

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Rural Electrification

**West Central - The Last
Co-op to Incorporate**
Pages 8-9

Generational Farmers
Pages 12-13

Rural Electrification served even
the most rural communities.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

WEST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

OCTOBER 2, 2024

The Annual Meeting of the members of West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. was held at the Harold Thune Auditorium, Town of Murdo, Jones County, State of South Dakota, pursuant to due notice to the members, commencing at 5:00 PM CT on Wednesday, October 2, 2024.

The meeting was called to order by President Shad Riggle who announced that a quorum was present.

Pastor Jim Karg of Murdo gave the invocation.

Manager Jeff Birkeland recognized all Veterans and active service personnel.

The National Anthem was sung by the Jones County All State Choir.

The Manager introduced the directors from the various zones. He then recognized past employees of West Central and special guests.

The business meeting commenced with Manager Birkeland stating the official notice of the meeting was published in the October Cooperative Connections. Manager Birkeland then read the proof of mailing.

President Riggle announced that the minutes of last year's Annual Meeting were published in the Cooperative Connections and asked if the members wished to have them read or was there a motion to approve the minutes as published. A motion was made, seconded and upon being placed before the membership, the motion was approved. Thereupon the president declared the motion carried and the minutes approved.

President Riggle announced that the Financial Report, the President's Report, and the Manager's Report were published in the Cooperative

Connections and asked if the members wished to have them read or was there a motion to approve the reports as published. A motion was made, seconded and upon being placed before the membership, the motion was approved. Thereupon the president declared the motion carried and the reports approved.

President Riggle and Manager Birkeland each gave their reports.

Manager Birkeland recognized the employees and announced service awards.

Manager Birkeland then called upon the Legal Counsel for West Central, Jessica Hegge of Platte, South Dakota. Mrs. Hegge reported on the legal status of West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., as follows:

From a legal point of view, the past year has been successful and relatively uneventful.

A review of the minutes indicates that all actions taken during the past year comply with the by-laws, articles of incorporation, South Dakota Law, and RUS regulations.

Jessica Hegge, Corporate Attorney, announced the results of the Director election process. The Directors were elected earlier through the zone meeting process as defined in the Cooperative's By-Laws. This year four Directors were elected, each to serve a three-year term, and they are as follows:

- Jones County – Town Director
Zone 2 – Ken Miller
- Jackson County – Rural Director
Zone 3 – Jim Willert
- Stanley County – At-Large Director
Zone 5 – Shad Riggle

President Riggle then called for unfinished business followed by any new business.

Kory Hammerbeck, CEO of Rushmore Electric, gave an update.

Jessie Tucker, Manager of Member Services, conducted prize drawings at intervals throughout the meeting.

There being no further business to come before the board, President Riggle declared the meeting adjourned.

**COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS**

**WEST CENTRAL
ELECTRIC**

(USPS No. 018-988)

President

Shad Riggle, Hayes

Vice President

Kenneth Miller, Draper

Secretary/Treasurer

Marty Hansen, Philip

Directors

Rich Bendt, Kadoka

Mike McQuiston, Fort Pierre

Kevin Neuhauser, Midland

Paul Patterson, Draper

Jim Smith, Vivian

Cliff Uthe, Presho

Jim Willert, Belvidere

Attorney

David Larson, Chamberlain

CEO/Manager

Jeff Birkeland, Murdo

**Our Mission is to Provide
Safe, Reliable Service
to our Member Owners.**

West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Call 605-669-8100
24-hour Dispatching**

WEST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly by West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 17, Murdo, SD 57559. Periodicals Postage Paid at Murdo, SD 57559 and at additional mailing offices. Electric cooperative members devote \$1 from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$18 annually. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: West Central Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 17, Murdo, SD 57559; telephone 605-669-8100; fax 605-669-2358; e-mail wcec@wce.coop; Web site: www.wce.coop; Facebook: www.facebook.com/WestCentralElectricCooperative

Design assistance by SDREA

Official Notice

OF ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF WEST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

The annual meeting of members of west central electric cooperative, inc., will be held at the Expo Center in the city of Fort Pierre, Stanley County, state of South Dakota, on Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., CDT, to take action on the following matters:

1. Report of officers and directors.
2. The announcement of three (3) directors of the cooperative.
3. Transact any and all other business, which may come before the meeting. In conjunction with the announcement of three (3) directors for three (3) year terms scheduled for this meeting, the following members have been nominated for directors as provided by the by-laws:
 - Cliff Uthe, Lyman County, zone one (1), town director,
 - Rich Bendt, Jackson County, zone three (3), town director,
 - Kevin Neuhauser, Haakon County, zone four (4), rural director.

Marty Hansen – Secretary

West Central Electric Cooperative 76th Annual Meeting Agenda

Date: Wednesday, October 1, 2025

Location: Expo Center, Fort Pierre, SD

Time: Registration Opens at 4:00 (CDT)

Meeting Agenda:

Business Meeting Called to Order at 5:00 (CDT)
Introduction of Cooperative Directors
Notice of Annual Meeting
Proof of Mailing
Minutes of 2024 Annual Meeting
President's Report
Manager's Report
Attorney's Report
Announcement of Directors
Unfinished Business
New Business

All attendants will receive an extension cord. A high voltage safety demonstration will be conducted. Cash drawings will be held throughout the meeting, and a delicious meal served by the Fort Pierre Chamber of Commerce will follow!

Go Above and Beyond for a Safe Harvest

Anne Prince
NRECA

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height and extensions make them particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

360 Awareness

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used.

Smart Harvest Safety Tips

To ensure a safer harvest season, SafeElectricity.org recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- Exercise caution near power lines. Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines. Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.

- Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.
- Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path. Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- Avoid using metal poles inside bins. Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- Hire qualified electricians. Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.



"Don't play with outlets!"

Kinzlee Klomp, Age 12

Kinzlee warns readers not to play with power outlets. Great advice, Kinzlee! Kinzlee's parents are Kaitlin and Austin Klomp from Box Elder, 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. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Fresh BREADS

ZUCCHINI BREAD

Ingredients:

3 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 cup oil
2 tsps. vanilla
3 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
3 cups zucchini (shredded)

Method

Cream together eggs, sugar and oil. Then add the vanilla. Mix together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and add to the egg mixture. Stir in zucchini. Pour into two loaf pans. Bake at 325°F for approximately one hour.

Kimberly Grimm
Southeastern Electric

GLUTEN FREE OATMEAL PANCAKES

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups oats
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. salt
2 eggs
1/2 cup milk
3/4 cup applesauce
3 tsps. maple syrup
2 tsps. apple cider vinegar
2 tsps. vanilla

Method

Grind 2 1/2 cups oats in blender until turned into flour. In large bowl, whisk together oats, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. Form a bowl in center, add eggs and whisk them. Then, add milk, applesauce, maple syrup, apple cider vinegar and vanilla. Stir to combine. Wait five minutes to thicken batter. Cook in oiled pan.

Jean Beauchamp
Southeastern Electric

KUNSI' FRY BREAD

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. yeast (quick rise)
2 tsps. sugar
1 qt. warm water
1 tbsp. oil/melted butter
1/2 tsp. salt
6 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsps. powdered dry milk
4 cups oil for frying

Method

Mix yeast, sugar, salt, warm water, oil/melted butter and let proof for 15 minutes. Mix flour and powdered dry milk. Make a well in the flour mixture and add yeast mixture. Gradually add warm water until dough comes together and is no longer sticky. Cover and let rise until doubled in size. Heat oil to fry dough. Separate dough into 10 to 12 baseball-size dough balls (or smaller if you want smaller pieces). Stretch dough balls and shape into oval discs or round discs approximately 1/4 inch thick. Test the oil to see if it's hot enough by dropping a small pea size piece of the dough in the oil. If it floats it's ready. Flatten the disc between your hands and stretch it again. Fry the bread until both sides are golden brown. Transfer to paper towel lined plate to drain. Continue until all the dough is fried. Enjoy with soup or a Spam and egg sandwich or taco toppings.

Sheila Ironheart
Whetstone Valley Electric

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

WEST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

75 YEARS AND COUNTING

Bringing Safe, Reliable, Affordable Electric Energy to a Special Slice of South Dakota's Heartland



Jeff Birkeland
CEO



Shad Riggle
Board President

For the past 75 years, staff at West Central Electric Cooperative have been extremely proud to provide safe, reliable and affordable electric energy to members scattered throughout one of the most sparsely populated areas of Central South Dakota.

When West Central Electric was founded in November of 1949, people living in the isolated areas of Haakon, Jackson, Jones, Lyman and Stanley counties did not have access to the modern-day electrical appliances they saw only in magazines and catalogs, conveniences we all take for granted today. The majority of outlying farms, ranches and homes had no electricity primarily because commercial power companies saw no profit in serving such remote properties. Hence, West Central Electric Cooperative was born.

Three quarters of a century later, the Cooperative maintains its commitment to connecting more than 3,700 members in 15 towns and hundreds of farms, ranches, businesses and homes scattered across more than 7,000 square miles of this special slice of America. By comparison, West Central's service territory is twice the size of Yellowstone National Park,

roughly the same size as Alaska's Denali National Park & Preserve, and covers more ground than Rhode Island and Delaware combined.

Within that territory, West Central's modest staff monitors and maintains a total of 3,724 miles of electrical lines, day in and day out, through the hottest summer days and those brutal winter storms. Those lines, serving family homes, generations of farmers and ranchers, and bustling businesses, stretch 948 miles further than a drive from New York City to Los Angeles.

Of course, our members don't live in those major metro areas. They live in Central South Dakota, where we still revel in small things, like sunshine, brilliant blue skies and fresh air; small towns where a traffic jam is four pickups slowly following a tractor down a lonely county road and; where we learned early on that not every classroom has four walls. It's been said that the nice thing about living in a small town is that when you don't know what you're doing, someone else does.

And, your Co-op is doing that with just 29 workers, fewer staff than at any point in the last half-century, aided by the most modern equipment available.

Over the past year, West Central Electric has made significant progress on several fronts. In addition to inspecting, maintaining and making necessary repairs to existing distribution lines, we're staying on track to take 20-25 miles of line underground annually. These

Crew Foreman, Dana DesLauriers, installs a vibration damper on a transmission line rebuild.

overhead to underground conversions reduce staff time, particularly in the case of large loads carried on our territory's roadways by minimizing the need to raise lines to allow these loads to pass.

These continuing efforts are in-line with the GRIP (Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships) program under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). It is managed by the Grid Deployment Office under the Department of Energy. The GRIP program runs for five years (the first three years of funds have been awarded, via two rounds of selection), and you have five years to complete the project.

For this component, we are part of a consortium with 37 other cooperatives from the central and western United States as part of the WARN (Wildfire Assessment and Resilience for Networks) project.

WARN projects will modernize and strengthen our nation's electric grid, protecting customers' access to electricity during wildfires and mitigating the risk of wildfires due to our nation's aging transmission and distribution infrastructure. Undergrounding powerlines makes the electric system safer, stronger, more reliable, and more affordable. We are currently trying to find Build America, Buy America (BABA) compliant materials for this project. Once those are found we can order the material and proceed with the project.

We are also part of a group of eight South Dakota cooperatives awarded funds in Round 2. This project would include upgrading 70 reclosers in our substations to electronic reclosers. This would allow us to control the breakers at these substations remotely. It would also allow us to change the operation characteristics, such as changing to a one-shot (non-reclose) type of operation or even the ability to open the breaker in the case of emergencies with our SCADA system. This project has an estimated cost of \$700,000 and West Central Electric's portion would be about \$246,000.

In 2024, crews completed 11 miles of transmission line from Midland to Hilltop, a year-long project mostly using former Trans-Canada materials purchased at a fraction of the original cost. Staff also completed a five-year work plan with RUS, a three-month project to secure a loan of



New Siemens CMR breakers installed in a substation

nearly \$15.5 million for poles, wires and underground conversions, as well as new service meters.

This past March, a four-man line crew from West Central assisted with repairs to storm damages in Seward, Neb., at the Norris Public Power District, replacing downed poles and damaged wires.

Over the past year, we have also brought on new employees, including apprentice lineman Colby Fosheim at Midland, apprentice lineman Brett Daly at Kadoka, moved Steven O'Dell from pole tester to lineman in Murdo, and hired Kaden Kinsley as a pole tester.

On January 1 this year, West Central Electric increased its facility charge by \$4 per month per meter, to address increased costs borne by the cooperative, the first such increase to members since 2016. Material increases have been significant over the past decade. For instance, a new voltage regulator cost \$11,725 in 2019. Today, that essential piece of equipment is \$32,331. This past June, a bull snake damaged a large regulator at the Bad River Substation, impacting 456 meters and leading to estimated repair costs of \$53,000.

Your cooperative is eyeing a plan by Talus Ag, an agriculture and energy infrastructure company that produces green ammonia used as fertilizer. Talus Ag would like to build a new facility near Philip that has the

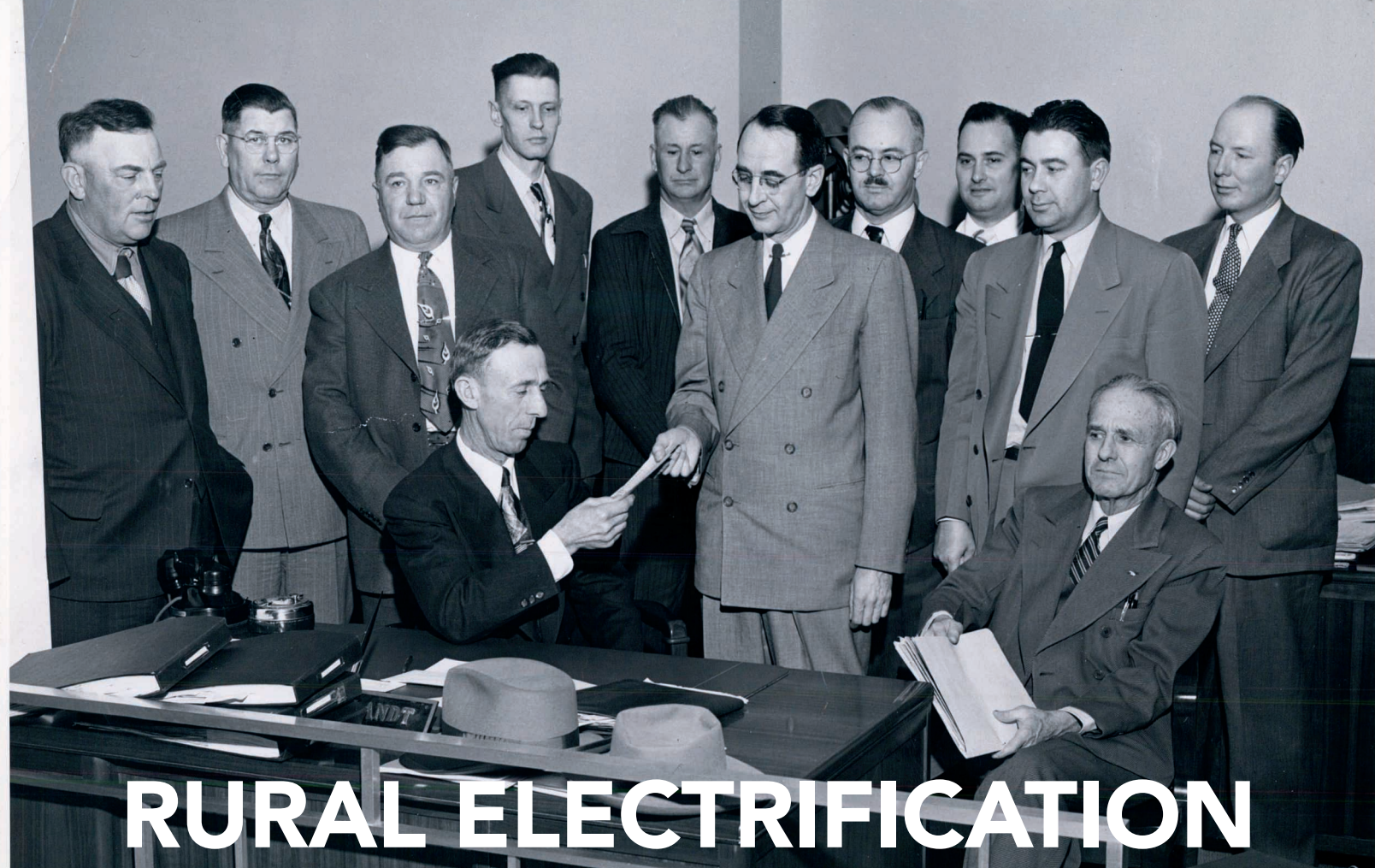
potential to bring \$8 million in additional annual revenues to West Central Electric.

In the area of equipment updates, the cooperative sold its two-year-old Ford Lightning EV truck in July. Used as a learning tool, the pickup allowed staff to learn its strengths and limitations. A new bucket truck was ordered recently, with delivery anticipated in 2026. Other purchases of equipment over the last year were minimal.

West Central is pleased to report that since its inception \$18,577,444 in Capital Credits have been retired back to the membership. In 2024 alone, \$836,553.83 of patronage capital was retired.

West Central Electric's biggest achievement over the past year was completing the Midland to Hilltop transmission line. Fortunately, your Cooperative was aided in those efforts by experiencing no major storms during that period, which would have diverted staff time to repairs.

Moving forward, West Central's largest challenges will remain rising material costs and environmental regulations that command exorbitant amounts of time and resources. In closing, we thank our members for their steadfast support in helping their Cooperative meet these challenges and continue to provide safe, reliable and affordable electric energy into the future.



RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

WEST CENTRAL

Last to Incorporate, Lasting in Impact

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Before rural electrification, South Dakota's farmsteads ended the day in silence. There was no music from the radio playing in the living room or hum of an electric refrigerator in the kitchen. Over decades of work, power lines would stretch across the prairie through President Franklin Roosevelt's vision of rural electrification, carrying not only electricity but also a new way of life.

In 1935, President Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) as part of his New Deal policies to revive a nation struggling through the Great Depression and bring electricity to

America's rural communities, something that private and investor-owned utilities refused to do.

Clay-Union Electric was the first rural community in South Dakota to adopt the cooperative model in 1937, and West Central was the last in 1949. But as former West Central Electric CEO Steve Reed can attest, being the last to adopt the cooperative way didn't hinder their success. Once the path to forming a cooperative was established, the members of West Central benefitted from electricity's transformation from a luxury into a necessity with the rest of rural South Dakota.

"We couldn't rely on the power

West Central Electric board directors present a check to a representative of Central Electric and Gas in 1951, finalizing the cooperative's purchase of the private utility system. *Photo submitted by West Central Electric.*

companies to come out to serve rural South Dakota," said Reed, a 42-year cooperative veteran who joined West Central Electric as a lineman and worked his way up to CEO. "They were never going to do it at price that was affordable, so rural electric has been great for not only the members of West Central but the entire country."

So why was West Central the last to form a cooperative? According to Reed, the rural communities that organized West Central Electric in 1949 had several hurdles to clear. The first was overcoming the sheer remoteness of the territory, which then had a system that averaged 1.5 members per mile of line constructed, even including towns and

cities. Because members were few and far between, the REA needed the towns in the proposed West Central territory to become members: from Philip to Hayes and Murdo to Kennebec, where West Central Electric was incorporated.

That led to the next problem: the towns and cities in the proposed West Central Electric's service territory were already being served by Central Electric and Gas, a private company based out of Philadelphia. This obstacle didn't stop the people who had a vision of what rural electrification could accomplish. Following lengthy discussion in 1951, West Central Electric purchased systems from Central Electric and Gas for \$850,000 using low-interest REA federal funds.

Former West Central Electric Attorney John Larson outlined the discussions in his 50th Annual Meeting Speech: "There was no choice but to buy out the private supplier, Central Electric and Gas, and that was accomplished... (Former South Dakota Governor M. Q. Sharpe, who served as West Central Electric's attorney), showed up for the meeting that morning unshaven and unkempt, with a threadbare shirt and suit. For the entire morning, he listened with his head down and eyes shut to the Philadelphia lawyer types who represented the power company. After the dinner break, however, he showed up in a new suit, shaved, and took over the meeting by dictating exactly what West Central would do and what we would pay. During an afternoon break, one of the Philadelphia types was heard to mutter, 'You want to watch that old guy. When he's got his head down and eyes shut, he's not sleeping!'"

West Central Electric's 1951 purchase included all the electrical infrastructure within the town boundaries, as well as the diesel generation system extending west from Chamberlain. Shortly after, the evolution of West Central Electric progressed with the construction of distribution systems to farms and reconstructing the systems of various

towns, including the installation of street lights.

Since that iconic moment, West Central has continued to grow with its membership, meeting more demand for electrical energy than had been previously thought possible, a reflection of just how integral electricity has

become in day-to-day living for business owners, ag producers, and rural folk alike.

"That moment modernized us," said Reed. "It just did so much for everything – and without it, where would we be?"



(Top) A West Central Electric Annual Meeting.
(Bottom) A West Central Electric Board Meeting with the REA.
Photos submitted by West Central Electric

ATTORNEY'S REPORT



David Larson
Attorney

South Dakota's wide-open roads and rural infrastructure often require coordination with the cooperative when moving large equipment and tall loads safely. But when it comes to electrical lines, safety isn't only common sense – it's the law.

Two key statutes – SDCL § 49-32-2 and SDCL § 49-32-11 – establish the rules and set strict boundaries on what individuals and business can and can't do in relation to electrical lines. Violating these laws can result in criminal charges, civil liability, and more importantly, serious safety risks.

SDCL § 49-32-2 – Interference with Utility Equipment

This law prohibits any person from destroying, damaging, disconnecting, cutting, grounding, or interfering with electrical or telecommunications equipment, including:

- Overhead wires and poles
- Underground conduits and cables
- Electrical machinery or apparatus used in power generation or transmission.

Even if the interference is not intentional, but results in damage, the violator may be held financially responsible for repairs and any harm caused.

SDCL § 49-32-11 – Proximity to High-Voltage Lines Prohibited

This statute makes it illegal to perform any activity that brings a person, tool, vehicle, or equipment within ten feet of a high-voltage overhead electrical line.

It applies to:

- Farmers moving large equipment.
- Haulers transporting oversized loads.
- Construction crews
- Anyone operating machinery near power lines

A common misconception is that as long as you don't touch the line, you are ok. That is not true. You have all seen a spark jump from

one thing to another. The higher the voltage the further it can jump – from inches to feet. Depending on humidity or moisture content, something like a 2x4 can turn out to be a conductor instead of an insulator. Intentional contact or lifting electrical lines to pass under them – without utility coordination – is a clear violation of both statutes and can get you injured or killed.

What You Can't Do

- Lift or move electrical lines to accommodate moving equipment or a tall load without utility approval.
- Operate farm equipment, cranes, booms, or tall vehicles within 10 feet of overhead lines.
- Interfere with electrical infrastructure for convenience or access in moving tall loads or equipment.

What You are Required to Do

- Contact the utility company at least 48 hours in advance if a move requires line adjustment (per SDCL § 49-32-3)
- Pay a reasonable deposit for utility labor and equipment.
- Wait for utility personnel to safely lift or de-energize lines.

Why It Matters

Electrical lines carry lethal voltage.

Unauthorized contact can result in:

- Serious injury or death
- Wildfires
- Power outages
- Lawsuits and criminal charges

These laws aren't just bureaucratic red tape – they're designed to protect lives, property, and infrastructure.

Final Word

Whether you're a farmer, contractor, mover, or county official, know the law before you act. If your work brings you near electrical lines, coordinate with cooperative and follow South Dakota's statutes to the letter. For more information, visit with West Central staff – they are always willing to help.

Statement of Revenue and Expenses

FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2024

| Operating Revenues | 2024 | 2023 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Farm and Residential | \$9,060,959 | \$9,153,194 |
| Small Commercial | 2,028,862 | 2,023,469 |
| Large Commercial | 4,884,566 | 4,826,333 |
| Irrigation | 98,310 | 116,718 |
| Street Lighting | 297,137 | 296,650 |
| Sales to Others | 510,125 | 401,595 |
| Miscellaneous Electric Revenue | 512,400 | 85,655 |
| Total Operating Revenue | 17,392,359 | 16,903,614 |
| Operating Expenses | | |
| Cost of Power | 8,762,564 | 8,376,735 |
| Operation and Maintenance Expense | 2,799,088 | 2,831,455 |
| Consumer's Accounting and Collecting | 279,476 | 280,483 |
| Electric Sales and Promotion Expense | 349,174 | 359,536 |
| General and Administrative Expense | 1,609,851 | 1,538,344 |
| Property Insurance Expense | 87,901 | 85,806 |
| Maintenance of General Property | 142,698 | 147,850 |
| Taxes | 240,268 | 246,700 |
| Depreciation and Amortization Expenses | 1,766,749 | 1,726,180 |
| Interest on Long-term Debt | 941,558 | 989,431 |
| Total Operating Revenue Deductions | 16,979,327 | 16,582,520 |
| Net Operating Margins | 413,032 | 321,094 |
| Interest Income | 457,710 | 467,876 |
| Generation and Transmission Capital Credits | 517,377 | 705,748 |
| Other Nonoperating Income | 146,721 | (6,382) |
| Net Margins for the Year | \$1,534,840 | \$1,488,336 |

Balance Sheet

DECEMBER 31, 2024

| What We Own | 2024 | 2023 |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Total Cost of Electrical System (After Depreciation) | \$37,997,888 | \$36,118,709 |
| Other Investments | 11,183,951 | 10,785,793 |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents | 846,769 | 696,180 |
| Temporary Cash Investments | 2,060,553 | 6,154,684 |
| Receivables Less Reserves | 1,677,247 | 1,575,633 |
| Notes Receivable – Current Maturities | 30,100 | 18,200 |
| Materials and Supplies on Hand | 3,455,553 | 2,533,872 |
| Advanced Payments on Insurance, Etc. | 72,093 | 63,707 |
| Deferred Debits | 23,658 | 14,694 |
| Total Assets | 57,347,812 | 57,961,472 |
| What We Owe | | |
| Total Borrowed from RUS, CFC and FFB | 49,822,712 | 49,822,712 |
| Total Paid on Loans | (20,008,674) | (18,466,191) |
| Balance Owed RUS, CFC and FFB | 29,814,038 | 31,356,521 |
| Accounts Payable and Other Liabilities | 3,598,703 | 3,434,591 |
| Margins and Equities | | |
| Net Margins Prior Years | 14,412,048 | 14,246,518 |
| Margins for Current Year | 1,534,840 | 1,488,336 |
| Other Equities | 7,988,183 | 7,435,506 |
| Total Liabilities and Equity | \$57,347,812 | \$57,961,472 |

The financial statements of West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., were audited by Eide Bailly, LLP, Certified Public Accountants of Sioux Falls, S.D. A copy of the complete audit report is available for review at the cooperative headquarters.



Photo submitted by JT and Luann Weber.

GENERATIONAL FARMERS

Four Generations of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Members Ranch on Lake Benton-Area Land

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Nestled amongst the rolling green pastures of western Minnesota, there's a generations-old farm worked by one family for over three quarters of a century.

From their Lincoln County property, the Weber family watched rural electrification improve the prairie, connect neighbors and bring reliability to farmsteads. Now they watch precision agriculture guide planting, bovine genetics strengthen herds, and social media and the internet connect their business to the wider world.

It all started in 1947, when John and Marie Weber moved into the old three-bedroom farmhouse from nearby

Elkton, S.D. Luckily, the move came six years after Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative energized lines in the area, so the Weber home enjoyed many of the modern amenities brought on by rural electrification, including electric lights, kitchen appliances and a washing machine.

"I know I had the best mom and dad in the world," said JT, one of John and Marie's eight children, who today helps run the ranch with his wife, Luann, their three sons and their families. "Dad was very community-oriented. He was on the school board, the elevator board and the rural water board. In fact, he was instrumental in starting rural water. He went from place to place, talking people

into getting rural water."

JT was born on the farm in 1957 during a blizzard that left his parents unable to reach the hospital in town. As a boy, he remembers collecting rainwater in a cistern and using it for cooking, cleaning and baths. Even as rural electrification began to transform the countryside, life on the farm remained far different – and often harder – than life in town.

"When I grew up, back in the 60s and 70s, if you milked 40 cows that was quite a few," JT said. "We were milking about 100 cows – we were kind of ahead of our time. But we had a big family, and us boys, we got right in there."

He continued, "We were hauling silage, hauling manure, milking cows and doing chores. But Dad never told us to do anything. He always asked us if we wanted to, and there's a difference. You wanted to work for him. He made you want to work for him, and it was never a burden."

That was a quality JT kept in mind with his own seven children on that same

ranch where he grew up. Today, JT and Luann's sons Jake, Garret, and Matt all stay involved in the ranch, now Weber Bros. Cattle.

"Growing up, I kind of always had that bug to get in the tractor, chase cows, put up fence, and do what needs to be done," explained Jake, the oldest son.

Today, they specialize in raising purebred Angus bulls and Simmental-Angus crosses, while also producing corn silage and alfalfa to help sustain the operation. While the operation may be old, it's not at all low-tech.

"Our main thing is our bull program," Jake said. "We sell about 50 registered Angus and Simmental bulls by private treaty every spring, and we also develop 50 replacement and bred heifers, and market a portion of them. We do a lot of artificial insemination and embryo transfer. Some of the more elite donor cows we can get our hands on by buying females and buying embryos. We're just trying to make good cows."

Jake, like his dad, graduated from South Dakota State University with an animal science degree, and was excited to return to the ranch to incorporate some of his new skills into the operation.

"When I got back from school, we really amped up our embryo transfer program with different ideas and stuff I learned about genetics from contacts and producers we've met over the years," Jake continued. "We went from selling 10 bulls per year to selling close to 50 bulls."

Jake's younger brother and fellow SDSU animal science graduate, Garret, keeps involved on the family's ranch as well. Though he works full time as swine genetic company Hypor's US Sales Manager, he helps out with the operation and finds the time to run Weber Bros. Cattle's social media pages, which he says has successfully expanded their presence in the market.

"Whether it's Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or our company website, we're able to hit such a broad spectrum of people, and it's a great way to tell the story of our operation, what we're doing year-in and year-out and advertise the



genetics of the cattle that we're showing and selling," Garret explained. "We're able to have a much greater touch point of individuals that we can reach out to and market our livestock."

JT, Jake and Garret all credit their spouses and families for supporting them as they work to grow the operation.

"It took a long time and a lot of support for us to get established and get to where we are today," JT said.

Looking toward the future – and the next generation, their goals are to make an already successful operation even better.

"We'll keep working with the cow herd, continue to make improvements and make better genetics every year," Jake said. "I want this opportunity to be available to my kids, so that if they want to be able to do this, they'll have the same chance we did."

Garret added, "It's something that I hope my sons can do someday if we're able to continue to grow the operation. I hope it's something they're going to be able to share and cherish with their own kids, because those are the memories that stick with you forever."

JT and Luann Weber with their adult children, Jake, Garret, Matt and Sara Weber, Liz Mergen, and Maria Opheim, and families.

Back, from left: Garret Weber, Levi Weber, Kailey Weber, Jake Weber, Amanda Weber, Sara Weber, Cade Opheim, Maria Opheim, Tawnee Opheim, JT Weber, Luann Weber, Brent Mergen, Liz Mergen, Davie Fiedler, Matt Weber, Racheal Krog.
Front, from left: Adam Weber, Chisum Weber, Abeline Weber, Vidalia Fiedler.
Not pictured: Talon Weber



Photo submitted by JT and Luanne Weber.



A purebred Angus Heifer.
Photo by Garret Weber

STAFF



Jeff Birkeland
CEO/General
Manager



Scott Kittelson
Manager of
Operations



Kit Talich
Staff Engineer



Seth Geigle
Line
Superintendent



Jessie Tucker
Manager of
Member Services



Stephanie Hespe
Staff Assistant



Jill Rankin
Manager of
Finance



Cindy Fox
Billing Supervisor



Beth Feddersen
Accountant



Carrie Lolley
Administrative Asst.



Joni Morre
Member Services



Derek Wolf
IT Coordinator

Philip



Nathan Drury
Lineman
Foreman



Chase Barnes
Journeyman
Lineman

Presho



Shane Neiderworder
Lineman
Foreman



Grady Floyd
Journeyman
Lineman



Jordan Jessop
Journeyman
Lineman



Braeden Walton
Journeyman
Lineman

Kadoka



Landon Stout
Lineman
Foreman



Brett Daly
Apprentice
Lineman

Murdo



Dana DesLauriers
Lineman
Foreman



Jared Dowling
Technician/
Metering Tech



Greg Glaze
Journeyman/
Purchasing
Agent



Steven O'Dell
Apprentice
Lineman



JayTee Sealey
Journeyman
Lineman



Jackson Volmer
Journeyman
Lineman



Kaden Kinsley
Pole Tester/
Groundsman

Midland



Dustin Vollmer
Lineman
Foreman



Colby Fosheim
Apprentice
Lineman



Shad Riggle
President
Zone 5
Stanley County



Ken Miller
Vice President
Zone 2
Jones County



Marty Hansen
Secretary/Treasurer
Zone 4
Haakon County



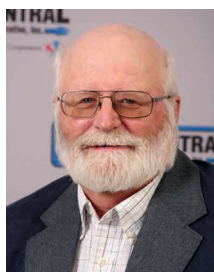
Rich Bendt
Zone 3
Jackson County



Mike McQuiston
Zone 5
Stanley County



Kevin Neuhauser
Zone 4
Haakon County



Paul Patterson
Zone 2
Jones County



Jim Smith
Zone 1
Lyman County



Cliff Uthe
Zone 1
Lyman County



Jim Willert
Zone 3
Jackson County

Voting Authorization Necessary for Organizations

A number of questions seem to arise concerning voting at the Annual/Zone Meetings by non-individual members of the Cooperative, such as schools, municipalities, churches, organizations, and corporations. All of these members are entitled to representation and one vote, but the proper procedure must be followed to exercise this right.

Each such member should see that a representative is designated in writing prior to the meeting. The representative must be a person who will not be voting another membership as no person shall be entitled to more than one vote on each matter submitted to a vote at the meeting. This written authorization must be in the following form and must be filed with the Secretary of the Cooperative prior to formal commencement of the meeting.

To avoid errors, we urge you to get these in just as soon as possible for approval.

Authorization to Vote

This is to certify that the _____ of _____ in a duly assembled meeting, designated _____ who is a(n) _____ of said organization, to represent the _____ at the regular Annual/Zone Meeting of the members of West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., to be held October 1, 2025, and said person is authorized to cast such member's vote on all issues that may come before said meeting. The undersigned verifies that (s)he is the _____ of said organization and authorized to execute this instrument on behalf thereof.

State of South Dakota)
)ss.
County of _____)

On this _____ day of _____, 2025
before me the undersigned Notary Public of the State of South Dakota,
personally appeared _____

known to me to be the person named in the above foregoing instrument, who
acknowledged that (s)he executed the same for the purpose therein specified,
(s)he being authorized so to do.

Notary Public, South Dakota
My commission expires _____, 20____



OCT. 10-12
Black Hills Powwow
 Rapid City, SD
 605-341-0925

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.

UNTIL OCT. 31
Wallace Dow, Prairie Architect
Traveling Exhibit
 Lake County Museum
 Madison, SD
 605-256-5308

OCT. 3
DSU Architecture Walking Tour
 3-4 p.m.
 Lake County Museum
 Madison, SD

OCT. 3-5
Black Hills Film Festival
 Journey Museum
 Rapid City, SD
 605-574-9454

OCT. 4
Pumpkin Train, Vendor
Showcase
 Prairie Village
 Madison, SD

OCT. 4-5
Sioux Falls Quilt Guild
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sun. 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Sioux Falls Convention Center
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-951-2034

OCT. 10-11
Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest
& Vendor Show
 Fri. 12 p.m.-6 p.m.
 Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m.,
 Philip, SD
 605-441-1060

OCT. 11
A Celebration of Classic Hits
 7 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-760-5799

OCT. 11
Howard Fall Festival
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Miner County 4-H Grounds
 Howard, SD

OCT. 18
Arts & Crafts Festival
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Faulkton, SD

OCT. 18
Northern Prairie Arts
Barn Quilt Class
 Highland Conference Center
 Register by Oct. 6
 Watertown, SD
 605-882-1780

OCT. 18-19
Heartland Quilting Stars Show
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD
 605-770-1551

OCT. 19
Helping With Horsepower
Year-End Horse Show
 10 a.m.
 Reclamation Ranch
 Mitchell, SD

OCT. 24
Humor for Heroes
Comedy Night Fundraiser
 Comedians, Silent Auction
 Tickets \$15, two for \$25
 1600 W. Russell St.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-336-3470

OCT. 25
The Greats of Country
 7 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-760-5799

OCT. 31-NOV. 2
Haunted Trail at
Reclamation Ranch
 7-10 p.m.
 Reclamation Ranch
 Mitchell, SD

NOV. 1
Reliance Christmas Carousel
 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
 Reliance, SD
 605-730-1462

NOV. 1
Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Dakota Christian School
 Corsica, SD
 605-366-7940

NOV. 1
Black Hills Meat Fest
 2-4 p.m.
 Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall
 Rapid City, SD

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.