure a reliable power supply to the grid. One of the most memorable times in my career was working the desk during Winter Storm Uri in February 2021, when the power grid was pushed to the brink of widespread failure.

After gaining valuable insight into energy markets and grid operations, I accepted the General Manager position at McCone Electric Cooperative in Circle, Montana. Leading that team was a rewarding experience, and I learned a great deal. However, the long distance from family and friends ultimately led me to seek an opportunity closer to home, which brought me to Clay-Union Electric.

The team at Clay-Union Electric and the Vermillion community have been incredibly welcoming. I am excited to serve you—the member-owners—with safe, reliable energy and to work alongside the dedicated team here at your cooperative.

I would be delighted to have members stop in and visit with me anytime.

Cooperatively,
Steve Tilton

A graphic titled "Core Values Foundation" with a blue background. The title is in white serif font, with "are our" in a small circle between "Values" and "Foundation". Below the title are four circular images, each with a caption and a tagline below it.

- Integrity**: Image of a man in a cap and blue shirt. Tagline: "Members first - every day."
- Accountability**: Image of a woman in a white top. Tagline: "Every member has an equal voice."
- Commitment to Community**: Image of a family (man, woman, child) in a field. Tagline: "Improve members' quality of life."
- Innovation**: Image of a woman using a tablet. Tagline: "Innovative solutions and state-of-the-art technology."

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

CLAY-UNION ELECTRIC SPARKS

(USPS 116-800)

Office Hours
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
31321 SD Hwy. 19, Vermillion, S.D.
605-624-2673

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CLAY-UNION ELECTRIC SPARKS is published monthly by Clay-Union Electric Corporation, P.O. Box 317, 31321 SD Hwy. 19, Vermillion, SD 57069. Periodicals Postage Paid at Vermillion, S.D., and additional offices.

Clay-Union Electric members devote approximately 50 cents a month from their electric payments for a subscription to this publication. Subscriptions for non-members are available for \$12 annually.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Clay-Union Electric Sparks, PO Box 317, Vermillion, SD 57069; Telephone (605) 624-2673, 1-800-696-2832 Fax (605) 624-5526.

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Happy Work Anniversary

Thank you for your dedication to the cooperative and its members!



Jake Husby
Journeyman
Lineman
3 years



Quinn Springer
Crew Foreman
16 years



In observance of the holiday, our office will be closed Friday, July 3rd.

We hope you have a safe and fun holiday with family and friends.

Our 24/7 on call service will handle any emergencies at 605-624-2673.



HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS

	April 2026	Year To Date
Number of Consumers billed.....	3,553.....	3,557
Total Revenue	\$824,304.....	\$3,794,112
Total Cost of Service.....	\$897,29	\$3,858,947
Operating Margins	\$(72,995).....	\$(64,835)
Other Margins.....	.\$6,678	\$46,768
Total Net Margins.....	\$(66,317).....	\$(18,067)
kWh Purchased.....	6,983,623	32,032,992
Cost of Power	\$491,101	\$2,271,305
kWh Sales.....	6,616,960	30,809,644
Residential Average Usage	1,298.....	1,386
Residential Average Monthly Bill.....	\$170	\$209

BEFORE THE SMOKE: PROTECT YOUR HOME BEFORE WILDFIRE SEASON

Wildfires can move quickly, especially when dry grass, high winds and hot weather come together. In rural South Dakota, where homes, farms, shelterbelts, outbuildings and open grassland share the same landscape, preparation matters.

But there is one important point to make first: fighting a wildfire is not a job for homeowners.

If a wildfire is nearby, leave firefighting to trained professionals. Follow evacuation orders, call 911 to report a fire and stay away from downed power lines, smoke-filled areas and active fire zones. Cooperative members can do their most important work in advance, taking steps that make a property harder for fire to reach and easier for responders to protect.

One of the most effective steps is creating defensible space around the home. That does not mean clearing every tree or turning a yard into bare ground. It means reducing combustible material near houses, garages, sheds and other structures, while thinking about how fire could move from brush to trees to buildings.

Start closest to the house. Embers can collect against siding, under decks, in gutters or near steps. Remove dry leaves, dead plants, stacked lumber, cardboard and other combustible materials from next to the home. Gravel, rock, concrete, pavers and other hardscaping can be better choices near walls, decks and porches.

Gutters and roofs deserve attention, too. Leaves and needles can become dry fuel. Cleaning them before fire season can reduce the chance that embers find an easy place to ignite.

From there, look at the rest of the yard. Clear dead brush, tall grass and dried weeds, especially near structures. Keep grass mowed around homes, outbuildings, propane tanks and driveways. Trim and space shrubs and trees so fire cannot easily climb from grass to brush to tree canopies. Low branches can act like ladder fuels.

Do not overlook decks, porches and crawlspaces. Dry leaves, grass clippings and other materials can collect underneath. Cleaning those areas and using screening can help keep debris from building up.

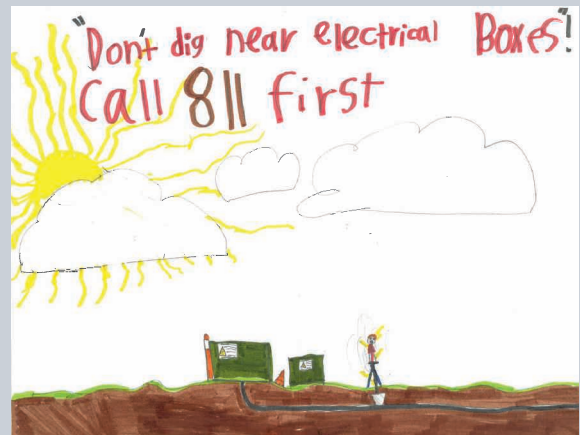
Access is part of preparation, too. Firefighters need to reach

a property quickly and safely. Keep driveways clear, make sure gates can open and trim branches that could block emergency vehicles. Clearly visible address signs can help responders find a home when visibility is poor.

Before making major landscaping changes, building fences, planting trees or adding new water lines, call 811. Underground electric, gas, water and communication lines may be closer than expected. A free locate request helps protect homeowners, utility crews and infrastructure.

Cooperative members can also make a plan. Know two ways out of the property or neighborhood. Keep important documents, medications and emergency supplies ready to go. Take photos or videos of buildings, equipment and belongings for insurance records.

Wildfire preparation is a seasonal habit, much like cleaning gutters, changing filters or preparing equipment for winter. The goal is not to fight the fire. That job belongs to firefighters and emergency responders. The goal is to give the home, property and responders a better chance before the fire ever starts.



**"Don't dig near electrical boxes!
Call 811 first."**

Caleb Blake, age 9

Caleb urges members to not dig near a pad-mounted transformer. Thank you for sharing your picture, Caleb! Caleb's parents are Peter and Stephanie Blake – members of West River Electric.

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.

Sweet on RHUBARB

RHUBARB CHEESE CAKE

Ingredients:

Rhubarb Filling

9" pie shell, unbaked
2 1/2 cups rhubarb, chopped
1/2 cup sugar
1 tbsp. flour

Cheese Cake Filling

8 oz. cream cheese
2 eggs, added one at a time
1/2 cup sugar

Topping

3/4 cup sour cream
2 tbsps. sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

Method

Stir rhubarb with flour and sugar. Put in the unbaked pie shell and bake at 425° for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and lower temperature to 350° degrees.

Beat cream cheese, add 2 eggs one at a time, then add the sugar. Mix well and pour over hot rhubarb layer. Bake 30 minutes at 350° degrees.

Mix the topping of sour cream, sugar and vanilla well and spread over hot pie. Cool 3 hours or more before serving. The flavors blend better the longer it cools. Refrigerate leftovers.

Charles Lebeda
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

RHUBARB SALAD

Ingredients:

2 cups rhubarb, chopped
4 tbsps. water
1/2 cup sugar
3 oz. red jello
3/4 cup cold water
1 apple, diced
1 banana, sliced

Method

Combine rhubarb, water and sugar. Stir and cook until mushy. Add jello and stir until dissolved. Add 3/4 cup cold water. Cool until it begins to set. Stir in diced apple and sliced banana. Chill and serve.

Leanne Eich
Central Electric

RHUBARB CAKE

Ingredients:

White cake mix
4 cups rhubarb, diced
1 cup white sugar
2 cups heavy whipping cream

Method

Mix white cake as directed on the box. Pour in a greased 9x12 pan. Place 4 cups of diced rhubarb over the top. Pour 1 cup of white sugar over the rhubarb. Pour 2 cups of heavy whipping cream over the top. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes.

Jeanette Kleinsasser
Dakota Energy

Picture by Sokor Space and Shutterstock.

HOW YOU CAN HELP DURING PEAK DEMAND



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Your electric utility works hard to ensure safe, reliable power to homes and businesses 24/7. To make sure everyone has the power they need, generation must match consumption and have the capacity to adjust to changing demands for energy.

Peak demand is the period in a given range of time – day, month or year – when electricity use is highest. It's caused by many people using energy-consuming equipment at the same time. It differs based on geography, weather and time of year. For example, demand is typically highest on hot summer afternoons and cold winter mornings. Most utilities also experience daily peaks when people are getting ready in the mornings and returning home in the evenings.

When everyone uses more energy at the same time, it puts more stress on the electric grid and requires more expensive electricity to meet the need. Electricity pricing is based on supply and demand. The price of electricity is higher when the demand is higher, which costs the utility more.

To lower energy use and strain on the grid during peak times, there are habits we can adopt in our homes.

Let's look at two examples.

Joe and John arrive home from work at 5:30 p.m. They both turn on the oven to make dinner.

While John waits for the oven to preheat, he throws in a load of laundry. He finishes dinner, cleans up and starts the dishwasher. Then, he moves the clothes to the dryer.

Joe finishes dinner, loads the dishwasher and sets it to start at 10 p.m. He puts a load of laundry in the washing machine and later that evening switches it over to the dryer.

Although they use the same appliances and amount of energy, John uses it all at once, running multiple appliances during peak hours, creating higher demand and more strain on the electric grid while using more expensive energy.

To lower your demand, spread electricity use throughout the day and avoid peak times as much

as possible. This will reduce the utility's cost of supplying electricity to your home. Another benefit of shifting your use to midday is that it can help integrate renewable energy, such as solar, which produces energy when the sun is shining.

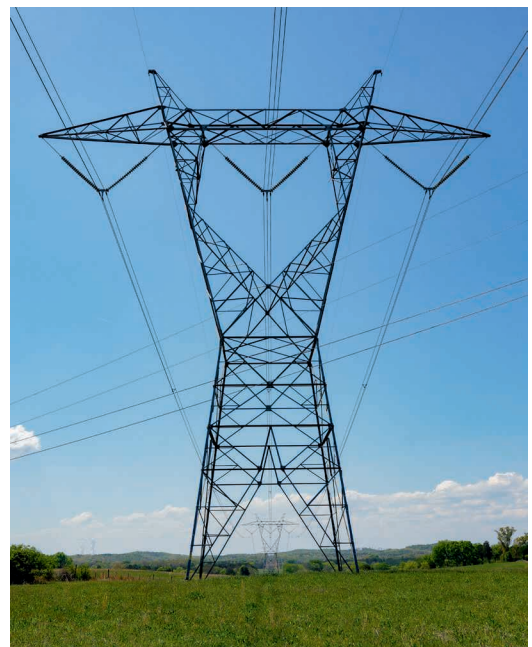
Large appliances – including washers, dryers, ovens, water heaters and air conditioners – have the biggest impact. Using them during off-peak hours or one at a time can help.

Automate as much as possible. Most electric vehicle chargers can be set to charge during scheduled hours with built-in timers or apps. Most modern dishwashers have delay-start features. If you have a pool, set the pool pump to run in the middle of the day, particularly if you are in a region with strong solar production.

You can also automate air conditioning. Some utilities offer programs that precool homes during off-peak hours to reduce demand during peak times. Simple, free adjustments, such as closing your curtains on hot afternoons and evenings, can help, too.

Keep in mind that extreme weather, such as freezing temperatures in Alabama or a heat wave in Minnesota, puts extra stress on the grid. Taking it easy on your energy use during extreme weather events can help prevent outages.

Spreading out your energy use helps your utility keep costs down and benefits your local energy grid.





August 12-15, 2026

Wednesday, August 12

- 10 am 4-H Food Stand Open
- 11-1 pm Livestock Skill-a-thon
- 3 pm 4-H Companion Animal Show
- 4-7 pm Vendor Booths Open
- 5 pm 4-H Rabbit Show
- 3-10 pm Beer Garden Tent
- 5-7 pm Balloon Twister
- 5-10 pm Inflatables
- 7 pm Mutton Bustin' & Mini Bull Showdown presented by Raise'em Rank

Mutton Bustin' Admission
Adult \$10
Youth \$5

Thursday, August 13

- 9 am 4-H Poultry Showmanship
- 10 am 4-H Poultry Show
- 12-10 pm Inflatables
- 1-3 pm Tahiti Joe Performs
- 1-7 pm Honey Bee Demonstration
- 1-8 pm Vendor Booths Open
- 3-11 pm Beer Garden Tent
- 4:30 pm Local Fare at the Fair hosted by Farmers Market
- 4:30 pm The Updraft Performs
- 5 pm Community BBQ
- 5 pm 4-H Swine Show
- 7 pm Bulls on the Bluff presented by Raise 'em Rank

Bull Riding Admission
Adult \$20
Youth \$10



For a complete schedule and more information about events, please visit

www.claycountyfair.net



Brought to you by:



Friday, August 14

- 9 am 4-H Sheep & Goat Show
- 10-5 pm Ag Day
- 10-5 pm Clay-Union Electric Member & Community Appreciation Day
- 12-2 pm Amy Ellsworth Performs
- 12-10 pm Inflatables
- 1-7 pm Honey Bee Demonstration
- 1-8 pm Vendor Booths Open
- 3 pm 4-H Fashion Revue
- 3-12 am Beer Garden Tent
- 4 pm Ice Cream Social
- 5 pm Great Plains Tractor Pull
- 6 pm Pizza Eating Contest
- 8-12 am Free Street Dance featuring Bluff Ridge

Tractor Pull Admission
Adult \$15
Youth \$10

Saturday, August 15

- 9 am 4-H Beef Show
- 10 am Cornhole Tournament
- 10 am Kids Pedal Pull
- 10-11 am Open Class Pie Entry
- 10-6 pm Vendor Booths Open
- 10-10 pm Inflatables
- 11-3 pm Car, Truck & Tractor Show
- 12 pm 4-H Round Robin Contest
- 12-7 pm Beer Garden Tent
- 2 pm 4-H Buddy Show
- 2-3 pm Chopped Contest
- 3 pm Pie Auction
- 4 pm Chasing the 4 of Clubs Finale
- 5 pm Arena Gates Open
- 7 pm Demolition Derby

Derby Admission
Adult \$20
Youth \$10



A CENTURY OF GRIT AND GLORY

The Days of '76 Rodeo

Photos by KSchurr Photography

Jocelyn Johnson

jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

In the historic gulch of Deadwood, S.D., the past isn't tucked away in books – it rides out of old wooden chutes every July at the Days of '76 Rodeo.

What began more than a century ago as a short weekend celebration has grown into a week-long rodeo and parade tradition that draws contestants and visitors from across the country. Yet, amid the growth and national recognition, the Days of '76 remains rooted in family, heritage and a deep sense of place.

Pat Roberts, longtime board member of the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "It started in 1924, and it actually wasn't a rodeo then. It was a celebration of Deadwood and its establishment in 1876 – hence where the name came from. It was started by the community just to promote the founding."

Those early celebrations featured parades, horses, fireworks and the kind of small-town pageantry that fits a frontier

community proud of its past. The full-fledged rodeo format came a few years later in the late 1920s, but the heart of the event hasn't changed: honoring Deadwood's origins and the Western way of life that built it.

Today, the Days of '76 Rodeo is marking its 104th year alongside other milestones – the 150th anniversary of Deadwood and the nation's 250th anniversary.

The rodeo boasts a total payout of roughly \$350,000 and typically draws 700 to 800 contestants, including top names like Rocker Steiner, Lisa Lockhart and rising stars such as Emily Beisel. During a week of performances, 25,000 to 30,000 spectators pack the grandstands, turning the arena into a sea of cowboy hats and hometown pride.

The events remain classic: bareback riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, team roping, barrel racing, saddle bronc riding, bull riding and breakaway roping. No frills, no gimmicks – just the timeless contests of skill and grit that define rodeo.

"We just keep it traditional," Pat said. "Just welcome everybody to Deadwood to enjoy the best cowboys and the best bucking stock that we can get."

For a town of about 1,200 people, the Days of '76 Rodeo has earned outsized recognition.

In 2011, the Days of '76 was inducted into the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame, a distinction the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) had not extended to a rodeo in many years.

Chris Roberts, son of Pat Roberts and fellow board member on the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "We won the PRCA Rodeo of the Year every single year that we were in the medium category until we surpassed into large. We've been nominated many times in the large category and won it once. To our knowledge, we're the only rodeo that's won Rodeo of the Year in each and every category."

In Deadwood, legacy still rides out of wooden chutes, year after year, drawing generational athletes. Rodeo here is a family affair. The Roberts family has been involved continuously since the event began.

"There's been a Roberts at every Days of '76 celebration since it started," said Pat.

Pat attended his first Days of '76 Rodeo when he was four days old and serves on the board with his son, Chris.

"I'm fourth generation," Chris said. "My great-granddad was there from year one, and we never missed a single year. Then his son – my granddad – followed in his footsteps, my dad and now me."

A fifth generation is already helping behind the scenes, continuing a family legacy that mirrors the rodeo's own endurance through the decades.

That kind of continuity isn't unique to the Roberts alone. Many contestants

arrive with stories of parents and grandparents who once competed in Deadwood.

"From a contestant perspective, I'd be willing to bet that no matter where you grew up, if you are a rodeo family, Deadwood was one that was always on the map," Chris said. "I hear it every single year – contestants talking about how grandpa or great-grandpa, grandma or great-grandma competed in Deadwood, and they've always wanted to be here. In the rodeo world, everybody knows Deadwood."

Mackenzi Gatzke, secretary of the board of directors, says her family story is similar. She currently serves on the Days of '76 board alongside both of her parents and noted two other families who have long served on the board promoting the event.

"Our board is all made up of people who were or still are locals to Deadwood, and we're all volunteers," she said. "We really do it because we love Deadwood, and we love the Days of '76 and the tradition behind it. We actually have four different families with multiple generations on our board, and we all just work together like one big family that just loves the community."

That focus on authenticity extends beyond the arena. The Days of '76 Museum houses the largest working



collection of horse-drawn wagons in the country, along with memorabilia from across the Black Hills dating back to 1876. During rodeo week, many of those wagons leave their resting place to roll through downtown Deadwood in historic parades – matching the sight of a 19th-century streetscape.

For Pat Roberts, rodeo's relevance in modern life is still significant and comes down to identity.

"It's tradition – it's the cowboy way," he said. "These cowboys and cowgirls are athletes...and the horses are too. They're bred to buck. We're not hurting anything by doing it – that's what they want to do. Just think of Deadwood and the West. Rodeo fits right in."





THE ART OF FORECASTING ELECTRICITY LOAD

Jeffery Groenewold
NRECA

Summer is in full swing, and many of us are enjoying the sunshine and warmer weather – it’s also a very busy season for South Dakota’s electric cooperatives.

Our irrigation members are in the middle of watering, many construction and capital improvement projects are underway, annual meetings are taking place and homes and businesses are using more electricity to keep cool.

It takes a lot of electricity to meet all this demand, and utilities must ensure there is power available around the clock. So, have you ever wondered how your electric co-op forecasts electricity on the grid?

Electric load forecasting is an important activity that many co-ops perform every day. When you hear things like “peak demand” or “prices are spiking,” it can sound complex and daunting. At the center of these challenges is forecasting. Electric co-op use a variety of analytics to predict factors like weather, sunshine, wind, cloud coverage, rain, power generation,

and yes, even the future use of electricity, including how much and when it will be used. All of this information helps co-ops plan and prepare for the next day, week or month to ensure the grid runs smoothly – so we can all enjoy the summer with our family and friends. This practice is called “load forecasting.”

With the changing electric grid – from more renewable energy sources showing up on the system to growing communities that need more electricity – load forecasting is crucial for managing the health of the power grid. Accurate forecasting is essential for grid operators to allocate necessary resources to keep the grid running successfully and allocating power generation effectively based on predictions. Proper forecasting aids in scheduling power plants and managing fuel supplies. This leads to reduced operational costs and minimized waste in electricity production, transmission and distribution.

Maintaining stability is a primary concern for electric co-ops because the grid must constantly balance electricity supply with demand. Load forecasting enables co-ops to anticipate electric

peaks and supply disturbances, and helps prevent the grid from failing, which can lead to blackouts.

The integration of renewable energy sources like wind and solar adds complexity to load forecasting. Accurate forecasts help optimize the use of variable renewable energy. Combining load forecasts with renewable generation forecasts helps optimize the grid with tremendous economic benefits.

Short-term forecasts (daily or weekly) give grid operators the necessary data to make informed decisions on what type of power generation to schedule, what electric market purchases or sales need to be made, and mitigate risks of supply shortages or surpluses so that you can get the most affordable electricity to your home or business. Additionally, load forecasting informs future planning for infrastructure development, grid expansion, upgrades and interconnections. With the growing demand for electricity, ensuring the grid can handle future increased use is essential and helps maintain reliability over time.

Forecasting electricity demand allows for adaptability to changing power generation sources and demand patterns. It’s an important piece of the puzzle for maintaining a reliable, efficient and cost-effective grid.

What is FERC and What Does It Matter to Electric Co-ops?

Cathy Cash

NRECA

Electric cooperatives were formed to serve members with affordable, reliable and safe power. But what role, if any, does the federal government play in ensuring that happens?

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is an independent agency in Washington, D.C., with authority over the transmission and wholesale of electricity in interstate commerce.

The commission also regulates the interstate commerce of natural gas and oil and the siting of natural gas and hydropower facilities. Basically, FERC oversees how energy moves across the country by high-voltage powerlines or large pipelines.

Definitely big picture stuff.

So, FERC doesn't regulate your local distribution co-op. But it does exert authority over five generation and transmission co-ops and all the wholesale electricity markets where co-ops buy their power supply. By setting the markets' transmission rates that electric power companies and utilities, including co-ops, must pay, the federal agency can ultimately influence retail prices.

Mary Ann Ralls, NRECA senior director, regulatory counsel, notes that while state utility commissions have more immediate control over co-op operations and building powerlines, the federal agency's influence fills in the gaps.

"State regulation over co-ops is like Swiss cheese – there are many holes where states don't regulate," she says. "FERC's authority is akin to a buffet – a handful of co-ops are subject to the entire scope of regulation, while the vast majority of co-ops must focus on a few items."

The commission's regulations aim at maintaining fair prices within the wholesale electricity markets run by six regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and independent system operators (ISOs). These FERC-regulated RTOs and ISOs manage parts of the national electric grid.

FERC also monitors these markets for energy supply manipulation that can hike prices. When things go wrong, the commission can investigate and levy penalties.

Overall, FERC sides with conserving energy and encourages utilities to find ways to reduce demand, which

eventually can place downward pressure on monthly bills.

The commission largely lacks authority over electric transmission in terms of siting and construction. That falls under state and local authorities.

FERC's authority over building generation is also limited to only approving, licensing and inspecting hydropower plants.

Regarding natural gas, FERC has the final say in construction and operation of liquefied natural gas terminals, pipelines and storage facilities. It reviews gas projects in terms of their impact on the environment, land use, geology and the economy.

And, being a public agency, keep in mind all FERC's final decisions can be challenged in court.

When it comes to grid reliability, the buck stops with FERC. The commission directs the national grid watchdog – North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) – and enforces its mandatory reliability rules and requirements on grid operators and owners of the U.S. bulk power system, including utilities and energy producers.

The commission tasked NERC as the electric reliability organization for the continental United States after Congress called for a single point of contact following the historical blackout of Aug. 14, 2003, which left more than 50 million people in the Northeast and parts of the Midwest without electricity for several hours to several days.

FERC can require NERC to set new reliability standards or update current rules as needed to protect the grid's ability to serve today's increased demand.

So, who is FERC?

The body is made up of five commissioners appointed by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate for five-year terms. The chair presides over open, public meetings on the third Thursday of the month, where the commission votes on orders to act on or approve projects or set precedents. You can even watch these meetings at home from the live link on the FERC website.

While its regulatory influence may not have a hand directly in co-op operations to serve consumers, FERC does have a role in how co-ops can best serve their members by upholding grid reliability and safety and in keeping costs affordable.

"Irrespective of the level of regulation FERC has over a co-op, it is incumbent upon NRECA, working with its members, to impress on the commission that ultimately the co-op's obligation is that the consumer-member at the end of the line has affordable, reliable and safe electric service," says Ralls. "And it is FERC's responsibility through its regulations to support the co-op's achievement of this goal."

FORT MEADE & THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

How South Dakota Set the Stage for a National Anthem

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

This month – July of 2026 – the United States of America celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, when the Founding Fathers declared the end of Great Britain’s role as their colonial overseer.

No patriotic song captures the sacrifice and resilience of the American experiment quite like the national anthem, “The Star-Spangled Banner.” However, the anthem is not from the American Revolution, nor was it immediately adopted as the nation’s official song. Its story unfolded over more than a century, from a British bombardment in Baltimore to a flag-lowering ceremony on the plains of western South Dakota.

The War of 1812

The year is 1814. The United States of America is in the midst of its second war with Great Britain – The War of 1812 – and the nation is reeling from a recent attack on Washington, D.C., where British troops torched the Capitol and White House.

A Maryland lawyer, Francis Scott Key, had just boarded a British naval vessel. He was sent there on behalf of the U.S. government to negotiate the release of an American prisoner, and while his negotiation was successful, Key was not allowed to return ashore until the British forces completed their bombardment on nearby Fort McHenry for fear that Key had overheard military plans while on board.

Detained aboard the enemy ship, Key looked ashore to Baltimore as the American forces fended off the invasion. As dusk settled over the harbor, it became harder for Key to track the battle, his only illumination being the occasional glow of British rockets and exploding shells. Key watched through the night, not sure who was winning the drawn-out fight. At dawn, there was just enough illumination for Key to make out the American flag still flying over the fort. The Americans had held



Visitors to Fort Meade (1 mile west of Sturgis, S.D.) will see the very same flag pole used by Col. Caleb Carlton during the flag retirements. These once-a-day evening ceremonies were the first instance of the Star Spangled Banner serving as the United States’ unofficial national anthem.

Photo submitted by Randy Bender

the fort and fended off the British from Baltimore.

Key’s experience that night inspired him to write a poem he titled “The Defence of Fort M’Henry.” Later, it was put to song and became known as “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Fort Meade

Fast forward to 1892, thousands of miles west on the American frontier.

Col. Caleb Carlton is the new commander of the Eighth U.S. Cavalry at Fort Meade, a U.S. Army post in the young state of South Dakota. About a mile west, the bustling town of Sturgis is growing along with the fort, serving as an important stop along numerous trails heading toward gold country in the streams of the Black Hills.

“Fort Meade was put in place in about 1878 to help maintain the peace in the Black Hills region between the native tribes and the settlers coming in,” explained Randy Bender, a lifelong resident of Sturgis and second-generation Fort Meade Museum board member.

Carlton was eager to make his mark – not through a battle, but patriotism. He and his wife discussed how they could better instill respect for the American flag among their troops stationed at the fort. The Carltons’ idea was to have the band play an official song during the evening retreat, when the flag is retired for the night.

“Carlton issued orders that all within hearing distance were to stand at attention, and all men not under arms were to remove their hats as a sign of respect to the flag,” Bender said.

That song, chosen at the urging of Mrs. Carlton, was the Star Spangled Banner.

“We selected the Star Spangled Banner as it was written under very unusual circumstances,” Carlton later wrote in a 1914 letter.

Carlton’s daughter, Mabel, recalled the first ceremony in her journal.

“As the final notes of the song faded away, the flag landed gently in the arms of the waiting troops,” she wrote. “If it had been practiced, it could not have been done more perfectly.”

From Fort Meade, the practice began to spread as other officers and government officials visited and observed the ceremony.

“The New York Times referred to the fact that (I) was trying to establish a national anthem,” Carlton wrote. “This attracted the attention of Col. Cook in command of the recruiting depot at David’s Island, who wrote me that he was having recruits taught to sing our national air. I suggested he concentrate his instruction on the Star Spangled Banner.”

Carlton also wrote that later, during a meeting in Harrisburg with Pennsylvania Gov. Daniel H. Hastings, that the governor promised he would initiate the playing of the Star Spangled Banner among the state’s militia.

The most decisive support came during a meeting between Carlton and Secretary of War Daniel Lamont, with the two speaking about the custom. Before long,



Above: Officers of the 8th Cavalry in Fort Meade, S.D. in 1892. Photo courtesy of the South Dakota State Historical Society



Right: A photograph of Fort Meade with Bear Butte in the distance. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Lamont ordered that the Star Spangled Banner be played during evening retreats across the nation.

Nearly 40 years after Fort Meade’s first Star Spangled Banner rendition, Congress in 1931 declared it the national anthem.

Today, visitors to Fort Meade can stand near the place where that custom began. A historical marker near the parade ground bears the words “It Started Here,” connecting the South Dakota fort to the story of the national anthem.

“That flagpole that they lowered the flag down from for that event is still standing at Fort Meade, and still used,” Bender said.

For Bender, who grew up at Fort Meade while his father worked at the

VA hospital and mother served on the museum board, the historic post still carries the feel of another era.

“When you visit Fort Meade, it’s like stepping back in time,” Bender said.

Many visitors are surprised to learn about Fort Meade’s place in the anthem’s history.

“It’s one of those things we just take for granted that we have a national anthem,” Bender said, “We never stopped to think about how these things came to be. But every one of those stories had to start at some point, and the national anthem story got its start in Fort Meade, South Dakota.”

The Fort Meade museum is open from mid-May through the end of September 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday.

BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

Clay-Union Electric Corporation Board Meeting Summary

APRIL 24, 2026 • VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA

The board meeting was called to order on April 24, 2026, 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 Directors Tom Larsen, Chris Kinney, Sara Schulte and Glen Gilbertson. The board seat for District #5 is vacant. Attending staff members included John Gors, Beth Bottolfson, Alan Gauer and Jackie Williams.

Approval of Minutes from the Reorganizational Meeting (ACTION ITEM) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the 4/24/26 reorganizational minutes.

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

Visitors to Be Heard – Derrick Larson, Eide Bailly via phone.

Approval of Minutes from the March Board Meeting (ACTION ITEM) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the March board minutes held on 3/27/2026.

Approval of Minutes from the March Executive Session (ACTION ITEM) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the March executive session held on 3/27/26.

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

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

Contracts (ACTION ITEM) – A motion was made, seconded and approved to approve the electrical contracts as presented.

Management Reports:

A. Manager's Report – Manager Gors provided reports on the monthly activities:

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

City of Vermillion Territory Exchange –

America's Electric Cooperative PAC – 2026 Memberships

Building Update –

Manager's Monthly Expense Voucher –

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

- Billing Collections & Customer Service
- Water Heater Activity
- Financial Audit
- Staking Program – Fieldstyle
- Updates to Banking Signatures
- March 2026 Financials

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
- March Outage Report
- New Service
- Retired Services
- Outage Update
- Service Upgrades
- Wiring

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

Audit Report - Derrick Larson, Eide Bailly partner, presented the audit report via Teams platform. A motion was made seconded and approved to accept the audit report as presented.

• Eide Bailly offered a clean opinion on the audit of Clay-Union records.

Margin Allocation (Action) - A motion was made, seconded, and approved to declare total 2025 margins of \$683,354.00.

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

- Balance Sheet
- Interest Income
- kWh Sales Report
- Large Power
- Line Loss
- Operating Statement
- Power Bill
- Summary of Purchased Power

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

Safety Meeting Minutes – The April Safety Meeting Minutes were posted to the website for the board to review and was discussed during the meeting.

Cyber Security – The March Cyber Security report from East River IT were 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

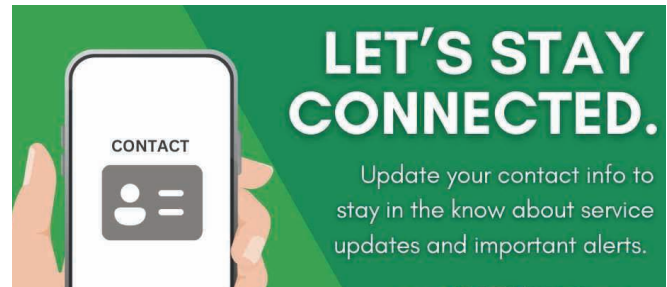
Executive Session – The board went into Executive Session at 10:50 a.m. Executive Session was adjourned at 11:05 a.m. There was no action taken.

Calendar – The board reviewed the May 2026 calendar.

Adjournment – There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and carried, to adjourn the meeting at 11:06 a.m.

Thomas Larsen, President

Sara Schulte, Secretary



ENERGY EFFICIENCY - TIP OF THE MONTH

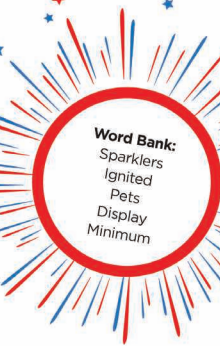
Running multiple major appliances at the same time—like your dishwasher, laundry machines and oven—can spike energy demand and strain the electric grid, especially during peak hours (typically late afternoon to early evening). Instead of stacking appliance use, spread it out throughout the day or shift chores to off-peak hours when energy demand is lower. This not only helps improve overall efficiency but can also reduce your energy costs.



**Fill-in-the-Blank:
Fireworks Safety
Tips**

Holidays like the Fourth of July and other celebrations can be fun times with great memories. But everyone should practice safety near fireworks. Read the safety tips below, then fill in the blanks with the correct answer in the word bank.

1. The best way to stay safe is to never use fireworks at home. Instead, attend a public _____ and leave fireworks to the pros.
2. Watch fireworks from a _____ of 500 feet away from where they are launched.
3. Never touch or pick up pieces of fireworks or duds as they may still be _____ or could explode at any time.
4. Remember, _____ are not toys and can reach 2,000 degrees F. Use glow sticks instead.
5. Think about _____ when fireworks are nearby. It's best to leave them indoors to reduce the risk of them running away or being injured.



Outage Reports

Cause	Date	Time	Township	Members
Farmer Hit Pole	5/6/2026	12:45 p.m.	Bethal	9
UG Fault	5/8/2026	7:30 a.m.	Mission Hill	5
Wind	5/22/2026	6:30 a.m.	Bethal	8
Wind	5/26/2026	5:30 a.m.	Gayville	1
Equip. Failure	5/26/2026	2:00 p.m.	Mission Hill	147
Tree Branch	5/30/2026	8:05 a.m.	Bethal	28

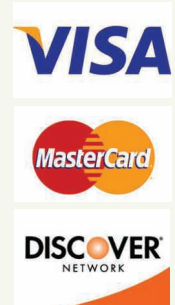
Office Hours and Due Dates

Our office hours are Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please remember your **PAYMENT DUE DATE is the 20th 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

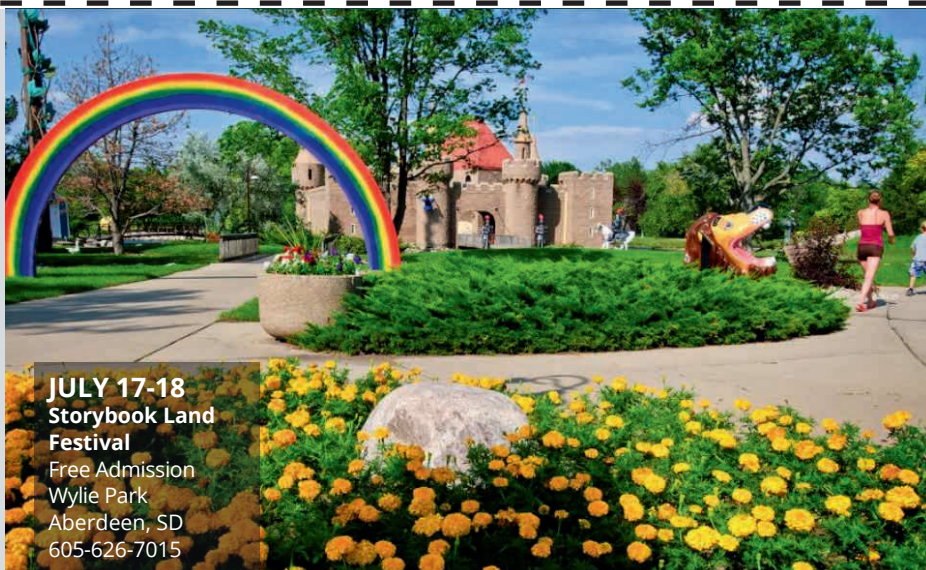
Delinquent Accounts (gross rate)
10 percent on the first \$200 plus 2 percent on the balance.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



JULY 17-18
Storybook Land
Festival
Free Admission
Wylie Park
Aberdeen, SD
605-626-7015

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.

JULY 2-4
USA 250th Celebration
at Mount Rushmore
Rapid City, SD
www.nps.gov

JULY 8
Tracy Area Gardens & Quilts Tour
2-7:30 p.m.
Lakes Area – Shetek, Sarah, Gavin
Rain Date: July 9
Tracy, MN
507-629-3252
tracy.area.garden.quilts@gmail.com

JULY 10-12
Rooted: A Prairie Arts Weekend
Geddes, SD
Vendors, Artists: 605-428-5007

JULY 11
40th Annual Spearfish Canyon
Half Marathon & 5K
Start: 7 a.m., Savoy, SD
End: City Park, Spearfish, SD
Register: www.nhcaso.org

JULY 15-19
Danish Days
Viborg, SD
danishdays.org

JULY 18
A Celebration of Johnny Cash
7 p.m.
Gayville Hall
Gayville, SD

JULY 18
Forever Simon & Garfunkel
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

JULY 18-19
10th Annual Charles Mix
Saddle Club SDRA Rodeo
Geddes, SD
605-680-2763

JULY 24-26
Bruce Honey Days
Bruce, SD
605-627-5671

JULY 24-26
Winner Elks 57th Annual
Rodeo to Benefit LifeScope
7 p.m.
Tripp County Fairgrounds
Winner, SD

JULY 25
Planes, Trains & Automobiles
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

JULY 25
Disability Awareness &
Accessibility Committees
Resource Fair (DAAC)
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Minneluzahan Senior Center
Rapid City, SD

JULY 30
Spurs Grand Classic
Equestrian Competition
9 a.m.
Aberdeen, SD
605-226-1099

AUG. 1-2
51st Annual Pioneer Power
Threshing Show
MN Machinery Museum
Hanley Falls, MN
507-828-5437

AUG. 4-6
Farmfest 2026
8-a.m.-4 p.m.
Gilfillan Estate
28269 MN Hwy. 67
Morgan, MN
ideagroup.com/farmfest

AUG. 7-9
Fur Trader Days
NEW Art in the Park
Geddes, SD
Vendors, Artists: 605-428-5007

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.