

NPEC prioritizes safety



Keaten Mikkelsen (left) and Brian St. Germaine



Shannon Petersen

Safety is the top priority at Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC). We take the time to educate crews and office employees to provide a powerful culture of safety in the workplace.

NPEC has an in-house Safety Committee that meets monthly to go over incidents and any potentially unsafe scenarios in the workplace. The hope is to spread awareness through the experiences of others to avoid those types of situations.

Job-specific safety training is also provided monthly. In June, crews took part in a mock pole-top rescue situation as part of their annual safety training held by Brian Lakoduk, a safety instructor with the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC). We hope our lineworkers never have to perform a rescue, but if they do, they will be prepared. ■

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Spreading the word about electrical safety
- A life-changing experience
- Solar energy update

AUGUST 2019



Danny Schuchard, NPEC's operations supervisor, demonstrates electrical contacts on the farm to Foster County fair-goers.

Spreading the word about electrical safety

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

It was a cold, rainy week June 19-22 at the Foster County fair, but that didn't keep people away. Many people turned out to enjoy typical county fair happenings, including carnival rides, food vendors and 4-H animal exhibits, and strolling through the community vendor booths.

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) took advantage of the opportunity to rent a booth and get the word out to the public about the importance of calling 811 before you dig and electrical safety, especially on the farm.

A miniature farm model, built by Northern Plains complete with working electricity, was used to demonstrate equipment contacting an energized line. Our demonstrators showed a couple different scenarios of how deadly coming into contact with an energized line could be.

"I think it was a shock to many fair-goers to hear the sounds from contact and to see the arcs. The hope is for the demonstration to stick in their minds more than just reading about the dangers of electricity," said Danny Schuchard, NPEC's operations supervisor.

So far this year, NPEC has had 24 poles broken, burned or damaged beyond repair. That number is average for this time of year, but any number is too high. Luckily, there have been no reported injuries during these accidents. In hopes to decrease this number, NPEC puts forth an advertising campaign asking the public to slow down to stay safe.

NPEC General Manager Seth Syverson commented on the fair, "It was a good opportunity for Northern Plains to show our presence in the community and help spread the word on farm safety and calling 811 before you dig." ■



FARM EQUIPMENT IS ON THE MOVE

LOOK UP AND LOOK AROUND POWER LINES AND POLES MAY BE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

For your safety, make sure you have at least 10 feet of clearance between power lines and your combines, grain augers, balers and front-end loaders.

Farming equipment is vulnerable to hitting power lines because of its large size, height and extensions. Newer, larger equipment is especially at risk.

Look for low-hanging lines when you enter and leave a field.

Keep in mind that uneven ground and shifting soil conditions can put you in harm's way.

If your equipment does make contact with a power line, do not leave the cab. Call 911, tell others to stay away, and wait for help.

If you are a Northern Plains Electric Cooperative member and you see a power line issue that may need attention, call NPEC at 800-882-2500 or email justask@nplains.com.

Your safety matters. Working together helps ensure the safety of all!

What if you contact a power line?

Imagine that you are driving a combine to the field when things come to a screeching halt. You look back to see what's stopping you, only to discover that you're tangled in an overhead power line! What do you do?

- First, **DON'T** climb out. If your equipment does contact a power line, stay in the cab and call for help. Warn others to stay away and wait until the electric cooperative arrives. Most utility lines are uninsulated, bare wires. Do not let your body become a direct link between the power line and the ground.
- If you must leave the combine due to immediate danger, such as a fire, jump as far away as you can, making sure that no part of your body touches the combine and the ground at the same time. Land with both feet together and hop or shuffle your feet a few inches at a time, making sure to never break contact with the ground or cause separation between your feet.
- Once you're off the combine, do not go back until your local electric co-op disconnects the power line.

Follow these other tips:

- Look over work areas carefully for overhead power lines and utility poles. Make sure you, your family and employees know the location of overhead power lines, and use routes to avoid the lines when moving equipment. Do this every year, as equipment sizes and soil conditions may change.
- Be aware of increased heights of equipment, especially new equipment with higher antennas.
- Avoid moving large equipment alone. Have someone watch as you move equipment to ensure you are clear of power lines.
- Be extra careful when working around trees and brush; they often make it difficult to see power lines.



Riley Grove poses in front of the North Dakota monument at the World War II Memorial.

Electric Cooperative Youth Tour **A life-changing experience**

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

Sixteen North Dakota high school students spent one week in June at the 54th annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. These students, sponsored by their local cooperatives, entered an essay contest to win this once-in-a-lifetime, all-expense-paid trip.

Students enjoyed an intensive week packed with touring museums, monuments and memorials, as well as learning about government, history and the cooperative business. Among those students, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative sponsored Riley Grove, 16, of Rugby.

Riley and 1,800 teenagers across America heard national speakers address the important role electric cooperatives play in their local communities at Capitol Hill Day. After touring the Capitol, the North Dakota students met with Sen. John Hoeven and Rep. Kelly Armstrong in a private setting. They learned about issues concerning their home state and even got to ask any questions they had.

The Capitol had a lasting impact on Riley. "I could definitely see myself working at the Capitol one day and being a part of making history like the ones before me," Riley said.

The North Dakota and Montana students partnered and traveled together the whole week. Both states were enrolled in "A Place for YOUTH in the Cooperative World," an interactive educational session that addressed the cooperative business model



North Dakota students visited many sites, including the United States Capitol, during the 2019 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

and the opportunities for internships and careers within cooperatives.

"It was very interesting to learn how many jobs there are in cooperatives and how they are helping people in their communities," Riley said.

Education, training and information is one of the seven cooperative principles of electric co-ops. By sponsoring students yearly on these trips, co-ops have helped students of generations understand the democratic process and gain the skills necessary to become tomorrow's leaders.

"I am so very thankful for the opportunity and I want to thank everyone at Northern Plains for giving me this awesome experience," Riley said. "If I ever have the opportunity to write another essay to go on this trip again, I would do it in a heartbeat."

For more information on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, visit www.ndyouthtour.com or email Brittnee Wilson, brittneew@nplains.com. ■

North Dakota and Montana 2019 Youth Tour delegates visited Gettysburg.



811 Day

Dig responsibly



Every year, Northern Plains Electric is responsible for roughly 2,500 locates.

Are you planning a home improvement job? Planting a tree? Installing a fence or deck? Before you dig, you must call 811, for every project, every time to avoid an accidental dig in.

Digging into a power line could cause serious injury, inconvenient outages and costly repairs. But it's not just buried power lines that you have to worry about. Water, sewer, gas and telecommunications equipment is often right underfoot as well.

At least two days before you start your project, contact the North Dakota One Call Center by calling 811, or submit a request online at www.ndonecall.com. After you provide information on your location and the project you are doing, North Dakota One Call then submits a request to the appropriate utility companies in your area to mark the underground utilities on your property. Utility companies, including Northern Plains Electric Cooperative, have 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) to locate their facilities with color flags and spray paint.

Northern Plains has 2,689 miles of buried cable and every year, we are responsible for roughly 2,500 locates.

Together, utility companies and One Call centers across the country are raising awareness of the dangers of digging without locates. Mark your calendar for Aug. 11 (8-11) to help promote 811 Day. Since 2009, Aug. 11 has been a day dedicated to promoting and reminding homeowners and contractors to always call before you dig.

Data shows that when you call 811 in the appropriate amount of time before digging, you have a less than 1 percent chance of striking a

buried utility line.

No matter how large or small your project or how deep you are digging, you should always call 811 first. It is never safe to assume the depth of utility lines. Over time, their depth can change due to erosion, previous digging projects and uneven surfaces.

Because safety is a top priority, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative asks you to respect the colored flags and paint and reminds you to dial 811 or visit www.ndonecall.com every time before you dig.

You can help spread awareness by using the hashtag #Call811 on social media. ■

Know the Color Code

WHITE:	Proposed Excavation
PINK:	Temporary Survey Markings
RED:	Electric Power Lines, Cables, Conduit and Lighting Cables
YELLOW:	Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials
ORANGE:	Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables or Conduit
BLUE:	Potable Water
PURPLE:	Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines
GREEN:	Sewer and Drain Lines

System improvements underway

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative is in the midst of its busy construction season. Seven miles of overhead to underground conversions are happening near Leeds, as well as two miles near Balta. The cooperative is also replacing 12 miles of older three-phase underground lines that are near their end of life in the Kensal and Lallie areas.

These improvements are intended to increase electrical capacity, reduce voltage drop and improve reliability. The replacement of overhead lines mitigates outages caused by severe weather, which includes ice buildup, strong winds and lightning during thunderstorms. ■



DON'T WAIT!

If you are in need of new services or would like to upgrade your line, please get your request into Northern Plains Electric sooner than later to ensure fitting it into our short construction season. Call **1-800-882-2500** today.

**NORTHERN
PLAINS** Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative





Solar energy update

Clean energy is a goal for electrical cooperatives. Government mandates for renewable energy are expanding and member curiosity is increasing. That is why Northern Plains Electric Cooperative, along with Dakota Valley Electric, built a 6.56-kilowatt solar system at the Northern Plains' Carrington office in 2015.

The 16-panel solar system is used primarily as a research project. The co-ops' goal is to learn how much the system will cost to maintain, how reliable it is and what sort of return members would see on their investment. With this information, Northern Plains can help provide unbiased information to members considering installing a system of their own.

In 2019, data has been collected through June with average readings compared to previous years, with the exception of February. The total energy generated in February was well below average, as it was a bitter cold month with 22 cloudy to partly cloudy recorded days.

Although solar energy can still be collected during cloudy and rainy days, the efficiency of the solar system drops. Solar panels are dependent of sunlight to effectively gather solar energy

No broken panels nor any maintenance had to take place in 2019. Payback of the system is in the 25- to 30-year range.

Visit our website to view solar generation in real-time: www.nplains.com. ■

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

Russell Carlson, Jamestown

District 3

Judy Geier, Heaton

District 3

Curtis Hanson, Pettibone

General Manager

Seth Syverson

Manager of Engineering & Operations

Ashten Dewald

IT Manager

Scott Buchholtz

Business Manager

Cheryl Belle

Northern Notes Editor

Brittnee Wilson

TOTAL ENERGY GENERATED (KWH)

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total	\$ saved
2019	303	190	879	814	958	942	-	-	-	-	-	-	3905	\$429.55
2018	398	593	765	1113	1015	1051	1142	1004	757	584	266	257	8945	\$983.95
2017	276	538	723	759	905	1016	1208	1011	760	721	426	332	8675	\$954.25
2016	325	484	831	821	975	1104	991	1042	730	536	440	248	8527	\$937.97