

# Welcome back, students!



**A**s the new school year kicks off, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) shares the many educational opportunities provided to students. You can find more information on each program by visiting our website, [www.nplains.com](http://www.nplains.com), or be sure to read future issues of *North Dakota Living* for announcements. Any questions can be directed toward Brittnee at 800-882-2500.

## Power plant tour program

A full-day tour provides students with great insight into one of North Dakota's brightest and

*continued on next page*

**SEPTEMBER 2024**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Grain bin safety
- 20 years of JunkFest
- What to know about power restoration



*continued from previous page*

most important industries. Students will come away with an understanding of the complexity of generating electricity and will learn about the many job opportunities available in North Dakota's energy industry. To help defray costs, the co-op offers financial assistance to schools located within NPEC's service area that book a tour.

## Scholarships

The Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship program recognizes and encourages the academic achievements of students in the region. It also serves as an investment in the economic future of rural areas. Together with Basin Electric, a \$1,000 scholarship is given to one lucky winner of an NPEC member dependent each year.

Additional scholarship opportunities have been given at our annual meeting in a luck-of-the-draw format.

## Electric Cooperative Youth Tour

This essay-writing contest is an opportunity for one lucky winner to enjoy a week filled with educational

learning and sightseeing in an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of NPEC.

## Kids safety poster contest

By hosting a safety poster contest, NPEC intends to initiate conversations between children and parents/teachers about the dangers of electricity and ways one should practice safety. The yearly contest is open to elementary-aged students, and the cooperative offers cash prizes to the winners.

## Legislative field trips

Electric cooperatives were born in government. An understanding and involvement in government is critical to our success and the successes of the communities we serve. That's why NPEC encourages students to visit the state capitol to view North Dakota's legislative process in action. Recognizing school budgets are often tight, NPEC will help defray trip expenses to any high school in the cooperative's service area that takes a student group. ■

# Do you have electric heat? Check that breaker!

**O**ften, members turn off their breaker to their heat meter through the summer months and forget to turn it back on heading into fall. If the breaker is off to the meter, the meter will not register, and the member will not be credited for the lower rate of electric heat.

If you already have an off-peak meter and your breaker is switched to the "ON" position, you do not need to do anything.

Don't have an electric heat meter?

Having a heat meter installed can help members save money during cold winter months. An electric heat meter records your heat usage only. When electric demand and market prices are high, an off-peak device in the home automatically switches from an electric source to a backup source, such as propane or fuel oil. In exchange, participating members receive discounted off-peak rates, which are competitive with fuel oil and propane. Our off-peak program is designed to reduce electric demand during peak times and save money.

If you are heating with electric heat and do not have a heat meter, please contact the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative office at 800-882-2500 to learn more. ■



# Bins require clearance from power lines

As rewarding as it may be, farming is an extremely difficult job. It ranks among the top 10 most dangerous professions in the United States. At Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC), safety is top priority for everyone.

Our farmers work hard to get the job done, and sometimes it's easy to forget all the necessary steps to take when practicing safe operations. Grain bins play an integral role in the efficiency and profitability of farm and ranch operations, and safety regulations should always be considered when working around these structures.

Whether you're purchasing new grain bins or remodeling areas that contain existing ones, proximity to overhead power lines must be a considered factor.

- **Safe clearance.** The National Electrical Safety Code requires an 18.5-foot minimum vertical clearance from the highest point of the filling port of the grain bin to nearby high-voltage wires and a 55-foot minimum distance from the power

line to the grain bin wall. See the chart for further guidelines. Changes to landscaping and drainage work can affect clearance heights of power lines, so remember to check these measurements regularly.

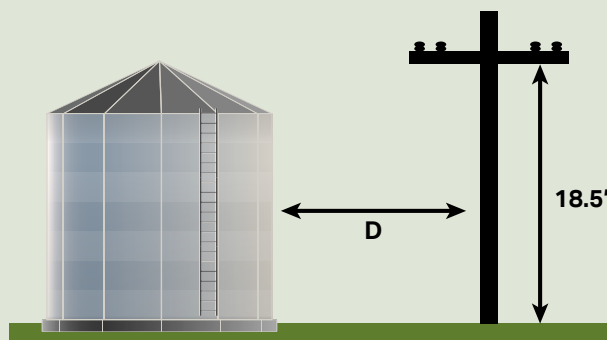
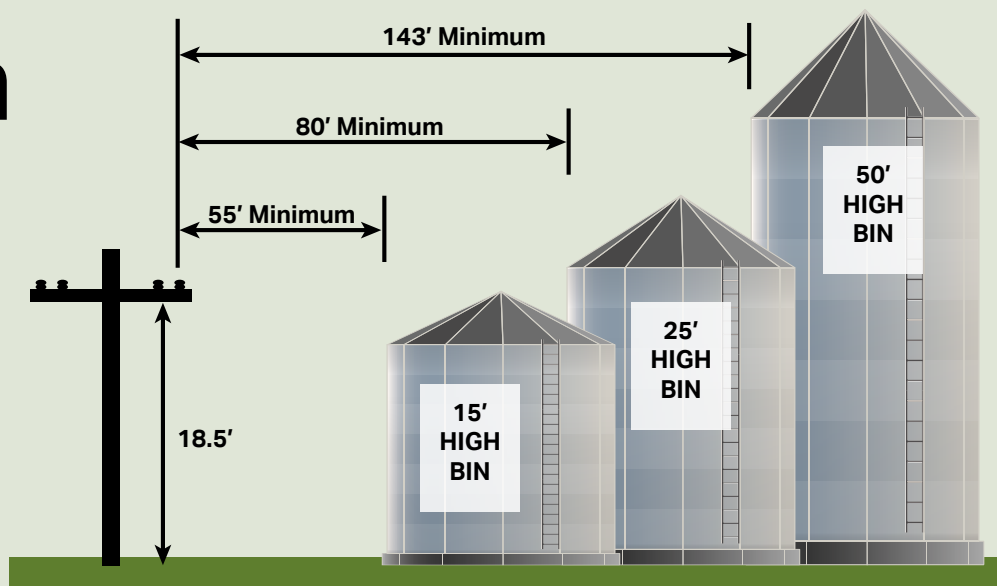
- **Filling grain bins.** High-voltage power lines are not insulated, so it's important to remember to maintain an adequate high-wire clearance when using a portable auger, conveyor or elevator to fill your grain bin.
- **Moving equipment near grain bins.** When moving equipment, such as a hopper or a scaffold, be aware of nearby power lines. Remember to maintain a 10-foot clearance to ensure safety.

Accidents can happen in a split second, which is why NPEC reminds you to always use caution when working near power lines. If you are considering a plan for a new grain bin or reconstruction of an existing bin's site, please contact NPEC. Let us assist you in maintaining a safe environment for you and your family. ■

## Grain Bin Safety

Height of grain storage structure	Minimum distance from line to bin wall*
15 ft.	55 ft.
20 ft.	68 ft.
25 ft.	80 ft.
30 ft.	93 ft.
35 ft.	104 ft.
40 ft.	118 ft.
50 ft.	143 ft.
60 ft.	168 ft.
70 ft.	193 ft.
80 ft.	218 ft.

\*Based on a typical power line having a vertical clearance of 18.5 feet above the ground and a supply line phase to ground voltage of more than 0V to 22KV; National Electrical Safety Code Rule 232.



### Danger: High Voltage

Follow farm safety rules around power lines







*Missy Hafner, curator of JunkFest, will celebrate the 20-year anniversary of the glamorous flea market event on Sept. 14.*

## 20 YEARS OF JUNKFEST

# One person's junk is another person's treasure

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

**A**n event like no other in North Dakota is held every autumn at the Foster County fairgrounds. Thousands of treasure seekers stroll through the crisp air, listening to the sounds of dealings from bargain shoppers, with folk music playing in the background. Pass by the row of food trucks followed by booths of junk, junk and more junk. The event is called JunkFest, a glamorous one-day flea market and so much more.

Missy Hafner reminisces on her first JunkFest back in 2004, a dream between her and three friends with hopes they could come together to share their passion for turning loved items into unique pieces for others to enjoy. Hafner and her fellow junk enthusiasts, Andrea Miller, Lynette Caylor and Cassie Smith, dreamt of the idea of bringing this one-day garage sale of sorts to their hometown of Carrington.

"We all loved the excitement and adventure of going to a good junk sale, but hated that we had to travel to other states to attend one," Hafner says.

The first event was held in the country at the home of one of the four friends, with an assortment of furniture,

décor and garden items displayed for sale.

"The sky was the limit, as our creativity started to flow, imagining how an item could be fun and functional, yet add charm to someone's home," Hafner says.

The friends sent postcard invitations, hoping a few families and friends would come. Much to their surprise, a few hundred people showed up and they knew their love for "junk" was shared by others. The following year, the event was moved to one building at the Foster County fairgrounds. After another successful turnout, the foursome made the decision to extend the opportunity to other creators in the area.

Over the years, JunkFest has grown to encompass the entire fairgrounds, with typically 125 vendors filling approximately 200 spaces and over 3,000 attendees. Most vendors are from all over North Dakota, while others travel from eight states across the Midwest bringing everything from antiques, vintage, salvaged and found items to handmade items of many types, as well as boutique and specialty food items.

"Even at 20 years in, I am continued to be in awe of



their talents and creativity!” Hafner says.

The fun, festive day of shopping, food and music proves to be a great day for all ages. Several food and drink vendors are available throughout the day, including adult beverages. A crowd favorite, the Mooncats, will return to the 2024 JunkFest event to keep the air filled with shopping music and good vibes.

The fairgrounds are not the only place buzzing around Carrington on JunkFest day. The event has inspired pop-up events and garages sales all over town. The local businesses often have JunkFest specials and increase their staff and hours to cover the boost to the town’s population.

“We are so proud to be the home of JunkFest! It has brought in thousands of attendees, which has been very beneficial for our local businesses. It has unique vendors, great food, friends and fun, not to mention the wonderful live music. We hope it will continue for another 20 years,” says Laurie Dietz, executive director of the Carrington Chamber and Economic Development Corporation.

The event has also been beneficial to a few local nonprofits and organizations that offer indoor food options for purchase as well as a holding area for shoppers to drop off their paid purchases to be safeguarded while they continue to shop.

Behind the scenes, and at the forefront, it takes a

village to have the event run smoothly. Roughly 30 family and friends assist Hafner with setup, checking in vendors, admission gates, security, sanitation and manning the original JunkFest booth. Just like 20 years ago, re-loved items are for sale as well as JunkFest branded merchandise of caps, T-shirts and sweatshirts.

“The perk of this side business is that you can pull aside items for yourself, then switch them out and sell later,” Hafner says.

On the downside, changes and tribulations are bound to happen during 20 years. As three of Hafner’s co-organizers have left the event for various reasons, their ideas, creativity and talents have been dearly missed.

“Keeping the event going, for me, is most about keeping the outlet of opportunity for the vendors. Some have been with the event since almost the beginning,” Hafner says.

Hafner also mentioned the biggest challenge is the curation of the event and having to limit quantities of certain categories of vendors due to space.

“I really dislike having to tell applicants that they were not selected,” she says.

As for JunkFest 2024, will there be anything special to celebrate the 20-year anniversary?

“You’ll just have to come to find out!” Hafner says. ■



**JunkFest 2024**

**Sept. 14**

**9 a.m.-4 p.m.**

**Foster County fairgrounds**

**For more information visit,  
[www.facebook.com/junkfest](http://www.facebook.com/junkfest).**



# 10 things to know about power restoration

**H**ave you ever watched a video or TV show in which a person is cooking a meal, then they snap their fingers and the meal is plated and ready to eat? That's called a jump cut.

While we wish we could "jump cut" from a power outage to power restoration, it can often take a lot more effort and people to make it happen.

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) is accustomed to members' questions about power outages and why it can take time to get power restored. Given our reliance on electricity, there's simply never a good time to be without it.

To shed light on our restoration process and to help our members understand what may be happening behind the scenes, here are 10 things you might not know about restoration:

1. **We need you.** When your power goes out, it might be just at your home or small section of a neighborhood. There is a chance we may not know about it, and no one has reported it. We rely on you to let us know if your power is out, so please call 800-882-2500.
2. **Our employees might be affected, too.** Because NPEC is a local electric cooperative owned by the members we serve, our employees are local, too. They are your neighbors, friends and familiar community volunteers. When you're without power, our people might be, too.
3. **It's a team effort.** Every one of NPEC's employees is working to get your power restored as soon as possible. Our member services representatives

## COMMON CAUSES OF POWER OUTAGES

There is never a good time for the power to go out, but if it happens on a sunny day, you might be left wondering why. Here are the most common causes of a power outage.

### WEATHER

High winds, snow and ice can cause tree limbs to fall on power lines. Other weather effects, like wildfires and lightning strikes, can cause major damage to equipment.

### CRITTERS

Squirrels, birds, snakes and other animals can inadvertently contact power lines, causing short circuits and disruptions to electrical supply.

### ACCIDENTS

Vehicles can crash into utility poles, bringing down power lines. Construction and excavation work can also result in disruptions to underground lines.

### Scheduled MAINTENANCE

Occasionally, we plan outages to perform upgrades or repairs to parts of the local grid.

are taking your calls, engineers and field staff are surveying damage, our vegetation management team is clearing hazards, dispatchers are organizing crews and communicators are keeping everyone informed of progress or potential dangers. When your power goes out, we all work together as quickly and safely as possible to get you back to normal.

4. **We assess the situation first.** Every outage is different, and we don't know how dangerous it is or what equipment might need to be replaced. When responding to outages, we first need to see what happened, then figure out what materials we need and a plan for how to fix the problem(s) without compromising electric flow for the rest of our members.
5. **Restoration is normally prioritized by the largest number of members we can get back on in the shortest amount of time.** Our crews focus on responding first to public safety issues and critical services such as hospitals. Then we complete work that impacts the largest number of people first.
6. **Our employees face many dangers.** Besides working around high-voltage electricity, our crews are on alert for wild animals, weather elements, falling trees and fast-moving cars. (If you ever drive past one of our vehicles, please do so slowly.)
7. **Flickering lights are good.** Some folks mistake flickering lights for outages, but these "blinks" are important, because they indicate our equipment

worked and prevented a possible outage likely caused by wayward animals or stray tree limbs on the lines.

8. **You need a backup plan.** We do our best to help those who need it, but if you depend on electricity for life support purposes, you must have a backup plan. Remember, we don't always know how long restoration efforts will take. If you're unsure what to do, call us so we can help you prepare an emergency location.
9. **Our employees have to plan, and eat.** If you ever see our trucks in a restaurant parking lot while your power is out, know sometimes our employees huddle in a safe, common area to map out their plan for getting your power back on. Also, our crews work long hard hours during outages and need to take time for meals, just like everyone else.
10. **Sometimes it's a waiting game.** Our portion of the power grid is connected to other electric utilities, and we maintain positive relationships with power providers interconnected to our system. If our outage is due to an issue from their feed into our system, we must let them do their repairs and be mindful of what they're going through to fix it.

We do our best to avoid power disruptions, but they are inevitable from time to time. If the lights go out, know your co-op team is working as quickly and safely as possible to restore power. If you experience an outage, please let us know by reporting it 24/7 by calling 800-882-2500. ■

## Your Electric Cooperative needs **YOUR HELP**

Your electric cooperative works hard to provide safe, reliable and convenient electric power for you and your family. We also provide programs to help you use energy efficiently.

To help us plan for the future and determine what programs will benefit you most, your cooperative needs your help.

This fall, we will be conducting a survey of our residential consumers. If you receive a survey, please help us by taking a few minutes to complete it. Your answers are very important, so please respond as best as possible and return it promptly. A postage-paid return envelope is included for your convenience. The survey will also be available to complete online.



# Employees recognized for years of service

Every year, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative expresses appreciation to those employees who have achieved a significant work anniversary. This year, we recognize eight employees who have put in a collective 185 years of service to the cooperative.

We thank these employees for their commitment to our cooperative and the role they each play in providing our members with safe, reliable and affordable electric service. Please join us in expressing appreciation for their many years of dedicated service. ■



**Jamie Harrington**  
Lineworker, 5 years



**Jonathan Tandeski**  
Lineworker, 15 years



**Seth Syverson**  
General manager, 15 years



**Randy Thomson**  
Line foreman, 20 years



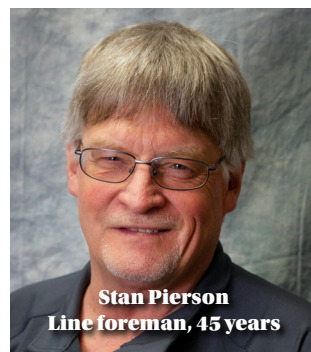
**Jon Sjostrom**  
Lineworker, 20 years



**Bob David (retired)**  
Tree maintenance crew  
25 years



**Kevin Larson**  
Staking engineer, 40 years



**Stan Pierson**  
Line foreman, 45 years

**NORTHERN  
PLAINS** Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

*An equal opportunity provider and employer.*

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

**CARRINGTON OFFICE:**  
1515 West Main  
Carrington, ND 58421

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

www.nplains.com  
justask@nplains.com  
800-882-2500

## BOARD & MANAGEMENT:

President..... Tracy Boe, Mylo  
Vice president..... Curtis Wiesz, Heaton  
Secretary/treasurer..... Randall Simon, Oberon  
Assistant secretary/treasurer..... Dave Teigen, Rugby  
District 1..... Mark Brehm, Cando  
District 1..... Bruce Olsen, Cando  
District 3..... Lori Carlson, Jamestown  
District 3..... Judy Geier, Heaton  
District 3..... Curtis Hanson, Pettibone  
General Manager..... Seth Syverson  
Manager of Engineering..... Ashten Dewald  
Manager of Operations..... Josh Cabler  
IT Manager..... Scott Buchholtz  
Business Manager..... Cheryl Belle  
Northern Notes Editor..... Brittnee Wilson