



Interested in running for the board of directors?

Nine board members make up Northern Plains Electric Cooperative's (NPEC) board of directors, which sets policies and makes decisions to guide the cooperative into the future. With the annual meeting just a few short months away, now is the time for members to start thinking about whether they have the time and desire to serve their electric cooperative.

The board meets on the fourth Monday of each month to make decisions regarding budget, policy, rates and other co-op business. Meetings alternate between the Carrington and Cando offices and typically last a good share of the day. In addition to monthly meetings, NPEC directors often attend meetings and conferences of the statewide association. Directors are compensated for their time.

To run for director, members must:

1. Receive NPEC electric service at your primary residential abode and you may only run in the district in which you reside.
2. Obtain a petition from our offices in either

- Carrington or Cando or call for one to be mailed.
3. Obtain at least 15 signatures from NPEC members.
4. Submit a petition by April 10.
5. Attend the annual meeting on June 11 in Cando.

For more information, call 800-882-2500 or email justask@nplains.com. ■

MARCH 2024

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Rosenkrans



Omlie



Halko

NPEC lineworkers graduate

Congratulations to Northern Plains Electric Cooperative lineworkers James Rosenkrans, Jordan Omlie and Leopold Halko for graduating from the apprenticeship program offered through the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC). They were three of the 17 graduates from across North Dakota recognized at the January awards ceremony of the Apprenticeship, Training and Safety Conference.

“On behalf of NDAREC, I’d like to congratulate this year’s graduates,” says NDAREC Executive Vice President and General Manager Josh Kramer. “The apprenticeship program is a critical pipeline for developing lineworkers in the technical and professional aspects of the job. Many graduates will work the remainder of their careers in the electric cooperative system. The paid on-the-job training and education apprentices receive is a fundamental aspect of our workforce, which helps build generational greatness in our industry.”

Over the past 65 years, more than 700 people have completed NDAREC’s apprenticeship program. To graduate, apprentices must complete 8,000 hours of on-the-job training and more than 400 hours of study.

NDAREC is the statewide trade association for 17 electric distribution cooperatives and five

generation and transmission cooperatives operating in North Dakota. The distribution cooperatives provide electricity to more than 250,000 North Dakotans. NDAREC services include legislative advocacy, lineworker safety training and professional development services, cooperative business development, and communication services including publication of *North Dakota Living*. ■

BENEFITS OF TREE TRIMMING

- ✓ Improves service reliability
- ✓ Speeds up restoration time
- ✓ Keeps crews & communities safe





Easements 101

As North Dakota's electric cooperatives continue to meet power needs across the state, they must seek easements from property owners.

What is an easement?

Easements are legal documents allowing an electric cooperative to install either overhead or underground power line across a member's property for the benefit of the community.

"If you have power to your house, at some point, somebody had to give an easement to get power to your place," says North Central Electric Cooperative General Manager Jon Beyer.

The landowner still owns the property, but the easement allows access for repairs and maintenance once the line has been installed.

When a line is switched from overhead to underground, a new easement is needed as well.

"Typically, we try to stay right on the edge of private property to have minimal disturbance to the property," Beyer says.

What is the process?

First, the cooperative must locate the landowner, which is often the most difficult task when owners live out of state. Sometimes, a tax record search is needed to locate a landowner.

The landowner is then contacted and details are discussed.

"We talk about how it's going to affect the land, where the power line will be placed, if they have any recommendations. We take that all into consideration," Beyer says.

A document is completed, signed and filed with the county recorder's office, so the easement follows along with any land sales.

Once a line is in place, maintenance within the easement may include repairing equipment, restoring equipment following a storm or cutting and trimming trees under and near the overhead lines. Keeping the lines free from trees reduces outages and maintains a safe clearance from electrical hazards and service reliability.

Landowners may experience easement fatigue if they're repeatedly being asked for easements for various infrastructure, but your electric cooperative understands.

"Electric cooperatives want to do the right thing for the landowners, because we live in the communities and we are going to be here for years to come. So, we want to make sure we do a really good job of securing the easement, securing the needs for the member and making sure the landowner is happy with how we're going to proceed with any type of power line," Beyer says. ■



Record number of farm equipment hit power infrastructure

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

The number of times farm machinery has struck and damaged Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) infrastructure has increased dramatically over the past 10 years.

Justin Kollman, NPEC safety coordinator and dispatcher, reports there was a record high 78 recorded public accidents to NPEC's equipment in 2023.

"Over half of the accidents involved our highline poles," Kollman says.

The 2023 incidents also included overhead line damage, digging into underground infrastructure and damage to an underground cabinet.

There are several reasons why such accidents are becoming more frequent. One reason is the use of

auto-steer systems and operators not paying attention. In times of low commodity prices and seeking higher yields, farmers are seeding as much ground as possible. Sometimes, that means machinery gets dangerously close to electrical structures in rights of way. NPEC suggests staying at least 10 feet away from all electrical infrastructures.

Another factor is farm equipment, such as cultivators, seeders and combine headers, are much larger today. Many are 80 feet or wider, which makes it more difficult to maneuver. Wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can cause one to lose control of equipment. NPEC suggests always lowering equipment extensions to their lowest possible level before moving

or transporting them.

Lastly, many farms have newer operators, who may be unfamiliar with the machinery or the risks in a particular field. NPEC urges farmers to give safety the highest priority and make sure everyone who operates equipment is trained on electrical hazards to help prevent accidents and injuries. Know the location of power lines in your fields to make sure you have adequate clearance as you go about your work.

Incidents not only interrupt electrical service, but they can also be costly and could possibly cost a life.

“It’s not just about the damage to our electrical infrastructures, it’s the issue of safety,” Kollman says.

Understand the dangers of downed power lines

If any equipment you’re operating should come into direct contact with a power line, call the cooperative to report it and stay until help arrives. Wait until the electricity is turned off before exiting the equipment. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and ground simultaneously. If you must escape, jump far away from the vehicle and land with both feet on the ground. Do not touch the exposed

vehicle, then hop or shuffle your feet across the ground until you’re safely away from the affected area – at least 40 feet.

Farmers should also consider having a couple fire extinguishers rated for electrical fires, one in the cab and one outside the cab.

Cost of repairs

While safety is NPEC’s No. 1 concern, there are other factors to consider, including the cost to the operator-owner in the case of an accident.

NPEC Accountant Tami Aljets says the replacement of electrical equipment can vary in cost, based on the type of damage that has occurred and what type of electrical equipment was damaged, such as transformers, poles, overhead lines and underground lines. Other factors include working conditions, equipment used and if lineworkers were called after hours to make the repairs, along with the significant increase in materials.

Time is a big factor when farming, but it’s important to take a little extra time when working around power lines and poles. NPEC urges farmers to keep our phone number handy: 800-882-2500. ■





Prepare for tax season with SmartHub

Print copies of your monthly utility bills for your tax records by logging into SmartHub! Visit www.nplains.com and click “SmartHub Login” on the homepage, then proceed to your billing history.

If you have not signed up for SmartHub, you can set up a new, secure account for free by visiting our website or downloading the mobile app to your device.

In SmartHub, one can view billing and payment history, set bill reminders, compare usage schedule and make payments. By monitoring and comparing energy usage, members can see how home energy changes from bill to bill and learn how personal habits and behaviors impact your monthly energy usage.

Contact Northern Plains Electric Cooperative if you have questions or need help signing up for SmartHub. ■

North Dakota offers property tax credit



SCAN ME

North Dakota homeowners may receive up to a \$500 tax credit on next year’s property tax statement. There is no age or income restrictions. The property must be the resident’s primary home. To apply, visit tax.nd.gov/prc or use the QR code. The deadline to apply is March 31.



Five ways to save energy when working from home

Today, more Americans are working from home than ever before. More time spent at home means more energy used throughout the day.

If you're punching the clock from home, there are small steps you can take to reduce your energy use and save on electric bills. Here are five easy ways to save energy when working from home.

- Plugging in your most-used devices, like computers, monitors and routers, to a smart power strip ensures these devices aren't drawing power when they're not in use. Smart power strips also give you the option to select which devices should stay in "always-on" mode.
- If your home office includes printers and scanners, you're probably not using these electronics every day. In this case, unplug your least-used electronics and devices, since many of these draw energy even when they're not being used.
- If you're looking to purchase new equipment for your workspace, look for the ENERGY STAR® label to ensure you're getting the most energy-efficient features. Computers, monitors, imaging equipment and other office electronics that receive the ENERGY STAR® rating include power management features to

make saving energy easy, and most are designed to run cooler and last longer.

- It's still chilly out there, so take advantage of natural light and additional warmth from the sun. When you're working during the day, open blinds, curtains and other window coverings to let natural light in. And don't forget to turn off the lights to reduce energy use!
- Home heating makes up a significant portion of your energy bills. Turn the thermostat down a couple degrees during the day to reduce energy use and save money. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting the thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler during winter months. You're more likely to stay focused and alert when it's cooler in your home, so all the more reason to mind the thermostat.

Working from home doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bills, and whether you're working remotely or not, these practical tips can help everyone reduce their energy use.

Contact Northern Plains Electric Cooperative if you have questions about your bills or want additional information about saving energy at home. ■



Last call for poster contest

Attention kids! Grab your art supplies! Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) is sponsoring 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 Northern Plains local pages of *North Dakota Living*.

- Only dependents of current NPEC members are eligible for this contest.
- Deadline is March 15. Submit entries to an NPEC office (Cando or Carrington) or mail to:

**Northern Plains Electric
Attn: Poster Contest
P.O. Box 608
Cando, ND 58324**

ENTRY CATEGORIES

- Kindergarten and first grade
- Second and third grade
- Fourth, fifth and sixth grade

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.

PRIZES IN EACH CATEGORY

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



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

An equal opportunity provider and employer.

CANDO OFFICE:
609 4th Ave.
Cando, ND 58324

OFFICE HOURS:
Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

CARRINGTON OFFICE:
1515 West Main
Carrington, ND 58421

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