



Northern Plains announces annual poster contest

Attention, kids! Grab your art supplies, as Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) sponsors a safety poster contest for children in kindergarten to sixth grade.

The purpose of the safety poster contest is to help make children aware of the dangers of electricity. At NPEC, safety always comes first, and we are dedicated to doing our part to teach children how to be safe around electricity. Winners will be announced on our Facebook page and featured in the NPEC local pages of *North Dakota Living*.

RULES

- Posters must be on white, 8.5x11-inch paper.
- Posters must depict the theme, “How to stay safe around electricity.”
- Print the child’s name, school grade, address and parents’ names on the back of the poster.
- Only dependents of current NPEC members are eligible for this contest.
- The deadline is March 15.

Submit entries to a Northern Plains office (Cando or Carrington) or mail to:
Northern Plains Electric Cooperative
Attn: Poster Contest
P.O. Box 608
Cando, ND 58324

ENTRY CATEGORIES

- Kindergarten to first grade
- Second to third grade
- Fourth to sixth grade

PRIZES IN EACH CATEGORY

- First: \$20
- Second: \$15
- Third: \$10

FEBRUARY 2024

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MAKING A CHANGE? Call your co-op!

Whether you are building a new structure or upgrading an existing service, it is important to communicate with Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) while in the planning stages.

Before any construction takes place regarding the need for new electrical service or changes to existing service, contact NPEC.

Are you planning to add electric heat to your home or workspace? Installing an electric grain dryer? Call NPEC FIRST!

Then, NPEC will be able to ensure placement of any structures will not be near power lines. Safe clearance is essential for all structures. For example, the National Electrical Safety Code requires an 18-foot minimum vertical clearance from the highest point of the filling port of a grain bin to nearby high-voltage wires and a 55-foot minimum distance from the power line to the grain bin wall.

If you are considering a plan for a new grain bin or reconstruction of an existing bin's site, please let us assist you in maintaining a safe environment for you and your family.

We will also make sure the proper electrical equipment is in place to serve any new loads. An upgrade to your electrical service may be required.

NPEC strives to provide affordable, reliable electricity every day. But when members add items that demand a greater amount of electricity, the current system may need to be adjusted.

So, contact NPEC when adding anything requiring a greater amount of electricity to verify the service provided by the cooperative will be sufficient.

And call ahead of time! It's important to be able to plan and implement any changes in the system before the project is completed.

By working together, we can do great things!

And, if you are planning to dig, be sure to call 811 so underground facilities can be marked.

Numerous utility lines may be buried on your property, ranging from electric and telephone lines to water and sewer lines, but North Dakota One Call will help you locate these lines before your project begins.

Contact North Dakota One Call and utility line owners will locate and mark their lines. These locates do not include any lines you may have installed to your private facilities, such as detached garages, wells or yard lights.

Go online at www.ndonecall.com or call 800-795-0555 or 811. ■

Board approves rate adjustment for 2024

BY SETH SYVERSON, GENERAL MANAGER

Rising costs have affected all of the cooperative's members over the past few years and, like you, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) has experienced higher prices for materials, equipment and services.

The NPEC board of directors approved an increase to the monthly service availability charge of \$2, which took effect on Jan. 1. Members who have uncontrolled electric heat and off-peak heat will also see a small

increase to their energy rate.

This increase will help offset the rising costs of materials, along with power supply increases, which is the cooperative's largest expense. In addition, large power accounts will see a slight increase to the demand charge as a passthrough from our power supplier.

The cooperative strives to keep rates affordable for the membership and to minimize the impacts of rising costs to your electric bill. ■

December 2023 ice storm summary

In the early hours of Dec. 26, 2023, an ice storm hit the southern part of Northern Plains Electric Cooperative's (NPEC) system. The freezing rain wreaked havoc on our system for days. Crews were finding more than 2 inches of ice around overhead wires, hardware and transformers.



As the number of members without power continued to grow, the cooperative called extra crews from the northern part of the system, plus lineworkers from Legacy Power Line, and requested mutual aid from our cooperative neighbor, Capital Electric Cooperative, Bismarck. On Dec. 27, the cooperative had a high of 1,704 members without power.

Due to the icy road conditions, crews had a difficult time traveling to outages and accessing damaged equipment. The ice buildup on trees and branches resulted in damage to lines, insulators and crossarms. In addition, the weight of the ice on the lines caused over 120 poles to fail, and as many as 25 poles were down in one section of overhead line. Members also experienced outages due to ice buildup to our power providers' transmission lines that caused loss of service to area substations.

Once the sun came out, the ice started to melt off the lines. However, as the ice fell, lines slapped together,

causing additional outages.

There were so many factors happening at once, it was difficult to tell the members an estimated time they'd be without power, said Brittnee Wilson, who directs communications for the cooperative.

The cooperative did its best to keep members updated, with multiple daily outage updates on its Facebook page and website.

The majority of the outages occurred in Stutsman County, but members experienced outages in the surrounding four counties. Power was restored to members on Dec. 31, with only a few limited-use services still out. The cooperative's engineering and line crews performed an in-depth line patrol and cleanup, which extended throughout January.

"As damaging as this ice event was to the distribution system and the extensive outages experienced by members, we were fortunate the wind did not blow and the ice had time to melt," said General Manager Seth Syverson. "The cooperative has invested in converting overhead distribution to underground over the past years, specifically the main three-phase lines out of the substations. We will continue down this path to further aid in preventing outages due to extreme weather events."

On Jan. 1, six NPEC lineworkers volunteered to give mutual aid to our cooperative neighbors, Dakota Valley Electric Cooperative, who had well over 1,000 broken poles in its system.

The cooperative thanks Capital Electric Cooperative and Legacy Power Line for their support, as well as the membership for their patience and understanding through the ice event. ■

December 2023 ice storm facts

- Six-day outage event
- Members were without power maximum of five days
- 1,704 members without power at one time
- 155 broken poles
- 31 lineworkers working 15-hour shifts
- 17 NPEC, 10 Legacy Powerline and four Capital Electric Cooperative lineworkers
- Two dispatchers working 15-hour shifts
- Six office employees answering over 1,800 outage-related phone calls
- Three engineers doing line patrol
- IT department answering generator questions
- Four office employees behind the scenes logging storm damage
- Six NPEC lineworkers providing mutual aid to Dakota Valley Electric Cooperative after restoration of Northern Plains' outages



***Janice Munson**, a retired cook from the Grace City school, continues to work in the same kitchen turned into the Schoolhouse Café as meal leader for the Grace City senior citizens group. The café prepares a lunch for the senior citizens three times a week.*

Grace City supports community café

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

Walking through the doors of the former Grace City school, you will find class photographs on the wall, as the years of accomplishments proudly displayed in the trophy case lead down the hallway to the community café.

You read that correctly – café, not cafeteria. When the town of Grace City, with a population of 50, lost its only restaurant, community members rallied to find an answer. And the perfect solution was setting empty – to utilize the former school and turn the cafeteria into a community café. It still held all the major appliances needed to operate a restaurant.

The former K-12 school closed in 1991 due to declining enrollment. Grace City joined other neighboring towns in Foster County with low enrollment to form Midkota Public School in 1992.

In 1995, the Grace City Betterment group was formed to operate a community nonprofit café, aptly named the Schoolhouse Café. The organization’s mission is to offer opportunities for local residents to obtain food services, employment and participate in community growth activities. It also hopes to advance the local economy,

organizations and individuals.

Lisa McCracken, who is one of four management board members under Grace City Betterment, calls the café “a staple in our community.”

The unique gathering place allows individuals and families to come together to get a warm meal in a welcoming setting. It is also a place to connect with neighbors. With the chalkboards still hung on the walls and the “ABCs” painted as trim around the room, the café holds a nostalgic schoolhouse charm.

The café, which is a Northern Plains Electric Cooperative member, is open seven days a week, serving breakfast and lunch with an all-you-can-eat buffet on Sundays.

The menu is a typical café selection, but with generous servings. The themed menu lists items such as “alumni sandwiches,” “varsity baskets” and “top of the class dinners.” The most popular items are the cheeseburger baskets, but many agree whatever you choose to order, you will be pressed to find homemade food as delicious elsewhere.

The café, being one of a handful of businesses in

The Schoolhouse Café, located in the old cafeteria of the Grace City school, is open seven days a week.



town, is boosting the local economic development by employing seven people between cooks and servers. During the winter, many of the employees are those who have retired doing their part to help keep the café going.

Generations of labor and love

Cindy Meehan is a retired nurse and former school cook who spends her retired days helping the café as a server and fill-in cook. Meehan’s mother, Janice Munson, who cooked for the Grace City school for over 17 years, joins Meehan in the café kitchen as she helps prep the senior citizen meals provided through the Schoolhouse Café. Three days a week, seniors are welcome to enjoy a hot meal provided to them in a classroom next door to the café. Meals are also prepared, packaged and delivered to the neighboring towns of Glenfield and McHenry.

As the mother and daughter reminisced about days at the Grace City school, Munson revealed her mother, Jenny, was also a cook for the Grace City school for over 28 years. Meehan joked she “couldn’t get away with anything” during her school years, with Mom and Grandma in the kitchen.

Rounding out the family tree, Meehan’s daughter, Katie Larson, volunteers on the management board of the café and finds herself pitching in where needed, and Meehan’s teenage granddaughter also serves at the café during her summer breaks. That’s five generations

of women who have poured themselves into providing nutritious food to school kids or community members at the Grace City school.

A helping hand

During a lunch rush when the staff is overwhelmed with customers, they are not at all surprised to see community members get up and start clearing tables or helping refill drinks.

“If they follow us in the door, they turn the lights on and make the coffee. It’s a community thing,” Meehan says.

It’s not just the individual community members, but also the local businesses who contribute to the café success.

“At times, if we need something at the café, the businesses in town are really good about helping out,” McCracken says. She named a few items the businesses have purchased for the café over the years, from smaller items like a mop or rug to an ice cream machine.

“The community gets involved. They step in when they see help needs to be given,” she says.

Although the school bell no longer rings, the Schoolhouse Café brings life to the community. Because the community of Grace City supports the café, there will always be a place where strangers can become friends. A place to promote a sense of goodwill among neighbors. A notion that good things may happen when centered around a table. ■

How extreme winter weather impacts reliability

When outdoor temperatures drop, our electricity use increases. That's because we're doing more activities inside. Our heating systems are operating longer and more often to counteract colder outdoor temperatures. And we all tend to use electricity at the same times in the morning and early evenings, which equals a lot of strain on our electric grid.

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) works closely with our local generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative in resource and infrastructure planning to ensure you have the power you need whenever you flip a switch, but the electric grid is much larger than your local co-op and G&T.


In winter months, when even more electricity is being used simultaneously across the country, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially if an unexpected event like a sudden snow or ice storm or an equipment malfunction occurs. If this happens, which is rare, the grid operator for our region of the country may call for rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the grid, and NPEC will inform you about the situation.

NPEC and our G&T take proactive steps to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather, including regular system maintenance, grid modernization efforts and disaster response planning, but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.

BEST BETS FOR

Winter Savings

Energy consumption spikes during winter months as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid by conserving during peak energy times. Reducing energy use will also help lower your energy bills.

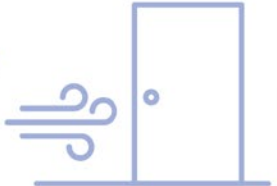



UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE

Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.

ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS

Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.






MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT

Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.


USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER

Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before you go to bed.



LOWER THE THERMOSTAT

Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).



To help keep the heat on, here are a few things you can do to relieve pressure on the grid (and save a little money along the way):

- Select the lowest comfortable thermostat setting and turn it down several degrees whenever possible. Your heating system must run longer to make up the difference between the thermostat temperature and the outdoor temperature.
- Seal air leaks around windows and exterior doors with caulk and weatherstripping. Air leaks and drafts force your heating system to work harder than necessary.
- Stagger your use of major appliances such as dishwashers, ovens and dryers.
- Start the dishwasher before you go to bed and use smaller countertop appliances, like slow cookers and air fryers, to save energy.
- Ensure your heating system is optimized for efficiency with regular maintenance and proper insulation.
- Make sure your furnace filter isn't clogged and dirty. Replace it as needed.
- When possible, use cold water to reduce water heating costs.
- Setting your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees can help you save energy and reduce mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.
- Unplug devices when not in use to eliminate unnecessary energy use. Even when turned off, electronics in standby mode consume energy.
- Plug devices into a power strip, so you can turn them all off at once with the push of a button.

As we face the challenges posed by winter weather, understanding its impact on energy demand is crucial

for maintaining a reliable power supply. By adopting energy conservation practices during periods of extreme cold, not only can you save money on your electric bills, but you can also each contribute to the resilience of the power grid, keeping our local community warm and connected. ■



Play to win contest

\$25 credit

from Northern Plains Electric Cooperative

Congratulations to Dennis Swanson of Carrington.

Dennis is our latest winner of a \$25 bill credit for playing the December bill insert word search contest. Members can regularly check bill inserts for future contests.

Regularly check bill inserts for future contests

Operation Round Up totals \$36,650 in grants for 2023



At its December meeting, the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) Operation Round Up board of directors approved grants totaling \$10,200 to help support worthy causes. A total of \$36,650 was distributed in 2023.

These charitable grants are made possible through the generosity of NPEC members who voluntarily elect to have their electric bills rounded up to the next dollar. The donated amount averages about 50 cents a month for each participating member and raises approximately \$37,000 each year. Since the program's

beginning in October 1998, grants totaling \$936,887 have been awarded to 1,291 local charitable causes.

Grants approved in December include:

- Kelly Jo Sand, Cando, medical expenses
- Jarrid Wanzek, Courtney, medical expenses
- Myron and Kristie Desjarlais, Rolla, medical expenses
- Jeremy Olson, Cando, medical expenses
- Connie Speldrich, Sykeston, medical expenses
- Dan and Deb Higgins, Bisbee, medical expenses
- Fathers Farm, Wolford, construction for staff housing
- Alano Society, Jamestown, AED project
- Elks Camp Grassick, Dawson, accessible technology
- Fred C. Wagner Post 235, Rolla, rebuild post after fire
- Frontier Village, Jamestown, new playground

If you would like additional information about this worthy program, please contact NPEC by calling 800-882-2500 or obtain guidelines or download applications at www.nplains.com. The board will meet again in March to review applications. The application deadline is Feb. 20. ■



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

An equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Cando, ND 58324

CARRINGTON OFFICE:
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