

The Nodak Neighbor

July-August 2018
Official Publication of Nodak Electric Cooperative
www.nodakelectric.com

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Call  to locate underground lines, page 4

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Official Publication of the
Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc.

746-4461 or 800-732-4373

www.nodakelectric.com

The Nodak Neighbor (USPS 391-200) is published six times a year in February, April, June, August, October and December for \$1.00 per year by the Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc., 4000 32nd Ave. S., Grand Forks, N.D. 58201-5944. Periodicals postage paid at Grand Forks, N.D., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NODAK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC., P.O. Box 13000, Grand Forks, N.D. 58208-3000.

Volume 68, No. 4
July-August 2018
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On the cover: Travis Vattthauer, journeyman lineman with the Grand Forks crew, locates a line for a new housing project in south Grand Forks.



Lightning safety

People generally think of lightning damage as what happens at the point where a cloud-to-ground strike hits a tree, structure or elevated wiring. Unless the struck items are protected from lightning, the results of the strike are often visible and lasting. However, the lightning current pulse continues into conductive parts of the structure, cables, and even underground wiring and pipes. Because the initial lightning impulse is so strong, equipment connected to cables a mile or more from the site of the strike can be damaged.

The most common damage arises from a lightning strike to the network of power, phone and cable television wiring. This network, especially if it is elevated, is an effective collector of the lightning surges. The wiring then conducts the surges directly into the residence and to the connected equipment. Lightning can also travel through the ground (soil), reaching underground cables or pipes. This is another route for lightning to come into a building and can also damage the cables.

The second-most common mode results from strikes to or near the external wiring – common to most suburban and rural houses. Air conditioners, satellite dishes, exterior lights, gate control systems, pool support equipment, patios and cabanas, phone extensions, electronic dog fences and security systems can all be struck by lightning. The lightning surges will then be carried inside the house by the wiring.

To take maximum precautions, unplug as many electrical and electronic appliances as possible if there is a storm brewing. Remember to check both the electric sockets and the telephone and cable television connections. Surge protectors are a good aid in protecting your equipment, but in proportion to the very low risk involved, these can be very expensive. Nothing can withstand a lightning strike – it is best to totally unplug.

Source: lightningsafety.com



*Mylo Einarson
President & CEO*

50-year contract with Air Base good news for member-owners

Each time we publish an edition of *The Nodak Neighbor*, I take that opportunity to utilize some of the space to share information with our member-owners. Those topics vary from some sort of safety-related topic like “Call Before You Dig,” or what to do if your vehicle hits a power pole, to subjects like regulation, voting or getting involved. With this edition, I’m happy to say I get to share some long-awaited good news. On July 1, 2018, Nodak was awarded a 50-year contract to take over the maintenance, repair and replacement of the electric infrastructure at Grand Forks Air Force Base and Cavalier Air Force Station.

The takeover, or privatization, of the Air Base distribution systems should be fairly transparent to the government and to the families that live on the installations. Nodak has been serving the electric needs of both facilities on a bulk basis for quite a long time, and the

government or their contractors have been responsible for their systems from the substations to the end users. With this new arrangement, Nodak will be responsible to maintain an adequate distribution system so we can deliver the power all the way to the end user.

We began this process approximately six years ago when we received notice that Grand Forks Air Force Base and Cavalier Air Force Station would be accepting bids for a 50-year contract to privatize their electric, water, and wastewater systems. With the assistance of a consultant that specializes in helping small businesses procure federal contracts, we submitted our proposal and were ultimately awarded the contract.

Over the next five months, we will go through a transition process where we finalize contracts and pricing and prepare personnel and equipment for working on the Bases. Dec. 1, 2018, will be the official start

date of the new agreement. From that point on, Nodak will receive a monthly payment for keeping the Base distribution systems working properly. In essence, that means we will go from serving bulk electricity to the installations to doing essentially what we do for all our other members. We will not only provide the power needed, but we will also care for the systems that bring the power to the end user.

Overall, we believe this will provide a safer and more reliable electric service to the government and the families who live and work on the Bases. For our membership, what this means is additional revenue to help take pressure off electric rates and lessen the effect of rising costs. This is a significant event for our member-owners, and we are excited to share this news with you.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer.



Know what's below. **811** Call before you dig.

No matter how large or small your digging project may be, remember to call 811 before you dig. Calling before you dig will keep you out of trouble with the law. Besides, who wants their neighbors mad at them because they caused a power outage when they dug a hole to plant a tree?

North Dakota One Call provides a single point of contact to both prevent damage to underground utility facilities and to protect public and construction contractors from contact with power, gas, water and communication lines. For Nodak to locate underground wires, it is required by law for the member to call 811.

Nodak has approximately 4,280 miles of underground cable wire, so if the cable is cut or damaged, that could lead to loss of power for many of our members. It will also result in added cost to the person(s) responsible for the damage. There have been cases of electrocution and severe injuries caused by digging into electric lines that could have been avoided with a simple call to 811.

How do you know whose line it is?

Homeowners should be aware that private facilities such as septic, water, gas lines from a propane tank, private secondary wiring running to an outbuilding or shed, an invisible pet fence or sprinkler systems WILL NOT be marked. In these instances, it is the homeowner's responsibility to make sure any privately owned underground wires on the member side of the meter are located prior to digging. Electric secondary lines should be located by an electrician. The property owner or tenant is responsible for contacting a private locator and paying the fee for locating private underground facilities.

What are private electric underground facilities?

Private underground facilities, or member-owned facilities, are those facilities that were installed after the meter. Also, if overhead distribution lines serve the property and the power is then distributed on the property by underground service facilities, those service facilities may be considered private. If the homeowner's electric

meter is located on the property line, then that electric line from the meter to the house is considered privately owned and will not be located.

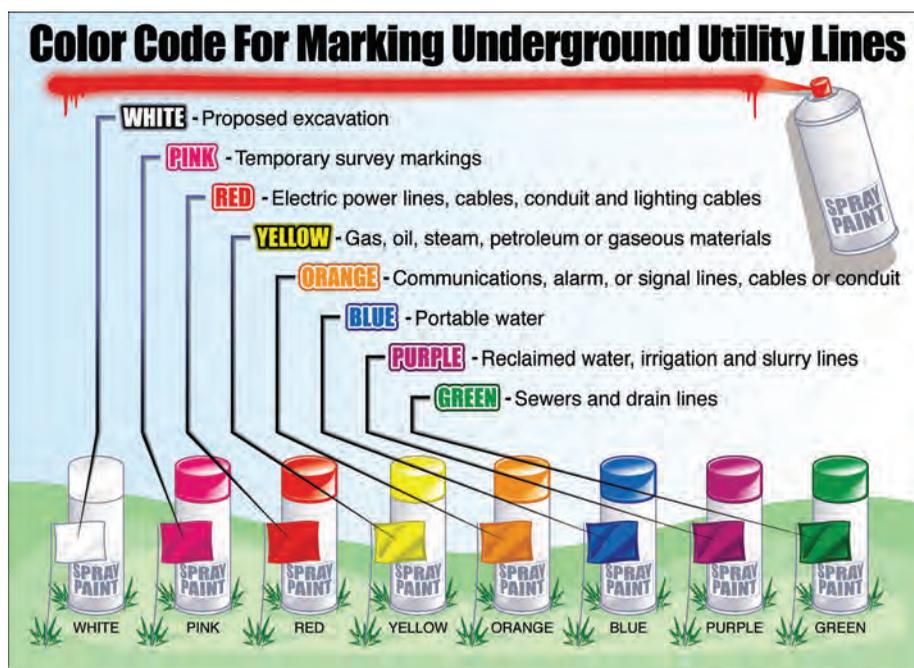
Where are private facilities found?

Private facilities are found everywhere, including single family homes, multifamily housing units, industrial areas, trailer parks, shopping centers and sometimes in the road right-of-way. Other private facilities can include: natural gas farm taps, natural gas or propane gas underground piping to buildings, gas grills, pool heaters, private water systems, data communication lines, underground sprinkler systems, invisible fences and many others.

Unless the property owner participates as a registered facility operator of North Dakota One Call, private or member-owned facilities will not be marked or notified. If you have a question on whether a facility in your excavation area is considered private, please contact that local utility office.

How the 811 process works:

- Call 8-1-1 to submit a locate request 2-3 business days prior to the project. North Dakota One Call is available 24/7 and the call is free.
- Wait the required amount of time for affected utility operators to respond to the request. Nodak typically responds to a locate request within 24-48 hours (1-2 business days).
- Check that all affected utility operators have responded and marked underground utilities. See the color code chart at left to know what flag color represents which utility.
- Respect the flags. Please keep the markers in place until the project is complete.
- As always, proceed and dig with caution!



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Youth Tour winner visits Washington, D.C.

Sixteen North Dakota high school students returned June 14 from the 54th-annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. They joined more than 1,600 students from around the nation for a fast-paced, intensive week of learning about history and American government, visiting with their state's congressional delegation, becoming more knowledgeable about the cooperative business model,



and touring museums, national monuments and memorials. While on the tour, the students develop

leadership skills and a national network of peers. Each year, high school students learn firsthand what it is like to be involved in politics, community development and today's social issues.

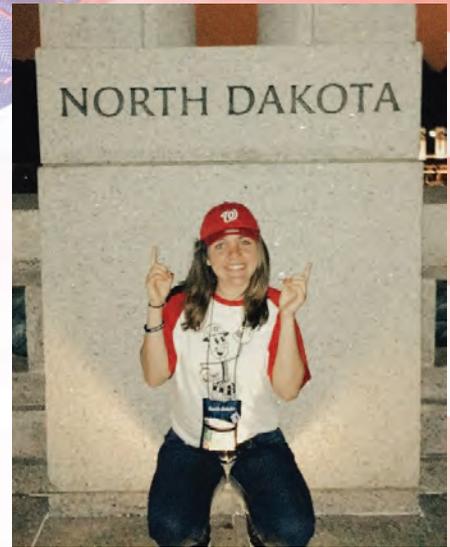
Past participants have described this as "a once-in-a-lifetime" experience. The students are sponsored by their family's electric distribution cooperative.

This year's participant, Lilly Bina, Park River, represented Nodak Electric Cooperative on the Youth Tour.

Coordination of the Youth Tour is handled by the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC). NDAREC serves as the liaison between the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the state's distribution cooperatives. Year after year, the Youth Tour has been followed up with glowing praise from participants; this year was no exception.

Why does Nodak Electric offer this experience to our area youth? Because we realize it is more vital than ever that today's young people understand and support the rural electrification program, for they are tomorrow's leaders and consumers.

Education is a fundamental principle of electric cooperatives. Boards of directors and co-op leaders believe it's imperative to help students understand the



Lilly Bina

democratic process and gain the skills necessary to become leaders. Through the Youth Tour, co-ops across the country have made unforgettable impacts on students for more than half a century.

Every fall, Nodak issues the Youth Tour essay contest to local sophomores and juniors. By early February, submissions are collected and judged, and the winners are contacted in preparation for the trip in June. For more information, visit nodakelectric.com/youth-tour, ndyouthtour.com, or youthtour.coop.





Capital credits

Your co-op, your piece of the pie

Tom Edwards, Accounting & Finance Manager

Capital credit power bill credits and checks totaling \$1.3 million were recently issued to our current and former members' purchasing power from Nodak Electric Cooperative in the year 2000.

The capital credit check or power bill credit that is delivered to you has a long history behind it. It is easier to understand the entire concept of capital credits if you look at the early beginnings of the electric distribution industry in our state. Back in the 1930s and 40s, the Rural Electrification Administration provided the funding necessary to build the power lines into the sparsely populated regions of this country. The challenge was, after the lines were built and electricity was flowing, how do we keep this fledgling electric company afloat and the lights kept on? The concept of capital credits provided that much-needed funding mechanism to keep the cooperative growing.

The early members contributed "capital" to the cooperative by purchasing electricity at a rate that was slightly above the cost to deliver energy to them. That small amount of profit or margin was then retained by the cooperative to help finance the operations for

the following year. In a sense, the original members of the cooperative were looking out for the needs of future members by allowing the co-op to retain those margins to build new lines in the years that followed. In return for the usage of those member funds, the cooperative set up a separate account to keep track of how much each member proportionately contributed to the entire margin picture with the intent of someday reimbursing that member, thus the term "credit" was joined with capital.

Time passes by quickly and here we are nearly 80 years after the first power lines were strung. Everything around us has changed, but some things remain consistent. We are still delivering energy to our members at a rate that is just above the cost to deliver it. We still live in a part of the country that is sparsely populated. With continually increasing costs associated with running an electric distribution system, it becomes more of a challenge to pass those costs along to a relatively small membership and still carve out a slight margin.

Still, another unchanged fact is the concept of paying back past members for usage of their working capital, or "capital credits," in



a timely manner. Our Board of Directors has consistently followed the principles of retiring capital credits that were founded back in the 1930s. Due to those spiraling costs and a small growth of new customers, the amount of time from when the capital is contributed by the member to the time he/she is repaid has stretched out to 17 years. In comparison, there are many cooperatives in the United States that are on a 20-25 year cycle and still others that have never retired capital credits.

So, as you can see, the capital credit retirement from Nodak Electric Cooperative that you recently received has historical roots that run deep. It's just one of the many benefits of doing business with us, and we hope to keep those types of things unchanged.

Small change makes a
BIG DIFFERENCE!



Contractors at Work

Watch for these contractors helping Nodak this summer.



RAM Utilities conducts pole inspections, which includes visual inspection of the pole from top to bottom, sound and bore inspection and GPS service of each pole to give exact location along with notation of the attributes of the pole and physical characteristics.



Joe Ritter Painting does metal refinishing services for updating sectionalizing cabinets and transformers on members' property.



AW Power clears trees and brush hanging over or near power lines to prevent power disturbances and follows the standards for tree care practices.



RHINO Contracting plows, trenches and bores underground primary cable for telephone and power companies.

NORTH ONE DAKOTA CALL

811

**KNOW WHAT'S BELOW
CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG!**

**OR FILE YOUR TICKETS
ONLINE WITH**

ITIC
INTERNET TICKET PROCESSING

VISIT OUR WEBSITE - WWW.NDONECALL.COM

f WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/NDONECALL @NDONECALL



**PLEASE MOVE OVER
FOR EMERGENCY AND
UTILITY CREWS**

If you see police, firefighters, utility crews or other emergency personnel on the side of the road, please slow down and move over when possible. Together, we can keep our crews safe.

YOUR NODAK NEIGHBORS

The power you get from Nodak Electric Cooperative is so reliable that it can be easy to forget that there are dozens of men and women helping to make it happen. Who are these faces behind the kilowatts? We're your neighbors, and it's time we introduced you to some of the folks who keep Nodak running smoothly.

BROOKE JOHNSON

Member Service Representative

Job: Interacts with members to resolve issues and to provide responses to inquiries about products and services in a timely and friendly manner.

Year started at Nodak: 2015

Hometown: Edmore, ND

Favorite part about North Dakota: The "North Dakota nice" attitudes

First job: Cashier at Piccadilly Pizza

Hobbies/interests: Board games, bingo and YouTube

Surprising fact: I have 14 *Despicable Me* minions tattooed on my leg

Biggest strength: Customer service skills

Craziest food you've eaten: Kangaroo

Guilty pleasure: Netflix

Favorite quote/advice: "If not now, when?"

Favorite sports team: Philadelphia Eagles

Favorite app on your phone: Snapchat

