

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Keeping the Lights On

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Spring is a Time of Celebration



Chad Kinsley
CEO/GM

As I am writing this month's column, our weather is fluctuating from almost 70 degrees one day, to snow and wind the next. I am hoping that by the time this issue lands in your mailbox, we are entering more consistent spring weather. Spring is seen by many as a time of celebration. The change in seasons with longer days, more sunshine and warmer weather boosts everyone's moods. Our cooperative is celebrating our employees and members, and we hope you will join us in recognizing their achievements!

EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY

Employee Appreciation Day was recognized on March 1. The work our employees do every day demonstrates their commitment and dedication to serving our members 24/7/365 with the energy they need to power their lives. From the operations team that physically keeps the lights on no matter the weather, to the member services team that goes above and beyond assisting members, to the administrative and office staff working behind the scenes – each of those team members has a crucial role and part in the success of our electric cooperative.

LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY

You've likely noticed Southeastern Electric's crews out and about, working on power lines and other electrical equipment in our community. It's no secret that a lineworker's job is tough - but it's a job that's essential and must be done, often in challenging conditions. This month we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8.

Despite the many challenges, Southeastern Electric's lineworkers are committed to powering our local community. During severe weather events that bring major power outages, lineworkers are among the first ones called. They must be ready to leave the comfort of their home and families unexpectedly, and they don't return until the job is done, often days later. That's why the lineworker's family is also dedicated to service. They understand the importance of the job to

the community.

So, the next time you see a lineworker, please thank them for the work they do to keep power flowing, regardless of the time of day or weather conditions. After all, lineworkers are the power behind your power. Please join us as we recognize them on April 8.

**We know our co-op
community is filled with
people making a difference.
Let's celebrate them!**

WHO POWERS YOU CONTEST

The Who Powers You contest celebrates Touchstone Energy® members, employees and other individuals in the region who go above and beyond to help others. Please help us recognize individuals in our community that are making a difference. More information on this regional contest can be found on page 7. Nominate someone today at www.WhoPowersYouContest.com.

SCHOLAR OF THE WEEK PROGRAM

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives and Dakota News Now joined together to recognize the achievements of high school seniors throughout our region. The Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week program has been celebrating the achievements of high school seniors since 2002. Recipients are highly motivated high school seniors who excel in the classroom and community. The annual banquet to recognize these students will be held in April. Congratulations to Kellen Kueter, Parker Lessman and Zoey Christensen for being selected as winners from Southeastern Electric.

OFFICE CLOSED FOR GOOD FRIDAY

Our offices are closed on Friday, March 29 in observance of the Good Friday holiday. Our 24/7 outage phone will still be active (1-800-333-2859). Pay by phone will also be available at 844-961-2524. Bills can also be paid through Smart Hub online or in the phone app.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS SOUTHEASTERN ELECTRIC

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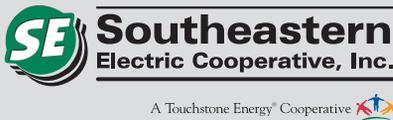
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FEBRUARY BOARD SUMMARY

The Board of Directors of Southeastern Electric Cooperative met in Marion on Friday, February 23, 2024, with all directors present. Also, present were Manager Chad Kinsley, Attorney Mike Nadolski and staff members Jessica Bickett, John Euchner, Todd Nelson and Jon Wunder.

CFO Jon Wunder reviewed his written report, including the preliminary financial report, budget review report, FEMA hazard mitigation project update, IRS filings, kWh tax summary, capital credit allocation, margin stabilization, RUS minor projects and the upcoming financial statement audit.

Member Services and IT Manager Todd Nelson reviewed his written report, nominating petitions, annual meeting, scholarship applications, youth tour, "Who Powers Your" contest, high use complaints, meter exchange issues, disconnects, past due accounts, cybersecurity and load management.

Operations Manager John Euchner reviewed his written report, close calls, safety meetings, outages, dispatch, construction work plan, large power projects, services, open positions, SD 811 positive response and project updates.

Human Resource Generalist Jessica Bickett reviewed her written report, outpost visits, employee engagement, job fairs, member engagement, part-time employment requirements, hiring and staffing and position descriptions.

Manager Kinsley reviewed his report and commented on the following topics: primary meter services, large load service changes, service territory exception, Basin FERC proceedings, strategic planning, 811 enforcement, master metering, leadership team meetings and Basin financials. Manager Kinsley attended the East River Energize Forum, SDREA Managers Meeting and the Basin Managers Meeting.

Attorney Nadolski briefed the board on recent legal topics in the industry.

The board acted on the following motions:

- A motion was made and seconded to approve the amended rate schedules as proposed. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to adopt the Affirmative Action Programs as presented. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to execute a non-site-specific contract for 2024 with Dave's Construction. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to adopt Board Resolution 2024-02 to authorize the General Manager to hire legal counsel to assist the Cooperative with respect to Basin's new crypto and large load rate schedules and intervene on its behalf when the rates are filed with FERC. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to approve the proposed amendments to Board Policies 401 Work Rules, Resignation and Terminations and 701 General Service Rules and Regulations. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded sponsor the Mitchell Technical College Foundation Alumni Cornhole Tournament. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to authorize Director Holmberg to attend the NRECA Directors' Conference. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to set the April board meeting for Thursday, April 18, 2024. Motion carried.
Next regular monthly meeting will be held on Monday, March 18, 2024, at the Marion office.

Break Dirt Without Breaking the Law

As the warmer spring temperatures cause the ground to thaw, contractors and homeowners alike are likely to begin on projects that require some sort of digging.

By law, anyone who is digging in South Dakota needs to call 811 and have a locate ticket in their hand before moving any ground. If you're not the one that's digging and you've hired a landscaper to do the work instead, that landscaper should have a ticket in their name.

When someone calls 811, the call goes through a center in Dallas, Texas. That call center then notifies utilities in the area, according to South Dakota 811 Executive Director Codi Gregg.

An excavator or digger has to allow 48 hours for the utilities in the area they plan to dig into to come on site and mark the location of those underground utilities. On average, there are five to eight utilities notified per call.

If there's a potential loss of life or property, the allowed response time is shortened to a maximum of two hours during normal business hours.

"When the ticket goes in, the excavator is given a list of the utilities that are involved or are working or that are in that area where they're working," Gregg explained.

Those companies that own the utilities will make marks that identify the location. Those flags are also color coded according to the type of utility. As more and more overhead electrical lines are converted to underground lines, it's imperative that anyone who plans on doing a project that requires digging call 8-1-1 to avoid a dangerous and deadly situation.

"It's a free phone call for the excavator to make. There's no real reason for them not to make the phone call other than not being aware of it," Gregg said.

Kristie Fiegen, South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairwoman, echoed Gregg's comments, stating that making the call to 811 is the "most important and easiest call anyone can make before starting a digging project."

"This simple and imperative effort will help to prevent damages to vital underground utilities and safeguard critical services that our residents and economy depend on," Fiegen said. "During the 2024 construction season, I urge everyone to call 811 before you dig and protect all South Dakotans by abiding by our state laws and making safety our highest priority."

- Last year, there were 176,984 notices to the 811 Center of work occurring.
- South Dakota's 811 laws were established in 1993.
- In 2017, South Dakota 811 added damage reporting to our laws, stating if there was a damage, disturbance, or a dislocation of a utility – 811 was to be contacted to report the damage. It was also added that 911 was to be contacted first if there was a leak.
- Free accounts are offered upon request, allowing account holders to enter locate tickets themselves without calling an agent.
- A total of 1,944 utilities were reportedly damaged in 2023. Of that total, 375 excavators did not have a previous ticket.
- According to Common Ground Alliance's Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report, the annual rate of damages to buried infrastructure costs the U.S. a staggering \$30 billion every year and 60% of nationwide damages to underground utilities are caused specifically by professional contractors not contacting 811 prior to digging.



Don't Fly Drones Near Power Lines

Lyndon Kaski, Age 8

Lyndon Kaski warns readers to stay away from power lines when flying drones. Great advice! Lyndon's parents are Jonathan and Amanda Kaski, members of Kingsbury Electric Cooperative.

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.

SALSA SAVORY

FRESH SALSA

Ingredients:

4-6 med. to large tomatoes, seeded and chopped
 1 med. onion, chopped
 4 fresh jalapenos, seeded and finely chopped*
 1 clove garlic, crushed
 1 tbsp. dried parsley or fresh cilantro to taste
 1 tsp. salt

Method

*To prevent jalapenos from burning your fingers, lightly rub fingers with shortening, especially around fingernails.
 Serve with tortilla chips.

Linda Hubbard
 Rapid City, S.D.

LUANN'S FRESH SALSA

Ingredients:

4 med. tomatoes, peeled and chopped
 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
 1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper
 1-2 tbsps. jalapeno or other hot pepper, seeded and finely chopped
 1 tsp. salt
 pepper to taste
 1 tbsp. lime juice or red wine vinegar
 1-2 tps. catsup
 dash garlic powder
 dash cayenne pepper
 1-2 tps. sugar
 cilantro (optional)

Method

Mix all ingredients. Serve with any tortilla or corn chips for dipping. Will keep approximately 1 week in the refrigerator.

Nancy Stenson
 Fort Pierre, S.D.

TAMARIND PASILLA MANGO PINEAPPLE SALSA

Ingredients:

1 1/4 cups diced fresh pineapple
 1 large mango, pitted and diced (about 1 1/4 cup)
 1 small red onion, diced
 1 small red bell pepper, diced
 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro
 1 med. jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
 3 tbsps. fresh lime juice
 1 tbsp. honey
 4 1/2 teaspoons Tamarind Naturally Flavored & Pasilla Chile Seasoning

Method

Mix all ingredients in medium bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving. Stir before serving. Serve with tortilla chips or use to top tacos or nachos.

McCormick

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Powering Reliability

The following projects will allow us to continue to provide reliable electric service to our members. As always we appreciate your cooperation. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions at 1-800-333-2859.

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE UNDERWAY

As part of our on-going maintenance program each year we inspect all of our overhead lines and underground cabinets for problems that could cause an outage or pose a dangerous situation.

Be aware that during this time of inspection we will also be stopping at each account to

inspect our equipment in your yard and you may see Southeastern Electric vehicles in your driveway. This is only an inspection of our equipment, so we can better serve you.

METER UPGRADE PROJECT

Southeastern invested in new advanced meters to improve the reliability and efficiency of our existing electric distribution system. The impact of the installation is minimal. Co-op members may lose power for a few minutes on the day of the installation. In addition, the next bill will show two meter readings: one from the old meter and one from the new meter.

The new advanced meters will enable our cooperative to perform several functions remotely, such as reading meters and reconnecting power.

Other benefits from the meters include faster response to outages, information to help us keep power costs down for members and more accurate information about outages and restoration times.

Southeastern Electric is a member-owned, not-for-profit utility. Our electric cooperative is looking out for our members by investing in technology to improve efficiency and reliability.



**CALL OR CLICK
BEFORE YOU DIG**

Call 811 or visit call811.com at least two to three business days before you start digging. At no cost to you, professional locators will mark underground utility lines so you can work safely—and save you from possible injury or property damage.

Together we're
RE-ENERGIZING SAFETY



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

TELL US WHO POWERS YOU!

They could win \$3,000!



WHO POWERS YOU?

Nominations open for annual contest

Erica Fitzhugh

Communications Specialist

Nominations are now open for “Who Powers You,” a contest being hosted by Southeastern Electric Cooperative and the region’s other Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives. The third annual Who Powers You contest seeks to highlight local figures who are making a difference in their communities.

“No one succeeds alone, and that is especially true in rural areas, where friends and neighbors in tight-knit communities support, encourage and inspire each other,” said Erica Fitzhugh, Communications

Specialist at Southeastern Electric Cooperative. “Those people don’t do it for the recognition, but they deserve to be recognized, and we’d like to help make that happen.”

Member-owners, employees and residents who live or work within the service territory of the region’s Touchstone Energy Cooperatives are eligible to be nominated. Nominations are currently being accepted through April 7, 2024. Three final winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact that they have on the community. Weekly finalists will be announced and featured on Keloland Living starting March 14, 2024, and the three contest winners

will be announced on Keloland Living on May 30, 2024.

The Who Powers You contest grand prize winner will receive a \$3,000 prize. A second place winner will receive \$1,500 and the contest’s third place winner will receive \$500.

“As an electric cooperative, our services extend beyond delivering safe, affordable and reliable power to our member-owners,” Fitzhugh said. “The Who Powers You contest highlights the commitment of our co-op to the communities and member-owners that we serve. We know that our co-op community is filled with people making a difference. Let’s celebrate them!”

To learn more about the Who Powers You contest and to nominate someone in your community, visit WhoPowersYouContest.com.



Elliot and Janaye Rayman at their second annual Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser.

One Lineman's After-hours Outreach

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Across the state, linemen are charged with keeping South Dakota's power going. It's a big responsibility: troubleshooting electrical systems, operating heavy equipment, and maintaining power lines. These workers are frequently asked to navigate high voltage and confront dangerous challenges in all kinds of extreme weather. In the face of these challenges, it takes a truly community-minded individual to ensure the community's lights stay on. Many of these crucial workers demonstrate their commitment to their community daily, both during and outside of work hours.

Butte Electric Journeyman Lineman Elliot Rayman, who has been with the cooperative for seven years, serves as just one example of an electric cooperative employee who has pulled extra hours for his local community of Spearfish, S.D. In addition to his role as a lineman, Elliot wears many hats in his community beyond just the hard hat of a co-op employee. He is a veteran of the National Guard, having served a deployment overseas. Elliot and his wife, Janaye, are also deeply involved in their community as the owners of Barefoot Fitness, a gym in the Spearfish community. Janaye, a cancer survivor, operates the gym and is an integral part of their community efforts.

Janaye and Elliot purchased Barefoot Fitness in 2018, fulfilling Janaye's long-standing dream of owning a gym. Shortly after their purchase, the couple learned that Janaye's cancer, previously in remission, had metastasized into Stage 4 breast cancer.

"In 2020, I had reoccurrence everywhere – brain, lungs, liver, bones," said Janaye. "Since then, I have been on a mission every day to heal and recover. It's also been my goal to help others every single day, day in and day out, and that's

what keeps me going. That's my job and it's what I love to do, so I'm not stopping."

"My wife is an inspiration to many people," added Elliot. "She is the strongest person I know."

Undeterred, Elliot and Janaye decided to press on and use their gym as a platform to engage with their local community. Despite Janaye's ongoing battle with breast cancer, the two started a new Barefoot Fitness tradition – an annual Memorial Day fundraiser to benefit South Dakota's gold star families, the families of fallen soldiers.

"After a few years of owning the gym, we decided we needed to give back to the community, because the community had really been there for us through everything," said Elliot. "We knew we had the ability and the platform to give back to the community through Barefoot Fitness, so we settled on a Memorial Day fundraiser that would benefit gold star families in our state."

This May, Elliot and Janaye will host their fourth Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser. Like previous years, the event will feature local catering from Spearfish businesses, such as Spearfish Brewing Company and Timmons Market. The event will also include an optional community workout for all ages.

"We kick off our day with the National Guard leading the pledge of allegiance and national anthem," said Janaye. "We do a prayer, and then we do our Memorial Day workout. It's a team workout that people are encouraged to complete with their family or friends."

According to Janaye and Elliot, the team workout is about more than just breaking a sweat. Instead, it's about remembering those who gave their lives for this country.

"You always hear about people doing things for veterans, but you never hear about the story on the other side of

that – the families," Janaye said. "A lot of times the family is forgotten so we really want to honor the families that also made a sacrifice."

At the end of the day, Elliot and Janaye said none of their efforts would be possible without the support they have received from the Spearfish community, the veteran community,

and the electric cooperative community.

"Butte Electric and the co-op world have helped us out so much," said Elliot. "The culture of the co-op community is huge: there is brotherhood – it's the way people help each other out. You just can't ask for a better group of people, and that's the same way with the veteran world."



Janaye and Elliot lead a community workout session, challenging participants to complete 300 weighted ball throws.

Rate Change

As a not-for-profit, member-owned cooperative, we strive every day to hold down costs while still providing the safe and reliable service you expect. Southeastern is one of the fastest growing electric cooperatives in the state. This strong growth has been a blessing and a key reason we haven't had to raise rates for nearly 7 years now, since 2017.

However, the current macroeconomic environment continues to put upward pressure on nearly all operating costs, and in March we implemented an 8% general rate increase for all rate classes. For the average residential member using 1,200 kilowatt hours (kWh) per month, this equates to a \$9 to \$13 increase per month on average. Details on the rate increase were included in the February bill and can also be found on our website: www.southeastern.coop.

Thank you for your understanding and support as well as your involvement in your electric cooperative. As always, please feel free to give us a call anytime with questions or concerns.

For More Information:
1-800-333-2859
southeasternelectric.com

Comparison of Current and Approved Rate Schedules			
	Current Rates	Approved Rates	
General Service - Single Phase			
Facility Charge	\$33.00	\$38.00	/month
First 600 kWh	\$0.1300	\$0.1363	/kWh
Over 600 kWh	\$0.0860	\$0.0923	/kWh
Water Heater Credit	(\$0.010)	(\$0.010)	/kWh
Urban Residential Service - Single Phase			
Facility Charge	\$20.00	\$25.00	/month
First 600 kWh	\$0.1175	\$0.1214	/kWh
Over 600 kWh	\$0.0860	\$0.0899	/kWh
Water Heater Credit	(\$0.010)	(\$0.010)	/kWh
Electric Heat and Dual Fuel Rate			
kWh	\$0.0590	\$0.06372	/kWh
General Service - Three Phase			
Facility Charge	\$87.50	\$92.50	/month
First 2000 kWh	\$0.1200	\$0.12800	/kWh
Over 2000 kWh	\$0.0825	\$0.09050	/kWh
General Service - Three Phase Large Power			
Facility Charge	\$200.00	\$200.00	/month
Non-coincidental Demand	\$16.60	\$16.60	/kW
First 150 kWh per kW	\$0.0565	\$0.0641	/kWh
Over 150 kWh per kW	\$0.0420	\$0.0496	/kWh
Off-Peak Service - Three Phase Large Power			
Facility Charge	\$200.00	\$200.00	/month
Non-coincidental Demand	\$3.75	\$3.75	/kW
Coincidental Demand	\$25.00	\$25.00	/kW
kWh	\$0.0410	\$0.0457	/kWh
Primary Voltage - Three Phase			
Facility Charge	\$200.00	\$200.00	/month
Non-coincidental Demand	\$5.00	\$5.00	/kW
Coincidental Demand	\$25.00	\$25.00	/kW
kWh	\$0.0410	\$0.0480	/kWh
Irrigation			
Facility Charge - varies per member by demand (no rate change)			
Non-coincidental Demand (general service)	\$18.00	\$18.00	/kW
Coincidental Demand (off-peak service)	\$25.50	\$25.50	/kW
kWh	\$0.0640	\$0.077	/kWh

* The facility charge covers the costs to build and maintain our electric system that carries the electricity to your home or business.

Powering Possibilities

**SOUTHEASTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
ANNUAL MEETING | JUNE 6 at 5 PM**

SAVE THE DATE

Get Ready... preparations are underway for YOUR electric cooperative's annual meeting - an evening of food, education and community.

Bring your whole family and join us for dinner starting at 5 p.m. Take time to explore our informative booths and engage in meaningful conversations with our employees and board members. The meeting begins at 7 p.m.

Participating in your annual meeting provides you as a member the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about how we're powering our communities.

Mark your calendars for a memorable evening packed with food, fun and friendly faces. We can't wait to see you there!

Location:

Freeman High School
1001 S. Wipf St., Freeman, SD



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 





SDHP Trooper Megan Koch stands by her patrol vehicle. Koch works within the state's Motor Carrier Division. *Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel*

COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

When commercial motor vehicles come into the state of South Dakota, it's the job of the South Dakota Highway Patrol's Motor Carrier Division to ensure the drivers of those vehicles have the necessary paperwork, permits and documents.

The task is one of public safety.

Making sure the carriers are adhering to safe driving practices is just another way to ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be while driving on the state's roadways.

South Dakota Highway Patrol

Trooper Megan Koch is one of the officers who works within the motor carrier division.

"Our main focus is making sure the motor carriers or trucks are safe on the roadways and keeping everybody else safe. It helps them perform their job of carrying their property or passengers across the state lines and within the state. We help make sure that they can do that job," Koch explained.

Mainly, Koch works specifically with commercial motor vehicles that carry over a certain weight or property of monetary value within the state or interstate.

"When we do an inspection on a driver, we're checking a bunch of different things. Weight sometimes is one of them, but not always. It just depends on the situation," Koch said.

"They have to have certain paperwork with them and they are required to follow certain rules. It depends on what they're doing."

The dependent variables include whether a carrier is traveling with goods within the state or going out of the state and how far away they are from the hub, or where they leave every day or go home to every day.

Koch also checks their paperwork to ensure the drivers are within compliance of state law.

"They have to follow certain hours that they can work so that they don't get tired while driving. It's a big thing that we follow for safety," Koch said.

"We also check things like

equipment violations, headlights, taillights, tires, you know, stuff that makes them safe on the roadway and keeps them safe. We'll also check for things such as bad driving behavior, if they're not staying within their own lane, using blinkers, not properly stopping at stop sign – stuff like that. So, if we see something like that, we can initiate an inspection."

Koch, a Plankinton native whose father was a truck driver, said the division is typically checking brake lines and lights.

In South Dakota, there are four main ports of entry. The ports are located along Interstate 29 in Jefferson and Sisseton, and along Interstate 90 in Sioux Falls and Tilford.

Each carrier is issued a "safety score," which is assessed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

"That's based on whether or not they have the proper paperwork, if they're driving within their hours, if they have the proper equipment and whether or not they've received any driving or alcohol violations," Koch said.

If a driver has a high enough safety score, they aren't required by law to stop at a port for inspection.

Overall, it all comes down to keeping the roadways safe for everyone, regardless of what type of vehicle they are driving.

"These rules and laws are in place for a reason. They have to be extra alert and awake while they're driving and that all of their equipment works properly. If you're driving a very heavy, large vehicle, you need excellent brakes. You have to be able to stop in time. That is the main reason we're checking all these things. It helps everybody on the road."

The division also works

with rural electric cooperatives when oversized loads travel along the state's highway system, according to Lieutenant Austin Schmitz, District Four Assistant Commander with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Sometimes oversized loads require that overhead power lines be moved out of the way to let the carrier pass through.

"As a district we do work with a lot of the cooperatives such as East River Electric. We all get together when planning for oversized loads coming through our area," Schmitz said.

"They usually run the route first and let us know what lines they need to move."

That was the case when a massive generator was moved across the state. The generator was so heavy and huge that the truck carrying it could only travel 30 miles per hour. That truck was also equipped with over a hundred tires, Schmitz said.

"That generator came through Watertown a couple of years ago and we've got some more coming in two or

three years," Schmitz said, referring to the multi-million pound machines.

"The planning for those started last year. That equipment will be coming in through the Great Lakes on a ship. They'll pick them up there and then they'll move through our state then Wyoming, Montana, however they can go," Schmitz said.

The truck carrying the heavy equipment is too big to go across most bridges and overpasses, so finding a route that allows the machinery to snake across the country is tricky.

While moving huge pieces of machinery can be one of the more interesting parts of the job, it's the flexibility of the job that Koch enjoys most.

"I get to pick and choose where I want to go for the day. I get to do something a little bit different every day. Because, I mean, nothing is ever the same," Koch said.

"It's kind of nice to be able to do that and make the day what you want of it."



A SDHP officer has the latest technology at his or her fingertips to ensure trucks on South Dakota roads are operating safely. Photo Credit: South Dakota Highway Patrol



WHATEVER IT TAKES

Powering life, from a lineman's perspective

Eric Christiansen

Foreman - Sioux Falls

Lineworkers are ranked as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the country. The lineworkers at Southeastern Electric Cooperative work rain or shine, in often challenging conditions to ensure you have reliable electricity. We're celebrating Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8, 2024. The following column was written by Eric Christiansen one of our many dedicated lineworkers.

My name is Eric Christiansen, and I'm a foreman and one of 30 lineworkers at Southeastern Electric

Cooperative who work every day in all weather conditions to make sure our community has the power to live their lives. I love my job. It's hard work, but it's very rewarding. I hope this will give you a better look into what we face and more importantly, why we do it.

THE DANGER

A lot of people know linework is dangerous because we work near high-voltage electricity. Move just the wrong way or lose focus for a split second, and it could be deadly. You have to be aware of your surroundings and the safety of the person next to you. We often

work on energized power lines, and you can't always tell they are energized by just looking at them. You're working with an element of danger that requires concentration, and there is no margin for error. The environment compounds the pressure, because when you need power most is usually when the weather is worst. I'm often working in storms with rain, wind, extreme cold, in the dark, or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it's dangerous, but that's what we're trained to do.

Many may not realize it, but we undergo years of training before we can officially be called a lineworker. We typically start as a utility assistant, helping crews with tools and keeping job sites safe, then we transition to apprentice status, which typically spans four years. After an apprenticeship, with more than 7,000 hours of training



Eric, Ashley, Kyler and Wrenley.

under our belts, we transition to journeyman lineworker status—that’s when we’re considered officially trained in our field. After working at Southeastern for 6 years, I was promoted to the position of foreman, and I help lead one of our Sioux Falls crews.

But the education is ongoing. Lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

THE PHYSICAL DEMAND

The daily expectations of a lineworker are physically demanding, but you won’t hear any of us complain about that. I know what I signed up for—loading heavy materials, climbing poles and in and out of buckets. But that’s the job. Most of us are just glad to be outside.

THE SACRIFICES

There are some sacrifices to being a lineworker. We are often first on the scene of an emergency, seeing things that are devastating like car accidents, structure fires and damage from severe storms. We don’t know what type of situation we’re going to face or when we’re going to face it.

IT’S A CULTURE OF TRUST, TEAMWORK & SERVICE. IT’S ALL ABOUT KEEPING THE TEAMMATE BESIDE YOU SAFE AND THE LIGHTS ON FOR EVERYBODY.

We get calls at all hours and in the middle of the night. I’ve missed a lot of soccer, baseball and basketball games and family dinners, but my family is very supportive, and it pays off in the end. We make sure there is nothing standing in the way of helping our friends and neighbors get back to normal life.

IT’S WORTH IT

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. My co-op is my second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood. In this work, you have to depend on the person beside you in life-or-death circumstances. It’s a culture of trust, teamwork and service. It’s all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on for everybody else.

I have a lot of pride my work. Even when it’s cold and windy, I know I’m working to keep people warm. There’s a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell “Thank you” from the window after the lights

come back on or seeing people flipping the light switches on their porches after an outage is restored. No matter how tired I am or how long I’ve been working, that feeling always makes it worth it.

Southeastern Electric Cooperative and its employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off too. So, you can trust that we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible - so you can get back to normal life.





APRIL 5-7, 2024
PBR: Unleash the Beast
 Denny Sanford
 PREMIER Center
 Sioux Falls, SD

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

MARCH 30
BHEC Community Easter Egg Hunt
 10 a.m.
 Hermosa Baseball Fields
 Hermosa, SD

MARCH 31
Easter Sunday Sunrise Celebration
 7 a.m.
 Mount Rushmore National Monument
 Keystone, SD

APRIL 2
Clay-Union Electric Ribbon Cutting & Open House
 3 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
 31321 SD Hwy. 19
 Vermillion, SD

APRIL 5
A Night at the Races fundraiser for Safe Place of Eastern SD
 6:30 p.m.
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 5-7
71st Annual Hayes Play: Under a Cowboy Moon
 7 p.m.
 Hayes Community Hall
 Hayes, SD

APRIL 12-14
The Farmer's Daughter 19th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 13
Front Porch 605 Shop Hop
 9 a.m.
 Groton, SD

APRIL 14
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 20
Healthy Kids Day
 10 a.m.
 Liberty Center YMCA
 Box Elder, SD

APRIL 20
Groton Firemen's Spring Social
 7 p.m.
 Groton Fire Station
 Groton, SD

APRIL 21
Fiddle & Popular Song
 2 p.m.
 Gayville Hall
 Gayville, SD

APRIL 26
Mitchell Technical College Alumni Cornhole Tournament
 6:30 p.m.
 World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 27
66th Annual Lions Pancake Jamboree
 7 a.m.
 Masonic Hall
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 27
Spaghetti Feed & Silent Auction for Black Hills Raptor Center
 4:30 p.m.
 Canyon Lake United Methodist Church
 Rapid City, SD

MAY 5
Opening Day
 Historic Prairie Village
 Madison, SD

MAY 11
Opening Day
 1880 Train
 Hill City, SD

MAY 18
Booth Day
 10 a.m.
 D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery
 Spearfish, SD

Note: Please make sure to call ahead to verify the event is still being held.