

Cooperative Connections

Getting the
DIRT on
Underground
Damages

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with a
Lineworker

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Know what's **below.**
Call before you dig.

KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON ISN'T ENOUGH.



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South Dakota Electric

Cooperative Connections

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Make a Call to 811 Part of Your Springtime Plans



Ed Anderson

ed.anderson@sdrea.coop

Spring is finally here! With the snow melted and the ground ready for planting, eager homeowners are gearing up to start those outdoor digging projects.

Before you reach for that shovel to start digging, remember to call 811, the national call-before-you-dig number, to ensure that your buried utility lines are marked.

The Common Ground Alliance and its 1,700 members, including utilities in South Dakota, recognize April as National Safe Digging Month. Throughout April, co-ops and other utilities will be promoting National Safe Digging Month through statewide outreach and local events. For more information, visit www.call811.com.

National Safe Digging Month was designated to remind residents that our land is made up of a complex underground infrastructure of pipelines, wires and cables. Striking an underground utility line while digging can cause harm to you or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

A call must be placed to 811 before every digging project, from simple landscaping projects like planting trees or shrubs, to building a deck or installing a rural mailbox. Every nine minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811.

Don't become part of the statistic – make sure to call 811!

Here's how it works:

- One free, simple phone call to 811 makes it easy for South Dakota One Call to notify all appropriate utility companies of your intent to dig.
- Call at least 72 hours prior to digging to ensure enough time for utility lines to be properly marked.
- When you call 811, a representative will ask for the location and description of your digging project.
- South Dakota One Call will notify affected utility companies, who will then each send a professional locator to the proposed dig site to mark the approximate location of your lines.
- Once lines have been properly marked, roll up those sleeves and carefully dig around the marked areas.

Power Tools and Equipment Safety

Many do-it-yourself projects involve the use of power tools. Working with power tools requires skilled instruction and training. They can be deadly if not properly used or maintained.

The most common scenario for power tool-related electrocutions is when the equipment comes in contact with live electrical wires while it is being used.

Facts and Statistics:

- According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), there are nearly 400 electrocutions in the United States each year.
- Approximately 15 percent of electrocutions are related to consumer products.
- 8 percent of consumer product-related electrocutions each year are attributed to electrical accidents with power drills, saws, sanders, hedge trimmers and other electric power tools.
- 9 percent of consumer product-related electrocutions each year are caused by accidents involving the use of lawn and garden equipment and ladders, which come into contact with overhead power lines.

Power Tool Safety Tips:

- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) with every power tool to protect against electric shocks.
- Do not use power tools with an extension cord that exceeds 100 feet in length.
- Never use power tools near live electrical wires or water pipes.
- Use extreme caution when cutting or drilling into walls where electrical wires or water pipes could be accidentally touched or penetrated.
- If a power tool trips a safety device while in use, take the tool to a manufacturer-authorized repair center for service.
- When working with electricity, use tools with insulated grips.
- Appropriate personal protective gear should be worn when using power tools.
- Do not use power tools without the proper guards.
- When using a wet-dry vacuum cleaner or a pressure washer, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid electric shock.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

- Safeguards on outdoor electric tools are there for a reason. Make sure that they are always in place before operating.
- Invest in the safety goggles, hearing protection, dust masks, gloves and other safety gear as recommended for each tool. A few dollars now are well worth the lifetime of good sight and hearing that they are protecting.
- Wear the appropriate clothes for the job. Wearing sandals while mowing the lawn is just asking for trouble.

Source: safeelectricity.org

Five Easy Ways to

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

Every Day

1. Conserve water by taking showers instead of baths.
2. Turn off all lights when you leave a room.
3. Bring your reusable bags to the market and other stores when shopping.
4. Go paperless. Pay as many bills as possible online.
5. Ditch the car and walk when possible.

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Spring is coming! Don't fly kites near power lines."

Taylor Brooks, 7 years old

Taylor is the daughter of Tyson Brooks, Lake Andes, S.D. He receives his internet service through Charles Mix Electric Association, Lake Andes.

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.

Appetizers and Beverages

Jalapeno Poppers

- | | |
|---|--|
| 18 fresh jalapenos cut in half (stems intact if possible), seeds and membrane cleaned out (wear gloves) | 18 slices thin bacon, cut in halves |
| 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese | Bottled barbecue sauce |
| 2/3 cup grated Cheddar cheese | Toothpicks |
| 2 green onions, chopped | Rubber gloves or plastic bags for working with the jalapenos |

In a bowl, combine cream cheese, cheddar cheese and chopped green onion mixing gently. Stuff the pepper halves with the cheese mixture. Wrap bacon slices around each pepper half, covering as much of the surface as possible and do not stretch the bacon. Secure the bacon with a toothpick and then brush the surface of the bacon with barbecue sauce. Place on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake at 275°F. for 1 hour or until bacon is done. Serve hot or room temperature.

***Note:** These can be assembled a day in advance, kept refrigerated and then baked or baked, frozen and reheated prior to serving. Experiment with different cheeses or jellies instead of barbecue sauce.*

Judy Mendel, Doland

Mocha Freeze

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 2 cups vanilla ice cream, softened | 1 T. chocolate syrup |
| 1/4 cup cold strong coffee | 1/2 cup crushed ice |

Combine ingredients in blender; blend well. Makes 4 servings.

Becki Hauser, Tripp

Triple Berry Special

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 cup frozen strawberries | 1/2 cup buttermilk |
| 1 cup raspberries | 1-1/2 cups strawberry yogurt |
| 1 cup blueberries | 2 T. honey |
| 1 cup milk | 2 T. flax meal |

Combine ingredients in blender; blend well.

Hannah Schoenfelder, Cavour

Southwest Chili Cups

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1/2 lb. lean ground beef | 1 tsp. McCormick® Garlic Powder |
| 1 (15 oz.) can black beans, drained and rinsed | 2 (8 oz. each) pkgs. corn muffin mix |
| 1 (8 oz.) can tomato sauce | 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese |
| 4 tsp. McCormick® Chili Powder | 3/4 cup sour cream |
| 2 tsp. McCormick® Oregano Leaves, finely crushed, divided | 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions |

Brown beef in large skillet on medium-high heat. Drain fat. Add beans, tomato sauce, chili powder, 1 tsp. oregano and garlic powder; mix well. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Prepare corn muffin mix as directed on package, adding remaining 1 tsp. oregano. Spoon batter into 12 greased and floured or paper-lined muffin cups, filling each cup 2/3 full. Spoon beef mixture into each cup, gently pressing into batter. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 400°F. for 12 minutes or until edges of muffin cups are golden. Cool 5 minutes in pan on wire rack. Top each cup with sour cream and green onions. Makes 12 servings.

Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 317, Total Fat 13g, Sodium 659mg, Cholesterol 67mg, Carbohydrates 38g, Protein 12g, Dietary Fiber 3g

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Orange Julius

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1/2 cup water | 1 T. sugar |
| 1/2 cup milk | 1/4 tsp. vanilla |
| 1/3 cup frozen orange juice | 6 ice cubes |

Combine ingredients in blender; blend well.

Fay Swenson, Rapid City

Please send your favorite casserole, dairy and dessert recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2018. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Maintain an Efficient, Comfortable, Healthy Indoor Humidity Level Year-Round



James Dulley

www.dulley.com

**Dear Jim:
I have lived in
hot and cold
areas and had
indoor humidity
problems in
both. What is
an efficient,
comfortable
humidity level
and how can
I maintain it
year-round?
– Steve W.**

Dear Steve: Humidity-related problems are generally worse during winter in the north and during summer in the south, but there can be year-round problems everywhere. Indoor humidity levels can be controlled by just opening windows or running the furnace or air conditioner more, but these options increase your utility bills and waste energy.

There is not just one ideal indoor humidity level. When referring to personal comfort, a target of 40 percent to 45 percent relative humidity is good. Most people are comfortable with a relative humidity ranging from 30 percent to 50 percent and can tolerate 20 percent to 60 percent. With relative humidity in the proper range, your furnace or central air conditioner thermostat can be set down or up respectively to save energy.

When the relative humidity level is too high, there can be serious health problems related to allergies, dust mites, mold, mildew, and other harmful microbes. Being at the other extreme with relative humidity too low, a person's mucous membranes may dry out which increase the susceptibility to cold and respiratory illness. Also some nasty microbes prefer excessively dry air.

To understand how to control indoor humidity year-round, it is important to understand the term "relative humidity" or RH. Warmer air can hold more water vapor (moisture) than can colder air. If the air at 75 degrees has a RH of 50 percent, it means the air is holding 50 percent of the maximum amount of water vapor it can hold at that temperature.

If that air drops to 50 degrees, that same amount of water vapor may now be 70 percent RH. When the air gets cool enough, next to window glass during winter or the refrigerator door seal during summer, it reaches a point where the air can no longer hold that much water vapor. This is called the dew point. This is when your windows or refrigerator door sweat.

You can purchase an inexpensive hygrometer at most hardware stores to measure indoor relative humidity. Since you are having humidity-related problems, your best gauge of the proper relative humidity is when the problems are alleviated or, at least, tolerable.

For example, if you have old single-pane windows in the north, you would have to get the relative humidity level to an uncomfortably low level to avoid all window condensation on cold winter nights. In the south, it may not be possible to stop all mold and mildew in the bathroom even if you run the vent fan and your central air conditioner almost continuously.

The keys to maintaining a comfortable and efficient indoor humidity level are controlling the sources of moisture and ventilating them efficiently. The average person gives off one-quarter cup of moisture per hour just breathing. Cooking for a family of four produces five cups of moisture per day. A shower contributes one-half pint and a bath contributes one-eighth pint.

Exterior moisture sources are leaky roofs, plumbing, windows, doors, etc. Once you have taken care of these problem areas, check the slope of the ground around your home. It should slope slightly downward away from the house walls. Even with the best new windows, soggy soil around your home allows excess moisture to migrate indoors year-round.

Installing new efficient replacement windows or exterior storm windows is the best method to control a window condensation problem efficiently. This also saves energy during the summer cooling season. With more efficient glass, you should be able to close insulating window shades at night to save energy. With old windows, closing shades exacerbates condensation problems.

Install new bathroom vent fans with humidity sensors. These come on automatically and run until the humidity level drops. With a manual switch, you have to either turn it off prematurely when you leave for work or let it run all day. Check the seal around the clothes dryer duct leading the outdoor vent.

Install a new furnace/heat pump with a variable-speed blower and compatible thermostat to allow it to run in an efficient dehumidification mode during summer. Make sure the damper handle on the central humidifier is set for the proper season. Use electric countertop cookers and vegetable steamers in the garage instead of in the kitchen during summer.

Send inquiries to:

James Dulley,

Cooperative Connections,

6906 Royalgreen Dr.,

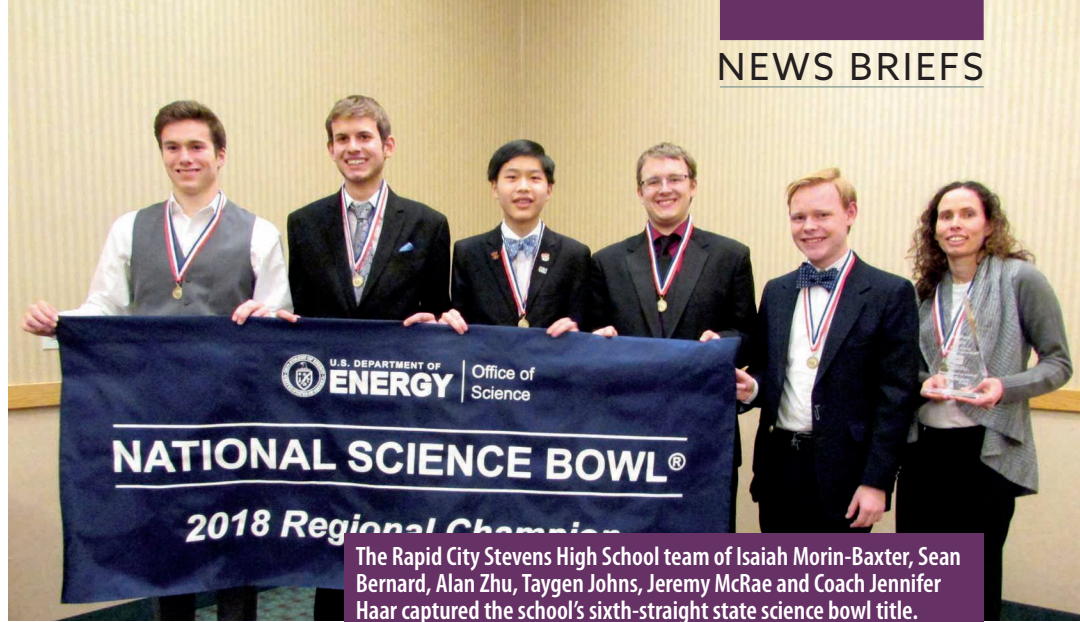
Cincinnati, OH 45244

or visit www.dulley.com.

S.D. Science Bowl Champs Since 1995

- 2018:** Rapid City Stevens High School
- 2017:** Rapid City Stevens High School
- 2016:** Rapid City Stevens High School
- 2015:** Rapid City Stevens High School – Team No. 1
- 2014:** Rapid City Central High School – Team No. 1
- 2013:** Rapid City Central High School – Team No. 1
- 2012:** Aberdeen Central High School – Team No. 2
- 2011:** Vermillion High School
- 2010:** Greater Sioux Falls Home School Association
- 2009:** Aberdeen Central High School
- 2008:** Aberdeen Central High School
- 2007:** Greater Sioux Falls Home School Association
- 2006:** Rapid City Central High School
- 2005:** Rapid City Central High School
- 2004:** Rapid City Stevens High School
- 2003:** Rapid City Stevens High School
- 2002:** Vermillion High School
- 2001:** Huron High School
- 2000:** Huron High School
- 1999:** Huron High School
- 1998:** Vermillion High School
- 1997:** Alcester-Hudson High School
- 1996:** Philip High School
- 1995:** Aberdeen Central High School
- 1994:** Brookings High School

Source: <https://www.wapa.gov/regions/UGP/ScienceBowl/Pages/south-dakota-winners.aspx> and <https://science.energy.gov/wdts/nsb/about/historical-information/past-national-science-bowl-winners/past-hs-winners/other-participants-1994/>



The Rapid City Stevens High School team of Isaiah Morin-Baxter, Sean Bernard, Alan Zhu, Taygen Johns, Jeremy McRae and Coach Jennifer Haar captured the school's sixth-straight state science bowl title.

Science Bowl Six Pack Stevens Captures State Science Bowl Title

Students from Stevens High School in Rapid City, S.D., secured that school's sixth-straight South Dakota Science Bowl Championship title. In fact, a Stevens team has won the competition eight of the 25 times the competition has been held.

The Raiders won the Feb. 17 regional competition for the 2018 National Science Bowl® (NSB) in Huron and advance to compete in the NSB National Finals in April in Washington, D.C. The South Dakota event was coordinated by the Western Area Power Administration.

"The National Science Bowl® continues to be one of the premier academic competitions across the country and prepares America's students for future successes in some of the world's fastest growing fields in science, technology, and engineering," said U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry. "I am proud to oversee a Department that provides such a unique and empowering opportunity for our nation's students, and I am honored to congratulate Stevens High School in advancing to the National Finals, where they will continue to showcase their talents as the top minds in math and science."

The NSB brings together thousands of middle and high school students from across the country to compete in a fast-paced question-and-answer format where they solve technical problems and answer questions on a range of science disciplines

including biology, chemistry, Earth and space science, physics and math.

A series of 113 regional middle school and high school tournaments are being held across the country from January through March. Winners will advance to represent their areas at the National Science Bowl® held from April 26 to April 30 in Washington, D.C., for the final middle school and high school competitions.

Minnesota will be represented in the national competition by a team from Wayzata High School. This will be the school's third appearance at the national competition since 2011.

The top 16 high school teams and the top 16 middle school teams in the National Finals will win \$1,000 for their schools' science departments.

Prizes for the top two high school teams for the 2018 NSB will be announced at a later date. (The first and second place high school teams from the 2017 NSB received all-expenses-paid science trips to Alaska, where they learned more about glaciology, marine and avian biology, geology, and plate tectonics.)

More than 275,000 students have participated in the National Science Bowl® in its 27-year history, and it is one of the nation's largest science competitions. More than 14,000 students compete in the NSB each year.

Know what's below Call **811** before you dig.



April is set aside as National Safe Digging Month, designed to raise awareness of safe digging practices and the need to call 8-1-1 before any digging projects.

Underground Excavation Damages Cost **\$1.5 BILLION**

Common Ground Alliance

www.cga-dirt.com

Damage to underground utilities from digging activities carries a hefty price tag.

Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the stakeholder-run organization dedicated to protecting underground utility lines, people who dig near them, and their communities, released its comprehensive 2016 Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report in 2017.

The report, which is the sum of all 2016 data submitted anonymously and voluntarily by facility operators, utility locating companies, one call centers, contractors, regulators, and others, estimates that the total number of underground excavation damages in the U.S. last year rose 20 percent from the year prior, to approximately 379,000, and conservatively cost direct stakeholders at least \$1.5 billion. The 2016 DIRT Report benefitted from a record-high number of event record submissions as well as a record-high Data Quality Index score (a measurement of the completeness of data submissions), yielding the most comprehensive analysis of damages to buried facilities ever compiled.

Data from 2016 informed CGA's first-ever estimate of the societal costs associated with underground



One easy call gets your utility lines marked and helps protect you from injury and expense.

Safe Digging Is No Accident: Always Call 811 Before You Dig

Visit call811.com for more information.



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.

facility damages in the U.S. As estimated by a very conservative model accounting only for stakeholders' direct costs related to a damage, 2016 damages alone cost approximately \$1.5 billion in the U.S. This estimate does not include property damage to excavating equipment or the surrounding area, evacuations of residences and businesses, road closures and/or traffic delays, environmental impacts, legal costs, injuries or deaths. Customers and users of underground facilities were most impacted, shouldering just over 30 percent of the total societal costs, and emergency responders absorbed more than 23 percent.

While the 2016 damage ratio, which measures damages per 1,000 one call transmissions, increased 14 percent from 2015, construction spending has risen such that the ratio of damages to construction spending has dramatically declined since 2004 (the first year the DIRT Report was issued), and estimated damages have stabilized into the 300,000-400,000 range since 2010 despite increased construction activity in the interim.

"The substantial estimated economic impacts of damages to underground facilities across the U.S. likely do not come as a big surprise to damage prevention advocates who are dedicated to reducing that figure – along with the very human impacts these damages can have – on a daily basis. Nevertheless, we hope that the 2016 DIRT Report's analysis of the \$1.5 billion in societal impact is eye-opening to both the industry and the public at large, and provides clear evidence that reducing damages is solidly in the public interest," said Sarah K. Magruder Lyle, president

and CEO of CGA. "The latest DIRT Report also examines damage prevention paradigms in other countries for the first time, which is an opportunity to consider how this information can help us can work toward our goal of zero damages."

Other significant findings from the 2016 DIRT Report include that damages caused by a failure to call 811 prior to digging have fallen to a record-low 16 percent, part of an encouraging long-term trend.

2016 damages alone cost \$1.5 billion in the United States.

Once again, CGA has made an interactive DIRT Dashboard accessible to the public through its website, allowing users to view and manipulate the data through the lens of a specific element, e.g., damages by state, root cause analysis, etc. It contains a series of dashboard visualizations that allow users to sort information through additional filters, giving damage prevention stakeholders a powerful tool for drilling down into the areas where they feel they can have the biggest positive impact. Added this year are the capabilities to filter several dashboards by state or year (inclusive of 2015 and 2016 data), as well as a new dashboard that centers around the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) determinations on the adequacy of state damage prevention programs.

"CGA's Data Reporting and Evaluation

Committee has worked tirelessly to recruit quality data submissions and explore new areas of analysis to inform the 2016 DIRT Report as part of its pursuit to provide damage prevention advocates and the public with comprehensive, relevant information," said Bob Terjesen, Data Committee co-chair from National Grid. "DIRT data is more accessible than ever with the interactive DIRT Dashboard hosted on the CGA website, making it possible for any stakeholder to explore the unique ways each of us can have an impact on the staggering \$1.5 billion in societal costs caused by damages to buried utilities, and on protecting the people who work near them."

The complete DIRT Annual Report for 2016 is available for download at www.commongroundalliance.com, and stakeholders interested in submitting data to the 2017 report or establishing a Virtual Private Dirt account should visit the DIRT site at www.cga-dirt.com.

About CGA

CGA is a member-driven association of nearly 1,700 individuals, organizations and sponsors in every facet of the underground utility industry. Established in 2000, CGA is committed to saving lives and preventing damage to North American underground infrastructure by promoting effective damage prevention practices. CGA has established itself as the leading organization in an effort to reduce damages to underground facilities in North America through shared responsibility among all stakeholders. For more information, visit CGA on the web at <http://www.commongroundalliance.com>.

Key Takeaways

This year's DIRT Report highlights several key takeaways that demonstrate that despite the increase in damages submitted to DIRT, the industry continues to make progress in several key areas:

- Estimated total U.S. damages increased 20 percent, from 317,000 to 379,000.
- Since 2010, damages have stabilized into the 300,000-400,000 range despite there being a rebound in construction spending.
- Damages per 1000 transmissions increased 14 percent, from 1.54 in 2015 to 1.76.
- However, the rate is lower than the 2013 and 2014 rates of 2.07 and 1.84 respectively, indicating a long-term trend of

improvement.

- The ratio of damages to construction spending has declined dramatically from 0.63 damages per million dollars of construction spending in 2004 to 0.41 in 2016.
- Call before you dig awareness remains consistent with historical findings at 45 percent (survey taken June 2017).
- The societal costs associated with underground facility damages in the U.S. in 2016 are estimated at \$1.5 billion. This is a minimum estimate based on routine costs for stakeholders directly connected to a damaged facility. It does not include costs such as property damage, evacuations, road closures, environmental impacts, lawsuits, injuries, and fatalities

Three Important Votes

NRECA CEO Discusses Votes Members Hold that Impact Co-ops

Michael W. Kahn

NRECA

With trust, the co-op adapts to new challenges in partnership with its members.

As new challenges confront electric cooperatives, NRECA CEO Jim Matheson told co-op leaders, “our ability to succeed today depends on strong engagement with member-owners.”

“With trust, the co-op adapts to new challenges in partnership with its members. Without trust, the co-op and its members drift apart,” Matheson told nearly 6,000 co-op CEOs, directors and other participants at the 76th NRECA Annual Meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

Matheson said engagement is based on mutual trust and noted that co-ops are trusted in many ways, from being community partners to being political advocates. “But, the future is going to test that trust,” Matheson cautioned. “You see it. You know it’s already being tested today.”

To help co-ops forge ahead in an era when energy management has fundamentally changed for co-op members, Matheson urged a focus on “the three votes each of your member-owners hold” that ultimately impact co-ops.



H-D Electric Cooperative director Terry Strohfus considers a resolution before voting at the NRECA annual meeting. NRECA CEO Jim Matheson said co-op members like Strohfus and the members he represents have three important votes that will impact co-ops.

“To build engagement we have to understand these three votes, and use them,” said Matheson. “Each vote is a way for the member and the co-op to make decisions together, and to gain the benefit of doing so.”

Speaking Feb. 26 to the opening general session at Music City Center, Matheson said the first vote is “a critical part of co-op governance”: members’ voting control of the co-op.

“We place a premium on governance because it’s the basis of the relationship between the co-op and the community, our transparency, and the continuous conversation between members and the utility they own together,” said Matheson.

And in an era when few remember the lights first coming on, Matheson said that without accountability, “there’s no

Abby Martin, a student from Dupree, S.D., represented South Dakota on the Youth Leadership Council and carried the state flag during the opening ceremonies.





NRECA CEO Jim Matheson addressed co-op directors and employees attending the NRECA annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

way to gain the trust of a new generation of folks who don't even know they belong to a co-op, much less the advantages of trusted cooperation."

The second vote "happens at the ballot box," Matheson said, and he made clear to co-op leaders that "we don't have a choice; we must be a force in politics."

To that end, Matheson encouraged local participation in NRECA's nonpartisan Co-ops Vote program, which he said has "everything you need to start a conversation."

"Make sure our elected leaders know we expect them to represent all the people we serve," said Matheson.

He also encouraged participation in the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE*), including the Co-op Owners for Political Action component, funded by member contributions. Noting that "elected officials and policymakers across the political spectrum trust us," Matheson said "stronger political engagement creates stronger member engagement."

While those first two votes have been around a long time, Matheson said one more vote has to be added today: economic choice.

"You may not think of it as voting, but it's what happens every time your members buy an appliance or change their energy use," he said. "Each new choice in energy management exposes us to competition from outside the industry."

Matheson pointed to solar panels as "the first examples of what can happen when a new technology comes between the meter and the member," and he warned of more to come.

Our mission is to be trusted – to help your co-op be as involved and as engaged as possible.

"Every time a member installs a security system, or buys a smart refrigerator, or downloads a new app, someone is challenging our relationship with that member," said Matheson, noting that those third parties don't necessarily have consumers' best interests at heart. Co-ops do, on the other hand, and need to be involved.

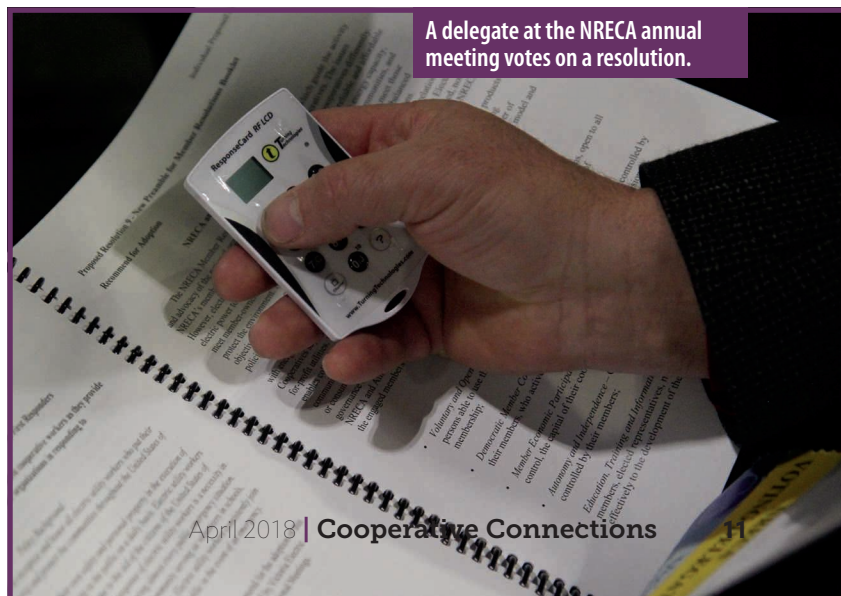
"When you help your member-owners understand their options, they will start making these choices in partnership with you," he said.

All three votes "are going to happen with or without us," Matheson told co-op leaders. "The outcomes matter."

NRECA, he said, is committed to its partnership with its more than 900 member co-ops and to the wise use of these three votes in the communities it serves together.

"The relationship between NRECA and our members is vital to meeting these challenges," Matheson said. "Our mission is to be trusted – to help your co-op be as involved and as engaged as possible. We are national leaders with local impact because you are local leaders with national impact."

"I believe our most prosperous future is realized when all electric co-ops – all of us – work together," Matheson added. "Yes, we turned the lights on, but our brightest days are yet to come."



A delegate at the NRECA annual meeting votes on a resolution.



A DAY WITH A LINEWORKER

Cooperatives' Dependable Problem Solvers

Paul Wesslund

NRECA Contributing Writer

Larry's typical day as an electric co-op lineworker actually started the night before. He was getting ready for bed when a woman reported her power was out. It was Larry's weekly overnight to be on call, so the co-op truck was already in his driveway. He drove it to the woman's house, ID'd a problem in the base of the meter, installed a temporary fix until an electrician could get out the next day and returned home two hours later. He would report for work at the co-op office by 7:30 the next morning.

"I like hunting down problems," said Larry. "I know I'm doing something the members can't do themselves. They depend on us."

Larry's like a lot of electric utility lineworkers, said Mark Patterson, director of safety and loss control for the South Dakota Rural Electric Association.

"There are more people who can't do this work than can do it," said Patterson. "It takes specific skills and intestinal fortitude. They're a 'get it done' type of personality."

Larry isn't like a lot of lineworkers, he is a lot of lineworkers. He's actually not a real person, but a combination of the real people interviewed for this story about a typical day for a lineworker.



Following procedure

Larry started his day in a room with the rest of the lineworkers, leafing through stacks of paper – checklists, maps, work orders – planning the day's work. They compared notes, asked who was familiar with the area they were headed to and analyzed last night's college ball game.

In addition to taking time to coordinate the plans and paperwork, these guys (there are a few women among the more than 15,000 co-op lineworkers around the country) need to keep track of a lot of equipment. Neatly organized shelves in the warehouse hold saws, drills, climbing hooks, insulated work poles, trash cans and binoculars. They need to be wearing safety gear or have it close at hand – hard hat, safety glasses, fire-retardant uniforms, steel-toed shoes, regular work gloves, hot-line safety gloves.

One more delay kept the crews from driving off to their first jobs, and it was probably the most important reason of all – the weekly safety meeting.

The co-op's safety coordinator opened the meeting. He said that while catastrophic contact with electric current is always top concern, today's meeting would focus on avoiding "slips, trips and falls that can cause very big issues." A safety specialist from the state co-op association told the group that he disagreed with the common idea that a lineworker's job is dangerous: "It's hazardous and unforgiving, but it doesn't have to be dangerous if you follow

the right procedures. We have the tools, the rules and the knowledge that can keep it from being dangerous."

By mid-morning, the convoy was ready. Three lineworkers drove three trucks: a service truck, a bucket truck pulling a trailer with a large spool of wire and a digger truck with a huge auger on top and pulling a trailer carrying a backhoe. They headed across the county for the day's job – moving a ground-mounted transformer 500 feet up a hill, closer to an underground connection to a new barn.

"It's going to be muddy out there after the rain we've had," said Larry. "When you're working on underground connections, mud is not your friend."

They're a 'get 'er done' type of personality.

We neared the site by late morning. To avoid interrupting the field work, the team stopped for an early lunch. Over burgers, I asked Larry about his training and his typical day.

We don't say 'hurry up'

"There's nothing routine," he said. A work plan might get changed because someone crashed their car into a utility pole. Tomorrow he would be presenting a safety demonstration to a group of elementary school students. He told about the satisfac-

tion of traveling out of state to help repair hurricane damage.

When the caravan arrived at the work site, the trucks drove up the packed, crushed-rock driveway, avoiding the soft ground on either side.

The three lineworkers gathered near the front of one of the trucks for what a lot of co-ops call a "tailgate meeting" and this co-op calls a "job briefing." They read through forms, noting the address, cross street, job and account number. All three men signed the form.

They broke their huddle and de-energized the lines they would be working on, calling to let the office know the power had been cut. The next step was to use the backhoe to dig around the new connection pipes sticking out of the ground, making room for a ground-mounted transformer.

When the backhoe finished digging around the new transformer location, it drove down to the old transformer site. The crew unhooked the electric connections then chained the transformer to the backhoe's loader bucket to be carried up the hill. But to keep the backhoe from getting stuck in the mud on the trip up the hill, the trucks had to be backed down the driveway to clear the way for the backhoe to drive up on firmer ground.

Two of the crew pulled new wire underground, then cut and spliced the two-inch diameter wires into the transformer box. They secured the connections before cleaning up the work site.

On the return trip, the convoy visited the truck stop to top off the gas tanks. Back at the co-op, they checked the paperwork for the next day's jobs, then stocked the trucks with the equipment they would need for an early start.

Before we said goodbye, I asked Larry what thought of the time it took to follow all the procedures of their work day.

"We don't think, 'this is taking a long time,'" he said. "We just think, 'this is how you do it.' We don't say, 'hurry up.' We look out for each other."

Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

National Lineworker Appreciation Day April 9, 2018

More than 15,000 electric cooperative lineworkers serve on the front lines of our nation's energy needs, maintaining 42 percent of electric distribution lines.

Lineworkers perform intricate work, often in dangerous conditions, to ensure we receive the safe, reliable power we depend on.





West River Electric Association board secretary Jamie Lewis shares his story.

YOUNG, PROFESSIONAL AND RURAL:

South Dakota Leaders Talk of How to Connect

Brenda Kleinjan

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Two South Dakotans – one an electric cooperative employee and the other a co-op director – took to the national stage to discuss what it takes to attract and keep young professionals in rural America.

Courtney Deinert, communications manager at Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell, S.D., and Jamie Lewis, secretary of the board of directors at West River Electric Association in Wall, S.D., were two of four speakers on a panel entitled, “Attracting and Retaining Young Professionals to Rural America.” The panel was moderated by Adam Schwartz of the Cooperative Way and was one of the sessions held at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn., Feb. 25-28. Other panelists included a college student from Wisconsin and a Kentucky dairy farmer/lobbyist/trial lawyer.

Deinert had a unique story to tell.

As a high school senior, she received a scholarship from her local electric cooperative, Charles Mix Electric Association in Lake Andes. She used the



Jamie Lewis speaks with cooperative leaders from Wisconsin.

scholarship money to pursue an undergraduate degree in English at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion and her master's degree in adult and higher education.

"I like to think that scholarship has come full circle for my hometown co-op. I work at a neighboring co-op and I get to collaborate between my hometown co-op and my current cooperative on projects," Deinert said.

She said the investment made by her cooperative was important but the co-op's follow up left an impression.

"Just because a high school student isn't interested in becoming a lineman or an accountant doesn't mean they won't play a role in your cooperative someday," she told those gathered.

She stressed the follow up with area youth is important.

"They do want to help. They do want to be involved and they WILL come back to rural America if we help them with that follow up," she said.

In 2013, at 23 years old, Jamie Lewis was elected to the board of directors of West River Electric Association in Wall, S.D.

He is arguably one of the youngest electric cooperative directors in the nation.

"I had just come out of college and an older director approached me and said, 'I have a job for you if you're interested. Run

Just because a high school student isn't interested in becoming a lineman or an accountant doesn't mean they won't play a role in your cooperative someday.

for the West River Electric board," Lewis recounted. Lewis graduated from South Dakota State University with a degree in animal science and minors in agribusiness, ag marketing and business. He returned home to work in the family's family ranch and help with the family's insurance business.

"It was a contested election and I was lucky enough to be elected. I was then selected to be board secretary," said Lewis.

He then set his sights on running for a national cooperative board.

"I was later elected to the Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange board of directors," Lewis said. Federated is the insurer of many of America's electric cooperatives.

Lewis noted that his fellow directors are not typically in his age demographic.

"Most of them have kids or grandkids older than me," Lewis said. The age difference can be a benefit, he said. "Sometimes I look at the issues a little different from the others."

"Being part of the co-op allowed me to come back to rural America and be part of that," he said.

The panelists all agreed that being able to be connected via Internet is essential in keeping people in rural America.

"The internet for this generation is what electricity was 80 years ago," Schwartz noted during the panel.



Courtney Deinert, communications manager at Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell, S.D., spoke of getting youth involved in cooperatives.

March 24

Spring Craft Fair/Flea Market,
American Legion Hall,
Wagner, SD, 605-384-3543

March 24

Milltones Spring Show, 7 p.m.,
High School Theatre, Milbank,
SD

April 5

McCrossan's Wildest Banquet
Auction in the Midwest
featuring A Night Out with
the PBR, 5:30 p.m., Arena,
Sioux Falls, SD, Tickets:
\$75 each, 605-339-1203,
www.mccrossan.org

April 6

SPURS Spring Dance, Dakota
Events Center, Aberdeen, SD,
Tickets available at the Hitch
'N Post or by calling
605-226-1099

April 6-7

Forks, Corks and Kegs Food,
Wine and Beer Festival,
Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

April 6-8

Professional Bull Riders Built
Ford Tough Series, Sioux Falls,
SD, 605-367-7288

April 7-8

Spring Zonta Vendor and
Craft Show, Northridge Plaza,
Pierre, SD, 605-222-1403,
bkstand@pie.midco.net

April 7-8

Hats Off to the Artists Art
Show, Faulkton, SD,
605-598-4160

April 25-29

Black Hills Film Festival, Hill
City, SD, 605-574-9454

April 28-29

Bike Show, Ramkota
Convention Center,
Aberdeen, SD, 605-290-0908



April 28-29: Quilters Guild 2018 Quilt Show, Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.,
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, 605-690-8281 or mcfarlas@brookings.net

Photo courtesy: Brookings Quilters Guild

May 5

Consignment Auction,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

May 6

Opening Day, Prairie Village,
Madison, SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

May 13

1880 Train Mother's Day
Express, Hill City, SD,
605-574-2222

May 18

Turkey Races, Huron, SD,
605-352-0000

May 18-19

Sioux Empire Film Festival,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

May 18-20

State Parks Open House and
Free Fishing Weekend, Pierre,
SD, 605-773-3391

May 18-20

Tesla Road Trip Rally, Custer,
SD, 605-673-2244

June 3

Prairie Village Pageant,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

June 7-9

Senior Games, Sioux Falls,
SD, Contact Nicole Tietgen at
605-665-8222

June 8

Northern Bull Riding Tour,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

June 8-9

Senior Games, Spearfish, SD,
Contact Brett Rauterhaus at
605-772-1430

June 15-16

Czech Days, Tabor, SD,
www.taborczechdays.com,
taborczechdays@yahoo.com

June 16

Holy Rocka Rollaz concert,
Prairie Village, Madison,
SD, 800-693-3644,
www.prairievillage.org

June 21-23

Senior Games, Mitchell, SD,
Contact Howard Bich at
605-491-0635

June 24

Variety Show, Prairie Village,
Madison, SD, 800-693-3644,

July 7

Hedahls Auto Value Car Show,
Hav-A-Rest Campground,
Redfield, SD, 605-380-9985

July 10-15

4th Annual 3 Wheeler Rally,
Deadwood, SD, 605-717-7174,
www.d3wr.com

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