

Summer electrical safety tips

It's finally summer! As you prepare for backyard barbecues, family outings, lake days and poolside fun, remember these important tips to make sure it's a safe summer.

- Keep electrical devices away from the pool or any water source. Water and electricity don't mix! This includes pools, hot tubs, bathtubs, sprinklers, sinks and more.
- Stay away from plugged-in devices when your hands are wet.
- Never allow swimming near the boat, marina or launching ramp. Residual current could flow into the water from the boat or the marina's wiring, potentially putting anyone in the water at risk of electric shock drowning.
- Always use safety caps on electrical outlets near water.
- When possible, use ground-fault circuit interrupter outlets to protect yourself and your electrical appliances outdoors.
- Whether you're fishing or flying a kite, stay clear of overhead power lines.
- Never let kids (or adults) climb trees near power lines.
- Call 811 before you dig. Whether you're planting a tree or digging a post hole, it's critical to know what's underground. It's free, safe and it's the law.

JULY 2024

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A concern for reliability and costs

BY SETH SYVERSON, GENERAL MANAGER



Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) takes seriously our commitment to providing reliable, affordable electricity to your family, farm or business when you need it.

Your electric cooperative works every day to control what it can control, so you have reliable power. From trimming trees to regular pole testing and upgrading aging infrastructure, these investments help ensure our local electric system is reliable.

Of course, some things are out of your cooperative's control. Like the weather. But we know how to weather storms. Our line crews are prepared and trained to respond to outages in bad weather.

Other issues arise, too. Those which we cannot control, but may influence. What am I talking about? Regulation. Legislation. Politics. Because each affects electric cooperatives, NPEC is a member of national and statewide electric cooperative associations, which advocate for policies that benefit electric cooperatives. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association is our voice in Washington, D.C., and the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives is our advocate in North Dakota.

We do our best to avoid political talk in your electric co-op magazine, but sometimes critical national or state issues arise that can't – and shouldn't – be avoided.

In April, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released new power plant rules, which threaten U.S.

electric reliability and would force the premature retirement of reliable, dispatchable, baseload electric generation assets. It's the most pressing issue electric cooperatives face today.

Why? And how does it affect you?

EPA RULES

The EPA rules aim to cut emissions from power plants by imposing unrealistic timelines and relying on technology not yet deployable.

To operate past the start of 2039, the new regulations require existing coal-fired power plants to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 90% by 2032. To do so requires coal plants to deploy carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) technologies. Though promising and actively being pursued by electric cooperatives, CCS is not yet proven or commercially available. Coal plants unable to meet the new emission standards would be forced to close. New natural gas units must also meet the new standards.

HOW IT AFFECTS YOU

NPEC and our power supplier have mechanisms in place to mitigate risk and keep our local electric system reliable.

One of the ways this is accomplished is with a diverse energy portfolio. The electricity you use at any given time may be powered by a variety of energy sources – environmentally beneficial renewables such as wind and solar, hydro, natural gas or coal. The resources complement each other. If one energy source is unavailable, there is usually another source available to compensate.

Coal has long provided our members with always available, low-cost power. A future without coal, with the technologies available today, is a threat to the reliability you enjoy as a member of this cooperative.

Simply put: The EPA power plant rules jeopardize our ability to keep the lights on. It will lead to higher costs and uncertainty for families and businesses.

Know that NPEC and electric cooperatives nationwide are working hard to protect your interests. We will continue to push back on these problematic rules. We will continue to seek solutions to reliability challenges. And we will never forget our commitment to you. ■

Pay-by-phone number has changed

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) provides many ways to pay your monthly electric bill. For those who pay by phone, please note the phone number has changed to 855-963-3619.

Simply call the toll-free number and follow the prompts to guide you through the easy payment process. This free option is an automated service that takes payments 24 hours a day.

Other convenient ways to pay:

- **Mobile app.** Download the SmartHub app on your Apple or Android device. First-time customers must set up a username and password. You can pay your bill, view electricity usage and more!
- **Online.** If you do not want to create an online account, you can simply make a one-time quick payment by visiting our website, www.nplains.com. Payment options include e-check, Visa, Mastercard or Discover.
- **Autopay.** This is the easiest way to pay your bill. Autopay automatically transfers funds from your checking account or credit/debit card on or around the 15th of each month. You'll still receive monthly statements, but you won't have to write a check!
- **Mail.** You can mail a check or money order payment to: P.O. Box 608, Cando, ND 58324.
- **In person.** Payments can be made in person at either the Cando or Carrington office during business hours from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

- **Dropbox.** Can't make it to the office during business hours? Drop off your payment any hour of the day at either the Cando or Carrington office using the dropbox conveniently placed at the main entrance.
- **Pay cash:** VanillaDirect Pay is a safe, convenient and secure service to pay cash at participating retailers. By using the personal barcode found on your monthly utility bill, you can make a payment up to a maximum amount of \$500 with a transaction fee of \$1.50. Participating retailers include Dollar General, Walmart and Family Dollar. Find more participating locations on our website. ■



PAY-BY-PHONE: 855-963-3619

Account # _____

1-800-882-2500 www.nplains.com

For your convenience, cut out the card provided to reference when using the pay-by-phone option for your Northern Plains Electric Cooperative utility bill.





KX/Co-op Day at the North Dakota State Fair

Wednesday, July 24
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Drawings for cash & prizes throughout the day

Sponsored by:

- North Dakota Coordinating Council for the Cooperatives (NDCCC)
- KX News
- North Dakota State Fair

Free breakfast 7:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.
Ice cream social 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.



Bob David has been an integral part of Northern Plains Electric Cooperative's tree maintenance program.

Clearing a path to reliability

BY BRITTNEE WILSON



Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. That's why Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable

electricity. Enter Bob David.

David started working for the cooperative when it was known as Baker Electric Cooperative in 1997. He was hired as summer help on the Rolla tree maintenance crew. His first day on the job was the day after he and his wife welcomed their first child into the world.

After that summer, David's temporary position ended, and he planned to move back to Minnesota. His bags were packed and the car was loaded, but fate intervened. Just before the David family drove away, he received a phone call from the general manager asking

him to work for the cooperative full time.

"This was back before cellphones. If he didn't catch me when he did, I would have been long gone," David says.

He expressed how relieved he was. He liked North Dakota and he loved his job.

"I just love cutting the trees. I love clearing the line," David says. "There is so much satisfaction in it."

On a typical day for a tree maintenance crew member, David first "finds his spot," which comes from a tip from either the lineworkers, dispatch or by his own scouting.

"Linemen do line patrol. I do tree patrol," David jokes.

He looks for brush and trees under the right of way of the power lines. The standard right of way for a power line is 15 feet on each side of the line. Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events. Clearing

the underbrush also makes a path for bucket trucks to access the area in case lineworkers are needed to repair the line.

“My goal was to do the best I can. The best for the co-op, the best for the member, the best for the linemen, the best for everyone,” David says.

David finds great satisfaction in his “before” and “after” photos of each job. He also enjoys making modifications to his machine for better performance.

“I would make improvements on the skidsteer to make my job easier. I’ve never seen anyone else do the things I have done,” he says.

Over the years, David logged countless hours in the skidsteer, becoming an expert on the machine, which caught the attention of others throughout the industry.

In 2019, David was called to lend his expertise, demonstrating a forestry unit of Diamond Mowers from Sioux Falls, S.D. The next year, Bobcat sent professionals and engineers to watch David use a

skidsteer with the company’s forestry unit which was not yet on the market. The machine was hooked to logistics, recording performance readings with David’s every move.

David was honored Bobcat asked him to help and that he was able to give his input on how to make the machine operate better.

This April, after 26 years with the cooperative, David decided to hang up his hard hat and retire.

What’s next for David? In addition to spending more time with his wife, Alexandra, and their eight children, he has plans of working with, yes, trees. Trees are a big part of his life, and he isn’t ready to part ways just yet. He would like to start a sawmill, and it has always been his dream to build a little Lincoln log cabin.

The cooperative thanks Bob for his years of service and dedication to keeping the right of way clear.

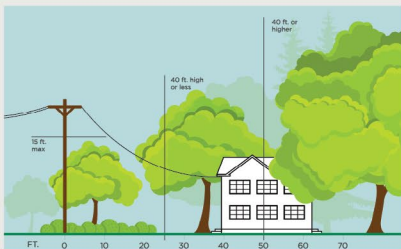
“It’s been a great run. I hope I did right by everybody getting those trees out,” he says. ■

3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

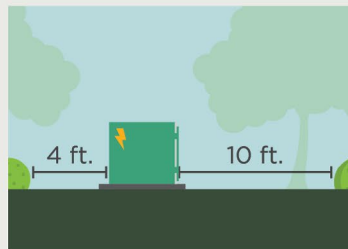
Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them.

Here’s how you can help:

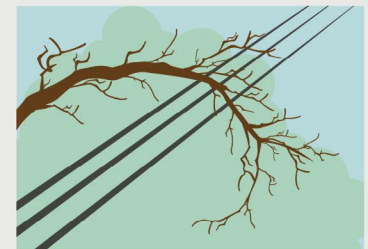
1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



2. Don’t block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



Trimming improves safety for all.

Let’s work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.



Connecting to the grid? Tell your co-op!

Electric cooperatives maintain a safe, reliable electric grid to power the members they serve. But some electric cooperative members own electric generation systems, or they may be interested in purchasing or installing a system, such as solar panels, wind turbines, energy storage batteries or diesel generators.

Consumer-owned generation systems are known as distributed energy resources (DER). DER technologies generate or store electricity and are interconnected to a utility's electric distribution system.

Because DER utilize the local distribution system and existing infrastructure, electric cooperatives set their own DER policies, which may include buyback rates for excess energy produced. Interconnection agreements are also required before members can safely connect their system to the local grid. The agreement is intended to ensure safe, reliable and quality electric service for all.

Electric co-ops are prepared to assist members with DER, while still maintaining the safety of the grid. If you're considering a grid-connected DER for your home, contact Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) first. Members should review applicable metering rates and learn the co-op's DER policies.

But be aware, members sometimes think they may save significant money, or even make money, by installing a DER system. And they become disappointed when that doesn't happen.

Do your research

NPEC does not install solar generation systems for members. However, we will work with members and their contractors or agents to assist with the interconnection process. Members installing DER should conduct a site assessment and work with a qualified installer.

We want to help you choose a system that includes

the safety and power quality components necessary to keep you, co-op crews and members of the community safe.

If a storm hits and a power outage occurs, DER must be able to properly disconnect from the electric grid to ensure lineworkers are not injured or electrocuted while restoring power.

For example, a solar panel pumping energy onto the grid while lineworkers are restoring power down the line could potentially put the safety of those lineworkers at risk.

Along with safety issues, equipment must also meet federal, state and local codes.

Do your research. It is the responsibility of the member and contractor to determine the optimal DER capacity to fit the member's needs. Here is a tool that can help determine the size of a solar installation: <https://pvwatts.nrel.gov>.

Electric cooperatives also do not allow systems to be connected if there are submeters at the location. When submeters are present, it is impossible to accurately measure your electricity use. This is an important issue, because removing a submeter could result in increased expenses for the member.

Anyone with questions should contact NPEC. ■



Annual poster contest winners announced

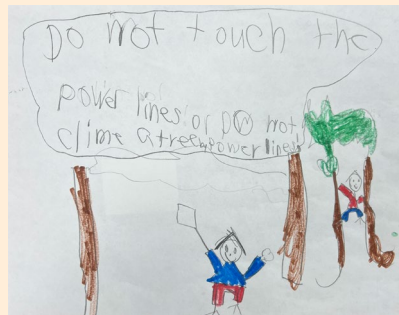
Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) hosted its sixth annual safety poster contest, asking for members' children to depict "how to stay safe around electricity."

Nearly 30 children entered their drawings, with a wide variety of scenes showing safety precautions taken at their home or farm. The posters were judged by NPEC employees and winning entries are displayed here. ■

Kindergarten-first grade



First place
Leo Swanson, Cando



Second place
Dwayne Skjerva, Cando

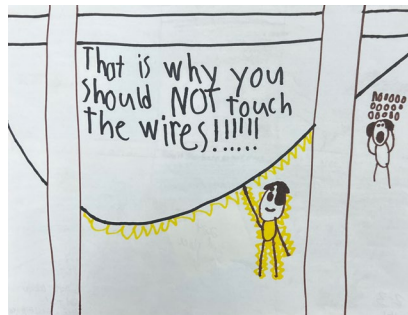


Third place
Michael David, Cando

Second-third grade



First place
Julius Vandal, Perth

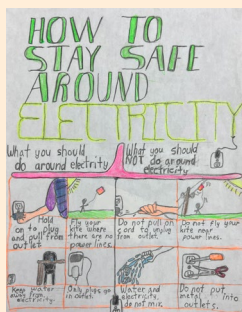


Second place
Gage Weiss, Bowdon



Third place
Aiden van Graan, Wolford

Fourth-sixth grade



First place
Lerissa Jackson, Harvey



Second place
Noelle Heinle, Buchanan



Third place
Anna Kirkeide, York

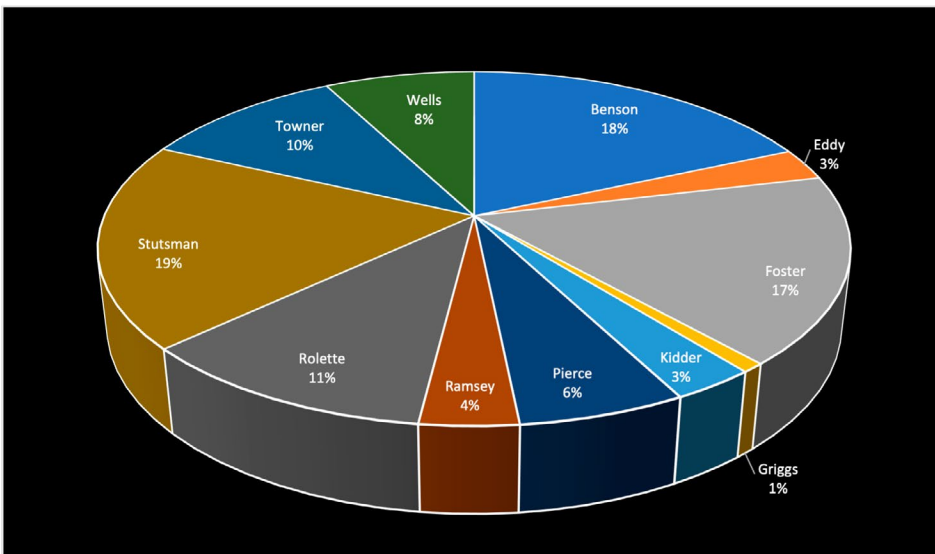
Co-op paid \$349,736 in taxes this year

Eleven counties served by Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) are the beneficiaries of taxes the cooperative pays yearly.

In 2024, NPEC paid \$349,736 in taxes to the 11 counties in our service area. The tax money comes from the electric distribution tax, which taxes how much electricity we sell. The electric distribution taxes are paid in lieu of property taxes on the cooperative's

overhead and underground power lines. The money is distributed to counties based on electricity sales and miles of power line in each county. This ensures each county receives a fair share of the taxes.

In addition, NPEC pays property taxes on the headquarters and outpost buildings it owns in Rolla, Cando, Maddock, Rugby, Carrington, Robinson, Woodworth and Jamestown. ■



This graph shows the percentage of the cooperative's electric distribution taxes paid in lieu of property taxes in 2024 - \$349,736 - each county received.

Kilowatt-hours sold:

437,170,606

Miles of power line:

6,648

Counties served by NPEC:

Benson, Eddy, Foster, Griggs, Kidder, Pierce, Ramsey, Rolette, Stutsman, Towner and Wells

NORTHERN PLAINS

Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

An equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Cando, ND 58324

CARRINGTON OFFICE:
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