

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Keeping the Lights On

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RATE INCREASE IS FORTHCOMING



Melissa Maher
Manager

March is here – spring has always been my favorite time of the year with the thoughts of summer to follow. We have much going on here at your cooperative, including moving into a new headquarters building sometime mid-year. Stay tuned for more information on this big event.

In June of 2023, your board authorized Power System Engineering (PSE) to conduct a cost-of-service study to

determine a rate design per rate class. For the next several months, employees funneled requested information to PSE to assist with their extensive analysis.

As has been mentioned many times – our last rate increase here at Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative was in August of 2016 (7 ½ years ago). With all that has taken place in our world since 2016, it is amazing that we made it this long. Rate increases are tough decisions that are not taken lightly here at your cooperative. Rate design is challenging and complicated. The end goal with rates is to be fair and equitable among our members and between different rate classes.

At the February board meeting last month – a representative from PSE presented the completed report with recommendations for the needed increase per rate class. There are several options to choose from – thus your board will make the final decision at their March meeting inclusive of an implementation date.

Our 2024 budget approved in December

of 2023 revealed that a rate increase was needed to meet our lenders' requirements. The rising cost of electric utility materials has certainly factored into this decision – as you can see many of our material items have more than doubled in price since 2016. (refer to the graph)

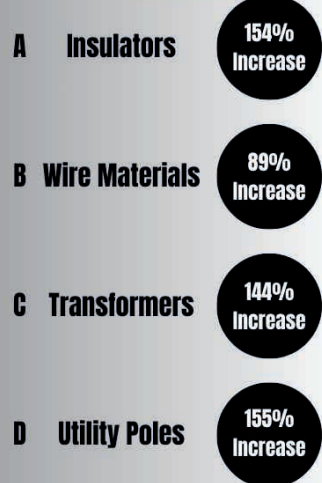
In next month's newsletter, I will share a chart of the approved increase per rate class. Expect an increase to the monthly customer charge along with an increase of kwh energy charge. NO. 996 SWEET GRASS AVE.

As a non-for-profit electric cooperative, Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative returns any margins to its members, so there is no incentive to raise rates more than required. Our goal is to always provide safe and reliable electricity to our members.

Until next month... Thankful for God's continued blessing for our cooperative



The Rising Costs of Electric Utility Materials 2016-2023



COMPARATIVE REPORT	Current (Jan 2024)	1 year ago (Jan 2023)	10 Years Ago (Jan 2014)	% Change in 10 years
Number of Meters	7,132	7,140	6,830	4%
Kilowatt Hours Sold	12,875,183	11,124,730	11,439,589	13%
Cost of Purchased Power	\$790,688	\$329,883	\$705,010	12%
Overall Ave. Rate / kWh Per Member	0.1141	0.1130	0.1031	11%

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS
MOREAU-GRAND ELECTRIC
 (USPS No. 018-951)

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MOREAU-GRAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly by Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative, PO Box 8, 405 Ninth St., Timber Lake, SD 57656-0008, for the members of electric cooperatives across South Dakota. Families subscribe to Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better rural living.

Subscription information: Electric cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Timber Lake, S.D., and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 8, Timber Lake, SD 57656; Phone (605) 865-3511; Fax (605) -865-3340; e-mail mge@mge.coop; Web site www.mge.coop. This institution is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Design assistance by SDREA

Feb. 19, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes and Dec. 2023 Financial Information

The February 19, 2024, board of directors' meeting was held at the Timber Lake office with the following directors present: Bartlett, Clark, Hieb, Keckler, Lawrence, Maher, McLellan, Walker and Hahne via Webex, director absent: Wall and others present: Manager Maher and Finance Officer Lemburg (Delegated Recorder of Minutes).

The Large Power Users monthly report was given by Stephanie Bartlett, which included topics on large power usage and payments.

The Member Services report was given by JJ Martin, which included topics on using the new drone, producing informational videos for the membership, getting ready for the new Outage Management System, worked at the Neon Leon display at the Black Hills Stock Show and scholarship update.

The Operations report was given by Kent Larson, which included SDREA first aid and CPR training, retagging, verifying transformers, pole changes, line patrol and broken Truck 14 bucket mechanism is covered under warranty.

Nick Nelson, Power System Engineering Consultant, presented the Cost-of-Service Study findings, which included an increase in revenue requirements and proposed various rate increase scenarios. This matter will be re-visited at the March Board meeting.

Manager Maher gave the Manager's report, which included writing a Cooperative Connections article describing how the electrical system works and MGEC operates on loans, not federal grant funds, three employees will attend the Federated Insurance/NRECA Safety Summit in Kansas City, Missouri in April, on-site training for the new Outage Management System will be held in May and the new system will go live in June, reported a tree trimming complaint to Federated Insurance, the furnace in the front portion of the existing headquarters facility no longer works, signed the contract for the WAPA Substation upgrade, new headquarters facility

update, Rushmore and Basin Electric estimated capital credit allocations for 2023, Basin KWH tax for 2023, revenue 10-year compare chart, expense 10-year compare chart, 2023 power bill information, payroll as percent of gross revenue and gross expense, balance sheet history, 2023 year-end ratios, Basin Electric January financials, January load control and cybersecurity update.

Manager Maher reminded the directors that Co-op Day at the Capitol will be held Feb. 20, 2024.

CoBank's Board of Directors has four seats up for election in 2024, and CoBank is accepting candidate nominations. No Directors expressed interest in being nominated.

The NRECA Legislative Conference will be held April 21-24, 2024, in Washington, D.C. No Directors expressed interest in attending.

Manager Maher gave the Rushmore Managers' Webex meeting report, which included a Basin Electric update.

Manager Maher gave the SDREA Managers' meeting report, which included Tony Anderson as the guest speaker, and updates on the Cooperative Family Fund, cybersecurity, RUS, cannabis in South Dakota, NRECA benefits, and a legislative update.

President Maher gave a legislative update, which included a relatively quiet legislative session and proposed bills.

Board approved the following: the agenda, the minutes from the January meeting, new members, refunds, line extensions, financial statistics, disbursements, safety report, resolution not to allocate the non-operating margins for 2023 in the amount of \$209,295.63, sponsor the SD Public Broadcast "Greetings from Timber Lake," and sponsor the Horizon Health Foundation Cowboys Care Bull Bash.

The next board meeting was scheduled for March 19, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. in the Timber Lake office.

DEC. 2023 FINANCIAL INFORMATION			
	DEC. '23	DEC. '22	YTD 2023
Operating Revenues	\$1,165,448	\$1,364,516	\$13,031,667
Cost Of Power	\$572,827	\$775,371	\$6,276,002
Cost Of Electric Service	\$1,089,802	\$1,332,849	\$12,689,132
Margins	\$700,713	\$894,356	\$1,233,545
Kwh Purchased	11,117,120	13,167,493	111,476,945
Kwh Sold	9,622,170	12,193,585	102,564,085

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.

Celebrate Earth Day

Why Taking Steps to Conserve Matters



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Earth Day is April 22, a time when we celebrate this beautiful planet we are lucky to call home. During this day of appreciation, I encourage you to take action at home by making changes to conserve energy. If we all contribute, even small adjustments and changes to how much energy we use can have positive impacts.

Electricity is essential to our daily lives. It gives us opportunities to learn, keeps us safe and comfortable and provides entertainment. The downside is that every source of energy generation has consequences. Fossil fuels emit carbon. Hydropower dams limit the passage of migrating fish. Even solar panels can't be made without mining minerals. Using less electricity is a way to mitigate the impact of producing the electricity that powers our lives.

Before diving into ways to use less energy, it's important to know the difference between conservation and energy efficiency. Energy efficiency refers to equipment that uses less energy to do the same job. For example, ENERGY STAR®-certified refrigerators keep your food just as fresh as standard models but use about 9% less energy to do it, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Conservation is using less energy by changing behavior and practices. For example, adjusting your thermostat to be closer to the temperature outside or turning off the lights or a ceiling fan when you leave the room conserves energy.

Conservation has the best return on investment. It's often free and can save a little or a lot – depending on what you are changing and how drastic of a change you make.

Let's start with what's typically the biggest energy user in the average household: heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment. Save energy while you sleep by programming your thermostat to be a few degrees closer to the outside temperature at night. In colder climates, add an extra blanket or comforter to your bed to keep you warm.

Typically, the second biggest energy user is the water heater. Replacing an electric storage water heater with a heat pump/hybrid water heater is a great example of an energy efficient project. Adjusting the temperature setting to the recommended 120 degrees and using less hot water in your home conserves energy. Wash clothes in cold water. When washing dishes, don't let the hot water run longer than necessary.

Earth Day also lends itself to thinking of ways we can connect with each other and limit our screen time. Look for electricity-free opportunities with your family or community. I like to unplug and get outside with friends and family. Going for a hike, a walk or even just spending time in your yard or local park is a great way to reconnect with others and nature. Before you head out, adjust that thermostat and turn off everything possible. Unplug chargers from outlets and turn off all electronics and lights.

I am grateful for this planet we call home. It offers so much to sustain us. Any small changes we can make to benefit the planet can add up if we all pitch in.

State Technical Colleges Offering Dual Credits

Shannon Marvel

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More and more motivated high school students in South Dakota are getting a leg up on their careers through dual credit programs offered by the state's technical colleges.

In fact, three high school students are set to walk away with their degrees from Lake Area Technical College this spring.

Lake Area Technical College President Tiffany Sanderson said more high school juniors and seniors are participating in the state's dual credit program to get a jump start on their career paths while saving a considerable amount in tuition costs.

"Students have ten different public colleges and universities in the state to choose from. At Lake Area Tech, the savings are huge. A student normally pays \$166 per credit but will only pay \$48 per credit through the dual credit program," Sanderson said. "That's a 70% savings on college coursework."

"It's popular for students to take both technical courses and general education courses. Often that first class helps them understand what they're interested in pursuing."

At Mitchell Technical College, more and more students are not only enrolling in the dual credit program but taking more

than one course during each semester. That's according to Carol Grode-Hanks, vice president of academics at MTC, and Hilary Vining, director of enrollment at MTC.

Vining said about 80% of those in the dual credit program just take one class.

"Students that take one class save \$570, while full-time students save \$3,500," Grode-Hanks said.

Vining said students enrolled in dual credit courses full-time typically only have their elective high school classes remaining.

"However, by taking dual enrollment courses, they have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning and actively participate in practical activities," Vining said. "There are some kids that are ready to get out in the workforce and get as much as they can get done at a cheaper rate. It's becoming a lot more popular. Parents are getting more educated about the opportunity as well."

At Western Dakota Technical College, for the 2023-2024 school year, there are 310 dual enrollment students in the fall semester and 327 students in the spring semester.

Diana Newman, director of admissions at WDTA, said the school works with many students one-on-one to advise them toward a track to get ahead in addition to a graduation plan.

"Western Dakota Technical College aims to help make dual enrollment accessible. Through the use of grants, we have been able to support more students to have access to books, tools, equipment, uniforms, and other needed items to succeed in dual enrollment classes," Newman said.

Southeast Technical College President Robert Griggs said he's also seeing an increased interest in the dual credit program.

"Dual credit courses provide high school students the opportunity to explore different career fields and areas of interest, all while earning credits that count towards a high school diploma and a college degree," Griggs said. "Southeast Technical College works with area school districts to package dual credit learning options that facilitate the transition into college and entry into high-demand career fields."

Dual credit programs that fill up fast at Southeast Technical College include welding, medical and cardiovascular sonography, HVAC, electrician, nursing, and vet tech.

For more information on enrolling in the dual credit program, students and parents should reach out to their high school counselor's office or check out the options at <https://ourdakotadreams.com/high-school/dual-credit/>.



Students enrolled in Western Dakota Technical College's Dual Credit Program.
Photo courtesy of Western Dakota Technical College.



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

One Lineman's After-hours Outreach

Frank Turner

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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.

Value of the kWh



JJ Martin

Member Services and IT Director

Inflation has been rampant the last couple of years, and we all feel it. We often lose sight of the value of everyday items during such volatile financial times. Basic staples like eggs, butter, and flour have seen their prices skyrocket since 2020. Simply feeding our families (just cooking from scratch at home, not to mention dining at a restaurant) has nearly doubled in the last few years.

Interest rates are through the roof. Meanwhile, buying even a used vehicle

has grown so costly that it's impossible not to finance it. People buying cars or homes are feeling the pinch doubly since so much of every payment goes straight to interest. We have made it through two years of this, and hopefully things will start to ease up in the coming year!

The dollar has lost its value tremendously. Thankfully, one thing has not lost its value: the kWh.

A kilowatt hour (kWh) is a unit of energy used over a period of time. If you use a 1000-watt space heater for an

Year	Ave MGE Residential kWh Cost	Average Bacon Cost	1986 dollar value
1986	\$.07	\$2.08	\$1
1998	\$.08	\$2.54	\$1.49
2010	\$.10	\$4.11	\$1.99
2022	\$.12	\$7.31	\$2.67
2023	\$.13	\$7.22	\$2.80
Percent Change	186%	347%	280%

See how the kWh has increased in value over the last 38 years compared to the dollar and bacon.

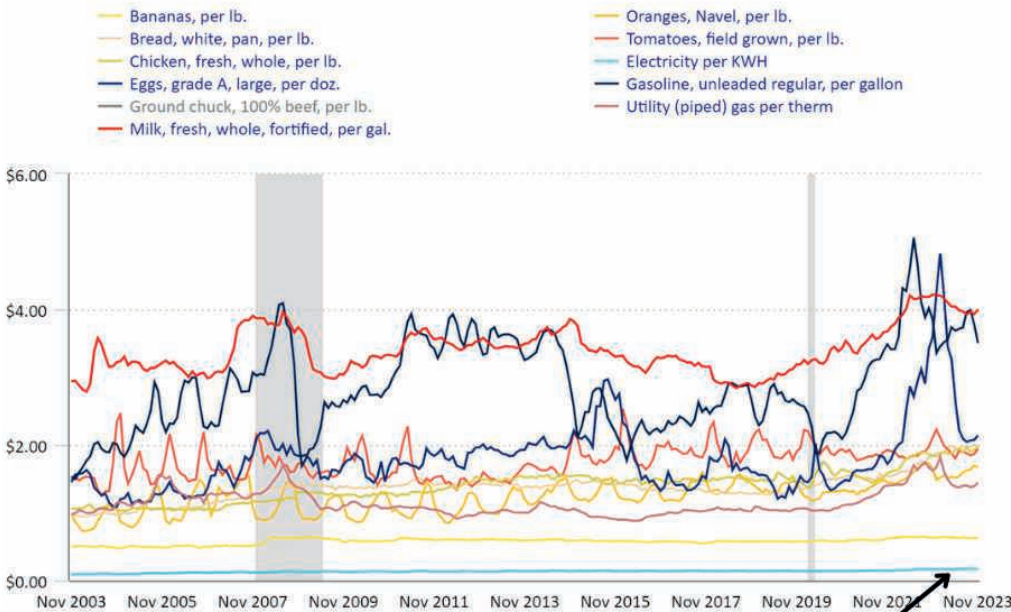
hour, you have consumed one kWh of electricity. The kWh is the unit used to bill end-use members for electricity. That is how it has always been, and probably how it always will be. Let's see how the average price of a residential kWh from MGE has changed over the years.

- A kWh in 1986 = \$.07
- A kWh in 1998 = \$.08
- A kWh in 2010 = \$.10
- A kWh in 2023 = \$.13

Since 1986, the price of a kWh has nearly doubled. On the other hand, the value of the dollar is *less than half* of what it was in 1986. Back then, \$1 had the buying power of \$2.80 today. **In comparison to the dollar, the kWh has only increased in value.**

Your cooperative is one of the best investments that you, our member-owners, can make. It is our mission to provide the entire membership one of the most stable and valuable commodities when and where it is needed – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Average price data (in U.S. dollars), selected items



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This flat blue line is electricity

Among the volatility of most commodities, electricity remains consistent.

Lineworker Appreciation Day

We want to thank our linemen for everything that they do. They are the boots on the ground. They battle the elements. They keep the lights on. Without our outstanding line crew, we wouldn't be able to commit to our mission of continuously providing safe, reliable power to you, our member-owners.

Not only do these heroes keep the lights on, but they are also active members in our communities; they are involved in our churches and schools – the two things that keep us all connected. Many of them are also volunteer firefighters, making them first responders twice over. When the call comes, these men are ready to answer it.

Please, on April 18, be sure to take a moment and thank a lineworker.



LOCATE YOUR ADDRESS

If you locate your address on any of the inside pages of the Moreau-Grand Electric's *Cooperative Connections*, notify us and you will receive a \$25 bill credit. "Eligible addresses will not be on the front or back cover."

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

Source: [energy.gov](https://www.energy.gov)





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

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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*

Fun and Unique Places to Stay in South Dakota

Scott Waltman

South Dakota is known as the land of infinite variety, and for good reason.

From the Black Hills to the Badlands to the rolling East River prairies and from scorching heat to bitter cold, South Dakota covers a wide swath of geography, weather and activities.

That carries over to places to stay across the state.

There are plenty of fun and unique Airbnb and Vrbo options in South Dakota with something to please everybody who doesn't need the hustle, bustle and traffic of a major metropolitan area. Not surprisingly, some of the best options are near water. Others are remote for folks who want to unplug for a few days, while some are near farms and ranches and offer the opportunity to help with modest chores, if visitors so choose.

Here is a look at some of the more distinctive and interesting staycation options in South Dakota.

Lookout Loft Treehouse near Valley Springs

How about planning a stay in a treehouse? That's possible with the Lookout Loft Treehouse near Valley Springs. Two decks, a fire pit, a hot tub and 360-degree views more than make up for any lack of space for a guest or two looking for a getaway that sets itself apart from most others. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Wrap-around deck
- Pillow-top mattress
- Hot tub

- Propane fire pit
- Kitchenette
- Air conditioning and heat

Mansfield Micro-Cabin

In the heart of the pheasant belt, this small Escape Vista trailer is ideal for hunters seeking for South Dakota's state bird or those who just want to escape. No city lights, no traffic, no interruptions. Just peaceful prairie surroundings with easy access to top-notch hunting. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Queen bed
- Full bath
- Patio
- Kitchen
- Backyard

Log cabin in Vanocker Canyon

There's a lot to like about this custom-built log cabin that's surrounded by the Black Hills National Forest on three sides. With 1,300 square feet, it's roomy and sleeps as many as eight guests. There's a deck, patio and hot tub, and the cabin is settled on 40 acres between Nemo and Sturgis. There's easy access to ATV trails and nearby golf courses. Take in the local history knowing Gen. George Custer camped in the canyon during the summer of 1847. This rental is available through Vrbo.

Amenities

- Gourmet kitchen
- 60-inch high-definition TV
- Deck and patio
- Log pool table
- Luxury bath
- Propane grill



Cabin over water on the prairie near Philip

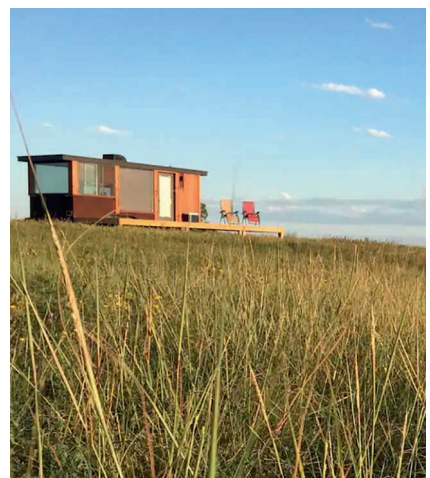
- Fireplace and fire pit
- Washer and dryer

Dennis Ranch near Red Owl

Settle in and enjoy a working cattle ranch that's a century old at the Dennis Ranch. Take a personal tour led by your hosts. Go for a hike, search for arrowheads and dinosaur bones or just enjoy nature and bird-watching. For an extra fee, guests can watch or help with day-to-day ranch work. Those who can ride horses can hop on and ride alongside working cowboys and ranchers. Visitors will stay in a house with the hosts, who will happily share the history of the land and ranch.

Amenities

- Two bedrooms
- Dedicated workspace
- Wi-Fi
- Washer and dryer
- Fire pit
- Shared patio



Mansfield Micro-Cabin



The Still House near Rapid City

The Still House near Rapid City

How's a tent with an attached deck sound for a unique option? That's what The Still House offers. Visitors won't exactly be roughing it with sleeping bags on the ground. The 16-foot-by-13-foot wall tent is more like luxury camping near the Black Hills. A heated shower is attached and there's a private, odor-free, environmentally friendly "outhouse" just a few steps away. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Wood-burning fireplace
- Private deck
- Barbecue grill and outdoor kitchen
- Fire pit
- Outdoor shower
- Outdoor furniture and dining area
- Hammock

37-foot recreational vehicle near Hot Springs

If you don't have your own RV, but you're willing to stay in one, here's something to consider. This large RV offers a few extras, including a beautiful patio overlook and a hot tub. The Evans Plunge mineral springs are just a 15-minute drive away. This rental is available via Vrbo.

Amenities

- Seven beds, including three bunk beds
- One full bath
- Private property with an overlook view of Hot Brook Canyon

- Propane fire pit
- Hot tub available upon request
- Mountain view

Cabin over water on the prairie near Philip

Relax and enjoy in this locally constructed prairie home that sits along the bank of a small dam. Don't expect the bells and whistles offered by a top-end motel room. This is a place for people who enjoy nature and the outdoors. Hop in a kayak and row away a portion of the day while getting a little exercise. This rental is available via Airbnb.

Amenities

- Four queen beds
- 43-inch TV
- Private patio
- Kayak
- Grill
- Fire pit

The Lodge at Broken Arrow Farms near Pierre

If you have a big gathering and need lots of room, The Lodge is worth considering. It's huge. The nine bedrooms can accommodate as many as 28 guests, and there are eight and a half bathrooms. Need a place for a family reunion,

team-building event or an upscale base for fishing or hunting? You've found it. Just northeast of Pierre, the waters of the Missouri River are nearby and easy to access. This rental is available via Vrbo.

Amenities

- Pool table
- Bluetooth sound system
- Patio
- Four king beds, 10 queen beds
- Fire pit
- Barbecue

Deep Snow near Terry Peak Ski Area

This is a stop for folks who love snow skiing, but it makes for a great summer stay, too, with plenty of hiking options. Terry Peak Ski Area is not even 1,000 feet away, so don't forget to pack your gear. There are no shortage of other options, either, with the history and casinos of Deadwood nearby and the entire Black Hills area as a possible playground. This rental is available through Airbnb.

Amenities

- Fully equipped kitchen
- Hot tub
- Wi-Fi
- Patio
- Grill



Log cabin in Vanocker Canyon



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.