

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Fostering Futures

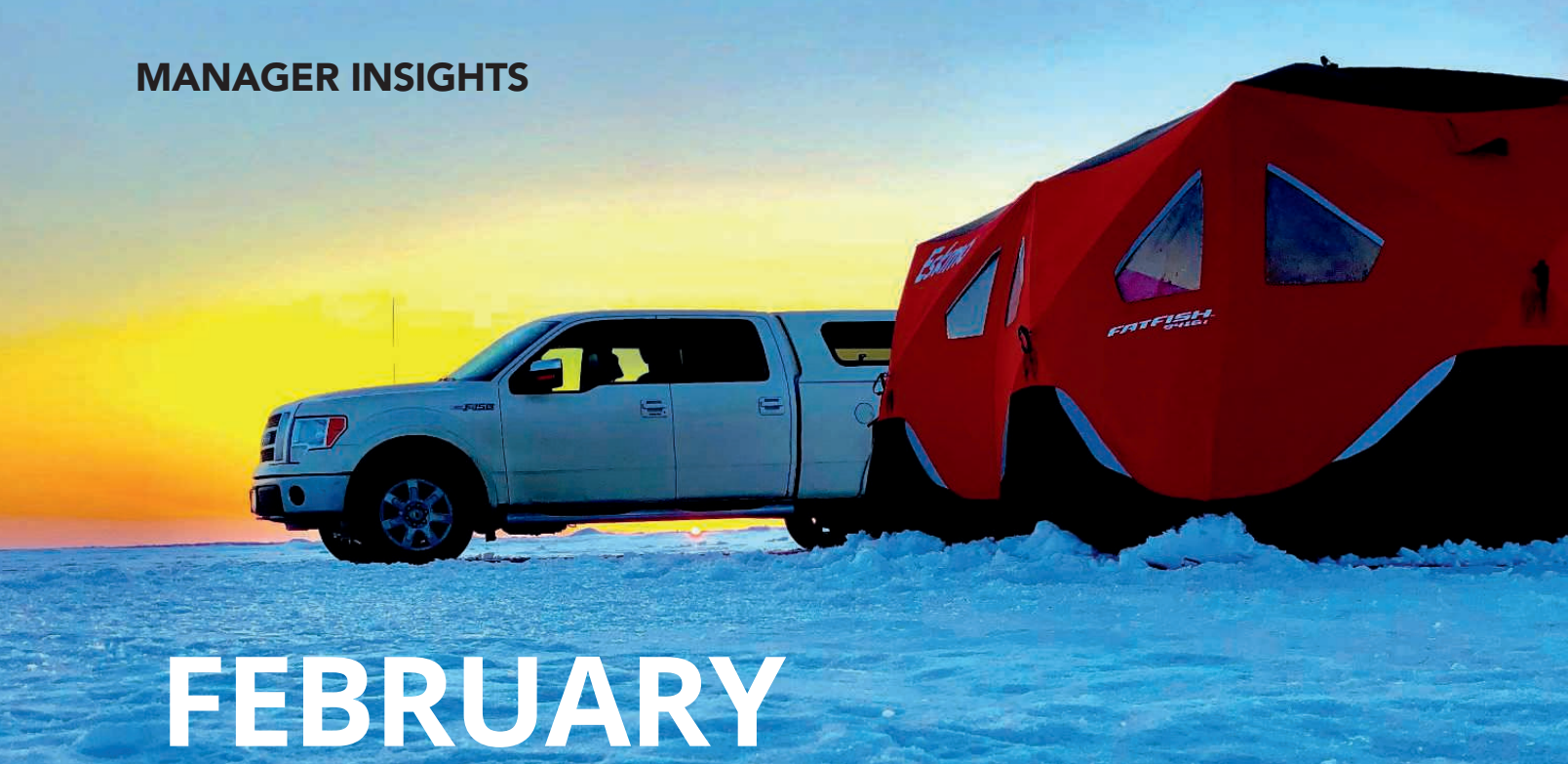
**Mike Rowe Scholarship
Sponsors Co-op Lineman**

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**Understanding the
Southwest Power Pool**

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Dirty Jobs star Mike Rowe with Work Ethic Scholarship recipient Tayden Wells at Mitchell Technical College
Submitted Photo



FEBRUARY ICE FISHING



Jeremy Lindemann
CEO/GM

Well folks, it's that time of year again! Traditional holidays have passed, and we are heading into the season of true love for me. That's right, ice fishing season! Ice fishing is in full swing and once again I am out there in the cold searching for that South Dakota gold: the yellow perch, which we all know is the fish equivalent of the butterball turkey! Now don't get me wrong, I love walleyes too, but perch are such good table fare. Not only are they good to eat, but they are also fun to catch because they put up a decent fight for their size!

As I mentioned last year in my February article, I understand that many people, including some of our member-owners, have headed south for the winter and are out on the golf course enjoying themselves. That is great, and believe me, I too dream of those 75-degree days in the sun! But as long as I can keep catching these fish, the only rays I will be getting are the ones emitting from my buddy heater.

One of my favorite things about ice fishing is that it is a really great time to get the kids out. When my kids were younger and we went ice fishing, we would pack so much equipment and snacks that it looked like we were going on a month-long arctic expedition! We would set up one of these large pop-up fish houses made by Eskimo on the ice where we thought the hot spot was. I would get all the holes drilled and then put the kids to work on scooping the slush out of the holes. This builds character! A bit of expert advice: always bring extra socks and some old bread

bags because kids' feet are drawn to a hole in the ice like a moth to a flame. Once the holes were cleaned out and we managed to keep the kids' feet dry, we would get everyone set up with a pole and the lure of their choice and start fishing. If the fish are biting fast enough to keep the kids interested, they have a blast! On the other hand, if the fishing is slow, I learned it's best that you just turn the kids loose outside. After an hour or two the kids would start to get cold and hungry, so I would call them back in and I would start making lunch. I have a little one-burner propane stove to cook on. This thing is tiny yet puts out a ton of heat! It has a stand where you can set your pan, and you can make everything from breakfast to dinner right there on the ice. For me, this is a great time to cook up some deer brats made from last year's successful deer harvest. Serve those brats up with some leftover holiday treats and you have the makings of a great meal! After lunch we would listen to a game on the radio and hope for the bite to pick up in the afternoon. At the end of the day, we would pack up and head home, usually with some fish, but either way it was always an adventure! Now that my kids are grown, I am looking forward to taking the grandkids out and making some new memories and new adventures right here in Lake Region territory!

Until next time, I hope everyone up north has a great ice fishing season and to everyone down south, I hope you have a great time escaping the cold and snow! Don't worry, we are keeping the lights on for you here at home!

Oh, yeah: Happy Valentine's Day!
Jeremy Lindemann

**COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS**

**LAKE REGION ELECTRIC
RIPPLES**

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New Lake Region Electric Rates

Effective January 1, 2026

Rate Class	Old 2025 Rate	NEW 2026 Rate
Residential		
Base Charge	\$65	\$65
First 1,400 kWh	11.29¢ per	12.98 ¢ per
All Additional kWh	10.69 ¢ per	12.29 ¢ per
Electric Heat Meter		
Base Charge	\$5	\$5
Electric Heat kWh (Controlled)	5.76 ¢ per	6.09 ¢ per
Electric Heat kWh (Non-controlled)		
October – April	5.76 ¢ per	6.09 ¢ per
May - September	9.39 ¢ per	10.80 ¢ per
400 Amp		
Base Charge	\$75	\$75
First 1,400 kWh	11.29 ¢ per	12.98 ¢ per
All Additional kWh	10.69 ¢ per	12.29 ¢ per
600 Amp		
Base Charge	\$85	\$85
First 1,400 kWh	10.09 ¢ per	11.60 ¢ per
All Additional kWh	9.49 ¢ per	10.91 ¢ per
Demand Charge per Billing kW	\$3.50	\$5.00
800 Amp		
Base Charge	\$95	\$95
First 1,400 kWh	10.09 ¢ per	11.60 ¢ per
All Additional kWh	9.49 ¢ per	10.91 ¢ per
Demand Charge per Billing kW	\$3.50	\$5.00
Small Three Phase		
Base Charge	\$80	\$80
First 1,400 kWh	10.33 ¢ per	11.88 ¢ per
All Additional kWh	9.73 ¢ per	10.91 ¢ per
Demand Charge per Billing kW		
First 20 kW	\$2.50	\$5.00
Next 30 kW	\$2.50	\$5.00
All Additional kW	\$17.25	\$18.25
Grain Dryer		
Base Charge	\$65	\$65
First 1,400 KWH	10.09 ¢ per	11.60 ¢ per
All Additional kWh	9.49 ¢ per	10.91 ¢ per
Demand Charge per Billing kW	\$3.50	\$5.00
Large Three Phase (Controlled)		
Base Charge	\$120	\$120
First 100 kWh per Billing kW	7.06 ¢ per	8.12 ¢ per
Additional kWh per Billing kW	4.76 ¢ per	5.47 ¢ per
Demand Charge per Billing kW	\$6.75	\$7.75
Large Three Phase (Non-Controlled)		
Base Charge	\$120	\$120
First 100 kWh per Billing kW	7.06 ¢ per	8.12 ¢ per
All Additional kWh per Billing kW	4.76 ¢ per	5.47 ¢ per
Demand Charge per Billing kW	\$17.25	\$18.25
Irrigation (Controlled)		
Base Charge	\$90	\$90
All kWh Charge	6.39 ¢ per	7.35 ¢ per
Demand Charge per Billing kW	\$6.75	\$7.75
Irrigation (Non-Controlled)		
Base Charge	\$90	\$90
All kWh Charge	6.39 ¢ per	7.35 ¢ per
Demand Charge per Billing kW	\$17.25	\$18.25

FIVE WAYS TO SAFEGUARD YOUR HOME THIS WINTER

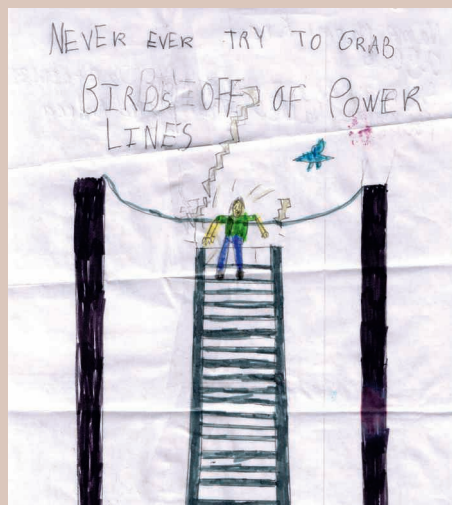
As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months.

Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season.

1. Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.
2. Inspect electrical cords. We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, extension cords or portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least three feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip. Speaking of power strips...
3. Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.
4. Clean the fireplace to improve safety and efficiency. There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning

also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.

5. Practice safety in the kitchen. As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.



Naomi Krcil, Age 8

Naomi warns readers to never, ever grab birds off power lines. Great job, Naomi! Naomi's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil from Dante, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Family Night FAVORITES

SAUERKRAUT BEEF BAKE

Ingredients:

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 can sauerkraut, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup instant rice
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 soup can water
- 2 tbsps. onion soup mix
- 1 small can sliced mushrooms (optional)

Method

Brown ground beef, drain excess fat. In large bowl, mix all remaining ingredients. Transfer to a greased 2-quart casserole or baking dish.

Cover and bake at 350°F for one hour or until heated through.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix Electric

MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. ground beef
- 6 oz. chili sauce
- 4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 1/2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. seasoned salt
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 tbsps. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. yellow mustard
- 1/2 cup BBQ sauce

Method

Preheat oven to 425°F.

Cook and crumble bacon.

In a mixing bowl, mix together all meatloaf ingredients except the BBQ sauce.

Divide the mixture into 8 round loaves. Press a small depression into the middle of the meatloaves.

Brush BBQ sauce on top of the meatloaves.

Bake for 25 minutes. Turn on broiler and brown the BBQ sauce for 2 to 5 minutes.

Kayla Beaner
Southeastern Electric

SMOKED MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 1.5 lbs. 93% lean ground beef
- 1 lb. ground pork
- 1/2 pkg. bacon
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 tps. Worcestershire sauce
- 1-2 tps. minced garlic
- 1/8 cup ketchup
- 2 tps. Heifer Dust (spice)
- 1/2 tsp. ground pepper
- 1/2 sweet onion, chopped
- 1/2 green pepper, chopped
- 1-2 carrots, chopped
- 1-2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1/2 carton mushrooms, chopped

Basting Sauce

- Cookies BBQ Ketchup
- Brown sugar Dry mustard
- Apple cider vinegar

Method

Turn Traeger to Smoke then set to 225°F and preheat for 15 minutes.

Combine the vegetables, drizzle with olive oil and microwave for about 2 minutes to soften. Cool for 10 minutes. Mix everything in a large bowl with hands. Form into a large loaf on parchment paper. Place bacon strips on grate pan. Gently flip loaf onto the bacon lined grate pan.

Place on grill and smoke for 45 minutes. Increase temperature to 325°F. Preheat for 10 minutes. Return to grill and insert probe. Cook until internal temperature reaches 160°F – about 1-2 more hours depending on size of loaf.

During the last 15-20 minutes, baste heavily with barbeque sauce mixed with brown sugar, ketchup, mustard and a little apple cider vinegar or apple juice.

Deb Prins
Cam Wal Electric

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture by Elena Veselova from Shutterstock

Williams Promoted to Line Superintendent

Dan Williams was promoted to Line Superintendent in December. After posting the job internally and interviewing several candidates, the position was offered to Williams, who accepted. General manager Jeremy Lindemann has confidence that Dan will do a great job. “Dan’s extensive knowledge and years of experience will be a huge benefit to the members of Lake Region in this position. He genuinely cares about this cooperative and all of the members and he wants to do a good job.”

Dan graduated from power line school at Mitchell Tech in 1999. After graduation, he worked for a year in Nebraska then moved to Miller where he worked for Dakota Energy Cooperative for about six years. In the middle of 2006, an opportunity opened up for Dan at Lake Region, so he and his wife Stephanie decided to relocate their little family to Webster. It was a home-coming for Dan

who grew up in the area. He started at Lake Region as a Journeyman Lineman in 2006. He was promoted to Line Foreman in 2014. Dan led the linemen out in the field for 11 years. Though there have been changes and challenges, he has always loved working with his fellow

linemen; often commenting, “You cannot find a better bunch of guys to work with.” Dan is looking forward to being the new Line Superintendent, a staff position that is demanding, requiring more administrative duties and less time in the field. “I am excited to embark on this new adventure and also very thankful for this opportunity.”



**TELL
US WHO
POWERS
YOU!**

Let's celebrate
people making a
difference in our
co-op community!



Nominate someone you think deserves recognition for the difference they are making while giving them a chance to win up to \$3,000 for their cause.

Go to WhoPowersYouContest.com to submit your local hero.



Lake Region Employees Spread Community Cheer

Laura London

The employees of Lake Region Electric Association take the principle “Concern for Community” to heart. Not only are we all working hard to keep the lights on for you, but most employees are also dedicated to supporting the community in other ways. You see them out coaching



Lindemann delivers gifts for local kids.

kids, fighting fires, organizing or helping at fundraisers and events, volunteering their time on organizational boards and other activities, in addition to the unseen acts of kindness that they do to support the communities that we serve. The spirit of generosity amongst the employees at LREA is amplified during the holiday season when many in our communities are struggling. It has become a Thanksgiving tradition to set up a table for donations to the food pantry so that we can help them replenish their shelves. Many of our employees are parents, but even those who aren't love kids so grabbing tags and buying gifts for the Spirit of Christmas Tree is a favorite holiday tradition. This year, LREA employees helped spread a little extra Christmas cheer to 14 children.



Accountant McClurg presents LREA employee donation check to the food pantry.

A Legacy of
SERVICE
85 Years

**ANNUAL
MEETING**

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

JUNE 4, 2026

Britton, SD



FOSTERING FUTURES

'Mike Rowe Scholarship' Winner Kicks Off Career at Electric Co-op

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

For many high schoolers, figuring out the next steps after graduating is a time for making big decisions and answering tough questions. What do I want to do for a career? Should I go to a university or technical college? Will I be able to pay off all of this college debt?

Tayden Wells' mind was already made up following a great high school internship and a little bit of faith and support from others. Wells was awarded numerous scholarships, but none as prestigious – nor time-consuming – as the Work Ethic Scholarship from 'Dirty Jobs' star Mike Rowe.

Discovering the Passion

Growing up around linemen, Tayden had an early appreciation for their work, unpredictable schedules and the expansive grid of wires and poles that keeps everyone's lights on.

"As a child I'd be sitting in the house and all of a sudden, Dad would up and vanish," Tayden explained. "And I always wondered, what's he doing? Where's he going? Why is he going to work on a Saturday or in the middle of the night? And then finally it occurred to me that we rely on the power grid, and when the power goes out, linemen go to work."

Tayden's dad, Travis, is a lineman at Clay-Union Electric in Vermillion, S.D. Tayden recalls the long car rides on hunting trips with his dad and uncle – also a lineman – where the conversations would drift to the power lines outside the truck windows.

"I'd hear them talking, using linemen slang like 'distro' (distribution lines) and 'T-lines' (transmission lines)," Tayden said. "They really sparked my interest."

When Tayden's high school business teacher told students to think about internships, he knew exactly where he wanted to go.

It All Started With an Internship

Tayden's teacher made the call to Union County Electric Cooperative in Elk Point, S.D. After getting the green light from the board of directors, Tayden was cleared to shadow the crew for about 10 hours a week as he learned the ins and outs of the job.

"He was always looking for something to do, and he also asked a lot of questions and had an eagerness to learn," General Manager Matt Klein said about Tayden's work ethic. "When I saw that, I knew he would fit in well with the rest of our team."

Klein offered the high school senior a full-time summer



Tayden Wells of Vermillion is an apprentice lineman at Union County Electric Cooperative in Elk Point. Submitted Photo

internship where he continued to expand his skills before heading to Mitchell, S.D., in the fall.

Mike Rowe's Work Ethic Scholarship and the S.W.E.A.T. Pledge

With his mind made up after the internship, Tayden's next step was to enroll in the power line program at Mitchell Technical College for a formal education – and find scholarships to help pay for it.

A straight-A student involved in athletics and extracurricular activities, Tayden applied for numerous scholarships, including the highly competitive Work Ethic Scholarship.

The scholarship, founded and administered by Mike Rowe and his foundation, offers millions of dollars to kids around the nation interested in pursuing trade careers.

Electricians, linemen, HVAC, nursing, culinary, automotive, even cosmetology – just no four-year bachelor's degrees.

"We promote skilled trades and want to get people into good-paying jobs without them drowning in debt," explained mikeroweWORKS President Mary Sullivan, who oversees the scholarship. "It's just heartbreaking seeing the amount of kids taking on college debt and graduating and aren't able to find jobs in their chosen field. Even more heartbreaking – but less reported – is the number of kids that drop out partway through the program with the debt and no piece of paper."

The scholarship's application process is different too – it's intensive, spanning several months and requires applicants to submit a video, answer questionnaires, gather references and think critically about the scholarship's curriculum.

The scholarship attracts thousands of applicants, but by the end, only the most committed, hardest working remain.

"We want to give scholarships to the kids who are passionate – they show up early, stay late and help others," Sullivan explained. "One of the recipients said he applied for 20 scholarships, and if you put all the other 19 into a bucket, ours still took more

time – but he said there was a level of pride in receiving it. High school kids today need to see 18-20 year olds who are successful, and the scholarship program allows us to meet students we believe are good representatives for the industry.”

Part of the curriculum includes the S.W.E.A.T. Pledge (Skill & Work Ethic Aren't Taboo) video series that walks students through 12 pledges Rowe designed to promote strong work ethic and foster successful careers, which include:

“I do not follow my passion. I bring it with me. I believe that any job can be done with passion and enthusiasm.”

“I deplore debt and do all I can to avoid it. I would rather live in a tent and eat beans than borrow money for a lifestyle I can't afford.”

After completing all of the curriculum and proposing a 13th S.W.E.A.T. pledge for a final project, Tayden was awarded \$16,000 to cover his education.

And when Rowe traveled to MTC in 2024, Tayden got the chance to thank Rowe face-to-face.

“Mike told me, from his mouth, that my scholarship was one of the highest amounts they gave out that year,” Tayden said. “That was very cool to hear.”

Rowe said Tayden stood out among thousands of applicants and embodies the qualities the scholarship promotes.

“Tayden checked all the boxes, and then some,” Rowe said. “His references were great, his attitude was great, his essay was great, and his comments about The SWEAT Pledge were spot on. His willingness to pursue a skill that's in demand, along with his attitude and work ethic, make him a perfect example of the qualities we're trying to encourage with our scholarship program. The country needs thousands more like him.”

Reflecting On the Journey

Tayden graduated from the power line program in 2025. He credits his success in part to his internship, saying the out-of-classroom experience set him up for a good year of training at MTC and a rewarding career with electric cooperatives.

“I kind of had the upper hand going into the program with my internship,” Tayden said. “I was able to see stuff before I went to school, so I kind of had a good understanding of the basics. But for kids coming in, some of them obviously struggle. I'm a very hands-on, visual learner, so because I was able to see it beforehand, the bookwork and the schooling really clicked a lot better with me.”

Today, Tayden is a full-time apprentice lineman at Union County Electric, where he continues to accumulate hours and complete coursework to earn his journeyman lineman certification. He encourages other young people not to overlook a career in the trades – or the Work Ethic Scholarship.

“With all of the talk about AI now, the trade jobs are always going to be there,” Tayden said. “Without oil fields we wouldn't have gas, and without electricity we wouldn't have lights. Mike realizes that the world revolves around the trades, and he wants to see kids strive and succeed because in the trades there are endless opportunities, just like any other job.”

Why is it so important that more young Americans enter the trades, and what does a shortage of skilled workers mean for the country?

For decades, the skills gap has been a tragedy of missed opportunity, both for students who weren't encouraged to consider a lucrative and viable path and the industries that rely on skilled labor. It still is. Today though, it's also a matter of national security. Not a week goes by that MRW doesn't get a call from an industry leader, desperate to hire skilled workers. The US Maritime Industrial Base told me they need 250,000 tradespeople to build nuclear subs. The automotive industry has over 100,000 openings for mechanics and collision repair techs. The energy industry needs half a million electricians, and the construction industry has so many openings they've stopped counting. The skills gap is real, and I can tell you that every CEO and every elected official I know are paying attention like never before.

What's one piece of advice you have for young people who are deciding their career path?

With regard to choosing a career, there's nothing more dangerous than dispensing advice to people you've never met. Same thing with choosing an education. We told an entire generation of kids that a four-year degree was the best path for the most people and then pressured them to borrow whatever it took to buy a degree, regardless of the cost. That kind of cookie-cutter advice was a colossal mistake and a big reason why we have millions of open jobs today that don't require a college diploma and lots of college graduates with a trillion dollars in student debt and no work in their chosen field. The only advice I generically offer to young people is to be very careful about “following your passion.” Just because you're passionate about something doesn't mean you can't suck at it. Obviously, it's important to be passionate about whatever you do, but passion – like work ethic - is a choice, and life is a lot easier when you figure out a way to be passionate about whatever it is you're good at. (People hate hearing that, by the way, but it's the truth.)

What do you see as the single biggest misunderstanding young people have about working in the trades today?

The trades are surrounded by dozens of stigmas, stereotypes, myths and misperceptions that dissuade people from giving them an honest look. I guess if I had to pick one, I'd point to the stubborn belief held by many parents that their kids can't make six figures working with their hands. It's laughably and demonstrably false. And fun to disprove. Also – the simple fact that the road to so many successful small businesses often starts with the mastery of a skill that's in demand. The number of successful entrepreneurs in the skilled trades is enormous, and more people need to understand that.

What can teachers, community leaders and co-ops do to better identify and support young people interested in a trade career?

Start a “Career Reality Day” where local linemen, meter technicians and substation operators come in and talk real numbers. Not feel-good fluff, but actual wages, benefits, and career paths. When kids hear that a journeyman lineman can make \$80,000 a year without student loan debt, that gets their attention.



RESTORING WINTER OUTAGES

Laura London

It takes a team to manage outages. Lake Region has highly trained individuals in the office and technology departments communicating outage information to crews and members. Electricians and member service employees assist members with problems they are facing on their side of the meter as well as teaming up with the linemen as they brave the elements to restore power during outages.

Thank you to our member-owners for your patience during outage situations. Our goal is to provide you with reliable power all day, every day, even when mother nature has other ideas!

December 4, around 36 Lake Region Electric members and their families woke up with no power to start their day. An underground fault caused the power to go out at around 4:19 a.m. When calls started coming in about the outage, crews were dispatched to assess the situation. The outage was in an area where lines are buried so it took some time to find the break.

Line Superintendent Dan Williams explained the process, “During an underground outage, such as the one east of Waubay in early December, the lineman “sectionalize,” or go step by step, to find the stretch of cable that is bad. Once the bad section is located, they hook up a fault-finding machine that will send a high voltage pulse down the line, a computer in the machine indicates how far away the bad spot in the wire is. The crew then goes to that area and listens for a thumping sound; hence the machine is called a thumper. After the faulty wire is found, they dig it up, cut out the bad spot and splice in a new piece of cable. There are several reasons why cables will fault, such as someone digging and hitting the wire, age of cable, or rodents chewing on cable.

Cable quality and insulation have come a long way; today’s new cable has a protective outside jacket to protect it from rodents.”

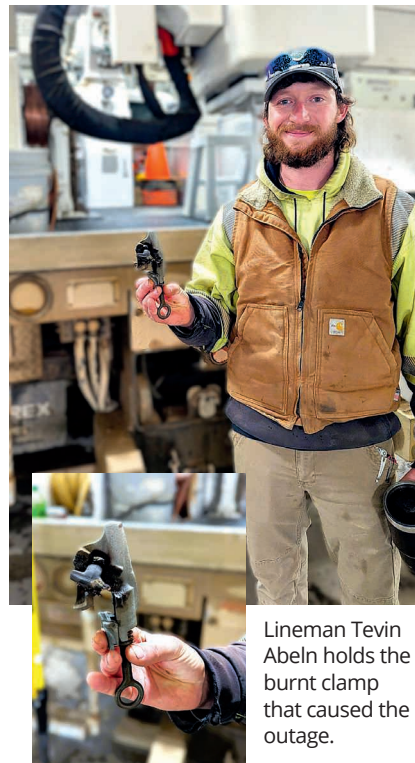
The biggest challenges crews ran into in early December were finding the location of the underground fault and battling the elements. The temperature during this outage ranged between -4 and 17 degrees with wind gusts up to 28mph. Lineman Tyler Aadland said the foot of snow on the ground helped insulate the ground from frost so once the fault was located, it only took him about two minutes to dig the hole. Crews made a quick fix to get power temporarily restored then had to shut the power off for another hour and 45 minutes while they made permanent repairs. Power was out to 37 meters for about 6 hours total that day.

December 18 was a windy day across the upper Midwest with historic “hurricane force winds” recorded in western South Dakota. According to the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration, winds of 74-95 mph are considered a category 1 hurricane. Our neighbors in the Black Hills sustained extensive damage to trees, buildings and powerlines that caused some people to be without power for up to a week.

The wind started to calm slightly by the time it reached Lake Region territory where we saw gusts up to 59 mph. All hands were on deck with concerns about potential damage. We were fortunate enough not to have any major damage and only had one outage. Calls reporting power outages in the Lake City and Roy Lake area started coming in just after 11 a.m. Crews were ready and dispatched immediately but the high wind and blowing snow made for treacherous driving conditions and complicated line patrol to see what sort of damage we had. After a lengthy search, crews discovered a burnt hotline clamp on a

regulator structure just north of Lake City. When the wind and snow are impacting visibility so badly that you can hardly see your hand in front of your face, it’s hard to imagine noticing a small burn on a 4-inch clamp 30 feet up in the air, but our linemen spotted it and set a plan into action to get the power going. Lake Region had to turn the power off to more members in order to safely make necessary repairs but had all power restored by 2 p.m.

Lineman Tevin Abeln braved the weather and was hoisted up in the bucket just when the winds were at their peak speed that day. Facing the wind, because there was no other way, he switched out the clamp and hustled back to the truck. “My eyelashes were frozen shut and even with the face mask on, I think it was a good three days before I regained all the feeling in my nose!” he said. By the time all crews returned to Lake Region headquarters, the guys had thawed enough to make a beeline for the hot cocoa!



Lineman Tevin Abeln holds the burnt clamp that caused the outage.

A QUICK GUIDE TO GENERATORS

With proper use and maintenance, generators provide great convenience during a power outage. Before you purchase a generator, determine your backup power needs to select the right size. Make a list of essential appliances and devices you'll want to power during an outage, then total the required wattage.



RECOMMENDED IF YOU...

... **rarely** lose power.

Recreational Inverter

Up to 2,000 watts

Lightweight, about 60 pounds

Quiet, easy to store

Power: fridge and a few smaller items (i.e. lamp, phone charger and home security system)

Midsized Inverter

Up to 3,500 watts

Weighs up to 150 pounds

Power: fridge, laptop, five to 10 lights, phone charger, home security system and 10K BTU air conditioner

... **occasionally** lose power.
Transfer switch required.

Portable Generators and Large Inverters

Up to 7,500 watts

Weighs about 300 pounds

Power: fridge, gas furnace, 10K BTU air conditioner, dishwasher, multiple lights, TV, laptop and more

Ability to connect to home's breaker panel

... **frequently** lose power.
Transfer switch required.

Home Standby

Up to 20,000 watts

Must be permanently installed; starts automatically during outage

Power: nearly all home appliances and electronics (simultaneously)

Can run indefinitely on natural gas or propane

Recommended if you frequently lose power.

SAFETY FIRST!

- Let us know if you purchase a generator that you plan to connect to an electric panel.
- Improperly installed generators can create back feed, which is dangerous to our crews and the community.
Before using the generator, disconnect the normal source of power coming into your home/business.
- Never operate a generator indoors or in an enclosed space.

Disclaimer: Please note safety requirements may differ based on the type of generator you purchase. Thoroughly read the operator's manual and know how to shut off the generator quickly.

Source: Consumer Reports



UNDERSTANDING THE SOUTHWEST POWER POOL

Basin Electric's trading floor connects the cooperative to the broader wholesale electricity market.
Submitted Photo

Frank Turner
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When looking at the entire electric grid, electric cooperatives are just one component in a much larger system. Understanding how that system works, and how power is planned and shared across the region, provides important context for decisions that affect reliability, long-term infrastructure investments and, ultimately, the cost of electricity.

Southwest Power Pool

Every electric cooperative in South Dakota operates within the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), a regional transmission organization that oversees the grid. Really, electric cooperatives are all essential pieces of a larger,

regional puzzle that keeps the lights on.

SPP manages a wholesale electricity market and operates transmission lines across all or parts of 14 Midwest states, including South Dakota.

In 2015, East River Electric Power Cooperative joined the Southwest Power Pool along with Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the Western Area Power Administration Upper Great Plains Region. This move allowed electricity generators in the state to participate in a larger regional market, making it easier and more efficient to buy and sell energy across the grid.

Electric cooperatives aren't the only utilities operating within this regional system. Investor-owned utilities and

municipal utilities also participate in the SPP, all feeding into the same wholesale electricity market. By sharing transmission lines and following the same market rules, these utilities help create a broader, more flexible grid, allowing power to move long distances to where it's needed most.

"SPP is like a traffic director of electricity, because it doesn't own any assets," said Kristi Fiegen, South Dakota Public Utilities Commissioner and chair of the Southwest Power Pool's Regional State Committee. "They direct traffic and work to make sure the transmission lines and generation are bringing electricity to about 18 million customers on a second-by-second basis. That supply has to equal the demand every single second."

Winter Storm Uri

Another important benefit of participating in SPP is its ability to support the grid during extreme weather or unexpected outages, when regional coordination becomes especially important. Because SPP manages electricity across such a large footprint, the system can draw on resources from far beyond state borders. For example, when a power plant in North Dakota goes offline for routine maintenance, electricity from another state can cover the gap. Likewise, during severe winter weather in the South, generation from the Dakotas can help support the southern part of the grid.

That system maintained regional reliability until Feb. 2021, when it was pushed to its limits by Winter Storm Uri, which caused widespread power outages across Texas. According to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 4.5 million people in Texas lost power during the storm.

“Winter Storm Uri woke up the entire nation, because we didn’t know how vulnerable we were,” said Fiegen.

The storm prompted SPP to reexamine how the grid maintains regional reliability during the winter. Part of that change involved increasing the reserve margin — the extra electric generation capacity kept on hand beyond what is normally needed — to help the system withstand extreme cold and unexpected outages. The goal, according to Fiegen, is to ensure enough power is available across the region, especially on the coldest days of the year.

“Since Winter Storm Uri, we have spent much of our time focused on resource adequacy policies,” Fiegen said, referring to SPP leadership and regulatory committees.

Reserve Margin

One significant change set to take effect in the 2026/2027 winter season is SPP’s adoption of a winter planning reserve margin, which increases the amount of generation required to be available during the winter season. The change will apply across the SPP footprint, including impacts to Basin Electric, which supplies power to cooperatives across South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Minnesota and much of the Midwest.

Through an increased winter reserve margin, the SPP aims to better prepare the entire SPP footprint for extreme weather and periods of unusually high electricity demand, helping ensure reliable power for homes, businesses and industries across the SPP footprint.

So, what does this mean for cooperative members in South Dakota? Valerie Weigel, senior vice president of Energy Markets and Dakota Coal Operations at Basin Electric, said higher reserve margins means Basin Electric needs to supply more generation capacity to the SPP market to meet expected peak winter demands, which affects Basin Electric’s wholesale rates for the cooperatives it serves.

“The increase in reserve margins means we need to build additional generation to ensure we have enough accredited resources to meet new planning requirements,” Weigel said. “As we look toward the rate increase in 2026, part of that increase reflects the cost of adding these resources to meet updated market requirements.”

Learning The Lingo

Transmission

High-voltage power lines and related infrastructure that move electricity long distances from power plants to local utilities. Transmission allows electricity to be shared across regions, especially during emergencies or peak demand.

Generation Capacity

The maximum amount of electricity that a utility’s power plant or portfolio of power plants can produce at one time. Capacity matters most during peak demand, when the grid is under the most strain. This may happen during extreme heat or cold, when people are using more electricity to heat or cool their homes.

Southwest Power Pool (SPP)

A regional transmission organization that coordinates electricity transmission and wholesale power markets across 14 Midwestern states, including South Dakota and Minnesota. SPP does not own power plants or transmission lines; instead, it manages how electricity flows across the regional grid.

Regional Transmission Organization (RTO)

A federally approved organization, like SPP, that operates the electric grid across multiple states. RTOs balance supply and demand, manage wholesale electricity markets and plan for long-term grid reliability.

Reserve Margin

The extra amount of generation capacity kept available above expected peak demand. This extra capacity helps the grid handle extreme weather, unexpected outages or sudden increases in electricity use.

CO-OPS IN THE CLASSROOM IS A SHOCKING EXPERIENCE

Parents of area fourth-graders were likely the recipients of an overload of information regarding electricity and safety just before Christmas break. Jennifer Gross from East River once again teamed up with employees from Lake Region Electric to bring the Co-ops in The Classroom program to area schools. This year we scheduled visits at Langford, Britton-Hecla, Enemy Swim, Webster, and Sunset Colony.

Using fun and engaging methods of teaching, the program safely teaches students ways to conserve electricity, how to be safe around electricity, recognize where electricity comes from and also introduces them to careers in the electrical industry, the cooperative business model and cooperative principles. Gross brings with her some interesting equipment, including a bicycle connected to a small generator showing kids how they can

generate electricity and how much more energy it takes to power an incandescent lightbulb versus a CFL or LED. The other big star of the show is a Van de Graff generator that shows how friction causes static and gives a visual example of naturally occurring electricity. Apologies

to any parents or siblings who became the recipients of their fourth graders dragging their feet across the carpet or rubbing a blanket on their hair just so they could get a thrill out of anyone they “shocked” with their knowledge.

The topic of safety ripples through the entire presentation. The children ask and answer questions and tell stories regarding electricity and safety. The number of students retaining information that they have learned from different safety demonstrations that Lake Region has provided to the communities is increasing from year to year, which is the most important aspect of the program.



ATTENTION Trade Students Do you want free money for school?

Apply now for the Charles Johnson Education & Training Trust Scholarship

Scholarships through the Charles Johnson Trust are awarded to persons who intend to further their education in order to return to the area with the knowledge and skills necessary to flourish in the trades industries.

Criteria for Award

- **Qualifying Course of Study** Examples, not limited to: Precision Machining, Welding, Electronics, Robotics, Energy Technology, Engineering, Construction Management, etc.
- **Positive Character Qualities - Future Goals & Plans Align With Scholarship**
- **Reference from educator or employer**

For information and applications:

- Visit: www.lakeregion.coop
- Contact Laura at Lake Region Electric or Contact Your High School Counselor

Applications Due April 1st



KINGSTON RYAN INTERNS WITH LAKE REGION

Laura London

Kingston Ryan has his sights set on being a lineman. With that goal in mind, he spoke with Line Superintendent Dan Williams to explore the possibility of doing an internship at Lake Region Electric as a part of his Youth Internship class through Webster Area High School. This quarter long class is designed as a capstone experience to help students graduate and become successful beyond high school and requires them to spend roughly 20 hours shadowing at a business. This is just one of many classes that Hannah Ziemer teaches, but it is her favorite, “Webster businesses have been fantastic about taking our Interns under their

wing and showing them the daily routines of how the business or department runs. This is truly one of my favorite courses to teach because the experience the students get is unmatched. They are able to see firsthand what that job entails, make a connection in their chosen career field, and an appreciation for the many business our community has.” Lake Region is dedicated to the education of our youth and community so hosting students and helping them get started on a career path is an excellent opportunity that aligns with cooperative principles.

During his Youth Internship at Lake Region, Kingston spent time shadowing all departments, including office and finance to learn about how a cooperative works and careers other than being a lineman or electrician. While he admitted that was somewhat interesting, it was definitely not something he would be interested in as a career. Kingston was able to spend several hours on a wiring job with electrician Zac Bremmon where he learned more than he expected and really enjoyed his time. Bremmon commented, “He’s smart and pays attention to things. He’s a great kid and I would take him with me again.” The time Kingston spent with the Line department was, by far, his favorite experience. He felt like he learned a lot and was comfortable asking questions. Line superintendent Williams said, “Kingston has the ability to go far in this career path he has chosen to intern. I am confident with the determination and attitude he has brought here to Lake Region every day that you can see this is what he wants to do for a career.” It’s uncertain if Kingston liked climbing trees or going on carnival rides as a child but when asked what the most memorable part of his internship was, Kingston smiled and said, “going up in the bucket!” Kingston has already been accepted to Mitchell Tech’s Power Line program to start this fall.

Students interested in interning at Lake Region are encouraged to contact Lake Region and speak with their teacher about the variety of career opportunities available.





SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE



**LREA/Basin
\$1,500**



**LREA Duane Snaza
Memorial
\$1,000**



**LREA/Basin
\$1,000**

To apply for these scholarship opportunities, students must complete the required criteria and the scholarship application, which can be obtained from your high school counselor, by visiting our website www.lakeregion.coop, or from the Lake Region Electric Association Office. Applicants must provide all of the required information and complete the scholarship application. Submissions **MUST BE POSTMARKED OR RETURNED BY FEB. 14, 2026**, to Lake Region Electric Association, PO Box 341, Webster, SD 57274.

For more information, contact Laura London at Lake Region Electric Association by email: llondon@lakeregion.coop or by telephone: 605-345-3379 or 1-800-657-5869.

Applications and Information:
www.lakeregion.coop

 **Applications due
February 14, 2026**

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



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.

JAN. 30-FEB. 7
Annual Black Hills Stock Show
Central States Fairgrounds
Rapid City, SD
www.centralstatesfairinc.com
605-355-3861

FEB. 1
The Great Lake County Hotdish Competition
11:30-1:30 p.m.
St. Thomas School Gym
Madison, SD
605-256-5308

FEB. 6-7
31st Annual Dinner Theater
Reliance Legion Hall
Reliance, SD
Tickets: 605-730-0553

FEB. 7-8
The Black Market/Formerly Benson's Flea Market
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

FEB. 13-16
12th Annual Frost Fest
Brookings, SD

FEB. 14
Polar Bear Chili Cook-Off
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Hill City, SD

FEB. 20-22
Winterfest
Fireworks, Parade of Lights, Bonfire, Snowshoeing
Lead, SD
www.leadmethere.com/winterfest

FEB. 21
Knights of Columbus Fishing Derby & Raffle
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Enemy Swim Lake, Waubay, SD
605-881-5075

FEB. 21
All Ability Skate
12-3 p.m.
Main Street Square
Rapid City, SD
disabilityaac@rcgov.org

FEB. 21
Bellator Titans Casino Night Fundraiser
6-11 p.m.
City Lights Bar & Event Center
Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 22
C Street Brass
4 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 24
Life as an Astronaut
Free Presentation by NASA
Astronaut Charles Gemar
7-8 p.m.
DSU Science Center
Madison, SD
605-256-5308

MARCH 5
SD Jazz Festival
7:30 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

MARCH 7
Free Christian Men's Event
The Barn at Aspen Acres
8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Spearfish, SD
Register: RiseUpMen.com

MARCH 14
St. Uhro Finnish Festival
11 a.m. Main Street Parade
12 p.m. Community Ctr. Lunch
Lake Norden, SD
605-881-1758

MARCH 20-21
Badlands Quilters Getaway
Fri. 5:30 p.m. Start
Sat. 8 a.m. Start
Wall Community Center
Wall, SD
605-279-2807

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.