

# COOPERATIVE

## CONNECTIONS



### Wall Meats Expansion

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the Grid  
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# RATE INCREASE ANNOUNCED



**Melissa Maher**  
Manager

As mentioned in my newsletter report last month – the final cost of service analysis performed by Power System Engineering was delivered at the February board meeting with the final board decision for the rate increase approved at the March board meeting.

The overall average increase is 8.8%. With this said, each rate class was then evaluated to meet this goal. The following chart is a comparison of the present and approved rate schedule.

In general – the customer charge will increase by \$5.00 per month per location and the Power Cost Adjustment has been set back to zero – as it has been rolled back up into the rates. You will note that Street Lights and Security Light rates remain the same – with no increase.

The plan is to implement this increase starting with May usage payable in June of this year. The hope is that this increase will suffice through 2025 – providing no other unforeseen events take place. Life does operate in cycles – so stay tuned as to what wholesale power costs do going forward. With power costs being over 50% of our expense – a drastic raise in power costs can be a game changer.

Elsewhere in the newsletter, JJ has given some scenarios of various usage amounts showing the old rate versus new rate with the dollar difference. 213 Moonlight Loop Eagle Butte, SD 57625

Again – I wish to emphasize that the last increase here at Moreau-Grand Electric was in 2016. The 8.8% equates to approximately 1% increase per year.

Thank you, members, for your continued loyalty to your Cooperative over the years.

Until next month.... Anxious for warmer weather and green grass.

COMPARISON OF PRESENT AND APPROVED RATE SCHEDULES				
		Present Rates	Approved Rates	
<b>Small General Service - Resid. (A)</b>				
Customer Charge	@	\$30.00	\$35.00	/month
Energy Charge	@			
First 850 kWh	@	\$0.11060	\$0.12400	/kWh
Excess	@	\$0.08300	\$0.09900	/kWh
Power Cost Adjustment	@	\$0.00600	\$0.00000	/kWh
<b>Small General Service - Wells/Seasonal (A)</b>				
Customer Charge	@	\$35.00	\$40.00	/month
Energy Charge	@			
First 850 kWh	@	\$0.11060	\$0.12400	/kWh
Excess	@	\$0.08300	\$0.09900	/kWh
Power Cost Adjustment	@	\$0.00600	\$0.00000	/kWh
<b>Small General Service - Farm (A)</b>				
Customer Charge	@	\$30.00	\$35.00	/month
Energy Charge	@			
First 850 kWh	@	\$0.11060	\$0.12400	/kWh
Excess	@	\$0.08300	\$0.09900	/kWh
Power Cost Adjustment	@	\$0.00600	\$0.00000	/kWh
<b>Small General Service - Small Comm. (A)</b>				
Customer Charge - 1 Ph	@	\$30.00	\$35.00	/month
Customer Charge - 3 Ph	@	\$60.00	\$65.00	/month
Energy Charge	@			
First 850 kWh	@	\$0.11060	\$0.12400	/kWh
Excess	@	\$0.08300	\$0.09900	/kWh
Power Cost Adjustment	@	\$0.00600	\$0.00000	/kWh
<b>Street Lights Service (SL)</b>				
Energy Charge	@	\$0.12000	\$0.12000	/kWh
Power Cost Adjustment	@	\$0.00600	\$0.00000	/kWh
<b>Security Lights (SL-Y)</b>				
Unmetered	@			
100 W HPS	@	\$117.00	\$117.00	/year
250 W HPS	@	\$224.00	\$224.00	/year
175 W MV	@	\$117.00	\$117.00	/year
400 W MV	@	\$224.00	\$224.00	/year
LED	@	\$117.00	\$117.00	/year
Metered	@			
100 W HPS	@	\$75.00	\$75.00	/year
250 W HPS	@	\$82.00	\$82.00	/year
175 W MV	@	\$75.00	\$75.00	/year
400 W MV	@	\$82.00	\$82.00	/year
LED	@	\$75.00	\$75.00	/year
Power Cost Adjustment	@	\$0.00000	\$0.00000	/kWh
<b>Large Commercial Service (LC)</b>				
Customer Charge	@	\$65.00	\$70.00	/month
Demand Charge	@	\$10.00	\$12.00	/kW
Energy Charge	@			
First 200 kWh/KW	@	\$0.06000	\$0.05850	/kWh
Next 200 kWh/KW	@	\$0.05700	\$0.05850	/kWh
Excess	@	\$0.05500	\$0.05850	/kWh
Power Cost Adjustment	@	\$0.00600	\$0.00000	/kWh

**COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS**  
**MOREAU-GRAND ELECTRIC**

(USPS No. 018-951)

**Manager:** Melissa Maher

**Editor:** JJ Martin, Member Services and IT Director

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- Geralyn Hahne, Secretary-Treasurer
- Lois Bartlett
- Clint Clark
- Larry Hieb
- Bob Keckler
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**Attorney:** John Burke

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- Kent Larson,  
Operations Superintendent
- Josh Lemburg, Assistant Operations Superintendent
- Kyrie Lemburg, Finance Officer
- Jamie Jones, Accountant

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# March 19, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes and Jan. 2024 Financial Information

The March 19, 2024, board of directors' meeting was held at the Timber Lake office with the following directors present: Bartlett, Clark, Hahne, Hieb, Keckler, Lawrence, Maher, McLellan, Walker and 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.

Director Clark gave a presentation on the cost of electricity and the importance of coal generation.

The Operations report was given by Kent Larson, which included topics on OCR changeouts, attended a meeting on a development project in the Eagle Butte area, underground inspections and retagging, Josh and JJ are attending a TWACS user conference, changing out rubber gloves, and met with Federated Insurance and discussed fire mitigation.

Manager Maher gave the Member Services report, which included topics on Tiospaye Topa School Beulah tour, Rushmore Electric employees will be installing network cable in the new headquarters facility, JJ is installing hot spots in the service trucks in preparation of the Outage Management System, the Neon Leon display is reserved for safety demonstrations in April, and upcoming Eagle Butte School job fair.

Manager Maher gave the Manager's report, which included attending a CRST Land Committee meeting, new headquarters facility update, Grip 2 Grant update, mail issues with the U.S. Postal Service, Policy Committee meeting will be held on March 27, 2024, depreciation for the new headquarters facility, will keep the existing vault to store records, Rushmore Electric capital credit allocation update, Basin Electric's February financials, 5-year comparative statistics, and fiber installation at the new headquarters facility.

CFC is seeking qualified candidates to fill an Audit Committee (Financial Expert) position on its Board of Directors. No Directors expressed interest in this position.

Manager Maher discussed a RESCO Manager-Director board seat coming up for election this year. Manager Maher did not express interest in this position.

The board discussed the CFC Forum scheduled for June 17-19, 2024, in Indianapolis, and no Director expressed interest in attending.

Director McLellan gave the Rushmore Electric Board meeting report, which included reviewing the 2023 audit, load control, renewable energy credits, cybersecurity grant application, WAPA rate increase, potential Basin Electric rate increase, strategic planning, donation to Mitchell Technical College, roundtable discussions, large load update, and the credit union has a new manager.

Directors who attended Co-op Day at the Capitol gave a report, which included attending committee hearings and the event was well attended.

Director Hahne gave a CCD Training report, which included a history of cooperatives, the training was valuable as a new director, director duties, understanding the electric business, the importance of cybersecurity, and breakout discussions.

President Maher gave a legislative update, which included the 2024 legislative session is complete, the 2024 budget, appropriations for education, and Senate Bill 201 regarding pipelines was signed by the Governor.

Manager Maher presented a request from Dewey County Register of Deeds, Deborah Goldade, to utilize the USDA zero interest loan that is available through MGEC to help construct a vault at the Dewey County Courthouse. Policy 50-5 was distributed to review the guidelines of this loan. This matter will be re-visited at the next board meeting.

During the roundtable discussion, Director Bartlett discussed paintings that she would like to see placed in the new headquarters facility. Director Bartlett will bring photos of the paintings to the next meeting.

The Rushmore Electric annual meeting will be held June 5, 2024, in Deadwood and there will be an election for two Director positions. A delegate and alternate delegate will be chosen at the April board meeting.

Manager Maher briefly discussed the Highway 63 road move coming up in a few years.

Board approved the following: the agenda, the minutes from the February meeting, new members, refunds, line extensions, financial statistics, disbursements, safety report, and the Cost-of-Service Study Option 2 to increase the monthly facility charge by \$5.00 and slightly increase the energy charge.

The next board meeting was scheduled for April 16, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. in the Timber Lake office.

<b>JAN. 2024 FINANCIAL INFORMATION</b>			
	<b>JAN. '24</b>	<b>JAN. '23</b>	<b>YTD 2024</b>
<b>Operating Revenues</b>	<b>\$1,500,789</b>	<b>\$1,289,423</b>	<b>\$1,500,789</b>
<b>Cost Of Power</b>	<b>\$790,688</b>	<b>\$329,883</b>	<b>\$790,688</b>
<b>Cost Of Electric Service</b>	<b>\$1,435,517</b>	<b>\$934,534</b>	<b>\$1,435,517</b>
<b>Margins</b>	<b>\$80,291</b>	<b>\$370,548</b>	<b>\$80,291</b>
<b>Kwh Purchased</b>	<b>13,182,581</b>	<b>12,075,394</b>	<b>13,182,581</b>
<b>Kwh Sold</b>	<b>12,796,503</b>	<b>11,066,869</b>	<b>12,796,503</b>

# Your Safety Matters

## Prevent home electrical fires

Eight out of 10 fire-related deaths occur at home – the place that embodies comfort and security. That’s why it’s important to take steps to keep everyone safe.

Faulty or deteriorating electrical cords are a top cause of fires at home. Cords that become frayed or cracked can send sparks to flammable surfaces. Check your cords to ensure that they are in good shape, and replace any that are worn.

In addition, make sure you are not overloading circuits. If you’ve been in your home for more than 10 years, have your circuit breaker box inspected by a licensed electrician to tighten loose connections and check for overloaded circuits.



Homes with copper wiring need to be inspected every 20 years, and homes with aluminum wiring should be inspected every five years.

Check all Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets several times each year by pushing the test/reset button to be sure they are working properly.

If breakers are continually tripping or if fuses are blowing frequently, that’s a sign of potential trouble. The cause could be old wiring unable to handle the load demand of today’s modern appliances. If needed, ask a licensed electrician to install additional circuits for safety.

Use surge protectors and power bars to help prevent overloading an electrical outlet, plugging no more than three cords into the strip.

May is National Electrical Safety Month. We urge you to take the time and steps needed to lower the risks of electrical fires. Keep your family safe.



### Stay Away from Power Lines

#### Weston Koistinen, Age 6

Weston Koistinen warns readers to be safe by staying away from power lines. Weston’s parents are Dion and Stephanie Koistinen, members of H-D 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.

# SUMMER CASSEROLES

## BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

- 1 5 oz. package croutons, any flavor
- 2 cup sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 lb. sausage, fried and drained
- 9 eggs
- 1 can evaporated milk
- 1 tbsp. mustard

### Method

Spray 9x13 pan with vegetable oil. Arrange croutons on bottom. Sprinkle cheese over croutons and put sausage over cheese. Combine eggs, milk and mustard. Beat to blend and pour into pan. Bake covered at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Janet Ochsner  
Box Elder, S.D.

## CHICKEN CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

- 1 package Chicken Stove Top Stuffing mix
- 3 cups cooked cut up chicken
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups chicken broth

### Method

Grease a 9x13 pan and put 1/2 of the stuffing mix in the pan. Cover with chicken. Combine soups and milk and spoon over chicken. Spread other 1/2 of stuffing over the top. Pour 2 cups of chicken broth over all and spread with beaten eggs. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Gail Lee  
Brookings, S.D.

## TACO CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 lbs. ground beef
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 1 can (16 oz.) pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (15 oz.) tomato sauce
- 1 can (11 oz.) whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup coarsely crushed tortilla chips

### Method

Preheat oven to 400°F. Brown meat in large skillet on medium-high heat. Drain fat. Stir in seasoning mix, beans, tomato sauce and corn. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Spoon into 2-quart baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese and tortilla chips. Bake 5 to 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve with assorted toppings, if desired.

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.

# Why Solar is Not Free



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

**Q:** I often hear claims you'll never pay an electric bill again if you go solar. Is that true?

**A:** The ability to generate your own renewable energy at home is an amazing thing. It's pretty cool that the technology is accessible to home and property owners across the country. The concept of free energy from the sun is appealing, but solar power isn't actually free. There are costs associated with capturing that energy for use in your home.

Installing a residential solar system doesn't equate to \$0 energy bills. Prices for the solar system and installation vary, but adding solar typically comes with a five-figure price tag. Solar systems only provide power when the sun is shining. You still rely on your electric utility for power at night and when the skies are cloudy. Most electric utility rate structures include a set monthly service fee. Unless you plan to disconnect from local electric service completely, you will still have a monthly electric bill.

Solar might be a good investment for you, or it might not. Several factors impact how well the investment pencils out, including where you live, home orientation and shading, electric bill rate structure and cost, available incentives and tax credits, your budget and credit rating.

If you are considering solar on your home, I suggest taking these three steps:

First, make your home as energy efficient as possible. It wouldn't make sense to put a new motor on a boat with holes in it, so why would you put a solar system on an energy-wasting home? Invest in reducing wasted energy before investing in creating new energy. The efficiency updates I recommend before installing solar include insulating and air sealing your home and upgrading to efficient appliances – especially the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

If your HVAC system is older than 10 years or malfunctioning, make sure replacing it is in the budget. Remember, energy efficiency upgrades might have a better return on investment than installing solar.

A more efficient home means a smaller – and lower-cost – solar energy system. Solar systems are typically designed to produce the amount of energy a home uses in a year, so if you complete energy efficiency improvements before installing a solar system, make sure the solar contractor accounts for those energy savings.

Second, check with your electric utility about the requirements to install solar and how it will impact your bill. If you decide to install solar panels, working with your utility will be essential, as you will need to take important steps, such as signing an interconnection agreement to ensure the system is properly connected to the electric grid.

Third, get at least three quotes to compare each contractor's recommended system design, equipment and cost. It's a significant investment, so you want to know your options.

There are several ways to pay for a solar system and installation. It can be bought outright with cash or financed by a loan. This allows you to own the system immediately or at the end of the loan term. State and federal tax incentives can help offset the costs.

There is also the option to install a solar system through a lease or power purchase agreement. In this structure, a third party – usually the solar installer – owns the system. They install the system on your property and then sell you the energy produced at a predetermined rate. They are responsible for maintaining the system and own it at the end of the agreement term.

Loans, leases and power purchase agreements can impact the sale of a home. Although a solar system may increase the value of your home, some buyers – or their lenders – are not interested in taking on leases or power purchase agreements.

Investing in solar is one way to support the transition to renewable energy. Before you make the leap, improve your home's energy efficiency and empower yourself by thoroughly weighing the costs and benefits.

# Wish Upon a Crawdad

Curtis Condon's children's literature illuminates electric cooperative history

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

What happens when you blend the rich history of electric cooperatives with the picturesque landscapes of rural America and the magic of fiction storytelling? Curtis W. Condon, a former writer and editor for electric cooperative magazines, finds the answer in his vibrant children's novel, "Wish Upon a Crawdad." This coming-of-age story combines these unlikely elements through the eyes of the main character, 12-year-old Ruby Mae Ryan, during the late Great Depression years in rural Oregon.

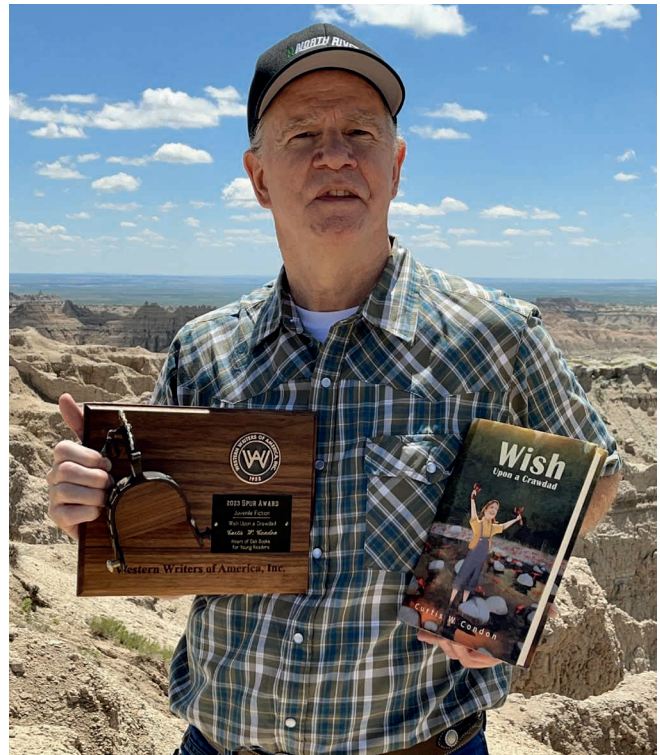
The book, highlighting Ruby's outdoor adventures, explores personal growth while giving testimony to rural electrification in American history. Before writing children's literature, Condon spent more than 27 years in the electric co-op industry as an editor and writer for *Ruralite*, a magazine for electric cooperatives and their members in the Northwest. His time there, conducting interviews and writing, familiarized Condon with the history of rural electrification in the U.S.

"I fell in love with the concept of the electric co-op. Electric co-ops have such a fantastic history and a wonderful story to tell, and I wanted to tell that in this book," said Condon.

This history began with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's determination to lead America out of the Great Depression. Deciding that electrification would play a central role in the process, the president established the Rural Electrification Administration through an executive order in the face of strong dismay from private utility companies. The president's order set the stage for the current network of member-owned electric cooperatives we recognize today, which bring electricity to rural homes that would otherwise be powerless.

However, "Wish Upon a Crawdad" doesn't tell the story of presidents and executive orders. Instead, the book focuses on the very real impact rural electrification had on Ruby, her family, and her community.

"It's about a girl who grows up without electricity until she is 12 years old, and she likes to wish upon crawdads the way that people wish upon stars," Condon explained. "One of the wishes is to get electricity, and that dream comes true because her mom



Curtis W. Condon, author of "Wish Upon a Crawdad," accepts the 2023 Western Writers of America Spur Award, an award presented to Condon in Rapid City, S.D.

and dad get together with their neighbors and create an electric co-op."

Condon's own upbringing in Oregon inspires the book's setting, filled with his memories of crawdad-filled pools, temperate forests and rural dirt roads. While set in the 1940s, many of Ruby's experiences reflect those of Condon's own family.

"My grandmother remembered when electricity was first introduced to her community. She considered electricity to be one of the greatest wonders of the world," said Condon.

Together, Condon's childhood and passion for electric cooperative history set the stage for "Wish Upon a Crawdad," his first children's book, fulfilling a dream he had held onto for years.

"Since I was twelve years old, I knew I wanted to be a children's book writer. It took me 30 years of doing a different kind of writing, but I finally got there," said Condon.

Fulfilling a childhood dream, Condon's book was published in 2022, and his passions and life history began connecting with readers. Although the target audience of the book is children ages 9 to 12, Condon said readers of all ages are enjoying Ruby's story.

Since publication, "Wish Upon a Crawdad" has won the 2023 Western Writers of America Spur Award, an award presented to Condon in Rapid City, S.D. Other awards include the 2023 Will Rogers Medallion Award, the 2023 First Horizon Award, and the 2023 Eric Hoffer Book Award. The book has a presence in libraries across 37 states, including South Dakota.



Patsy Besson helps package fresh cuts of meat at the Wall Meat Processing plant.  
Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel

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## Wall Meats Revives Local Meatcutting in South Dakota Through New Underwood Expansion

**Shannon Marvel**

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

A local meat processing plant is expanding its footprint in Pennington County in a way that will put more locally produced protein on dinner tables and bolster the local meat processing workforce throughout South Dakota.

The man behind this plan is local business owner Ken Charfauros, who owns Wall Meat Processing, which has locations in Wall and Rapid City.

Charfauros is currently raising funds through a capital drive campaign to finance the construction of a 30,000 square foot meat processing facility in New Underwood. The new facility will help train the next generation of meat processors through a partnership with Western Dakota Tech in Rapid City.

“We are at \$2.8 million in our drive. We also have the \$3.3 million USDA Rural Development grant, which is a meat and poultry expansion plan grant. We are about \$200,000 short of our goal,” Charfauros said.

He added that the New Underwood processing plant will also use funding from the Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MPILP), which according to the USDA’s website “provides grant funding to intermediary lenders who finance – or plan to finance – the start-up, expansion, or operation of slaughter, or other processing of meat and poultry. The objective of the MPILP is to strengthen the financing capacity for independent meat processors, and to create a more resilient, diverse, and secure U.S. food supply chain.”

Charfauros said he’s still meeting with potential investors and has a financial team focused on creating relationships with local ag producers.

“After we get our capital drive, the plan itself will be about \$21 million,” he added. “And then we start the project. The groundbreaking is going to happen in about a year and the facility will begin operations six months after that.”

Charfauros said he expects to purchase the property to site the new plant this spring.

### Returning to a Passion

Wall Meats Processing opened for business 57 years ago, but



Charfauros took ownership over the facility in 2017. His passion for meat cutting began when he was a teenager while working for a local meat plant in Delaware.

“It was my high school job and I loved it. After I graduated high school, I felt that my country needed me, so I joined the Air Force and did 30 years. But I always missed that part of my life,” Charfauros recalled.

“A guy that taught me how to cut was like my second dad, and I always wanted to come back to it. My son had just graduated from South Dakota State University, and I had retired from the Air Force. That’s when we decided to buy a plant.”

His son manages the store in Rapid City while Ken’s three nephews help run the family’s businesses in Wall, which include Wall Meats and the Red Rock restaurant.

## Supporting Local Producers

Building the new facility has been a challenging venture that’s been years in the making.

“We started building this plan about four years ago, then COVID hit and got in our way. Then, we were lucky enough to get those grant awards last year, and ever since we have been working diligently to get the format right,” Charfauros said.

“I have drawings. I have an equipment list all put together — everything is ready to go except for this capital drive that we are undergoing.”

Charfauros said he has been meeting with both potential and locked-in investors daily over the last year to produce the required financing.

“We have met with over 600 people with 99 percent of those people being producers, because this is all for them. This plant offers them premium pricing above the market rates,” Charfauros said.

While the cattle market is high now, Charfauros remains realistic that the market can change for the worse.

While he hopes the market remains high enough for producers to survive, his partnership with producers will serve as

added security. That means the partnership must be tightknit.

He knows he cannot do it alone.

## Reviving a Dying Art

“Meat cutting is a dying art, and we teach meat processing at our store in Rapid City to bring that art back. We’re trying to fight for that industry as it is,” he said.

Three meat processing students are currently being taught at the Rapid City facility through a partnership with Western Dakota Tech, which recently began offering the two-year program.

Pam Stillman-Rokusek, director of communications and marketing at Western Dakota Tech, said three students are currently enrolled in the Meat Processing program. Of those three, two will graduate in May.

But the college is still working on more outreach.

“Enrollment has been a bit low in the program, so the plan is for a hiatus this fall. They’ll revamp the curriculum. Then, we will certainly do additional outreach. We have done advertising, gone to the schools. We have reached out to 4-H

groups and done some traveling, but we need to turn it up a notch to produce more students in the program. That is our goal,” Stillman-Rokusek said.

Despite the Meat Processing program being put on hiatus, the school will still ensure that the remaining student completes the program while actively working on developing the program and outreach methods.

“There’s such a high need for meat processors and we’re looking at different ways to fill that gap. It’s something we’re committed to doing,” she added.

The goal is to enroll at least five students in the following school years when the program restarts.

The learning center that will be built within the New Underwood facility will also teach producers, in addition to students, the art of meat cutting.

“We are trying to bring that industry back to what it should be—regionally processed protein,” Charfauros said.

“That means we must build the environment to spark that passion. In anything you do, you need to learn how to do it the right way.”



Wall Meat Processing plant, established in 1957. Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel

# How will the rate increase affect me?



**JJ Martin**  
Member Services  
and IT Director

Melissa included a detailed breakdown of the rate adjustment by class. I'm sure many residential members simply want to know what their new bill will be.

Usage from May 1 onward will be billed according to the new rate structure. The slight increases to the minimum and kWh leave a small but noticeable difference to your bill. See the table to the right.

All of these figures are before taxes are applied. By usage, you can see the increases members will see in their May

bill, payable in June.

- Members who use 750 kWh will see a \$10.55 increase
- Members who use 1000 kWh will see a \$12.79 increase
- Members who use 1500 kWh will see a \$17.79 increase

Every member and every month is unique, but this table will help give a rough idea of what to expect on your new bill.

Your cooperative hasn't had a rate adjustment since 2016. After the pandemic and the rampant inflation that we have seen since, an increase was inevitable. In order to maintain

Residential Bills Pretax			
Usage	Old Rates	New Rates	Difference
750 kWh	\$117.45	\$128	<b>\$10.55</b>
1000 kWh	\$142.46	\$155.25	<b>\$12.79</b>
1500 kWh	\$186.96	\$204.75	<b>\$17.79</b>

and improve our infrastructure and continuously provide safe, reliable electricity to you, our member-owners, rates had to be adjusted to match the cost of service.

As member-owners of Moreau-Grand Electric, you are increasing your investment into YOUR cooperative.



## Scholarship Winner Shannon Gebhart

Now in its 33rd year, the scholarship program recognizes and encourages academic and community achievements of students that are dependents of our members. It is considered an investment in the economic future of America.

Applications from across the Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative Service area were received. The applications were mailed to Basin Electric Power Cooperative in Bismarck, N.D., where a Scholarship Committee selected the winners.

Selection was based on ACT or SAT scores, grade point average, high school/college honors, community and school activities, employment history, future career goals, and references.

In the member category, the \$1,000 scholarship provided by Moreau-Grand Electric and Basin Electric has been awarded to Shannon Gebhart of Meadow, S.D. She is the daughter of Travis and Renae Gebhart.

Congratulations, Shannon! We are proud to have future leaders like you in our territory!

# Annual Audit Performed

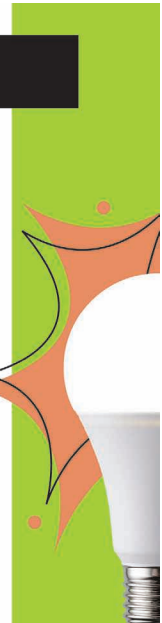
The auditing firm of Ketel Thorstenson, LLP, of Rapid City, S.D., completed the annual audit of Moreau-Grand Electric's records. The annual audit provides management and the board of directors with an independent opinion as to the accuracy and accounting compliance of the cooperative's financial statements. It is a check of the co-op's system of internal controls and compliance with the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) regulations. The audit includes checking member electric account billings, inventory of material and supplies, board minutes, policies and review of other accounting transactions. RUS requires an annual audit of the electric cooperative's books by an approved accounting firm with a final report being sent to RUS, the Cooperative Finance Corporation, CoBank, and to the Moreau-Grand Electric board of directors.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Looking for an easy way to manage home energy use? Smart plugs are inexpensive and offer convenient solutions for scheduling and controlling your favorite electronic devices.

With smart plugs, you can easily manage your coffee maker, lighting, home office equipment, video game consoles and more. Smart plugs can help you manage devices through a smart phone app, your home assistant or voice control. By conveniently powering off or scheduling devices, you can save energy (and money!).

Source: energystar.gov



COMPARATIVE REPORT	Current (Feb 2024)	1 year ago (Feb 2023)	10 Years Ago (Feb 2014)	% Change in 10 years
Number of Meters	7,134	7,140	6,802	5%
Kilowatt Hours Sold	9,314,646	10,584,207	10,901,094	-15%
Cost of Purchased Power	\$584,301.53	\$659,367.12	\$625,002.04	-7%
Overall Ave. Rate / kWh Per Member	0.1137	0.1139	0.1036	10%

Call Steph or JJ at 605-865-3511 and enroll in SmartHub today! See and pay your bill at the touch of a button and monitor your usage!

Using **SmartHub**, you can view your daily usage by week

You can see monthly usage throughout the year and see how usage is weather driven

You can pay your bill online and even enroll in Auto Pay

You can scroll through days and see your usage. Higher usage days are shown in red and lower usage days are shown in green.

Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative  
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



# CYBERSECURITY ON THE GRID

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Imagine sitting at your desk on a typical Monday morning. You have logged into your computer with coffee in hand, ready to tackle the day. But as you begin, your computer displays an ominous message: “Your files have been encrypted. Pay a ransom to regain access.” It’s not just your computer; your co-workers have received the same message. Overnight, the entire office has fallen victim

to a ransomware attack that has locked away critical data. Your office computers will remain unusable until a payment is made.

This scenario, among others, has become a primary concern for workplaces everywhere, including electric cooperatives. As a result, local co-ops are taking action in the cybersecurity space to prevent bad actors from disrupting the critical goal of delivering power that is safe, affordable and reliable to their members. Electric co-ops are focused

on enhancing cybersecurity resilience and readiness to defend against potential cyber threats.

Co-ops are routinely monitoring and managing cyber risks, working with federal and local law enforcement agencies and the North American Electric Reliability Corp. to protect critical infrastructure. By working as a network, co-ops are enhancing grid resilience, ensuring reliable electricity for their members.

According to an FBI Internet Crime Report, the U.S. reported more than \$12.5 billion in annual losses in 2023 due to cyberattacks like the one described. A significant number of these attacks target the elderly and vulnerable. When breaking down the losses by age group, individuals aged

20 to 29 accounted for \$360.7 million of the total losses, while those 60 and older incurred losses of \$3.4 billion in 2023 alone.

And it's not just about the money. These attacks also have the potential to undermine the stability of entire systems, including the electrical grid. This year, directors of the FBI, NSA, and CISA testified before Congress about Chinese Communist Party hacking groups that had gained access to the electric grid and other critical infrastructure to "wreak havoc and cause real-world harm to American citizens and communities."

"Many cyberattacks are conducted by criminals trying to steal money or collect a ransom," explains Chief Security and Compliance Officer Daniel Graham of Basin Electric Power Cooperative. "Nation-states

target electric utilities for different reasons. Some nation-states want to steal intellectual property. Others want to be able to disrupt our electric grid."

So how is it done? To execute their schemes, bad actors employ a long list of complex strategies and techniques, such as phishing, data breaches and malware to adversely impact their targets. Business email compromise, one of the most common techniques, occurs when an impostor poses as a legitimate business contact, seeking to steal sensitive information such as credit card numbers, bank account information or login credentials.

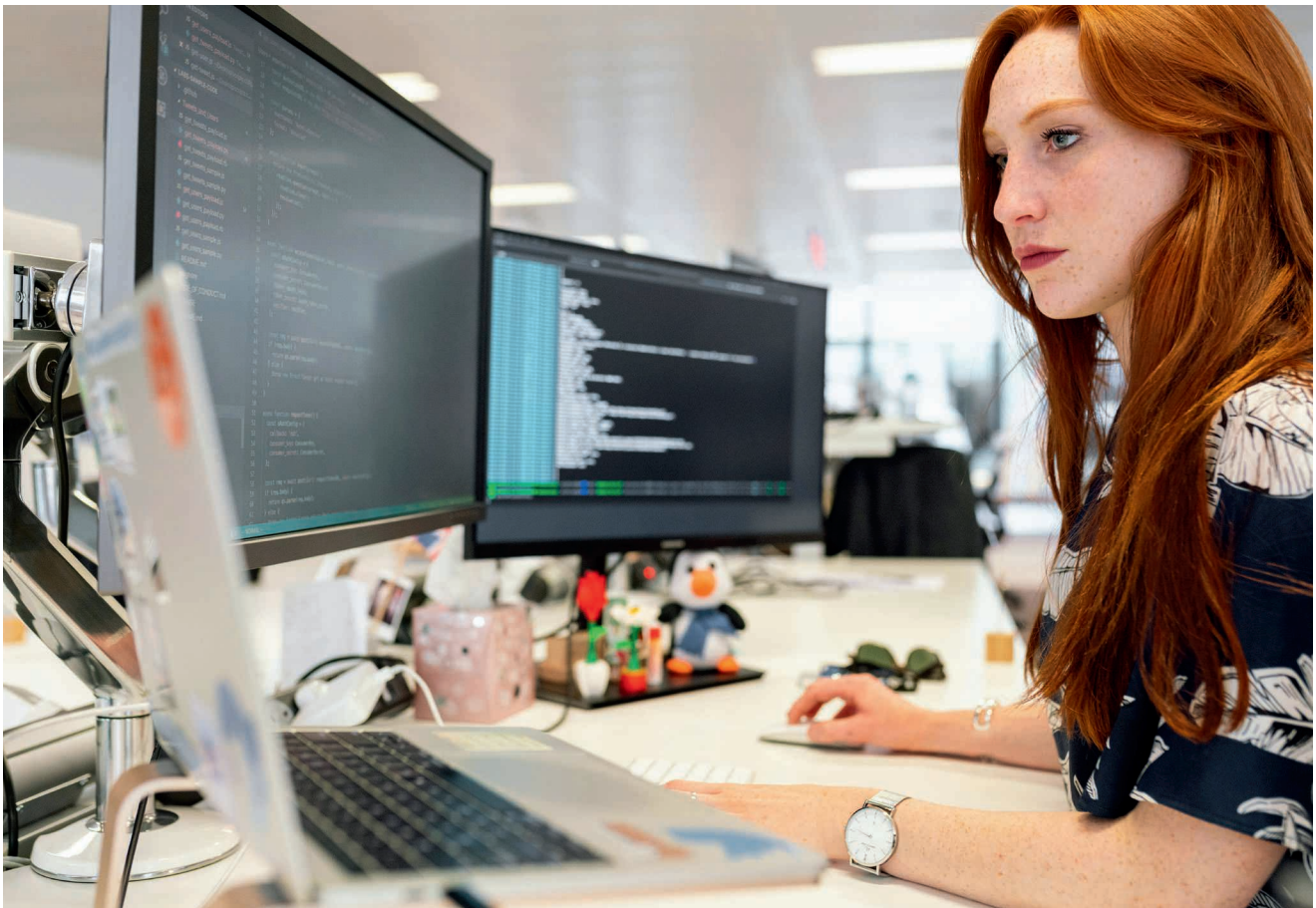
Luckily, co-ops are implementing a variety of tools, policies and training to help mitigate attacks and secure the grid. Programs like NRECA's Co-op Cyber Goals Program help co-ops build fundamental cybersecurity

measures, such as employee training, developing cyber incident response plans, and regular self-assessment. These strategies help co-ops reduce the risk of a successful cyberattack in the ongoing battle against cybercrime.

"Additionally, co-ops can conduct cybersecurity exercises to determine the effectiveness of current defenses and practice responses," Graham says.

Despite these efforts, the threat of a successful cyberattack persists, making vigilance an essential component of effective cybersecurity.

"If you see something suspicious, report it to your cooperative," explains Graham. "Electric co-ops are an essential part of our country's critical infrastructure. We can best protect our electric grid by working with each other."





# Living Prepared

## South Dakota's survivalist community live in bunkers

Jocelyn Johnson

[jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop](mailto:jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop)

It's a semi-underground community of survivalists acting as humanity's last chance.

These survivalists, otherwise known as preppers, have prepared for security and safety within what's touted as the world's largest survival community – in southwest South Dakota.

Vivos xPoint, owned by real-estate mogul Robert Vicino, is located south of the Black Hills, near Edgemont, S.D. It was formally established as the U.S. Army's Black Hills Ordnance Depot – a military base created to store

ammunition and bombs. The base's history began in 1942, just after the United States entered World War II.

Once humming with approximately 6,000 workers and their families, the military base was eventually retired in 1967, leading to its eventual abandonment. The army sold the property to the town of Edgemont, S.D., which in turn, sold it to local cattle ranchers.

"This land was used by landowners to graze cattle, until one of these ranchers sent me an email asking if I would be interested in the bunkers," Vicino said. "It took me about a minute, and I said yes. So, in 2016, I acquired the southern

Vivos xPoint owns 575 bunkers. *Photo Credit: Vivos xPoint*

portion of the base. That portion is about three-fourths the size of Manhattan. We take people up on a local hill that's about 300-400 feet higher than the rest of the site. From there, you can almost see all the quarters of the property. At a distance, the bunkers are like specs...you can't really tell what you're looking at. That's how big this thing is."

Vicino owns just under 6,000 acres of land where these bunkers sit. Originally, the army built 800 bunkers, but Vivos xPoint owns 575. Today, approximately 200 of these bunkers are being leased for 99 years with an up-front payment of \$55,000. Additionally, the ground lease is \$1,200 per year and utility payments are \$108 per month.

Mark Bowman, a retired tenant at Vivos xPoint, moved from Chicago with his wife to live in one of the bunkers



*Photo Credit: Jocelyn Johnson*



Each bunker is 2,200 square feet. Photo Credit: Vivos xPoint

seven years ago. Keeping busy by doing odd jobs and helping others get settled, Bowman commented that people from various backgrounds lease these bunkers. Some visit on occasion and some live in them full time.

“Eventually, we plan to have a health club, meeting hall and store out here too,” Bowman said. “It’s a work in progress.”

Each bunker is 2,200 square feet. It’s relatable to a narrow Quonset fixed underground, measuring 80 feet long and 26 feet wide with 12-foot ceilings. Vivos xPoint boasts 575 bunkers in total. Tenants can access floor plans and choose to have a Vivos xPoint contractor customize their bunker. Currently, there is a one-year backlog for customization services provided by a company contractor.

“It’s cavernous on the inside,” Vicino said. “We can build out a five-bedroom interior with a living room, two bathrooms, laundry room...everything you will need. When we build it, it’s effectively a submarine. The power we get from the local electric cooperative is to run our well pump that pumps water 4,300 feet underground up to a cistern on a hill. From there, it’s distributed to

the bunkers via gravity.”

Vicino noted that one of the most important features to these bunkers is the location. It’s centrally located within the United States and remote – making it an unlikely target in war. The off-grid area is also located at high altitude in a non-seismic area, relatively safe from natural disasters.

“Sometimes, I get asked why would anyone want one of these,” Vicino

commented. “And I say, ‘well, have you ever watched the news?’ Look what’s going on in this country.”

“All of the bunkers have NBC filtration, which is nuclear, biological and chemical filtration,” Vicino explained. “The air that comes in is scrubbed, so it’s breathable on the inside. We’re even adding CO2 scrubbers, which scrub the air you breath out if you had to shut off the air to the outside. You can do that for a week maybe.”

This isn’t a project that Vicino took lightly or stumbled upon in his business ventures. He emphasized it was years in the making.

“When I was 27 years old, I had a vision or an inspiration in my head. I could hear the words of a woman talking to me in total silence. The only thing I could attribute it to was the Holy Spirit. What she said to me was, ‘Robert, you need to build bunkers deep underground to help thousands of people survive what’s coming our way.’ The message was very loud and quick, and so I tucked it away for 30 years, thinking about it occasionally.... Then, I got the feeling I didn’t have any more time. It’s either now or never.”



Mark Bowman, right, shows an empty bunker to Calvin Romey, left. Bowman has been a tenant in a neighboring bunker for seven years with his wife. Photo Credit: Jocelyn Johnson



**MAY 11, 2024**  
**Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**  
 Falls Park  
 Sioux Falls, SD

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

**MAY 4**  
**Jones County Pheasants**  
**Forever Banquet**  
 Murdo, SD

**MAY 10**  
**Mother's Day Tea**  
 1 p.m.  
 Spearfish Senior Center  
 Spearfish, SD

**MAY 11**  
**Opening Day**  
 1880 Train  
 Hill City, SD

**MAY 11-12**  
**Best of Hill City**  
 Main Street  
 Hill City, SD

**MAY 12**  
**Hill City Senior Sunday**  
**Breakfast**  
 8 a.m.  
 Hill City Center  
 Hill City, SD

**MAY 12**  
**Mother's Day Special**  
 1880 Train  
 Hill City, SD

**MAY 17**  
**"Heart of the Hills" a**  
**musical**  
 2 p.m.  
 Spearfish Senior Center  
 Spearfish, SD

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

**MAY 18**  
**Fundraising Breakfast**  
 7:30 a.m.  
 Spearfish Senior Center  
 Spearfish, SD

**MAY 18**  
**Grand Re-Opening & New**  
**Artist Reception**  
 3 p.m.  
 ArtForms Gallery  
 Hill City, SD

**JUNE 1**  
**Spring Volksmarch**  
 Crazy Horse Memorial

**JUNE 7-9**  
**Gumbo Ridge Wagon Trail**  
**Ride**  
 Murdo, SD

**JUNE 8**  
**Mt. Rushmore Rodeo**  
 Palmer Gulch Resort  
 Hill City, SD

**JUNE 8**  
**Sportsman's Bash**  
 2 p.m.  
 Weston County Senior Center  
 Newcastle, WY  
 605-440-1842

**JUNE 9**  
**1880 Train Old West**  
**Shootout**  
 5 p.m.  
 Hill City, SD

**JUNE 14-15**  
**Fine Arts In the Hills Show**  
**& Sale**  
 Hill City, SD

**JUNE 15**  
**The Big Mick**  
 The Mickelson Trail  
 605-673-5154

**JUNE 15-16**  
**Friends of the Library Book**  
**Sale**  
 Hill City Public Library  
 Hill City, SD

**JUNE 20**  
**Murdo Ranch Rodeo**  
 Murdo, SD

**JUNE 20**  
**Kadoka Ranch Rodeo**  
 Kadoka, SD

**JUNE 21-22**  
**Scavenger's Journey**  
 Yard sales, farmer's markets &  
 specialty shops  
 Wall, SD to Wagner, SD  
 www.scavengersjourney.com

**JUNE 21-22**  
**Kadoka Reunion Weekend &**  
**PRCA Rodeo**  
 Kadoka, SD

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