

Manager denies affair with Sasquatch

*Wife finds hair on shirt collar...
DNA confirms encounter with beast*



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Admit it. Before today you never read this column. In our high-speed, high-tech world, we skim past headlines stopping to read only if enticed. Professional journalists (and tabloid editors) know that if they cannot lure you into reading the article, they at least want you to reach the desired conclusion from the headline. That is not the case with this

column.

Sometimes headlines are an exaggeration of the obvious: "Federal agents raid gun shop—find weapons", "Teen pregnancy drops off significantly after age 25", or "Study shows eating causes weight gain".

Sometimes they offer instruction: "How to tell your husband is a moron", or "Is your cat from Mars?".

Tabloids specialize in the preposterous. The Weekly World News, which claims to be "the world's only reliable news", recently ran a story under the headline, "Duck hunters shoot angel—stray bullet brings down messenger of God." The article quoted the first-time hunter: "At first she



looked like a giant bird, so I wondered where I'd get a skillet big enough to fry the critter." He claimed it was an accident and defended his character saying, "I'm not a bad man. I've never even killed anyone before." Surprisingly the victim disappeared after being loaded into an ambulance.

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One of the principles governing your cooperative is democratic control. Each year at the annual meeting, cooperative member-owners vote for neighbors to serve on the board of directors. Your cooperative has one of the most inclusive processes to encourage participation. Black Hills Electric Cooperative is the only utility in the country that mails postcards to every eligible member encouraging motivated and qualified candidates to participate in the election process.

Most years after members receive the postcards, we get a few requests for applications. This year we received more than a dozen inquiries the first day. One caller asked, "Is this the first year you've mailed the postcards?" (Actually we've mailed postcards for sixteen consecutive years.) Another suggested that we seemed desperate to fill vacant director positions. (We aren't. All incumbents are seeking reelection.) The only real difference this year was that the postcards included the headline: "Director Candidates Wanted". We learned something. You read headlines. I hope you remember your cooperative's commitment to democratic control and participate in the election process. I also hope you will forget this column's headline.

Save Time and Money

You can save yourself time and money by paying your electric bill on the Internet. Go to www.bhec.coop and click on the e-bill link. Set up your user name and password and you are ready to save. You may also view your monthly bills and see your usage. Why pay for a check or stamp when it is so easy to pay online? Go to www.bhec.coop to sign up today!

Black Hills Electric Cooperative Connections

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Safety Demo at the Stock Show



Top: Mike Davis, left, and Gerald Draine, linemen with Butte Electric Cooperative in Newell, demonstrate the dangers of being careless around high voltage power lines during a session in the civic center arena at the Black Hills Stock Show in Rapid City. South Dakota's electric cooperatives put on two demos during the show. More than 360 people attended the two shows. **Below:** Mike Chase, manager of marketing and members services at Black Hills Electric Cooperative, shows stock show attendees a bare aluminum wire from the co-op's power lines. The co-ops staff an electrical safety booth in LaCroix Hall during the entire show. This is the 25th year that Black Hills Electric and the seven other West River co-ops have promoted safety at the stock show. It is the sixth year that employees from cooperatives across the state have assisted the western South Dakota cooperatives at the booth.



BHEC Annual Meeting Fri., June 1, at Hot Springs

Power Cost Adjustment and Demand Rate Explained

Black Hills Electric has had a power cost adjustment on bills since 2007 when federal energy and environmental policies began raising power costs. Local rates remained unchanged while wholesale power cost increases (primarily resulting from federal policy) were passed through as a line item on members' bills.

BHEC purchases power from Basin Electric Power Co-operative and from Western Area Power Administration. Basin's generation mix is mostly coal but includes wind, waste heat, nuclear and natural gas. Hydro power comes from the Western Area Power Administration.

The power BHEC purchases includes two separate components—energy and demand. The rate that BHEC charges its members for electricity is a blend of energy and demand and is developed to recover only the cost of the power and delivering it to its members.

With political efforts to eliminate coal generation, the future of low-cost energy is uncertain. Power costs continue to rise despite efforts at the local level to cut costs without affecting reliability.

The PCA line on members' bills is only the increase since 2007 in the wholesale cost of the electricity the co-op buys to deliver to its members.

To help reduce wholesale power costs, Black Hills Electric is developing a new rate for its members. The rate would bill each member for the demand he or she adds to the co-op's peak demand plus the kilowatt-hours used each month.



Peak demand, measured in kilowatts or kW, is when BHEC's members are using the most electricity each month. If the co-op's peak occurs at the same time as the co-op's power supplier's peak demand, electric costs are at the highest.

BHEC's peak winter demand occurs between 5-9 a.m. and between 5-10 p.m. Its summer peak happens between 1-9 p.m. During these time periods, each kilowatt of demand costs the cooperative \$15.56. BHEC's highest demand in 2011 was 46,240 kW in February.

The new rate would encourage members to limit their demand during these times. It would also more fairly assign costs to those who are causing them.

Limiting demand can be done by using the clothes dryer, water heater and electric heat at times other than those

listed above. The demand charge would only apply to kilowatts used during the peak periods.

Members can limit their demand and lower their bills by remembering to shut off large appliances during the peak times. However, the co-op is developing a program to offer an individual demand controller that would automatically control a member's demand during the peak periods. This controller would be sold by BHEC and installed by qualified electricians. Members would be able to finance the controller through the co-op.

With almost 75 percent of each member's bill due to power costs, debt service and taxes, there is little more that BHEC can do to lower members' power costs. However, members using energy wisely and staying off demand peaks can lower



their bill and BHEC's bill.

"I would encourage you to continue to let your congressional delegation know that you are concerned about rising power costs," said Mike Chase, manager of marketing and member services. "Go to www.ourenergy.coop and send a message to all three of South Dakota's delegates. Let them know that America was built on low-cost energy and we need low-cost energy to survive and prosper."



More than **19 days of electricity** for your home = \$62*

*Based on Black Hills Electric's average non-electric heated residential usage of 1,055 kWh per month at an average rate of 9.2 cents per kWh.

The **value of electricity!**

One tank of gas for your car (20 gallons at \$3.10 per gallon) = \$62



Got Gas? Get Carbon Monoxide Detectors

If your home has a fireplace or any gas appliance, you should install carbon monoxide detectors in or near every bedroom. A carbon monoxide detector will react when it senses that carbon monoxide levels in your home are too high, usually because an appliance is malfunctioning. However, the detectors do not detect gas leaks.

Here are some tips for ensuring your carbon monoxide detector works when you need it:

- Replace it every five years.
- Replace the batteries at least once a year or when the device starts making a "chirping" sound, which is a symptom of a low battery.



— Test each detector regularly by pressing and holding the test button for 20 seconds.

— Place carbon monoxide detectors at least 10 feet away from sources of humidity, such as showers and bathrooms, where steam can cause them to overreact.

— Place a carbon monoxide detector on every level of your home and at the top of the basement stairs, even if there are no bedrooms on those floors.

— Do not put a carbon monoxide detector in the garage, kitchen or the room with your gas furnace.

— If your alarm goes off too often, it may be too close to a fireplace or gas furnace or stove. It could also mean that your gas appliances are not burning the fuel completely. If you see a yellow or orange pilot light, that could be the case. Call a heating and air specialist to have the gas appliance checked.

— Leave the alarm plugged in all year, not just during the heating season. Your gas stove, gas clothes dryer and gas water heater are also potential sources of carbon monoxide leaks.

— Never leave your car running in the garage as carbon monoxide can leak into your home.

Because carbon monoxide is odorless and colorless it is not always evident when it has become a problem in the home.

Often people who have a mild to moderate problem will find they feel sick while they spend time at home. They might feel a little better outside in the fresh air but will have re-occurring symptoms shortly after returning home. If other members of the family have re-occurring bouts with flu-like symptoms while fuel-burning appliances are being used it may be time to have the house checked by a professional.

Symptoms of low levels of carbon monoxide poisoning can be confused with flu symptoms, food poisoning or other illnesses and carry a long-term health risk if left unattended. Some of the symptoms are:



- Shortness of breath
 - Mild nausea
 - Mild headaches
- Moderate levels of carbon monoxide can cause death if the following symptoms persist for a long period of time.
- Headaches
 - Dizziness
 - Nausea
 - Light-headedness
- High levels of carbon monoxide can cause death within minutes.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get the victim into fresh air immediately. If you can not get the people out of the house, open all windows and doors immediately. Turn off any combustion appliances.

Call 911 or take those who were subjected to carbon monoxide to a hospital emergency room as quickly as possible.

When the Winter Wind Chills

As native South Dakotans know, the state's howling winds can make even a relative mild winter day feel cold. The National Weather Service calls this fact of nature wind chill.

Wind chill is the temperature it "feels like" outside and is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by the effects of wind and cold.

As the wind increases, the body is cooled at a faster rate, causing the skin temperature to drop. Wind chill does not affect inanimate objects, such as car radiators and exposed water pipes because these objects cannot cool below the actual air temperature.

The National Weather Service informs the public when wind chill conditions reach critical thresholds. A wind chill warning is issued when wind chill temperatures are life threatening. A wind chill advisory is issued when wind chill temperatures are potentially hazardous.

Frostbite is an injury to the body

caused by freezing body tissue. The most susceptible parts of the body are the extremities, such as fingers, toes, ears and the tip of the nose. Symptoms include a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance of the affected area. Seek medical attention immediately.

Hypothermia is abnormally low body temperature—below 95 degrees. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. Medical attention is needed immediately. If it is not available, begin warming the body slowly. Warm the body's main trunk first. Do not warm extremities first.

Visit www.NWS.noaa.gov/om/wind-chill for more information on wind chill.

