

The Nodak Neighbor

May-June 2021
Official Publication of
Nodak Electric Cooperative
www.nodakelectric.com

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



**Dig into a
co-op career**

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Officers and Directors

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Vice Chairman David Kent
Secretary/Treasurer David Brag
Directors Ryan Benson, David Hagert,
Luther Meberg, Pete Naastad,
Cheryl Osowski and Les Windjue
President & CEO Mylo Einarson
Editor Blaine Rekken

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**Our offices will be closed
Monday, May 31, in observance
of Memorial Day**

**In case of an outage,
call 1-800-732-4373.**

On the cover: Grand Forks crew foreman Derek Sondreal (in the digger), apprentice lineman Jesse Struman and lineman Jared Lothspeich complete system improvements.

Around the co-op

New hires

Max Stromsodt joined Nodak as a seasonal apprentice journeyman lineworker in May 2020 with the Hillsboro crew and became a full-time employee with the Finley crew in January 2021. A Finley, N.D., native and Finley-Sharon High School graduate, Max went on to complete the lineworker program at Bismarck State College. In his spare time, Max enjoys hunting and fishing.



Max Stromsodt
Finley Crew



Kaden Jaeger
Construction Crew

Kaden Jaeger began working with Nodak as a seasonal apprentice journeyman lineworker with the construction crew in August 2020. He was hired full-time in January 2021 with the same crew. Kaden is a Rugby, N.D., native and a Rugby High School graduate, and is a graduate of Bismarck State College. In his spare time, he enjoys hunting, fishing and camping.

Osowski earns CCD certification

Nodak Electric Cooperative board director **Cheryl Osowski** recently completed coursework to earn the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) certificate from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Completing this training provides Nodak Electric members with a director who has expanded knowledge in cooperative governance, fiduciary responsibilities and other essential skills.



Cheryl Osowski
Director

Osowski lives on a farmstead northeast of Voss, N.D., with her husband, Robert.

Congratulations, Cheryl, on this outstanding accomplishment!

Director Sigurdson retires

Paul Sigurdson has retired after serving 30 years as one of Nodak Electric's board of directors. He has represented District 1 since 1991. During his tenure, Paul served in various board leadership roles, including the role of chairman of both Nodak Electric's board and Square Butte Electric Cooperative's board. Paul, a lifelong learner, became a Credentialed Cooperative Director and completed the NRECA board leadership program.



Paul Sigurdson
Director

Over the years, Paul played an integral part in shaping policy that has helped Nodak continue to grow. Paul stated, "I have truly enjoyed my tenure on the board of directors of Nodak Electric Cooperative. I would like to graciously thank the cooperative members of District 1 for their support, as well as the incredibly talented employees at Nodak. I was afforded the opportunity to grow and learn as a director. I am grateful for the lifelong friendships made. It has been a remarkable experience to serve the Nodak Electric Cooperative."

Paul and his wife, Ina, live on a farm near Gardar, N.D. In retirement, Paul and Ina plan to enjoy traveling to see their four daughters and their families. Paul is especially proud of his granddaughter, five grandsons and two granddaughters-in-law.



Mylo Einarson
President & CEO

Committed to keeping you safe

Safety is an everyday thing, especially for line crews; however, spring and fall are times when we tend to talk about it more with our members. Farmers are back in the fields, homeowners are eager to get out of the house, and kids are outside riding bikes and playing in the parks. All of these things require additional vigilance on everyone's part to ensure we all stay safe.

Our farmers will be spending long hours using heavy equipment that can be inherently dangerous. Homeowners will bring out saws, mowers and ladders as spring cleanup begins, and our kids will be crossing busy streets, riding bikes to school and play. With all this activity going on, we need to be reminded to follow safety instructions and to watch out for each other at the same time.

May is National Electric Safety Month. As a member-owned electric cooperative, we are committed to keeping members and employees safe. Electrical safety is a common topic with the employees of Nodak Electric Cooperative, but May is a time when we make an extra effort to educate and inform our members about the dangers of electricity.

While electricity is a necessity in modern-day life, the same electricity used to power our daily lives can be dangerous, even life-threatening if used improperly. We regularly print articles in this publication with tips on how to avoid being hurt by electricity. I would encourage you to take a few moments and read those short articles and ask yourself if you are following those potentially life-saving tips.

One recommendation we don't stress often enough is to have a qualified electrician tackle all of your wiring projects. Not only will they ensure your project is done properly, they will notice if something is not up to current Electrical Code.

The standards for safe electrical wiring can change from time to time. Even though your system may have been installed correctly according to the code in effect at the time it was put in, it may not adhere to today's National Electric Code. For example, your wiring may have been done before GFCI (Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupter) outlets were required but, depending on their location, they may be required for new construction today. A qualified professional would notice such a departure from current code requirements and suggest you change them out.

Seemingly simple improvements like this can make a dramatic difference in securing your family's safety. For their sake and

yours, consider hiring a qualified electrician for your next project, no matter how big or small.

For those of you who participated in our annual meeting by voting for the board of directors, thank you for taking the time to participate in your cooperative's business. We had 2,053 members cast votes in our board of directors election through mail-in ballots. Congratulations to David Brag and David Hagert, who were reelected to new three-year terms, and welcome to our newest board member, Ryan Benson, who is beginning his first three-year term. This meeting also marked the end of the long career of director Paul Sigurdson. Paul served your cooperative with distinction for more than 30 years. I would like to thank Paul for his strong commitment over the years and wish him well in his new endeavors.



Ryan Benson
Director

HOME SAFETY DEVICES

Renovate your Home to Code

The National Electrical Code is revised **every three years** and outlines the minimum requirements for **safe electrical installations**. Many older homes may not have an adequate electrical system to meet the electrical demands of today. If you're renovating your home, **make sure to have the following electrical devices installed** to maintain an electrically safe home.

Safety Devices



Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCI): Available as a circuit breaker and receptacle. AFCIs protect against electrical fires from malfunctions. The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 50% of home electrical fires can be prevented by proper AFCI protection.



Surge Protective Devices (SPD) protect against surges that can damage or reduce the lifespan of your electrical system and devices.



Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI): Available as a circuit breaker and receptacle. GFCIs protect against electric shock and are required in areas where water and electricity may come in contact.



Tamper Resistant Receptacles (TRR) function like normal receptacles but they include an internal shutter system to prevent foreign objects, other than plugs, from being inserted into the outlets.



Power over the market

ENERGY MARKETERS COMBINE RELIABLE RESOURCES
AND DEMAND RESPONSE TO AVOID A COLD-WEATHER CRISIS

In mid-February, millions of Texans were learning how to get through brutal winter temperatures with no electricity, while many more were researching how to pay for suddenly enormous power bills.

During that same subzero-weather event, a group of energy marketers at Minnkota Power Cooperative (Nodak Electric Cooperative's wholesale energy provider) was getting a lesson on how to protect the cooperative's members from facing similar ice-cold consequences. And they skillfully passed the test.

"We've seen some extreme temperatures locally, and we know how that plays into what we do day-to-day," said energy marketer Mark Fulbright, who has been with Minnkota less than two years. "But during this event we had the opportunity to see extreme temperatures spread across the country, and how that can add a new dimension to how we handle operations here."

The "we" that Fulbright refers to is a trio of fairly new additions to Minnkota's power supply and resource planning department. Along with Fulbright, energy marketers Amber Langemo and Isaac Hoffart were all hired within the

past two years, all three missing the last polar vortex event in January 2019. They join experienced energy marketer Dan Trebil, an 8-year veteran of powering through climate anomalies.

"They handled a very stressful situation very well," said Todd Sailer, senior manager of power supply and resource planning. "Trying to incorporate our demand response, managing the wind forecasts and understanding how the markets work – this was one of those experiences that will end up being very valuable for them in the future."

What happened?

The nearly two-week February cold snap that essentially crippled the Texas power grid started up north. From approximately Feb. 8-14, Minnkota's service area experienced some of its coldest temperatures of the stretch. As the polar vortex dropped south, both regional demand and weather-related generation issues began to rise.

Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) – the organization that manages the transmission grid and energy markets of a 15-state region that includes Minnkota's territory – asked its

providers to enter conservative operations Feb. 14-20 and declared a Maximum Generation Event on Feb. 16. Over those days, the combination of expanded regional need and less generation availability (from frozen plants, natural gas pipeline constraints and less production from wind farms across the midsection of the country) made the cost of buying energy from the grid skyrocket.

"We saw prices over \$100 all hours of the day starting on Feb. 15, and it lasted four to five days," Sailer recalled. "We might see it that high for a few hours but, typically, in the last couple of years, it's been averaging less than \$20 per megawatt-hour. So when you're seeing prices of \$200, \$400, sometimes up to \$900, it completely changes what you're trying to manage."

Minnkota had to protect itself from relying on the volatile market. Although the coal-based Young Station continued to provide electricity reliably throughout the event, wind power generation dropped due to low winds and temperatures. Minnkota's healthy demand response program – through which members volunteer to have certain electric loads like dual-fuel heating and

water heaters controlled for a reduced rate – helped Sailer’s energy marketers decrease the demand on the grid.

“Because we’re scheduling our generation resources into the market, we’re making sure we’re scheduling those resources in the right market. If the power plant’s going to be available or the wind’s going to be available, we’re making sure to schedule that properly,” Sailer explained. “With that, you identify where your exposure is in the market, or maybe identify some opportunities in the market related to our demand response program. We’re making sure we’re doing something that is beneficial to our members and maximizing the value of those resources.”

Ultimately, Minnkota came out of the cold snap with few weather-related service interruptions to its members. There were no rolling blackouts as briefly seen in neighboring grid systems, and no days-long outages as experienced in the south. Minnkota used 84 hours of dual-fuel heat control, which helped avoid high energy market costs. The electricity provided by the Young Station covered the remaining demand and added needed power into the national grid.

“Our value of reliability shined through in a moment where others were facing crisis,” said plant engineering and environmental manager Tim Hagerott, adding that the Young Station is specifically designed to operate in North Dakota’s cold-weather climate. “The majority of our equipment is housed indoors in heated buildings. We also have several systems that utilize heat trace that is covered by insulation to prevent piping and equipment from freezing.”

A different situation

In Texas’ unique energy landscape, the situation was starkly different. Many generation resource technologies, including natural gas pipelines, coal plants and wind turbines, could not perform in the once-in-a-century low temperatures. For most of the country, this would mean importing energy from a neighboring grid system operator (such as MISO). However, the Electricity Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) is independent of those grid interconnections.



Minnkota’s energy marketers examine the load data of the day. Photo: Minnkota/Michael Hoeft

“They’re somewhat of an island when they start having problems on their system, because they’re limited in bringing in other resources from other regions,” Sailer said. “It was obviously a very extreme weather event for them, so some of their units just weren’t prepared for that cold. It wasn’t just one resource – they were nearly all impacted, which resulted in Texas being isolated.”

Additionally, hundreds of Texas power consumers who were enrolled in programs that connect them directly to wholesale power rates were burned by that week’s market volatility, receiving bills that were thousands of dollars higher than normal. Minnkota and its member cooperatives protect their

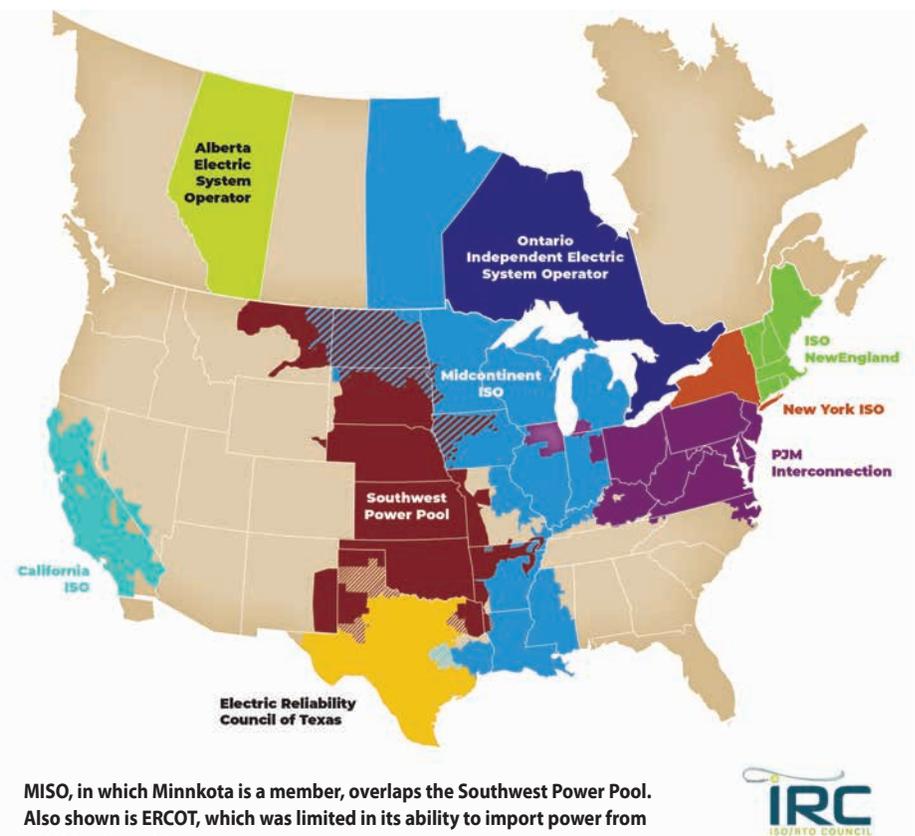
member-consumers from this price fluctuation by using their own generation resources to limit market exposure.

When the polar vortex finally waned in late February, Minnkota’s energy marketers were able to return to some normalcy – regular work hours, stable market prices and infrequent demand response needs. The adrenaline may have faded, but the newcomer knowledge will stick around for the next time it’s their job to help keep power reliable and affordable.

“This is a unique job in the sense that it seems like we learn something new every day,” Fulbright said, surrounded by his fellow marketers. “And that week was tenfold.”

“It was exciting, because we hadn’t seen anything like that before,” Langemo added. “You can talk about these things in theory, but when you’re actually doing them, it’s a lot different. It was a great way to learn, when you have three other people to bounce ideas off of. That’s one thing with our group – we do function well as a team.”

By Kaylee Cusack
Minnkota Power Cooperative



MISO, in which Minnkota is a member, overlaps the Southwest Power Pool. Also shown is ERCOT, which was limited in its ability to import power from neighboring grids.



PICTURE YOURSELF AT A CO-OP



RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CAREERS

Did you know that cooperatives power 56% of our nation's landmass, serving 42 million people in 48 states? Rural electric co-ops are the backbone of our economy, especially in states like North Dakota and Minnesota, where many consumers live in rural areas. Electricity is vital to enhancing our communities, small and large – and you can be a part of it with a career at a cooperative.

Not sure what you or your recently graduated student would do in the energy industry? The options are nearly endless! Electric co-ops offer diverse career tracks, both at your local distribution utility – Nodak Electric Cooperative – and at the regional co-ops that generate and transmit electricity, like Minnkota Power Cooperative.

Here is just a small segment of the opportunities:

Engineers – From electrical to civil to mechanical and beyond, co-ops need a wide array of these technical innovators.

Environmental Scientists – Co-ops take environmental stewardship to heart, and this team helps maintain the highest levels of land, water and air quality.

Lineworkers – Day or night, these height-defying heroes make sure power lines are well maintained and working properly.

Information Technology Specialists – Whether it's PC networking, power system operating or cybersecurity

monitoring, IT experts are vital to the electric industry.

Project Managers – Cooperatives have to juggle several projects at once to keep power flowing, so these planners make sure things stay on budget and on schedule.

Power Plant Technicians – These industry pros ensure the machinery of generating energy is running smoothly, safely and efficiently.

Member Services Representatives – If members have questions about their electricity, these are the friendly voices who guide them to savings and efficiency.

Electricians – You can't have electricity without electricians, so these folks assemble all of the connections that get power from point A to point B.

Business Professionals (Human Resources, Accounting, Communications, etc.) – Cooperatives are filled with people who run numbers, write newsletters and hire new employees to round out the cooperative team.

A career with an electric co-op is rewarding in many ways. You get the satisfaction of knowing you're part of a not-for-profit organization that prioritizes reliable member service. Plus, employees enjoy competitive salaries and benefit packages to ensure individuals and families are supported along the way.

Consider a career at an electric cooperative.

Visit careers.electric.coop

Keep utility poles clear

Help keep our lineworkers safe!

Keeping utility poles and electrical equipment free of signs, flags and other foreign objects helps keep the community powered and our line crews safe. It may seem harmless, but nails, staples or other fasteners in utility poles present safety hazards to workers who have to climb the poles to repair or maintain the equipment. Sharp objects in the pole can lead to lineworkers snagging or piercing holes in their protective equipment, such as the rubber gloves that are meant to insulate workers from high voltage. Hanging things from utility poles also presents dangers to the community, putting individuals at risk of making accidental contact with energized power lines. Safety is our number one priority. This is a reminder to do your part by keeping utility poles clear.



DIGGING SOON?



One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked AND helps protect you from injury and expense. Safe digging is no accident: always call 811 before you dig.

Visit www.call811.com for more information.

Unfamiliar vehicle in your driveway?

It could be one of our contractors.

For Nodak Electric to provide safe and reliable electricity at the most affordable cost, we use contractors to assist with tree trimming, pole testing, trenching/boring and utility box painting. Please know that employees of these contractor crews will always have vehicles labeled with Nodak Electric stickers to officially mark their affiliation with the cooperative. Members will not be approached, under any circumstances, for payment by either a representative of Nodak Electric or one of its contractors for these types of services.

If you have any questions or concerns about a contractor who has visited your property, please contact Nodak Electric at 1-800-732-4373.

Nodak has hired the following contractors:

North Plains
Utility Contracting
Trenching/plowing

RAM Utilities
Pole inspection

Rhino Contracting
Boring/trenching

Dakota Tree Service
Tree trimming
ACE Utilities
Cable locating

Joe Ritter Painting
Metal refinishing service

AW Power
Tree trimming

These contractors are currently working in our service area. They will have a Nodak Electric decal on their vehicle. If you have any questions, please contact us at 800-732-4373.

5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging.



1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.

2-3

3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



Source: call811.com



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.



MILITARY

APPRECIATION MONTH

Military Appreciation Month is a special month-long observance honoring those in and out of the United States Armed Forces. The Senate selected May as National Military Appreciation Month in 1999 to ensure the nation was given the chance to publicly show its gratitude and recognize the men and women – past and present – who serve our country.

Each year, Military Appreciation Month reminds Americans of the important role the U.S. Armed Forces have played in the history and development of our country. May was chosen because it has many individual days marked to note our military's achievements. We thank you, service members, for your dedication and strength in keeping our nation safe.