

# West River Electric

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

## Cooperative Connections

APRIL 2010 VOL. 62 NO. 4

### A WEB OF SAVINGS

Logging on to  
Reduce Energy Use Pg. 8

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# SMART GRID



**Dick Johnson**  
West River Electric Association  
CEO/General Manager

**You have all** seen the “buzz” floating around newspapers, magazines, and the internet on “smart meters” and the “smart grid”. The US Department of Energy recently awarded stimulus grants for advanced electric grid projects to several utilities around the country to help modernize the electric grid and make it smarter. The main goal of modernization is to give customers and utilities more data to help use energy more efficiently and reduce our overall consumption. What does this entire “buzz” mean for our members?

At West River Electric, we have been well ahead of the curve in the area of smart metering long before the stimulus funding was made available. Our Board and Management had a vision of the future that two way communications with our meters was important. You will recall we began a program in 2001 when we replaced all of our meters with TWACS meters. TWACS stands for Two-Way Automatic Communication System.

The beauty in this system is how we can interact with the meter to get current information for many uses. Our employees can take this information and show our members their usage patterns so they can better understand how they can wisely use those kWh's they consume. We are planning on rolling out a new online product this fall called a meter data management system (MDMS). With MDMS, you can log onto a secure website and see your consumption on an hourly basis, and paired with hourly weather data, see graphs utilizing all of this data.

One of the long range goals in the electric industry is to utilize this real time usage data to have the opportunity to offer real time pricing to members. Our rates would be constructed to offer incentives for wise energy usage during certain times. Appliances would have devices in them to “talk” to each other. For example, the clothes dryer might check with the water heater to make sure it isn't running when it needs to start; or maybe the dishwasher wouldn't start until after you go to bed and your electric heat has been turned down and the lights are turned off. Overall, this would lead to lower energy usage and savings for you the member.

Besides all the information we obtain from these smart meters, we can install an additional module that will allow us to connect or disconnect power to your meter right from our office. This same smart technology then opens the door for us to provide to our members another new option; prepaid metering. I will have more on that in a future article.

So smart grid, keep buzzing because here we come! Until next time...

## What Caused the Outage March 1, 2010 in the Rapid City Area

**At 4:29 p.m. on** the afternoon of March 1, the first outages were called in. A local construction company was unloading an excavator when it came in contact with our transmission line south of the Box Elder Sub. West River Electric line crews were called in to make sure that the line was clear and they were then able to re-energize the line.

This transmission line brings power to the Airport Sub, the Box Elder Sub and the Rapid Valley Substation, affecting 5695 homes and businesses. Power was restored at 5:10 p.m.



## Freezing Fog Causes Outages

**Freezing fog causes** ice to build up on the power lines. When the ice begins to melt, ice falls off the lines causing the neutral conductor to jump and come in contact with the phase conductor. With all the fog we have had this winter – we have had blinking lights and outages caused by freezing fog.

## Electric Heat Rate to End with the April 18th Reading

**The Electric Heat** Rate will end with the April 18th reading. Please do not shut off your breakers as we still need to be able to read your meter remotely and detect problems over the electric lines. If you have any questions you can contact the Wall office at 279-2135 or the Rapid City office at 393-1500.

# West River Electric Cooperative Connections

(USPS No. 675-840)

## Our Mission

To inform you about your cooperative and its efforts to serve your energy needs; about how to use electricity safely and efficiently; and about the people who define and enhance the quality of life in communities served by electric co-ops.

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*West River Electric Cooperative Connections* is the monthly publication for the members of West River Electric Association. Members subscribe to *Cooperative Connections* as part of their electric cooperative membership for \$6.00 a year. *West River Electric Cooperative Connections* purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better living. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12.00 per year. Periodicals Postage Paid at Wall, S.D., and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *West River Electric Cooperative Connections*, PO Box 412, Wall, SD 57790-0412.

Other correspondence to: *West River Electric Cooperative Connections*, PO Box 3486, Rapid City, SD 57709; telephone (605)393-1500, Exts. 6617, 6631 or 6619; fax (605)393-0275; e-mail vkusser@westriver.com

Design assistance by:

TDG Communications, Inc. Deadwood, S.D.



### Call before you dig:

All underground cable location requests for the entire state of South Dakota are made through the South Dakota One-Call System. The number is toll free, 1-800-

781-7474 (dial 811 instate). You are required to provide this one-call center with information regarding the location where you will be digging, along with a description of the type of work you will be doing. You are required to give at least a 48-hour notice before you dig. The one-call center will then notify all utilities with underground facilities in the area where you will be digging.

## Co-op News

# Co-ops Support Alternatives to EPA Regulation

*Current carbon dioxide regulatory scheme would be the wrong tool for the job*

**Even as climate** change legislation remains stalled in Congress, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has begun taking steps to regulate carbon dioxide under the federal Clean Air Act – something West River Electric is very much against.

If this occurs, it is likely that energy rates, including those of West River Electric, would increase sharply. This is all possible due to a 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision which allowed the EPA to “make the call” on whether or not to clarify carbon as a threat.

“This could lead to higher electric bills and an ‘economic train wreck,’” points out Glenn English, CEO of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). “The Clean Air Act wasn’t intended to deal with carbon dioxide. It was tailored to curb harmful pollutants like sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which it does effectively. Using it to regulate greenhouse gas emissions would essentially be like using a hammer to tighten a screw, you may eventually get that screw hammered in, but using the right tool makes more sense and does the job without unintended harm.”

The Clean Air Act in its modern form was originally passed in 1970 to control specific pollutants on a local and regional basis. In 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that the term “pollutant” in the Clean Air Act includes carbon dioxide.

Disregarding Congress’ original intent when it passed the Act, the EPA subsequently issued a finding that included carbon dioxide among other emissions that endanger public health and welfare. Several members in the U.S. House and Senate have introduced bipartisan proposals to stop EPA from using the Clean Air Act in this way. House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-Mo.), along with Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo.) and House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minn.), recently introduced such legislation. Two other efforts are being spearheaded by U.S. Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-N.D.) and U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), ranking member on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

English says electric co-ops welcome and endorse the efforts of Congress to limit EPA’s regulatory oversight, stressing that consumers can also have an impact on the issue. Through the nationwide Our Energy, Our Future® grassroots campaign at [www.ourenergy.coop](http://www.ourenergy.coop), you can join with your local electric co-op in supporting members of Congress seeking other solutions.

“Affordable electric bills must be at the heart of this debate, and we’re fighting on behalf of consumers,” declares English. “Leaving matters up to unelected EPA bureaucrats is a major step in the wrong direction.”

# Make a Backup Date

**Welcome to the** first edition of the *TechRadio Newsletter*. We are excited to come to you with tips, tricks, helps, and just plain fun facts about the technology in your life.

Do you remember when a phone was a phone and a book was a book? I do, and sometimes it's hard to keep up with the technical advances that seem to be flooding our world. Sometimes expensive and fragile, often capable of doing what we want done, but having features we may not know what to do with, or even need. At times it can be frustrating.

I would like to use this column as an opportunity to answer your questions and solve your problems; my contact information is below. I look forward to hearing from you and helping put technology to work for you.

My tip of the month is a common one if you have ever heard our radio show. Back-up those important picture, music and text documents! Save them on CDs, DVDs or an external hard drive and keep them in another location – perhaps at a relative's house or in your bank box. I hear tragic tales every week of hard disks failing or laptops being stolen and people losing the only copy of precious photos they have. Take a moment NOW or make a reminder on your calendar to back up your information this weekend.

Send us your questions and comments – our e-mail address is [midday@sdpb.org](mailto:midday@sdpb.org) and our mailing address is PO Box 5000, Vermillion, S.D. 57069. *TechRadio* featuring the Computer Guys is heard online at [sdpb.org](http://sdpb.org) and over-the-air on your local South Dakota Public Broadcasting radio frequency twice a month on the first and third Fridays. More information about the topics covered in this newsletter can be found at [www.techradio.us](http://www.techradio.us). Kent Osborne is Director of Online Services for SDPB.

# Spring Driving Safety Tips

**Spring in South Dakota** and western Minnesota means melting snow and icy roads, in addition to hazards such as rain, mist and fog. When these conditions exist, drivers must use extra caution on the roadways. Consider the following safety tips:

- Slow down and increase your following distance when rain or mist begins to fall. Even a small amount of water can mix with oil and grease on the road to create slippery conditions.
- Use your low beam headlights. High beams reflect water vapor (fog) and make it harder to see. Low beams are the law in any event if your visibility is limited to 500 feet or there is precipitation.
- If you are driving in rain or fog that totally impairs visibility, pull off the road as far as possible and turn on your hazard lights.
- To keep the inside of your windshield clear of moisture, turn on your fan and defroster – the air conditioner may work wonders as well.
- Allow extra following distance – a car needs two to 10 times more distance to stop on a wet road than on dry pavement.
- Avoid driving through large puddles – the splashing water may affect your brakes, cause your car to swerve and impair the vision of other motorists.
- Watch the road to see if the vehicle ahead is leaving tire tracks and if it is, follow in those tracks if you can. If it's not, reduce speed slowly to prevent hydroplaning.

Source: South Dakota Safety Council



## Kids' Corner Safety Poster

**"Never walk close to a broken electric pole."**



**G. J. Castaneda, 8 years old**

*G. J. is the son of Jeff and Sylvia Mowrer, Mobridge, S.D. They are members of Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative, Timber Lake, S.D.*

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.

# Party Favorites



## Ham Ball

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened | 1 tsp. minced onion                       |
| 1/4 cup mayonnaise                    | 3/4 tsp. mustard                          |
| 2 cups ground, cooked ham             | 1/4 tsp. hot pepper sauce                 |
| 2 T. chopped parsley                  | 1/2 cup chopped peanuts or pistachio nuts |

Combine cream cheese and mayonnaise; beat until smooth. Stir in next 5 ingredients. Cover; chill several hours. Form into ball; roll in nuts to coat. Serve with crackers.

**Dawn Kleinschmidt, Harrold Cooperative Connections**

## Jalapeno Tortilla Roll-Ups

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened                   | 1 (4 oz.) can green chilies                        |
| 2 T. sour cream   | 1 (4 oz.) can jalapenos                            |
| 3 (10-inch) flour tortillas                             | 1 (4 oz.) can chopped black olives                 |
| 1 pkg. deli cooked thinly sliced chicken, turkey or ham | 4 medium dill pickles, cut into strips length-wise |

Combine cream cheese and sour cream. Spread equally on tortillas. Place meat slices on tortillas. Cover with chilies, jalapenos and olives. Place strips of pickles at one end of each tortilla. Roll up and cut into 1-inch slices. Put in sealed container in refrigerator for 1 hour.

**Darlene Price, Prairie City Cooperative Connections**

## Crockery Cocoa

- |                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 3-1/3 cups nonfat dry milk       | 1/2 cup sugar          |
| 2/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder | 1 tsp. vanilla extract |
|                                  | 6 cups warm water      |

In a crockpot, combine first 3 ingredients. Stir in vanilla and water. Cover and heat on low setting for 3 to 4 hours.

**Cherie Leibel, Glencross Cooperative Connections**

## Angel Frost Punch

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 2 (10 oz.) pkgs. frozen sliced strawberries     | 2 cups water              |
| 2 (6 oz.) cans frozen pink lemonade concentrate | 1 quart vanilla ice cream |
|   | 2 cups lemon-lime soda    |

Combine 1 pkg. strawberries, 1 can lemonade concentrate, 1 cup water and half the ice cream in a blender. Blend until smooth and thick. Pour mixture into punch bowl. Repeat with remaining strawberries, lemonade, water and ice cream. Pour lemon-lime drink into mixture. Carefully stir to mix.

**Sharon Morrell, Parker Cooperative Connections**

## Chocolate Peanut Butter Dip

- |  |
|--|
| 1/3 cup low-fat plain yogurt                               |
| 2 T. chocolate syrup                                       |
| 1/4 cup creamy peanut butter                               |
| 1 tsp. chocolate or colored sprinkles                      |
| 4 cups fresh fruit and vegetables cut in "dip-able" shapes |

In a standing mixing bowl, mix yogurt and chocolate syrup on medium speed until well blended. In a microwave-safe bowl, microwave the peanut butter at 70 percent power for about 1 minute or until melted; stir half-way through. Pour peanut butter into chocolate yogurt mixture and mix until smooth. Note: This dip may also be served with pretzels or spread on graham crackers.

*Makes 4 servings (each serving = 3 T. dip and 1 cup fruit/veggies)  
Nutrients per serving: Calories, 194 (38% from fat); Fat, 9g (saturated 2g, monounsaturated 4g, polyunsaturated 2g); Protein, 6g; Carbohydrates, 26g; Fiber, 4g; Cholesterol, 2mg; Calcium, 64mg*

**Pictured, Cooperative Connections**

## Bagel Dip

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 (16 oz.) container sour cream | 2 tsp. Accent                          |
| 1-1/2 cups real mayonnaise      | 1 medium onion, diced                  |
| 2 T. parsley flakes             | 2 (2.5 oz.) pkgs. corned beef, chopped |
| 2 tsp. dill weed                |  |

Mix and chill. Serve with plain, onion or pumpernickel bagels cut into small pieces.

**Deloris Gilbertson, Arlington Cooperative Connections**

## Summertime Rhubarb Slush

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 6 cups fresh or frozen rhubarb                         | 1 (12 oz.) can frozen lemonade concentrate, thawed |
| 7 cups water   |  |
| 2 cups sugar   | 2 (2 liter) bottles of 7-up, Squirt or club soda   |
| 1 (12 oz.) can frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed |  |

In a large saucepan, bring rhubarb, water and sugar to a boil. Simmer, uncovered, for 8 to 10 minutes or until rhubarb is tender. Process in blender until smooth. Cool. In a large covered container, combine rhubarb and juices. Mix well; freeze. To serve, scoop slush into a tall glass; add 7-up or other favorite beverage.

**Carol Mizera-Amick, Lead Cooperative Connections**

*Please send your favorite Casseroles and Ethnic recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2010. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.*

# Dress Up Your Home And Cut Energy Costs – With Landscaping



**Jim Dulley**  
www.dulley.com

**Dear Jim:** We just built a house and it needs a lot of landscaping. I want to plan and plant it all myself. I've heard proper landscaping can impact my utility bills. What are some basic efficient landscaping tips? – Janice S.

**Dear Janice:** People tend to appreciate landscaping for its aesthetic value, but proper landscaping also impacts the energy efficiency of your house. From an overall envi-

ronmental standpoint, good landscape design also minimizes the need for mowing and other lawn care. This not only saves you time, but you may be able to get by with a push mower or a battery-operated mower to eliminate gasoline costs.

In addition to increasing the efficiency of your home, wise landscaping can reduce the need for watering. In the past, this was an issue primarily for the Southwest. Today, water shortages are an issue across the nation. Even if there's adequate water available, it takes large amounts of energy at municipal waterworks facilities to process and pump domestic water.

Proper landscaping includes the use of ground cover, dwarf and full-size shrubs, climbing vines, and trees. Ground cover is typically some type of plant, grass or gravel. The selection you make depends on your climate and specific house. Within the same neighborhood, a combination which works best for one house may not be the best for a home just one street away.

In general, try to use low-growing ground cover plants or gravel instead of grass. Other than some unique types of grass, most common species of grass require maintenance. Grass is still the best choice for areas of your yard where children play or pets roam, but try to keep it to a minimum.

In all but the most humid climates, placing low-growing ground cover plants near your house helps keep it cool during summer. The leaves block the sun's heat from being absorbed into the ground and they give off moisture. This evaporation of water from the leaves, called transpiration, cools air near the home – similar to when we perspire.

In hot, humid climates, gravel which is shaded from the sun can be more effective than ground cover plants. Using gravel also eliminates the need for watering, but it may increase the

air temperature around your house. The thermal mass of the gravel stores the afternoon sun's heat, causing the heating effect to last into the evening. Though not helpful during summer, during winter gravel provides an advantage.

When selecting ground cover plants, consider their specific characteristics (mature size, water needs, propagation, foliage density, etc.) To minimize the watering requirements, group the plant types based on their watering needs.

Dwarf shrubs are ideal for energy-efficient landscaping because they remain small at maturity (two to three feet high). Plant some near the house foundation and some further away for windbreak ramps. Since they stay small, they require little care and little watering.

In addition, dwarf shrubs can cut your utility bills year-round. The sill plate, the bottom frame along a home's foundation, remains one of the greatest air infiltration pathways into many houses. Planting dwarf shrubs near the house, especially evergreen varieties, can block the force of cold winter winds and reduce the amount of air leaking in.

As a windbreak ramp, dwarf shrubs can be planted to the northwest side of taller shrubs and trees. These smaller plants begin directing the cold winds upward toward the tops of taller trees. The upward wind path continues over the top of your house, not against it.

Planting climbing vines on a trellis can create effective shading to reduce the heat buildup on a wall during summer. In most climates, locate the trellis close to the house to also take advantage of transpiration cooling. In humid climates, locate the trellis a little further away from the wall. This allows the air flow to carry the moisture away, but still provides good wall shading.

Climbing vines are often more effective than trees for shade because you can target specific windows and areas of your house where heat produces the greatest problem. Deciduous vines which lose their leaves during winter are best so the winter sun still reaches the house. One with a robust stem structure can help disrupt the force of winter winds.

Trees have perhaps the greatest impact upon your utility bills. The actual landscaping details vary for different climates, but some general concepts apply to all. Evergreen trees are effective for the northwest across to the northeast side of a house to block the winter winds. During winter, the sun does not shine from those sides. Deciduous trees planted on the other sides provide summer shade, but allow the winter sun through. You may want to leave a small gap to the southwest to allow summer breezes to reach your home.

*Have a question for Jim? Send inquiries to: James Dulley, Cooperative Connections, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com).*

# An Opportunity To Learn More About Where Electricity Comes From **July 20-22, 2010**

**Once again this summer,** West River Electric will sponsor area students at the South Dakota Rural Electric Youth Excursion. This three-day event will be headquartered out of Bismarck, North Dakota.

Young people attending the excursion will learn about the basics of cooperatives, how the region's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives work together, and the career opportunities available at the cooperatives. The trip promises to provide fun, sight-seeing, and an opportunity to make new friends with participants from other rural electric cooperatives.

Participants will tour the Great Plains Synfuels Plant, Coteau Properties Freedom Mine, Antelope Valley Station Power Plant and a drive through the 40-MegaWatt Wilton Wind Farm north of Bismarck, N.D.

Evenings will be spent swimming, dancing, taking a cruise, shopping and making new friends.

**WHO IS ELIGIBLE?** All area high school freshmen, sophomores and juniors whose parents or guardians are members of West River Electric are eligible to enter.

**WHEN IS IT HELD?** The excursion will be held July 20-22, 2010. Participants will be picked up Tuesday morning, July 20, and will arrive back home Thursday, July 22. Commercial buses will be used for transportation.



**WHAT DOES IT COST?** The trip is funded by West River Electric Association. Funding for the trip provides for each participant's transportation, lodging, meals, entertainment and sight-seeing events. Students are required to supply their own personal/shopping money.

**HOW DO I QUALIFY?** Contact West River Electric Association at 605-393-1500 or fill out the application form and return it to West River Electric Association by June 21, 2010.

## **July 20-22, 2010 Youth Excursion**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ T-Shirt Size \_\_\_\_\_  
 Year in School \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
 School Attending \_\_\_\_\_

**Send to West River Electric Association, Youth Excursion, PO Box 3486, Rapid City, SD 57709**

# Exploring a Web of Savings

by Brenda Kleinjan

WITH A CLICK AND A SCROLL, CO-OP MEMBERS can surf their way to a wealth of tips on how to save energy around their homes, thanks to a Web site powered by America's electric cooperatives.

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives' TogetherWeSave.com site is a one-stop shopping trip for information, including savings estimates, on a variety of energy efficiency topics from caulking and sealing air leaks to replacing big ticket appliances with more energy-efficient models.

The site, which allows visitors to enter their own ZIP code to customize assumptions used in the models, is an interactive way for homeowners to surf to relevant, useful information on energy use.

"We created this resource so members can find ways to reduce their energy footprint and save money on their electricity bill," said Tom Green, who is the director of communications for Northern Electric Cooperative in Bath, S.D., and Lake Region Electric Association in Webster, S.D. Green served on the national Touchstone Energy Committee that oversaw the creation of the site.

Visitors to the site can add up potential savings in their own home through the simple click of a mouse.

Thinking about updating your washing machine to an ENERGY STAR® model? Take the home tour on the site and swing by the laundry room. There, you can turn the dial and see that upgrading from a conventional washer to an

Visitors to the site can add up potential savings in their own home through the simple click of a mouse.



ENERGY STAR washer will generate \$140 per year in savings. (Remembering to turn off the laundry room light can save another 10 bucks a year.)

A visit to the site's kitchen shows a homeowner can add another \$100 a year to her annual energy savings by upgrading from a standard refrigerator to an ENERGY STAR model. More modest savings are realized by taking the dishwasher from a standard model to ENERGY STAR, a move that will put \$30 a year of savings back in the home's energy account.

For some real energy savings, trek on down to the home's basement and take a look at the heating and cooling system. The example shown walks the homeowner through the benefits of upgrading a standard 10.0 SEER/HSPF6.8 HVAC unit to a 15.0 SEER ENERGY STAR model for \$408 a year in savings. Stepping up to a 18.0 SEER ENERGY STAR model would add another \$83 – or a total savings of \$491 over the existing unit.

Since August, thousands of people have taken the home tour to calculate energy savings. The calculations they made are folded into a running total at the top of the page, really demonstrating that together cooperative members can save energy in very measurable ways. After six months, the possible savings calculated on the site totals nearly \$11 million.

Using the refrigerator upgrade example from above, \$100 may not seem like a huge amount compared to the purchase price of the new appliance (though, arguably, the energy savings could pay replacement costs during the appliance's lifetime.) But, if each of the more than 17 million households served by electric cooperatives nationwide upgraded their refrigerator, the annual savings would eclipse \$1.7 billion, or an energy savings of 17 billion kilowatt hours.

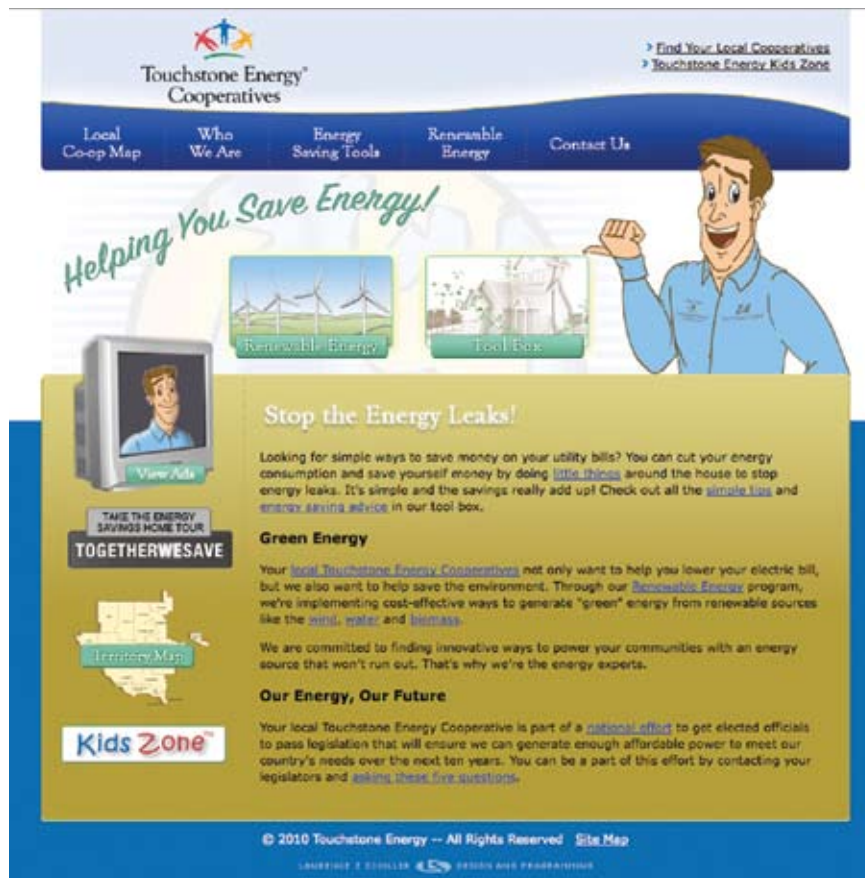
Those are some pretty big numbers, but what does it really mean? In 2007, the average home in the United States used 936 kilowatt hours of electricity per month. So, using this monthly average and carrying it out over the course of a year, the energy saved by installing upgraded refrigerators would power 1.5 million homes for a year.

Still not impressed? Try this:

Approximately 115,000 homes and businesses are served by electric cooperatives in South Dakota and western Minnesota. The energy savings noted above would power those homes for nearly 13 years. (Please keep in mind that the average energy use in the Midwest tends to be higher than the national average, so it might be safer to say the homes would be powered for a decade.)

"Upgrading to an ENERGY STAR refrigerator cuts the total electric use in a home by 7 percent to 9 percent," said Alan Shedd, a professional engineer with Touchstone Energy.

The TogetherWeSave.com site also offers Touchstone Energy TV – a one-stop shop for money- and energy-saving



**Cover:** Co-op members nationwide are tallying potential energy savings at [www.TogetherWeSave.com](http://www.TogetherWeSave.com). **Opposite:** The TogetherWeSave.com site offers visitors tour of a virtual house to find where potential energy savings may be found. The site also offers videos on improving your home's energy efficiency and tips on purchasing new appliances. **Above:** Ed the Energy Expert greets visitors to the [www.StopEnergyLeaks.com](http://www.StopEnergyLeaks.com) site developed by cooperatives in South Dakota and western Minnesota.

videos with tips on energy audits, lighting, sealing and insulation.

"This site show that the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives together care about our members and have taken measures to assist our members in saving energy by developing a user-friendly Web site nationally in Togetherwesave.com," said Loren Noess, manager of Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell, S.D. Noess is on the national board of directors for the nationwide Touchstone Energy Cooperatives brand.

The site is not the only online resource for area co-op members. Before TogetherWeSave.com launched, the region's electric cooperatives were already using the [www.StopEnergyLeaks.com](http://www.StopEnergyLeaks.com) site to aid members in making energy decisions. Ed the Energy Expert greets visitors to the site and points out innovative efforts cooperatives are making in renewable energy.

Whether it's online or by calling your co-op directly to seek more information, the bottom line is that together, cooperative members have a great deal of power at their fingertips to help control their home's energy use.

"We all share the responsibility of reducing our nation's energy consumption," said Green. "The greenest kilowatt of electricity is the one we never use."

## Tough Enough to Wear Pink



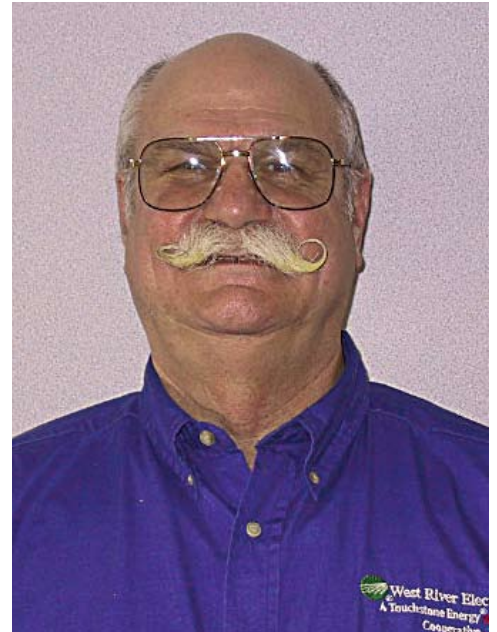
### West River Electric

Employees are Tough Enough to Wear Pink. Employees from the Wall and Rapid City offices took the challenge to wear pink in February to support Cancer research. All proceeds benefit the John T Vucurevich Regional Cancer Care Institute.



## Goodbye to Mike Erz

**After High School,** Mike got a Teaching Degree from South Dakota State University and then joined the ROTC where he was stationed at Fort Hood, TX in the Army for 2 years. He then drove truck, hauling cattle and road oil, in the McIntosh and Rapid City areas.



In 1972 Mike joined the staff at the Wall School District teaching Industrial Arts, Drivers Education and General Science. While teaching, two summers were spent as summer help at West River Electric, where in 1976 he became a full time Apprentice Lineman. Getting his Journeymans in 1980, he became Line Foreman in 1990 and Operations Superintendent in 1999 – a position he has held since.

Mike has enjoyed his time with West River Electric, with the biggest challenges being weather related outages. He has always enjoyed the feeling of getting power restored and the sense of fulfillment that this brings. Some of the biggest changes he has seen were going from overhead power lines to underground and back again.

Mike and wife, Mary, plan to spend time with their grandchildren, do some traveling and volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. Mike plans to continue with his volunteer service on the Wall Ambulance.

Mike's last day will be March 31, 2010. Congratulations and Best of Luck!

## Sign Up

Fill out and send to:  
**West River Electric Assoc.**  
**Cooperative Connections,**  
**PO Box 3486,**  
**Rapid City, SD 57709**  
 Or drop it in with  
 your payment.

### I am interested in more information on:

- Marathon Water Heater
- Radiant Cove Heat
- Meco Grills
- Special Electric Heat Rate
- Geothermal & Air to Air Heat Pumps
- Rebates
- Radiant Floor Heating

### Sign up for:

- Operation Roundup
- Budget Billing
- Pay By Bank
- Automatic Credit Card Payment
- Blocks Wind Energy

Be sure to include your name and address if you mail this coupon  
**E mail: vkusser@westriver.com**

### STATS

January 2010 - # of Consumers 14,989 KWH 27,506,997  
 January 2009 - # of Consumers 14,799 KWH 26,866,110

**Call SD One Call Before You Dig at 811**

## Statement of Nondiscrimination

**West River Electric Association, Inc.** is the recipient of federal financing assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or handicap shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Jenny Patterson, Manager of Office Services. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes with this organization or the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250 or the Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Washington, D.C. 20250. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. An Equal Opportunity Employer.

## Appliance Rebates Available Beginning March 1, 2010



**Beginning March 1** rebates were made available thru the State of South Dakota for the purchase of qualifying Energy Star® appliances to replace existing appliances. The appliances and rebates available are as follows:

**Washing Machine \$100**

**Dishwasher \$75**

**Refrigerator \$150**

**Freezer \$150**

**Water Heater \$125**

*(Marathon Water Heaters do not qualify)*

Appliances must be purchased after March 1, 2010 to be eligible for the rebates. Please check the website, <http://appliance rebate.sd.gov> for eligibility requirements before making your purchase. The rebates will only be made available until such time when available funds run out.

### Pat Trask Wins \$10.00 Credit

Pat Trask of Wasta is our latest winner of the survey drawing. These surveys are available at both offices for any member who would like to give us their comments. In return, you'll have a chance to save \$10.00 on your electric bill.



What's the main reason we use  
**RENEWABLE ENERGY?**  
— You're lookin' at it. —



**West River  
Electric Association**

Wall 1-888-279-2135  
Rapid City 1-888-393-1500



*Looking out for you.*

# Seasonal Use

by Brenda Kleinjan

**B**E IT A HUNTING RETREAT, A FISHING CABIN, A family cabin in a picturesque mountain setting or even a grain bin site, seasonal accounts provide unique challenges to electric cooperatives.

A seasonal account – a general term used for someplace that isn't a primary year-round residence nor a commercial account – by its very name implies that the energy demand will fluctuate.

Among what Cam Wal Electric Cooperative in Selby, S.D., sees as a seasonal load are grain bin sites scattered throughout the cooperative. Historically, grain drying takes place in a short window of October through November. But, as the types of crops grown have changed, the cooperative is seeing higher use by the sites in the spring and summer as producers use fans to dry the grain. General Manager Jeff Bonn said that electric use has increased 25 percent due to this.

With its 100-plus-mile long western border edged by the Missouri River, it's no surprise that the cooperative also has its fair share of seasonal

**You maintain the same infrastructure to places whether they're using electricity two months a year or 12 months a year.**

fishing cabins, hunting lodges and camper hookups.

According to 2008 statistics, about 30 percent of Cam Wal's cooperative membership was considered seasonal accounts.

A quick look at U.S. Census data for the three counties served by the cooperative confirms that the area has a high concentration of seasonal/vacant homes.

A challenge for the cooperative is that the most demand by the seasonal accounts comes at the



same time that the energy used by year-round membership is also peaking.

“Most of the usage is in July and August – It makes us have to build a larger backbone than if the usage was more distributed,” said Bonn.

The cooperative maintains more than 1,500 miles of line. One could argue that a fourth of the system maintained exists for those seasonal accounts.

Yet that 30 percent of members only uses 4 percent of the energy sold by the co-op in a year.

That’s when the Cam Wal board decided, after having a study done by its engineer, to institute a monthly charge that’s paid by all members. That service charge pays for the costs of the plant – the poles, wires, transformers, substations and so forth – that stand sentinel 24 hours a day to deliver power. The kilowatt hours charges, which vary by user, pay for the operation and maintenance of the system.

Each cooperative faces these challenges in a slightly different manner. There is no one-size-fits-all or even a one-size-fits-most solution. Striking the right balance is something that each locally elected board of directors does for

the electric cooperatives it governs. Rates are set by elected directors who also pay those very same rates. It is done with the guidance of federal standards, engineers and managers.

According to Rural Utilities Service numbers, about 8 percent of residential cooperative consumers in South Dakota were considered seasonal accounts in 2005, ranking the state ninth of 47 states with cooperative utilities. Minnesota had about 9 percent of its co-op members as seasonal accounts, ranking seventh. Nationally about 3 percent of co-op consumers were considered seasonal.

On the south end of the river, Charles Mix Electric in Lake Andes, S.D., also sees challenges brought on by an increasing number of seasonal accounts.

More than a decade ago, about 13 percent of its members were considered seasonal. By 2008, that seasonal number had grown to 24 percent of the cooperative membership. The amount of electricity sales also increased, from 1.5 percent of total sales 10 years ago to 2.9 percent of sales in 2008.

“You have to maintain the same infrastructure to these places whether they’re using electricity two months a year or 12 months a year,” said Russell Gall, member services advisor at the cooperative.

This creates a challenge of making sure that the infrastructure is in place for high demand times, yet that same infrastructure may be underutilized or not utilized at all during other times of the year.

When one thinks of South Dakota’s vacation destinations, which would seem to equate to high numbers of seasonal accounts, the southern Black Hills comes to mind.

At Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D., about one in every five of its members is considered seasonal and accounted for about 6 percent of energy sales in 2008.

But the use of the traditional seasonal setting has been evolving some.

“Some seasonals heat their homes all winter – they’ll disconnect the rest of the electric appliances, but it’s a lot easier on the home to keep it from freezing and thawing continuously which can damage the sheet rock,” said Mike Chase, manager of marketing and member services at BHEC.

“The old cabin or single-wide trailer by the lake are slowly fading off and nicer seasonal homes are showing up,” said Chase, who noted the co-op has seasonal members that have homes ranging from 1,000-square feet up to the 15,000-square-foot range.

For the cooperative, instituting a monthly service charge to all members regardless of energy use ensures that everyone is paying their share.



# See us at...



**31st Annual Invitational  
Cammack Ranch Supply Ag  
Trade Show**  
Union Center, SD • April 15-16, 2010

## Black Hills Home Builders Show

**March 26-28, 2010**  
Come see the Touchstone Energy Booth in the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Arena at the 2010 Black Hills Home Builders Show.

**Home Show Exhibit Hours:**  
Friday, March 26 - 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
Saturday, March 27 - 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
Sunday, March 28 - 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## Branch Office Construction In Rapid City

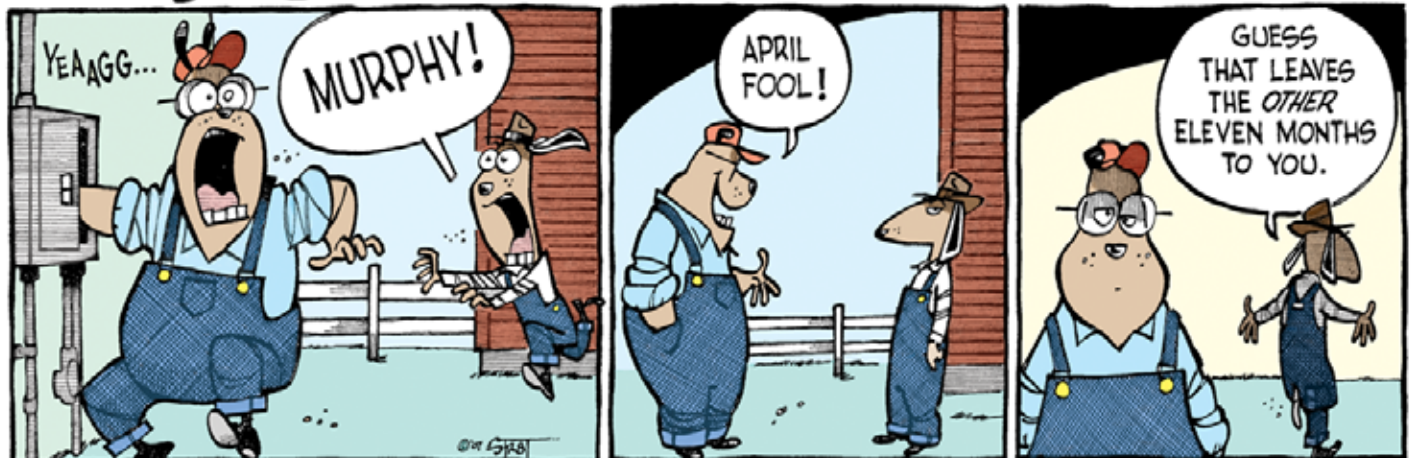
**Progress continues** at the Branch office. They continue to put steel up and it is beginning to look more like a building each day. We expect the precast to be delivered March 8th and the walls for the shop to be up by March 15th, weather permitting.



Just a reminder to you, our consumers, we have lost a lot of our parking at the Branch Office due to the construction of the new building. Please be careful when coming in to conduct business as parking is limited.



# Murphy



# House Move Down Hwy 44

**On February 9** this house was moved thru Black Hills Power territory to the edge of West River Electric service territory. On the morning of February 10 the house was moved east, down Hwy 44 passing over the Elk Vale bypass and down to Radar Hill Rd and then north to Hidden Springs Road.

The home is 25 feet tall, requiring us to shut off power to many homes and business consumers as the house was transported under the power lines.



## Line Patrol Continues

**Crews continue working** on annual line patrol. This is a yearly inspection of all of our lines. Even lines that are not connected, if it belongs to us, we inspect it every year. This inspection is for safety and operational purposes, our linemen are looking for any hazards to the public. This can include things such as haystacks and silage piles under a line, buildings constructed under a line, clearance issues on new roads/driveways, dirt work over buried cables, etc. They are also looking for any damaged equipment and loose hardware that may cause future outages. The electrical system we operate is very reliable, but as you all know, Mother Nature doesn't always play fair, winter storms can cause damage that goes unnoticed. This annual inspection helps us repair that damage before it causes an outage.

If you see one of our vehicles in your area, line patrol may be the reason. In addition to our usual white trucks we also use UTV's to patrol lines that are not along roads. This is a quicker way to get to some of the more remote areas and is easier on the land than driving a truck over it. If you have questions concerning line patrol in your area, contact Wayne Shull in the Wall office at 279-2135, Ron Lauer in the Rapid City office at 393-1500 or Lane Butler in the Enning office at 985-5360.

## CPR Recertification Training



**Each year as** part of the safety program at West River Electric, employees receive recertification in CPR. Mark Patterson of SDREA was in the Wall office to train employees on the most up to date information on performing CPR.

## Career Day At Valley View School



**Sam Lockhart and Willy Nohr** presented to the 1st-5th grade students at Valley View School the training and job experiences in being a lineman for West River Electric Assn.

## Regional Dateline

### March 17-21

SD State 8 Ball  
Pool Tournament  
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center  
Rapid City, SD  
605-348-5758

### March 18-20

SD High School  
Boys State B  
Basketball Tournament  
Aberdeen, SD

### March 18-20

SD High School  
Boys State A  
Basketball Tournament  
Sioux Falls, SD

### March 18-20

SD High School  
Boys State AA  
Basketball Tournament  
Rapid City, SD

### March 25-26

Broadway: Hairspray  
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center  
Rapid City, SD  
605-394-4111

### March 25-27

SD High School  
All State Band  
Watertown, SD

### March 27

RC Friends of NRA  
Ramkota Hotel  
Rapid City, SD  
605-923-5368

COURTESY PHOTO

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.

## Events of Special Note

### March 26-28

BH Home Show  
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center  
Rapid City, SD  
605-348-7850

### April 15-16

Cammack Ranch Supply  
Ag Trade Show  
Union Center, SD  
605-985-5591

### April 10

BH Symphony Orchestra  
Out Of This World  
Rushmore Plaza  
Civic Center Theatre  
Rapid City, SD  
1-800-468-6463

### April 12-16

Kindergarten Registration  
& Screening  
Douglas School District  
Badger Clark Elementary  
Box Elder, SD  
605-923-0080

### April 18

BH Chamber Music Society  
South Dakota String Quartet  
First Congregational Church  
Rapid City, SD  
605-718-5666

### May 6-8

SD High School  
All-State Jazz Band  
Aberdeen, SD

### May 20-22

SD High School  
Boys Tennis State Meet  
Rapid City, SD

### May 24-25

SD High School  
Boys & Girls B  
Golf State Meet  
Aberdeen, SD

### May 24-25

SD High School  
Girls A Golf State Meet  
Rapid City, SD

### May 24-25

SD High School  
Girls AA Golf State Meet  
Spearfish, SD

### May 28-29

SD High School  
AA Track & Field  
State Meet  
Brandon, SD

### May 28-29

SD High School  
A Track & Field  
State Meet  
Lennox, SD

### May 28-29

SD High School  
B/Finals Track & Field  
State Meet  
Sioux Falls, SD

### May 31

West River Electric Assn  
Closed in Observance of  
Memorial Day  
605-279-2135  
605-393-1500