

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

## Let's Go Fly a Kite

**Brookings Kite Festival  
Creates Excitement**

Pages 8-9

**Cooperative Metering**

Pages 12-13

*Photo Credit: Visit Brookings*



## Spotlight on Our Member Service Representatives



**Michelle Fischer**  
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& Member Services  
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At Black Hills Electric Cooperative, our success is driven by the dedicated efforts of our team. This month, we want to highlight four of our exceptional Member Service Representatives who consistently go above and beyond to ensure our members have the best experience possible when they contact us. Let's get to know them and learn what they love most about their jobs.

**Stephanie Zacher:**  
**Years with the Co-op: 30**

Stephanie is a seasoned veteran in our Member Service Department. She is known for having an outstanding work ethic and for her loyalty to the co-op. She is always looking to stay busy and puts in an honest day's work.

**What Stephanie Loves About Her Job:** "I love helping the members. I enjoy working with the employees of BHEC, and I appreciate how the industry is ever-changing and there is always something new to learn."



**Jennifer Kainz:**  
**Years with the Co-op: 26**

With many years of experience, Jennifer is also a long-time employee. Jennifer is known for her attention to detail and can recall various details. She has a thorough understanding of electrical systems and equipment.

**What Jennifer Loves About Her Job:** "I enjoy talking to our members at events and working with my co-workers. I also love the flexibility we have in our department."



**Terri Herman:**  
**Years with the Co-op: 13**

Terri's optimistic attitude helps her provide top-notch support internally and externally. Her calm and patient approach ensures that members and employees feel comfortable and understood.

**What Terri Loves About Her Job:** "I love being able to help and interact with the members. Every day is different, and I enjoy the people I work with."



**Shannan Steele:**  
**Years with the Co-op: 4**

Shannan is known for her quick thinking and problem-solving skills. She brings a new perspective and is up for new challenges.

**What Shannan Loves About Her Job:**

"I love the family aspect of the cooperative, the atmosphere of the office, and the flexibility and support from my direct supervisor on a daily basis. I enjoy helping members figure out solutions in all aspects, from issues with SmartHub to high bill complaints. I enjoy "out of the office days" when I get to interact face-to-face with the membership, such as Co-Op Day, our annual meeting, the stock show, and other local events we attend."



These four outstanding individuals represent the dedication and passion that drives Black Hills Electric Cooperative forward. We are proud to have Stephanie, Jennifer, Terri, and Shannan on our team. Their unique strengths and shared commitment to excellent service make them invaluable assets to our organization. Thank you for your hard work and for making a positive impact every day!



## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC

(ISSN No. 1531-104X)

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## AG APPRECIATION EVENT AT THE CENTRAL STATES FAIR

Please come show your support in honoring these individuals for their dedication to the rural community.

An Ag Appreciation Meal and short program will be August 20th from 5-6:30pm at the Monument Health Community Stage inside the fairgrounds.

Enjoy a free meal, free fair entrance\* and a night out at the rodeo\*!

### 2024 RURAL NEIGHBOR NOMINEES



**Roy Ireland**

2024 Rural Neighbor Award

**Sponsored by:**

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives



**Joy Falkenburg, M.D.**

2024 Rural Health Care Neighbor Award

**Sponsored by:**

Monument Health



**In memory of Jerry Cope**

2024 Rural Neighbor Award

**Sponsored by:**

Central States Fair



## BREADROOT

### NATURAL FOODS CO-OP

Breadroot Natural Foods co-op

2024 Agribusiness Award

**Sponsored by:**

Elevate Rapid City

\*MORE DETAILS TO COME  
 \*RODEO TICKETS SOLD SEPARATELY



**Ag Appreciation Event Ticket**

<p><b>WHEN:</b></p> <p>AUGUST 20TH</p> <p>5-6:30PM</p>	<p><b>WHERE:</b></p> <p>MONUMENT HEALTH STAGE</p> <p><small>*LOCATED INSIDE THE FAIRGROUNDS</small></p>	<p><b>WHAT:</b></p> <p>-FREE MEAL                  -FREE FAIR ENTRANCE*                  -NIGHT AT THE RODEO*</p> <p><small>*MORE DETAILS TO COME                  *RODEO TICKETS SOLD SEPARATELY</small></p>
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\*Must present to gate attendee and event entrance for free fair entrance and meal.

# Fireworks Safety

Summer is synonymous with barbecues, parades and fireworks. The National Safety Council advises everyone to enjoy fireworks at public displays conducted by professionals, and not to use any fireworks at home. They may be legal but they are not safe.

Every year, thousands of people are injured badly enough to require medical treatment after fireworks-related incidents, with many of the injuries to children and young adults. While the majority of these incidents are due to amateurs attempting to use professional-grade, homemade or other illegal fireworks or explosives, less powerful devices like small firecrackers and sparklers can also cause significant injury.

Additionally, fireworks start an average of 19,000 fires each year.

### Fireworks Safety Tips: If You Choose to Use Legal Fireworks

If consumer fireworks are legal to buy where you live and you choose to use them, be sure to follow the following safety tips:

- Never allow young children to handle fireworks
- Older children should use them only under close adult supervision
- Never use fireworks while impaired by drugs or alcohol
- Anyone using fireworks or standing nearby should wear protective eyewear
- Never hold lighted fireworks in your hands
- Never light them indoors
- Only use them away from people, houses and flammable material
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person
- Only light one device at a time and maintain a safe distance after lighting
- Never ignite devices in a container
- Do not try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks
- Soak both spent and unused fireworks in water for a few hours before discarding
- Keep a bucket of water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire
- Never use illegal fireworks

Better yet, grab a blanket and a patch of lawn, kick back and let the experts handle the fireworks show.

### Sparklers Are Dangerous

Every year, young children can be found along parade routes and at festivals with sparklers in hand, but sparklers are a lot more dangerous than most people think.

Sparklers burn at about 2,000 degrees – hot enough to melt some metals. Sparklers can quickly ignite clothing, and children have received severe burns from dropping sparklers on their feet. According to the National Fire Protection Association, sparklers alone account for more than 25% of emergency room visits for fireworks injuries. For children under five years of age, sparklers accounted for nearly half of the total estimated injuries.

Consider using safer alternatives, such as glow sticks, confetti poppers or colored streamers.

*Source: National Safety Council*



**“Let’s Go Fly a Kite Up to  
the Highest Heights.”**

### Eldon Femrite, Age 12

Eldon Femrite warns readers to not fly kites by power lines this summer. Eldon’s parents are Jody and Rosemary Femrite, members of Codington-Clark Electric.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you’ll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

# DELICIOUS Desserts

## NO CHURN ICE CREAM

### Ingredients:

2 cups heavy cream  
14 oz. sweetened condensed milk  
Other mix-ins as desired

### Method

In a mixing bowl, whip heavy cream until stiff peaks form.

Mix in sweetened condensed milk and any flavors/mix-ins you like (strawberries, Oreos, lemon, vanilla extract, etc.).

Pour into loaf pan and freeze until solid (2+ hours).

Kayla Beaner  
Centerville, S.D.

## CINNAMON PECAN PIE

### Ingredients:

1 refrigerated pie crust, (from 14.1-oz. pkg.)  
3 eggs, lightly beaten  
1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar  
1 cup light corn syrup  
2 tbsps. butter, melted  
1 tbsp. cinnamon extract  
1 1/2 cups pecan pieces

### Method

Preheat oven to 350°F. Prepare pie crust as directed on package for one-crust pie using 9-inch pie plate.

Mix eggs, sugar, corn syrup, butter and cinnamon flavor in large bowl until well blended. Stir in pecans.

Pour into crust. Bake 50 to 55 minutes or until knife inserted halfway between center and edge comes out clean. Cool completely on wire rack.

McCormick.com

## RHUBARB PIE

### Ingredients:

#### Crust

1-2 cups flour  
1/2 stick butter or margarine  
1/4 cup water

#### Pie

3 tbsps. butter or margarine  
1 cup sugar  
3 eggs, separated  
2 tbsps. flour  
1/2 tsp. salt  
2 1/2 cups cut rhubarb  
Smucker's caramel sundae syrup

### Method

**Crust:** Add ingredients and knead to complete pie crust. Amounts will vary due to humidity. Knead dough into pie pan and poke holes into the bottom as needed. You may make creative edges as you wish, however it is not necessary.

**Pie:** Soften butter or margarine and stir together with the sugar, egg yolks, flour, and salt. Beat egg whites until stiff. Add rhubarb and fold in the egg whites. Add the filling to the 8-inch, unbaked pie crust. You may add a drizzle of Smucker's sundae syrup for additional flavoring before baking. Bake in oven set at 400 until golden brown. You may also add more caramel syrup to pie after baking for ultimate effect.

Lisa Kummer Soukup  
Tea, S.D.

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Signs Your HVAC is in Trouble



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

**Q:** How do I know if my HVAC system is malfunctioning?

**A:** Your heating, ventilation and air conditioning system is one of the most important and expensive systems in your home. Detecting issues early can help you plan for repairs or equipment replacement.

Equipment functionality issues can affect your electricity use, which may result in higher energy bills. The age of your equipment can be a major factor in function. The lifespan of a heating and cooling system ranges from 15 to 20 years.

Proper maintenance and lower use can increase the life of the equipment. To find out the age of your system, look for the manufactured date printed on the unit's nameplate. If you can't find it, search online using the model number or call the manufacturer.

Being thrifty by nature, I typically subscribe to the notion of "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." That said, I also believe in being prepared for the inevitable. If your system is approaching or past the 20-year mark, start saving for a new system and get replacement estimates.

There are a few warning signs to watch out for if your heating and cooling system needs to be repaired or replaced:

- **Air conditioning is not as cool as usual.** If the air from your air conditioner is warm or not as cool as it usually feels, the equipment has an issue. It could be a problem with the compressor or a refrigerant leak. Contact a professional to get the issue checked. Many refrigerants, especially the ones used in older systems, are harmful to the environment. Fix leaks before adding more refrigerant. Special certifications are required for handling refrigerants, so hire a professional to ensure the work is done properly.
- **Low airflow.** If you aren't getting good airflow, it could be an easy fix, such as filter replacement or opening closed dampers. If you've made these fixes and airflow is not at normal levels, contact

a professional. There could be a bigger problem with a motor, fan or something else.

- **Bad odors.** Heating and cooling systems sometimes smell when you first start them up for the season. Those smells should be minor and dissipate quickly. Any serious smells – such as burning metal, melting plastic or noxious odors – are a sign that your system is in trouble. If you smell those odors, turn your system off immediately and contact a professional.
- **Strange noises.** There is typically noise associated with the fans and motors in heating and cooling systems. Take note of any excessive or new noises. If your system is making any clunking, clanging or whistling noises, turn it off and check the filter. If that doesn't solve it, reach out to a pro.
- **Running frequently.** Your system needs to run more to keep up on extreme weather days, but there might be an issue if it runs too often. Short cycling is when a system cycles on and off before completing the heating or cooling process. Contact a professional to diagnose this issue.

Several factors come into play when deciding to fix existing equipment or invest in new equipment. Consider the severity of the issue, repair costs, the likelihood of additional repairs, equipment lifespan and your budget.

The efficiency of your existing system is also a consideration. Heating and cooling technology improvements have come a long way in the last 20 years. Lower operation costs can offset the cost of a new system over time.

Consider your options before you are in desperate need. I recommend getting estimates from at least three contractors. Ask the contractor, "If this was your home, what type of system would you install and why?" The best solution for your home might be a different type of equipment.

# From East River to Missouri River

## Tom Boyko's 2,400-Mile Canoe Journey

Frank Turner

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What's a former CEO of East River Power Cooperative to do after they retire? For Tom Boyko, retirement after 37 years in the electric industry and serving nine years as East River's chief executive officer meant an opportunity to embark on a well-earned canoe odyssey from the headwaters of the Missouri River in Three Forks, Mont., to St. Louis, Mo., with his son, Jacob Boyko, who accompanied his father for a portion of the journey.

According to Boyko, the 2,400-mile trip had been brewing in his mind for a long time, so when he retired at the end of August 2023, he wasted no time planning and executing his adventure, jumping from his cozy office chair to his canoe in just six months.

"I grew up on the Missouri in Stanton, N.D., so I've been wanting to do this trip forever," said Boyko. "It's just something I've always wanted to do."

Boyko continued, "At first, my family didn't think I would follow through. But through the winter, I built a tank so I could sit and practice paddling, day after day. Then they realized I was going to do it. My wife and daughter actually drove Jacob and I out to Montana. They weren't sure I was going to make it all the way, and they thought we might call it quits, but we didn't."

Having read the journals of Lewis and Clark, Boyko wanted to follow in the pioneering duo's footsteps along the Missouri River. However, instead of relying on the historic travelers' accommodations, Boyko took a more modern approach to his journey with modern provisions, including a canoe packed to the brim with packets of chicken and tuna, boxes of mac and cheese, a valuable cache of instant coffee, a tent, two propane stoves, and many other supplies.

"I got ahold of David Miller's book, *The Complete Paddler*, and he really went through, step-by-step, what he experienced when he went down the Missouri River," said Boyko. "He logged the locations of the campgrounds and included a lot of great information, so it was a great book to have with."

Armed with the knowledge to navigate hordes of flies and mosquitos, unpredictable summer storms, and the channels of the Missouri River, Boyko launched his expedition on May 16 with his son, who had just graduated college with a degree in Journalism from South Dakota State University. Jacob had also just won a Pulitzer fellowship for a writing project about the Matanza Riachuelo River in Buenos Aires, Argentina. As a result, Jacob left the Missouri River expedition in Williston, N.D., to explore his own river-centric journey in Argentina. The rest of the trip, Tom tackled solo.

"When you get to be a dad like me, you just so appreciate the



Tom Boyko stands with his son, Jacob, at Tobacco Gardens Resort & Marina, a campground in McKenzie County, N.D. Photo submitted by Tom Boyko.

opportunity to do something like this with your son," said Boyko. "He enjoyed it, and he plans to finish the trip at some point in his life. And the cool thing is that every guy my age I met on the trip said the same thing, 'I wish I could have done that with my son.' I was very fortunate, and I very much appreciate that he came with me."

Although Boyko tackled most of the trip by himself, he did have help along the way. Boyko received help from family, friends, and co-workers from the co-op industry when portaging his canoe over the many dams along the way.

"My brother portaged me around Garrison Dam," said Boyko. "Jordan Lamb, the general manager of Oahe Electric, helped me portage Oahe Dam. Russell Gall with Charles-Mix Electric and Ervin Fink, a former director of East River, helped me through Fort Randall. Stephanie Horst with Bon Homme Yankton paddled Lewis and Clark Lake with me. Even my family came down and to help me portage Gavin's Point. It was great to see friends and family along the way."

Even bolstered by the help of friends, the trip wasn't always smooth sailing. Over the course of his 98-day journey, Boyko traversed strong winds and high waves on Lake Oahe, which forced him to ground his canoe and camp along the beaches of the reservoir. He drifted through oppressive 114-degree heat in Missouri and navigated past large barge traffic. There was even a rowdy raccoon who helped himself to some mac and cheese – all part of the adventure.

"I started packing the canoe when it became evident that a raccoon had been in my canoe during the night and ate through one of my food dry bags leaving mac and cheese noodles and orange cheese throughout the boat," wrote Boyko in his travel journal. "What a mess."

But it wasn't all bad. Boyko said he met some great people and found some real gems along the way.

"I worked for the Western Area Power Association for many years, so I was very familiar with the river and the dams... but when you are actually canoeing it, you get a different appreciation," said Boyko. "It's a beautiful river."

## KITE FESTIVAL



*Photo Credit: Visit Brookings*

# Let's Go Fly a Kite

**Shannon Marvel**

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The sky becomes more of an art canvas during the Brookings Kite Festival. For the last 25 years, kite fliers from across the country gather to let their art take flight at the festival.

One of those artists is Mike Gee of North Dakota.

“We go down there to Brookings and really like the kite flying field there. It’s just nice to come down and fly kites with friends who also enjoy flying kites,” Gee said.

Gee flies what’s called “show kites”, which are big, inflatable kites that can span 20 feet across the sky.

There are other kites flown during the festival, including soft kites, stick kites and sport kites.

A sport kite is one that is attached to two or four lines. Often they’ll be flown in teams and perform maneuvers in the sky.

“If you talk about crazy kites, there’s a wide variety. There are so many different creative people building things in creative ways,” Gee said. “It is definitely an art. It’s what you put on the canvas that makes it special.”

The kites are typically made with nylon, sail making cloth that doesn’t stretch.

“You can’t just go to the fabric store and buy tent fabric. We have a couple different weights of fabrics we use. And you need that tail on there to keep the kite stable,” Gee said.



*Photo Credit: Brookings Kite Festival*





*Photo Credit: Brookings Register*

Sally Damm Norby, of the Brookings Optimists Club, said the festival got its start when Lynn Versher, former director of the South Dakota Art Museum, approached Optimist member Bill Flynn about creating a joint effort to bring big kites to Brookings.

“This volunteer organization aims to make a positive impact on the lives of youth and communities. The Brookings club’s primary focus is on advancing the opportunities and programs for youth events that are encouraging with exceptional supportive outcomes. The Brookings Optimist Kite Festival offers a comprehensive learning experience that incorporates expressions of culture, science, creativity, civic involvement, and is

environmentally friendly,” Norby said.

Youth are encouraged to come down and learn how to make a kite of their own, with professional guidance.

Gee said he encourages visitors to come up to kite fliers to ask questions or strike up a conversation.

“One thing I really like about kite flying is it seems like no matter who you talk to on the field, someone can relate to an experience of flying a kite,” Gee said. “When we start flying kites, it brings back memories of when other folks were kids flying kites. It’s kind of emotional for some people.”

This year’s event will take place on June 22-23 at the Fishback Soccer Park in Brookings.

Gee said this location is a safe spot to fly kites, and well away from any electrical line hazards.

“If you’ve flown kites long enough, you have a story about power lines. When you hit a line, you call the power company, and they advise you of what to do. The best thing to do is avoid those wires. I always think, ‘If my line breaks, which way is my kite going to go and what’s over there,’” Gee said.

Gee encourages visitors to come down to the Brookings Kite Festival with their lawn chairs and blankets and stay for more than just a half hour.

“The thing is when the wind changes direction or speed, the kites change. There’s just so much going on throughout the day. You’ve really got to sit back and pay attention,” Gee said.



*Photo Credit: Visit Brookings*



# 79th Annual Meeting Overview

The 79th Annual Membership Meeting of Black Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc. was held at the Ramkota Convention Center II in Rapid City, South Dakota, on May 30th, 2024. Over 300 members, guests, and employees were in attendance. Each registered member received a \$25 bill credit as a registration gift. From the survey results, the members seemed to enjoy this option!

After members and guests made their way through displays and booths, Minerva's staff served dinner. Once again, the meal and service did not disappoint.

President Quivey reported that Black Hills Electric ended the 2023 year without any rate adjustments, significant storms, or injured employees. He stated that the co-op is in a sound financial position and informed the members of the shortened capital credit return timeframe. Quivey informed the membership of the board approved four-year work plan with a price tag of over 14 million dollars. He stated that the average member of BHEC had power 99.9995% of the time in 2023. Mr. Quivey thanked everyone for their support during his time as Board President.



CEO and General Manager Walker Witt informed the membership that a rate increase of just under 3% was effective as of May 1st. He explained the impacts of inflation and how wholesale power costs will be increasing over the next several years. Witt said that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released four new rules in April, and what that could mean for rates and reliability. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is working hard on our behalf in Washington, D.C.





Incumbent Gary Kluthe addressing the membership. Mr. Kluthe won the election and will serve a 3-year term.



Nominating Committee Chairman Robert Hovey explaining the nominating procedures.



(continued from page 10)

Mr. Witt stated that the 2023 inventory adjustment was just \$3.97. That is a testament of the due diligence of your employees and their checks and balance system.

Mr. Witt concluded his report by thanking the directors, employees, and the membership for their continued support and participation.

Following Mr. Witt's report, the membership voted and re-elected incumbent Gary Kluthe to represent the geographical areas of Lawrence, Meade, and Pennington Counties.



Fall River County nominee, Donald Andersen, addressing the membership.

Director Donald Andersen was unopposed and declared elected by President Dennis Quivey to represent the Fall River County geographical area.

Karina Novotny provided the membership with an overview of her experience at the 2023 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

Director of Communications and Member Services Michelle Fischer presented the \$1,000 Basin/BHEC scholarship to Lilibeth Schaack from Rapid City. Ms. Schaack drew for two additional \$500 scholarships. The winners were Rachel Miklos and Allison Hill.

After the meeting, cooperative personnel awarded several door prizes, including a \$480 one-year customer charge waived grand prize. The 80th Annual Meeting date is set for May 29, 2025. We hope to see you there!



The 2023 Washington D.C. Youth Tour winner Karina Novotny.



A number of displays were set up for our members. This display had lineman gear and tools that they use on a daily basis.

# COOPERATIVE METERING

**Roger Lawien**

More than 40 cooperative linemen and metering specialists gathered in Pierre for South Dakota Rural Electric's Meter School. This two-day gathering offers the opportunity to enhance skills, build a community of professionals, and learn the nuances of metering. As our need for more energy continues to grow, so does how we properly meter consumption.

Modern electric meters do much more than keep track of the electricity we consume. Correct electric metering is also essential for grid reliability and stability. Accurate measurements aid your cooperative in identifying and addressing issues such as voltage fluctuations or load imbalances promptly.

This proactive approach enhances the resilience of the electrical grid, reducing the likelihood of outages and ensuring a continuous and reliable power supply. At its core, accurate metering ensures fair and precise billing, preventing financial disputes and establishing trust between cooperatives and members.

From an economic standpoint, correct electric metering plays a pivotal role in resource allocation allowing member owned cooperatives to better understand consumption patterns, enabling them to optimize energy distribution and invest strategically in infrastructure development. This, in turn, leads to more efficient operations, cost savings, and improved overall service quality.

Precise metering supports energy conservation.

Members can sign into their account online, view consumption. Armed with accurate usage data they are empowered to make informed decisions about their energy consumption. This encourages responsible energy usage practices, reducing waste and lowering overall demand.

Metering guru and instructor John Pollard said it best. "These training schools are important. Metering is a craft handed down from generation to generation. With the advances of solid-state metering, these students are the supreme candidates to lead us into the future."

Your electric cooperative is your partner in getting it done!



2023 SDREA Meter School Instructors Photo by Roger Lawien

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# What is a Smart Meter?

A smart meter is a common term for Automated Metering Infrastructure, or AMI. These are connected devices that transmit information back to the electric utility's meter data management system and the information collected is used primarily for billing and outage response purposes. Smart meters started to be installed about 25 years ago. Individual utilities have different aged systems, but all electric cooperatives in South Dakota have two-way communication with every meter in the system.

## What advantages do Smart Meters bring?

Before smart meters were installed, customers were required to read their own analog meter and report their monthly usage for billing purposes, or a utility employee would physically travel to every home, farm or business in their large service territories to read usage data. Smart Meters take the burden off customers and employees, saving time and money for all consumers. In some cases, the aggregated energy usage information from their home can be visible to the customer via the Internet or a phone application.

- Smart Meters can be used to pinpoint exact locations of power outages more quickly by transmitting an “out of power” notification, meaning a faster response time to outages.
- Smart Meters allow information to be shared with individual consumers about their energy usage – allowing them to find energy efficiency opportunities or potential problems in their home.
- Smart Meters improve electric service reliability and power quality. Information obtained from the automated meters often identifies problems that can be repaired before they cause an outage.
- Information can be used by engineers to more effectively and appropriately size lines and transformers, saving the cooperative and members money.

## What information does a Smart Meter record?

Automated meters record an electronic kilowatt-hour (kWh) reading, the date and time of energy usage, the overall peak demand of the electric account, if the meter has been tampered with, and the number of times the meter has experienced a loss of power.

## Security of information

Electric cooperatives do not sell or share consumer data. Cooperatives abide by all laws regarding the privacy, protection and disclosure of personal information. The meters and associated communications systems are equipped with security features to prevent unauthorized access.

## Are there potential health impacts from a smart meter?

Research conducted by the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), the Utilities Telecom Council (UTC) and other similar groups have shown no health impacts from automated meters. The radio frequencies emitted by digital meters are well below the maximum recommended in federal guidelines. A digital meter equipped to send and receive data has an RF density hundreds of times lower than the RF density of a cell phone, and the meters are installed on the outside of homes or buildings.



# Paddling to the Arctic

## The Legacy of Dick Davidson and the South Dakota Canoe and Kayak Association

**Frank Turner**

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**GOALS**

To travel from South Dakota to the Arctic by canoe in one season. This is obviously no small challenge. If the season is giving, the added goals of reaching Alaska and even reaching both the Arctic Ocean (Beaufort Sea) and the Pacific Ocean (Bering Sea) would be added as noted later in 'Trip Segments'.

**PARTY**

A party of one in a solo canoe (at this time and likely during the trip).

**GEAR**

All gear will be carried at the start of the trip and only replacement gear (hopefully none) will be purchased in route. The gear must and will serve in all conditions of the trip, including weather ranging from hot, sultry days to possible blizzard conditions, including canoeing circumstances like numerous whitewater ascents and great lakes travel.

**FOOD**

Most food will be purchased in route. Resupply points will range from modern to basic. The incidence of points, after Lake Winnipeg, will range from several days to three or four weeks.

**SUPPORT**

None.

These are the original notes of outdoor activist and local canoe legend Dick Davidson, detailing his ambitious 1988 journey from South Dakota to the Arctic Circle by canoe. Embarking from Big Stone Lake, the 58-year-old from Sioux Falls attempted to paddle and portage his canoe 4,300 miles over several months through Canadian rivers and streams. Unfortunately, fires and drought in Manitoba prevented him from seeing reaching his goal. Even still, the ambitious journey captured Davidson's commitment to living a life dedicated to outdoor expeditions.

Davidson passed away in Sioux Falls in 2009, but his legacy and passion for canoeing live on through what is now known as the South Dakota Canoe and Kayak Association, a nonprofit

outdoor recreation organization he founded in 1981. Unlike his solo adventures through the Canadian wilderness, Davidson established the association alongside several co-founders, canoe enthusiasts, and friends, including founding member Dave Greenlee of Sioux Falls.

Although the group participated in races, canoe building, and conservation activism, Greenlee noted that the group mainly gathered mostly “for the sheer fun of canoeing.”

But they weren't just enthusiasts, this group of committed canoers were fanatics, appealing to all types of canoers from time-tested adventurers like Davidson to the casual outdoor enthusiast. Many of the founding members of the club would look for any opportunity to canoe, even taking to streams in near-freezing temperatures.

“Sometimes in the early spring season when the ice was still out, we would check the rain gauges after a quick rain to see if there was enough flow to enable a quick opening run for our canoes over the ice,” said Greenlee.

Another founding member, Tom Behrend, recalled crafting his own canoes and paddles from scratch, often gifting his creations to friends and enthusiasts for just the cost of the supplies.

“I would hold a class every year on how to build a canoe,” said Behrend. “A group of 10 to 15 of our members would meet every Thursday night in the winter time in somebody's heated garage. We would build these beautiful canoes with caned seats and all the goodies and then raffle them off once they were finished. It was a great way to raise money for the nonprofit.”

For the less devout, the association offered events catered to amateurs, offering downstream floats and river-bound birdwatches. Greenlee recalled organizing an introductory canoeing instructional for blind individuals. The experience, he said, was incredibly rewarding, both the participants and the instructor had something to learn.

“I had been asked a couple of times to lead a canoeing instructional for the Girl Scouts,” said Greenlee. “Then somebody said, ‘We have a group of individuals who are visually impaired who want to learn what canoeing is like.’ I was used to teaching young kids who just want to get out on the water and flail around and paddle, but this group was actually interested in learning about the canoe.”

Greenlee continued, “I remember taking one of the individuals out onto the water and saying ‘I'm going to turn to the left here and now we are facing West.’ He said, ‘I know that.’ So, I asked, ‘How do you know that?’ And he said, ‘I know the direction because I can feel the sun on my face.’ How many times had I been in a canoe, looking at the shore and landmarks, but I never realized that I could close my eyes and tell which direction I was going by feeling the sun on my face... He was teaching me.”

Today, the South Dakota Canoe and Kayak Association is still the state's premier paddling group, promoting safety,



A photo from an old article in the Argus Leader highlighting the preparations of Davidson's attempted 4,300 mile trip to the Arctic Circle by canoe. Photo by Mike Roemer, circa 1988. Courtesy of the Argus Leader.

education, conservation, and paddling outdoors. With roughly 100 members from across the state, the association centers around amateur paddling events, safety and outreach. Recent safety efforts include entry-level canoeing lessons and the association's recent WEAR IT campaign, which successfully installed more than 50 safety signs along recreation areas of the Missouri River encouraging kayakers and canoers to wear lifejackets.

“We host educational pool sessions across the state in Watertown and Sioux Falls where we practice falling out of the kayak and canoe and getting back in,” said Pat Wellner, the association's current president. “It's all about encouraging safe practices while enjoying the outdoors.”

Wellner encouraged outdoor enthusiasts of all levels to join the association by visiting the association's website at [sdcka.org](http://sdcka.org).

“Having the lakes and rivers of South Dakota is a great way to see the state from a different perspective that many don't get to see,” said Wellner. “If anyone is interested in becoming a member, I would encourage them to check out the website, and when you are on the water, please wear a life jacket.”

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**Aug. 24**  
**2024 McCrossan Boys Ranch Xtreme Event Rodeo**  
McCrossan Boys Ranch Campus  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-339-1203

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

**JULY 1-4**  
**Annual Black Hills Roundup**  
7 p.m.  
Black Hills Roundup Grounds  
Belle Fourche, SD  
605-723-2010  
blackhillsroundup.com

**JULY 4-7**  
**Star-Spangled Independence Day Celebration**  
10 a.m.  
Main Street  
Hill City, SD

**JULY 7, 14, 21 & 28**  
**1880 Train Old West Shootout**  
5 p.m.  
Hill City, SD

**JULY 10**  
**Trolley on the Trail**  
Tracey Park  
Hill City, SD

**JULY 13**  
**The Black Hills Raptor Center**  
The Farmer's Daughter  
Hill City, SD  
605-574-9095

**JULY 13**  
**Hill City Senior Citizen's Rummage Sale**  
Hill City Center  
Hill City, SD

**JULY 13**  
**Spearfish Canyon Half Mile Marathon & 5k Walk/Run**  
Spearfish, SD

**JULY 18**  
**Summer Fundraising Rummage Sale**  
8 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Spearfish Senior Center  
Spearfish, SD

**JULY 19-21**  
**Custer Piecemakers Quilt Show**  
9 a.m.- 4 p.m. each day  
Custer School Armory  
Custer, SD

**JULY 20**  
**Summer Flea Market**  
Boyd's World-Famous Antiques & Uniques  
Custer, SD  
605-660-3339

**JULY 26**  
**Disability Resource Fair**  
11 a.m. -2 p.m.  
Main Street Square  
Rapid City, SD

**JULY 27**  
**Hill City Evergreen Garden Club Flower Show**  
10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Hill City Community Center  
Hill City, SD  
210-326-4414

**AUG. 2**  
**Co-op Day**  
11 a.m.-2 p.m.  
BHEC Headquarters  
Custer, SD

**AUG. 17**  
**Northern Hills Area CASA**  
Black Hills Super 6 Mountain Bike Race; Big Hill Trails  
10 a.m.  
D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery  
Spearfish, SD

**AUG. 6-8**  
**IDEAg's Farmfest**  
8 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Redwood County, MN  
651-316-4369

**Note: Please make sure to call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**