



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Preserving Our Past

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South Dakota: We Can & Should Lead the Tech Race



Jordan Lamb
CEO

We Need to Transform a State Watching the Technology Race into a State Where the Race is Won

America is in a race, one that will define global economic leadership for the next decade. China is aggressively positioning itself as a center for artificial intelligence development and deployment. The winner will capture enormous competitive advantages in innovation, job creation and geopolitical influence. But there's a detail often overlooked in this high-stakes competition. None of it happens without reliable critical infrastructure, such as power and data centers.

Winning the AI race is fundamentally about establishing the critical infrastructure that powers innovation. AI systems rely on data centers, and data centers require electricity. If the United States intends to remain competitive, we must be able to build and power that infrastructure efficiently and affordably. That requires thoughtful policy, modernized permitting and a clear commitment to growth.

Data centers are not secondary to the tech economy. They are the foundation. The nation that builds and controls the most advanced, reliable and affordable data center infrastructure will lead in AI development and deployment.

Here in South Dakota, we have the essential components to build this critical infrastructure. Our affordable energy, vast land and strong workforce create the necessary conditions for establishing data center facilities that can compete globally. Tech employment in our state has grown 17% in recent years, outpacing many parts of the country. This is a signal that South Dakota can support and sustain the specialized environment required for advanced infrastructure development.

But having these advantages is not enough. The window of opportunity is finite, and other states are mobilizing their own competitive advantages. If we want South Dakota to be where America builds the critical infrastructure that powers the AI future, we must act decisively. Supporting and enabling this infrastructure development is not a favor to industry. It is imperative for our state and our nation.

Establishing critical data center infrastructure in South Dakota delivers immediate and long-term benefits for our communities. The Big Watt data center in Sully County alone contributes roughly \$900,000 a year in kilowatt-hour taxes directly to local schools and could eventually provide more than \$160 million annually as future phases come online. Its payroll already totals several million dollars a year, with nearly all staff drawn from within the region. This kind of investment

can strengthen schools, support local businesses and create lasting economic opportunity.

Additionally, construction and development of this infrastructure alone can support hundreds of electricians, contractors, engineers and skilled trades workers. These are good-paying jobs that circulate dollars through local businesses. For rural parts of our state, that kind of investment can be transformative.

At Oahe Electric Cooperative, we see how thoughtful planning and load growth can support grid upgrades while protecting affordability for the families and small businesses we serve. We also know South Dakota is already a leader in renewable energy, with 29 wind projects totaling 3,476 megawatts, along with growing solar capacity and grid storage resources.

As demand for electricity grows, we are taking on new generation responsibly through an all-of-the-above energy strategy that rests on a reliable foundation of natural gas and coal, accompanied by wind and solar resources. Just as importantly, data centers should be required to pay the upfront costs associated with their onboarding so existing consumers are not left subsidizing the infrastructure needed to support large-scale new load. When planned responsibly, this approach can support grid upgrades and new generation in ways that maintain reliability and protect affordability for South Dakota's households and small businesses.

The broader significance is strategic. By establishing critical infrastructure for the technology economy, South Dakota positions itself as essential to American competitiveness. We attract complementary investment, develop specialized workforce expertise and build advantages that strengthen our state's position in the global economy for decades. If our policies create uncertainty or make infrastructure development financially unworkable, capital will flow to other states where the path is clearer and the commitment is stronger. We must transform from a state watching the technology race to a state where the race is won.

Our state must act now to establish the critical infrastructure that will power American innovation for the next decade. This is our moment to position South Dakota as essential to winning the technology race. With practical regulations and a clear commitment to supporting data center infrastructure development, we can ensure that South Dakota is where America builds the advanced infrastructure that leads the world in artificial intelligence. The technology shaping the global economy will be powered by the infrastructure we build today. South Dakota can be that foundation.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

OAHE ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 019-042)

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Tory Smith – Journeyman Lineman

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Our Mission

Oahe Electric delivers high quality, low-cost electric service to our local member-owners. As a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative, we are committed to meeting the highest standards of customer satisfaction. We do business with accountability, integrity, innovation and commitment to community. As an electric co-op, we are part of America's most trusted network of high quality energy providers.

Oahe Electric to Hold Director Elections

During the annual meeting, the members present will be electing two board members, one from each district, to fill two, three-year position. Any individual who satisfies the qualifications and complies with the nominating procedures set forth below should be prepared to:

- Attend regular monthly board meetings held at Oahe Electric headquarters in Blunt, S.D.
- Attend annual and other special meetings as needed
- Attend director seminars or other outside meetings that provide necessary education on matters related to financing, electric rates, power requirements and legal issues of concern to rural electric members
- Provide an important and necessary link between member-owners and management staff of the Cooperative
- Serve as an extension of the rights and responsibilities of the cooperative member-owner. Joining with other directors of the cooperative, they try with honesty, consistency, and good conscience to make decisions and set

policy for the cooperative which are in the best interests of the cooperative and the membership as a whole

Petitions are available at the headquarters in Blunt. Should there be any questions concerning the bylaw procedures or if you would like to request a petition, feel free to call or stop in at the office. Petitions are due by Aug. 5, 2026.



Bylaws Governing Election of Directors

Section 4. Qualifications. No person shall be eligible to become or remain a Director or to hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who:

1. It is not a member and a bona fide resident of the area served by the Cooperative; or
2. Is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise, a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members of the Cooperative; or
3. Is an employee of the Cooperative, or who has, within five years of the proposed election or appointment, been an employee of the Cooperative.

The determination of residency, as required by this section, shall be determined by application of objective criteria to be set forth in policy adopted by the Board of Directors.

Section 5. Nominations. Any Fifteen (15) or more members acting together may make nominations by petition received at the principal office of the Cooperative not less than forty-five (45) days prior to the meeting and the Secretary shall post such nominations at the principal office of the Cooperative. The Secretary shall mail with the notice of the meeting, or separately, but at least 10 days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of Directors to be elected and the names and addresses of the candidates nominated by petition. There shall be no nominations from the floor unless no petition has been filed for a vacancy. In that event only, nomination shall be taken from the floor for that vacancy, and nominations shall not be closed until at least one minute has passed during which no additional nomination has been made. No member may nominate more than one candidate.



As unmanned aerial systems (UAS) increasingly populate recreational and professional skies, safety remains paramount – especially near critical infrastructure such as overhead power lines. Today we reaffirm that drones should be flown in open spaces away from electrical lines and substations to prevent power outages and dangerous debris that can threaten public safety.

A drone colliding with a power line can cause outages and, if lines are downed, create serious electrical hazards for anyone nearby. Touching downed lines or debris that has fallen on fences, trees or other objects can result in severe injury or death. If you encounter downed power lines, immediately call 911 and notify emergency personnel and the utility company.

To ensure safe and compliant drone operations, follow federal registration and business-approval requirements, and stay informed about local, state and community regulations. FAA safety guidelines remain essential: Inspect your drone for damage before each flight and repair any issues prior to use. Fly at or below 400 feet unless FAA authorization or an allowed exception applies. Maintain visual line of sight; do not fly beyond it. Avoid airports, manned aircraft, stadiums and crowds of people. Do not fly for unapproved commercial purposes without FAA authorization. Refrain from flying in bad weather, including low visibility or high winds. Never fly recklessly or endanger others; violations can result in fines and penalties.

It is encouraged that drone operators plan routes

that maximize safety and minimize proximity to power infrastructure. Responsible pilots, adherence to FAA guidelines and awareness of local rules can prevent outages, injuries and potentially tragic consequences. For more information on legal requirements and best practices, consult FAA resources and your local utility providers.

Together, we can enjoy the benefits of drone technology while safeguarding our communities and critical electrical infrastructure.

As drone use expands, operators should build safety into every mission from the outset. Calibration, pre-flight checklists, and robust maintenance programs help catch issues before takeoff. Operators are encouraged to use situational awareness tools, such as real-time weather updates and wind assessments, to adjust flight plans accordingly. Community education events and outreach can foster a responsible culture among hobbyists and professionals alike, reinforcing the shared responsibility to protect power networks and nearby residents. By prioritizing safety, we preserve access to this transformative technology for all.



"Call 811 before you dig – always."

Laina Nelson, age 10

Laina reminds members to always call 811 before digging. Thank you for sharing your picture, Laina! Laina's parents are Nathan and Kristen Nelson – members of H-D 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.



Family FAVORITES

PARTY IN A PAN

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside. Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted. Makes 9x13 inch pan.

Kathy Zomer
Douglas Electric

WALLEYE WITH HORSERADISH SAUCE

Ingredients:

2 lbs. walleye fillets
1 cup Lawry's Herb & Garlic marinade
1 tsp. Lawry's Season Salt
1 tsp. lemon pepper
1/4 cup butter
2 tbsp. horseradish
2 tsp. dill

Method

Marinate fish in herb & garlic marinade for 30 minutes. Drain. Sprinkle with season salt and lemon pepper. Bake fish until it flakes. Melt butter in saucepan. Remove from heat and add horseradish. Spoon onto fillet after cooked. Sprinkle on dill and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

BBQ MEATBALLS

Ingredients:

Meatballs

3# ground beef
1 can (12 oz.) evaporated milk
1 cup oatmeal
1 cup cracker crumbs
2 eggs
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. chili powder

Sauce

2 cups ketchup
1 cup brown sugar
1/2 tsp. liquid smoke, or to taste
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/4 cup finely chopped onion

Method

Mix all meatball ingredients together and shape into meatballs. Place meatballs in a baking dish.

Mix all sauce ingredients together and pour over meatballs. Cover and bake at 350°F for one hour. The meatballs can be made ahead of time and frozen for several weeks. This makes a large batch, so it can be divided into smaller batches and frozen.

Karen Soulek
Charles Mix 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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

The Mystery of the 5:30 p.m. Stampede



Valerie Marso
CFO

Picture this: It's 5:30 p.m., and someone just started supper. Then, someone else starts a load of laundry. Then air conditioner kicks on. A teenager plugs in a gaming system. Another family member decides it's the perfect time to take a hot shower.

Nobody planned it, yet all across the community, thousands of people are doing the exact same thing at nearly the exact same time.

Welcome to electric rush hour! Most of us think about electricity like we think about gasoline. Use more, pay more. That's true – but it's only part of the story.

Electric utilities also have to plan for those moments when everyone wants electricity at once. Think of the electric grid like a highway.

At 2 a.m., there are plenty of open lanes, but at rush hour, traffic gets crowded. The highway has to be big enough to handle the busiest times, even if it's only busy for a few hours each day.

Electric demand works the same way. The total electricity you use over a month is called energy. But demand is how much electricity is being used at one moment in time.

In other words, it's not just how much electricity is being consumed – it's how many "electrical lanes" need to be available at once. Those peak-demand periods can have a major impact on what it costs to provide power.

The good news? Managing demand doesn't mean sitting in the dark or giving up comfort. In fact, many members are already helping without even thinking about it. Stay tuned to learn more!!

New Face at Oahe Electric

Please Join Us in Welcoming Our Summer Intern, Masique Carley!

Masique is gaining hands-on experience with our line crew this summer before heading to Mitchell Technical College this fall, where he will study Power Line Construction and Maintenance.

We're excited to have Masique here with us learning the ropes and helping the Oahe Electric Cooperative crew deliver reliable electric service to all of our members.



Outages & Life Support Equipment: What You Need to Know

If someone in your household relies on life-support equipment – such as a respirator, supplemental oxygen, or heart-assist device – please contact Oahe Electric right away.

We maintain a list of members who depend on critical medical equipment so we can prioritize them during power restoration efforts.

While we work hard to provide reliable service, power outages can still occur. For this reason, we strongly encourage households with life-support needs to have a backup power source and a well-prepared emergency plan in place.

To ensure you're included on our life-support priority list, please call our office at 1-800-640-6243 and let us know about your situation.

WHO POWERS YOU?

For Dean Kueter, Community Service and Cooperative Values Run in the Family

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When something needs to be done in a small town, it often starts with someone willing to take the lead.

In Montrose, Dean Kueter has often been that person. Through years of involvement in local organizations, veterans' projects, school efforts and community work, Kueter has built a reputation as someone willing to step up.

That work did not go unnoticed. Tara Miller, manager of communications at Central Electric Cooperative and a former Montrose Area Foundation board member, saw Kueter's impact and nominated him for the fifth annual regional Who Powers You? contest.

Hosted by the region's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, the contest recognizes local people and organizations making a difference in their communities. Kueter, a Southeastern Electric Cooperative member, was selected as Southeastern Electric's finalist.

"You do those things because you see there's a need and you want to make a difference in your community," Kueter said. "It was meaningful to be recognized for that."

In her nomination, Miller highlighted Kueter's work with the Montrose Area Foundation, his leadership with the local American Legion Post, his 20 years with the Montrose Fire Department and his passion for education and accessibility.

Kueter grew up outside nearby Humboldt and later served as superintendent for the Montrose School District before joining the Cornbelt Educational Cooperative. He is entering his 14th year with the education

cooperative, which serves nine school districts by providing special education and related services, including speech therapy.

"It's really a high-need area," Kueter said. Demand for specialized services continues to grow, while schools struggle to find qualified people for those roles.

Much of Kueter's volunteer work has centered on places and organizations that bring people together. He currently serves as commander of the local American Legion Post, which he said is more than a veterans organization in Montrose. It serves as a gathering place for the community, hosting dances, birthday parties, anniversaries, graduations and other events.

"It truly is a community hub and community center for everyone," Kueter said.

The post is improving the Veterans Memorial on Main Street through fundraising, new statues and landscaping. The Montrose Area Foundation has also supported local causes ranging from the fire department to school projects, youth programs and the swimming pool.

"People are oftentimes more than willing to help," he said. "They just need to be asked, and they want their time to be valued. So, if you call on them to come help with something, you need to make sure you have a job for them to do."

For Kueter, the cooperative connection extends beyond his own contest recognition. His family has also been honored through Southeastern Electric Cooperative's Touchstone Energy programs.

Both of Kueter's children, Kellen and Hallie, have been active in their school, church and community, taking on leadership roles through FFA, student



Dean Kueter, a Southeastern Electric Cooperative member and Montrose-area community leader, was selected as a finalist in the regional Who Powers You? contest.

council and the National Honor Society while also volunteering with local organizations.

Kellen was named a Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week, received a 2024 Southeastern Electric scholarship and was later selected as Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year. Hallie was also named a Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week.

"Obviously, it's a proud parent moment," Kueter said. "Anytime your kid gets any type of recognition, it makes you feel good as a parent."

Kueter said he knows many people connected to Southeastern Electric, including lineworkers and family members who work in the electric cooperative world. As a member-owner, he said the cooperative connection is part of the broader network of relationships that tie rural communities together.

"I'm surrounded by great people who work hard to improve our community," Kueter said. "It takes a lot of people working together to have successful projects. I am just glad to be a part of the team doing this positive work in our community."



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A PAST FIT FOR THE FUTURE

A new lobby welcomes visitors to the Cultural Heritage Center.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

Cultural Center & State Museum Reopens After Extensive Renovation

Jacob Boyko

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After more than two years spent closed for renovation, South Dakota's state museum and cultural center is back up and running to share the story of South Dakota and its people with visitors from across the state and beyond.

The iconic museum built into the Pierre hillside held its grand reopening July 1 in time for the nation's 250th birthday, showing off new exhibits, a gift shop and an expansion that includes a larger meeting room and more space for its archives.

For Museum Director David Grabitske, the reopening marks a new chapter for the South Dakota State Historical Society, which oversees both the museum and state archives housed there. But it also honors the first laws set forth by the Dakota Territory's first territorial legislature, outlining specific steps and functions for historical preservation for untold future generations of its citizens.

According to Grabitske, many of the

first Dakotan settlers were determined to preserve the history they were making day by day as settlers on the vast American frontier.

"The first three acts [by the territorial legislature] were all about transferring property at the end of life – it's all about inheritance," Grabitske explained. "The fourth act of the territory created the historical society. In my mind, the fourth act goes along with those first three acts; it's about how we give things to the future."

Establishing a historical society demonstrated confidence that there would be a future for the Dakota Territory – complete with a permanent population that would live, grow and prosper there.

"We have a mantra around here," Grabitske said. "We collect today for tomorrow's history."

What that sentiment has amounted to is a sprawling collection of more than 17,000 cubic feet of paper, 50 terabytes of data on its servers, and more than 35,000 individual objects.

"The very first collections that arrived were in 1863, and we still have those in our library," Grabitske said. "They were

library books – 514 of them in 11 boxes."

In the process of collecting and disseminating information, historical societies at the time would collect and make copies of books to trade with other historical societies to expand their collections and diffuse knowledge across a wider area and reduce the risk of losing records to fire.

You'll find those 160 years' worth of books, deeds, contracts and reports



On the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Little Bighorn, Curator of Collections Katy L. Schmidt holds a can found on the battlefield.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

throughout the high-ceilinged, climate-controlled archive wing of the building – but you'll also find objects that aren't necessarily old or inherently valuable.

"The reason we add something into our collection is because it's historic, and what we mean by historic is it has significance and integrity," Grabitske explained. "Something being 'old' just fixes it in time. What makes something historic is that it is significant – it tells the story of people in South Dakota, and it has integrity, which means a certain completeness to tell that story."

To illustrate the point, Grabitske described a recent addition to the museum's collection – a painted tire with the words "no hunting."

"You see these things going down the road [in South Dakota], and we realized we were missing [one for the museum]," he explained. "We found one near Timber Lake which had a story. The lady who gave it to us (family of Dorothy Dopp, courtesy of the Timber Lake & Area Museum) had put it up in 1967 and she had faithfully painted it over the years and knew the dates she had painted it. We don't need 400 of these tires – we need one to represent the whole state."

Visitors to the museum this summer can experience the first three rooms of the updated exhibits. These sections house a welcome area, 'What is History?' exhibit and a gallery. The remaining sections are slated for completion in December 2026 and will feature exhibits on South Dakota's environment, people, politics, conflicts and more.

For more information on the Cultural Heritage Center and the South Dakota State Historical Society, visit history.sd.gov.



An exhibit showcasing the famous people of South Dakota.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



This plaster doll (left) was gifted to South Dakota by Japan in 1927 to commemorate the United States' 150th birthday. Fifty years later, for the nation's 200th birthday, Japan gifted South Dakota another doll (right).
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Museum Director and South Dakota State Historical Society Assistant Director David Grabitske walks through the extensive art archive, revealing a painting of an electrical lineman working through a winter storm.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Grabitske demonstrates the new movable shelves installed over tracks within the floor. This upgrade will maximize the available archival space.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Line Crew Update

What's Going On This Summer at Oahe Electric



Matt Eldridge
COO

Summer is always a busy season for our line crew, and this year is no exception. With multiple major construction projects underway and important system upgrades on the horizon, our team is working hard to strengthen reliability across the entire service territory. Here's a look at what we've accomplished so far – and what's coming next.

U.S. Highway 14 Underground Conversion

This spring we partnered with K&H Electric to install 10 miles of new three-phase underground primary cable along U.S. Highway 14. This upgrade replaces aging overhead line that has weathered many South Dakota seasons.

- Cable installation and terminations are complete
- Crews will be retiring the old overhead line as schedules allow

This project improves long term reliability and reduces outage exposure during storms.

206th Street Underground Project

Following the Highway 14 work, crews moved directly into the 206th Street project, which includes:

- 5 miles of new 3 phase underground cable
- Retirement of the overhead line serving Hwy 14 and 293rd Ave
- Improved reliability for businesses and members in this corridor

Connections are currently being made so the new underground line can be energized. Once energized, crews will begin converting members to the new system and then retire the overhead line.

New Services & Member Upgrades

We've had a handful of new service requests this year, and material lead times have improved compared to recent years. New service activity has been slower than usual, but we encourage members to reach out early if planning a new service or upgrade. Early communication helps us secure materials and schedule work efficiently.

Substation OCR Replacement

Beginning this fall, we will start replacing our hydraulic oil filled OCRs with new electronic OCRs.

- These upgrades improve reliability across the entire system
- Electronic OCRs integrate with SCADA, giving us real time visibility into system performance

Underground Line Patrol

We will also begin a systemwide underground line patrol, which includes opening and inspecting every underground cabinet in our service territory. This labor intensive project helps us identify issues early and prevent outages before they occur.

Your Co-op's Thank-You Notes

Dear Operation Round Up,

Many thanks for your donation to the Sully County Historical Society. Your continuing support is appreciated!

*Lew Robbenolt,
Treasurer*

Oahe Electric,

Greetings all and THANK YOU for the \$1,000 support from Operation Round Up to be used for extending our electrical service at the ranch. We are very grateful for your help as we work to serve others. And always thankful for how your efforts allow us to function day in/day out – rain/blizzard/shine.

*God's blessing and our respect
Ken and Liz – for The Ranch Ministries team*

Oahe Electric,

Thank you so much. Your generosity helps bring Oahe Days Music and Arts Festival to life each year. Because of your support, families, friends, and visitors can gather to enjoy great music, local artists and crafters, community activities, and lasting memories. We are proud to have partners like you who believe in celebrating and strengthening our community. Thank you for helping make Oahe Days a tradition that continues to grow and thrive.

*With gratitude,
Oahe Days Music and Arts Festival Committee*

Lessons Shared, Lessons Learned

Jordan Lamb & Dan Lettau Speak With Students About Careers, Perseverance, & Finding Your Own Path.

Dan Lettau

Journeyman Lineman

On June 5, Oahe Electric's CEO/General Manager, Jordan Lamb, and Journeyman Lineman Dan Lettau visited Ken Korkow's The Ranch Ministries south of Blunt to speak with a group of high school students about careers in the electrical industry and the many paths toward a successful future.

Together, Jordan and Dan shared their personal journeys, demonstrating that there is no single road to a rewarding career.

Jordan explained that after graduating from high school, he enrolled at South Dakota State University to pursue a degree in Electrical Engineering. During his junior year, he faced one of the greatest challenges of his life – a battle with cancer. Through unwavering faith, the support of his family, and determination to achieve his goals, Jordan persevered and ultimately earned the career he had worked so hard to build.

Dan's path looked very different. After high school, the last thing he wanted was four more years in a classroom. Instead, he entered the workforce, taking physically demanding jobs at a bentonite plant and later as a contract miner at the Homestake Gold Mine in Lead. When the mine closed due to low gold prices, Dan decided at age 35 to attend Mitchell Technical College and train to become a line worker.

Although he had a healthy respect – and even a fear – of electricity, Dan learned to work safely and found a career he loved. After serving Oahe Electric for 23 years as a journeyman lineman, he faced another battle with cancer. The disease damaged the nerves in his lower body, making it impossible to continue the physical demands of linework.

Thanks to his faith, family, friends, and especially his Oahe Electric Cooperative family, Dan fought through his recovery and returned to work just nine months later in a new safety and support role, where he continues helping keep the lights on for Oahe Electric's members.

Jordan and Dan spoke to 45 students, ages 15 to 17,



who are enrolled in a U.S. Marine Corps ROTC program. The students come from diverse backgrounds, many from inner-city communities in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area with difficult home environments. Despite the challenges many have faced, their advisor shared that some are straight-A students with remarkable determination.

The students expressed that their parents strongly encourage them to pursue four-year college degrees. Jordan and Dan emphasized that while college is an excellent path for many, it is not the only path to a successful and fulfilling career. They encouraged the students to keep an open mind about technical schools and skilled trades, reminding them that careers as line workers, electricians, nurses, plumbers, mechanics, carpenters, and many other skilled trade professions offer excellent opportunities with shorter educational programs and very strong earning potential.

After the presentation, the students had the opportunity to see and handle some of the tools and equipment used by Oahe Electric Cooperative employees. Several expressed excitement about careers in electrical engineering and linework, asking thoughtful questions about the industry and profession.

Reflecting on the experience, Dan shared that while he hopes they made a positive impact on the students, the students may have impacted him even more.

"It really made me realize just how fortunate we are to have a great electric cooperative like Oahe Electric," Dan said. "Because we're owned by our members, we work for them – and that's something special."

CO-OP SUMMER OUTREACH

Join Us at S.D. State Fair, Dakotafest, Minn. Farmfest

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Attention all co-op members! If you're heading to the South Dakota State Fair, Dakotafest or Farmfest this summer, stop by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booths for some great family fun and a chance to win a prize!

Make sure you fill out your coupon on the back of this magazine and bring it with you to the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair or Dakotafest for your chance to win one of two electric grills sponsored by Karl's TV & Appliance.

South Dakota State Fair – Sept. 3, 2026

South Dakota's electric cooperatives will host the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron, Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026.

This one-day event will feature a slew of energy-themed activities, from bucket truck rides lifting you more than 50 feet above the state fairgrounds to an interactive pole climbing demonstration complete with real spiked boots and climbing gear that linemen use every day on the job. We've also partnered up with South Dakota One Call to remind you to always call 811 before you start digging – but your kids are welcome to use our mini excavator in our sandbox to uncover buried treasure!

While you're here, check out our on-site displays for select highly efficient, all-electric heat pumps and mini-splits, water heaters, yard tools and more!

Find our booth near the Horticulture Building.

Dakotafest – Aug. 18-20, 2026

You'll want to stop by the South Dakota Touchstone Energy Cooperatives building at Dakotafest in Mitchell, Aug. 18-20!

Join us for fresh-off-the-grill brats, oven-baked cookies and freezie pops as you learn about the latest in home energy savings and efficiency. We'll have other cool stuff for you to check out, including an automatic lawn mower, a solar panel display and an EGO Power+ Portable Power Station.

Minnesota Farmfest – Aug. 4-6, 2026

Minnesota members, come visit your electric cooperative at Minnesota Farmfest near Redwood Falls, Aug. 4-6, 2026. Members may enter a raffle drawing for one of five battery-operated yard tools. We'll even have the high-voltage trailer on site for a live demonstration to remind visitors to be safe around overhead and buried power lines.



Kids perfected their utility pole climbing skills at the South Dakota State Fair.

Photo by Jacob Boyko



Touchstone Energy Cooperatives host a booth at Dakotafest in 2025.

Submitted Photo



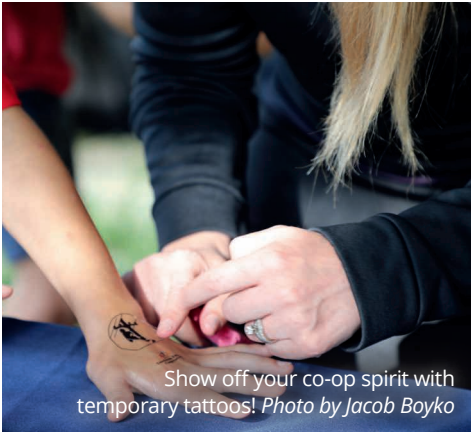
Charles Mix Electric Lineman Joe Michael shows off the bucket truck at the State Fair.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Fairgoers get a lineman's view of the State Fair! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A future lineman readies for his climb.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Show off your co-op spirit with temporary tattoos! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A line forms for bucket truck rides.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Booth visitors can win prizes by playing Plinko.
Submitted Photo



THE POWER OF THE PAUSE

Sioux Valley Energy line workers take part in a job briefing before work begins. The tailgate safety discussion helps crews review the task, identify hazards and make sure each person understands the plan.
Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy

How Job Briefings Help Co-ops Think Through Safety

Frank Turner

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Before an electric cooperative line crew begins work, the job starts with a pause.

The pause may only take a few minutes, but for crews working around energized equipment, changing weather and other hazards, those few minutes matter.

Before the first step of the job, line crews gather for a tailgate safety session – a documented pre-job briefing where they identify the task, hazards, protective equipment and plan.

For Travis Denison, manager of safety at Sioux Valley Energy, that conversation is one of the most important tools crews have to fight complacency.

“It forces our professionals to stop and go through the steps of the job they’re going to do and identify the hazards with each of

those steps,” Denison said.

Despite the casual name, a tailgate safety session is not a public demonstration or a quick conversation at the back of a pickup. It is a documented briefing used by crews before work begins. The goal is to slow down and communicate, making sure that everyone is focused on the work in front of them.

“These are jobs that our crews do every day, but all of a sudden something in the environment can change. There can be hazards that the crew didn’t talk about or recognize, and somebody can get hurt,” Denison said. “That job briefing or tailgate session is made to stop the crews, make them aware of their surroundings, talk about the job and each of the hazards, and discuss how they’re going to protect themselves.”

Denison’s focus on safety also runs in the

family. His brother, Joe Denison, is a loss control professional with SDREA – the same role Travis previously held before joining Sioux Valley Energy. Both came to safety work after years around line crews and firsthand experience with the risks of electric utility work.

“We were both linemen,” Travis said. “The more experienced you get as a lineman, the more you recognize the mistakes you made as an apprentice. You see the shortcuts that maybe you made yourself or that you see other linemen make.”

So how does a tailgate safety session actually work? The details change with the job, but the idea is the same: slow the job down before it starts.

For instance, if a crew is conducting a pole top rescue training, the briefing begins before anyone climbs. The crew identifies the emergency location, the people involved and who is leading the job and the protective equipment required.

Then they talk through the work itself. If the crew is practicing a mock mayday call or using a rescue manikin, they also talk through what could go wrong during the training. Someone could strain a muscle. A climber could make blunt contact with a pole or hardware. A falling object could injure someone below. Even a knife or hook could create its own hazard if people are not paying attention.

"We list the job, the steps of the job, the personal protective equipment we'll use and the energy sources," Travis said. "We talk about anything to do with the job before we start, so everybody's on the same page."

For Denison, the value of a job briefing is not limited to line crews. Members do not need a formal briefing form before starting work at home or on the farm, but they can use the same pattern to stay safe – name the job, look at the location, identify the equipment involved and talk through what could go wrong.

At home, that might mean looking up before raising a ladder, checking for power lines before trimming trees or calling 811

before digging a post hole, planting trees, building a deck or installing a sign.

That message is especially important on the farm, when large equipment may operate near overhead power lines.

"Be aware of the power lines," he said. "Have that talk. Communicate. Make the people you are working with aware of the potential dangers around them."

Sioux Valley Energy has also worked to carry that message to members through radio ads, videos and public outreach. The cooperative has shared reminders about overhead power lines, green boxes, construction work and the importance of locating underground utilities before digging. At times, Sioux Valley Energy has also partnered with Southeastern Electric Cooperative on public safety messaging.

Denison said the goal is similar to a crew's tailgate session: get people thinking before something goes wrong.

"Think about what you're doing," Denison said.

SDREA - Job Briefing			
Aerial Unit Testing			
Cooperative: <u>Thompson Center Coop</u>	Date of the Testing: <u>6-30-26</u>	Cooperative System Location: <u>L24C72</u>	
Emergency Location: <u>Substation #440</u>	Temperature: <u>76</u>	Humidity: <u>68%</u>	Voltage: <u>7200</u>
<u>Section 14 Township-112N Range-48west</u>			
Type of Personnel Involved:			
☒ Line Superintendent	☒ Lead Lineman	☒ SDREA Loss Control:	☒ Foreman
☒ Journeyman	☒ Groundman	☒ Contractor	☒ Apprentice
Work Procedures:			
☒ Person In Charge of the Aerial Unit Testing:	<u>N/A</u>	☒ Set Up Traffic Control Devices if Necessary	☒ Position Aerial Unit Next to Energized Line
☒ Safe Location for Testing	☒ Ground Each Truck to System Neutral	☒ Inspect the Aerial Unit Boom Condition	☒ Install Skarshaug Tester
☒ Competent Aerial Unit Operator Identified	☒ Aerial Unit will be tested for 3-5 minutes	☒ Competent Ground Personnel Identified	☒ Rubber Gloves Shall be Worn by both
☒ Removal of the Truck Ground from System U	☒ Retrack Boom to de-energizing test unit	☒ Repeat for the next Aerial Unit	☒ Remove Skarshaug Tester from Boom
Personal Protective Equipment			
☒ Truck Grounds	☒ Safety Glasses	☒ Work Area Protection Devices <u>out of Right a Way</u>	☒ Rubber Gloves
☒ High Visibility Vest	☒ Hard Hats	☒ Strokes or Beacons	☒ Aerial Unit Tester
Special Tools & Equipment Required			
☒ Aerial Unit Tester	☒ Spotting Scope	☒ Stop Watch/Watch	
Potential Hazards			
☒ Contact Energized Lines with Equipment	☒ Vehicular Traffic	☒ Discharge of Hot or Burning Oil	
Energy Source Control			
☒ Substation	☒ Sectionalizer	☒ OCR	☒ Installed 1 Shot
☒ Fuse Cutout	☒ SCADA	☒ Electronic VFI	☒ Other: _____
Personal at Job Site			
Signature	Signature	Signature	
<u>Joe Denison</u>	<u>Brad Rehner</u>		
<u>Danley Swartz</u>	<u>Tony Surana</u>		
<u>Billy Bob</u>	<u>Lynna Beck</u>		
<u>Heath Church</u>	<u>Larry Hardin</u>		
<u>Jaime Pike</u>	<u>Derek Donson</u>		

This mock SDREA job briefing form, created for illustration, shows how line crews may document pre-job planning before aerial unit testing. The example highlights the kinds of details crews review before work begins, including location, personnel, work procedures, protective equipment, tools, energy controls and potential hazards.

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: _____ Dakotafest – Find us in the Touchstone Energy Building!
Your Email Address: _____ S.D. State Fair – Find us in the Horticulture Park!



AUG. 18-20
Dakotafest
2300 E. Spruce St.
Mitchell, 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.

JULY 31-AUG. 2
Sioux River Folk Festival
Newton Hills State Park
Sioux Falls, SD
SiouxRiverFolkFest.com

AUG. 1-2
Family Camping Weekend
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

AUG. 4-6
Farmfest 2026
8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Morgan, MN
Ideagroup.com/Farmfest

AUG. 5
Ag Appreciation Day
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Sioux Empire Fair
Sioux Falls, SD

AUG. 7
Raise Em' Rank Bull Riding & Breakaway Roping
Geddes, SD
605-680-2763

AUG. 8-9
South Dakota Senior Games
Events for People Ages 50+
Huron, SD
Register by July 26
605-295-2039

AUG. 13-15
Clay County Fair
Vermillion, SD

AUG. 14
Member/Community Appreciation Day
Clay County Fair
Vermillion, SD

AUG. 21-23
Yankton Riverboat Days & Summer Arts Festival
Yankton, SD
605-665-1657

AUG. 22
Extreme Bull Riding Tour
7:30 p.m.
Yankton Rodeo Grounds
Yankton, SD
605-760-4217

AUG. 22
McCrossan Boys Ranch Xtreme Event Challenge
3:30 p.m.
McCrossan Boys Ranch
Sioux Falls, SD
605-339-1203

AUG. 27-30
Steam Threshing Jamboree
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

SEPT. 1-6
20th Annual Sturgis Mustang Rally
Sturgis, SD
SturgisMustangRally.com

SEPT. 3
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives at the South Dakota State Fair
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
State Fairgrounds – Horticulture Park
Huron, SD
605-224-8823

SEPT. 11-12
Center of the Nation 9/11 Remembrance
6 p.m. Fri: Remembrance Walk
Sat. 8 a.m.-4 p.m.: Blood Drive
Herrmann Park
Belle Fourche, SD
605-641-3245

SEPT. 12
The Hay Country Jamboree
7 p.m.
Gayville Hall
Gayville, 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.