

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

## In pursuit of Walleye

**SD anglers on the  
prowl for Walleye**  
Page 8

**Living the RV  
lifestyle**  
Page 12



# Affordable Electricity Powers Quality of Life



**Michelle Fischer**  
michellef@bhec.coop

Most of us use electricity, either directly or indirectly, at almost all times. Since electricity is so abundant and available with the simple flip of a switch, it's easy to take it for granted.

According to the Energy Information Agency (EIA), the typical U.S. household now uses more air conditioning, appliances, and consumer electronics than ever before. The average home also contains ten or more internet-connected devices. Considering everything that is powered by electricity, it's no wonder we occasionally might wince at our monthly bill. But keep in mind, it's no longer just the "light bill."

**We are happy to report that there will not be a rate increase for the remainder of 2021.**

Electricity powers our quality of life. From the infrastructure of your home (appliances, water heater, and HVAC system) to charging your smartphones, computers, TV and Wi-Fi router, your energy bill covers so much more than lighting.

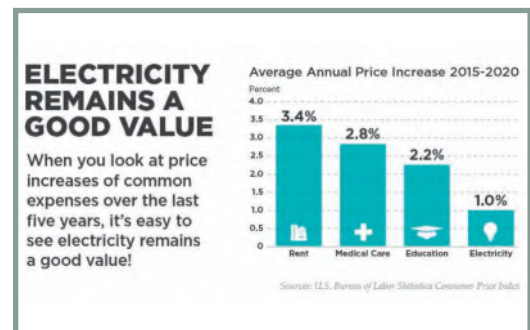
Today, there is more demand for electricity than ever before. At home, in schools and businesses, and in commercial sectors such as transportation, the need for electricity is increasing. Typically when demand goes

up, so too does the price, as is the case with most goods or services, like cable or even your favorite specialty coffee. However, that's not true with electricity.

Anyone driving a vehicle today, which includes practically all of us, has noticed a gradual increase in the price of a gallon of gas or diesel. The cost of crude oil has jumped 46 percent for the year with the national average for gas going over \$3 per gallon. BHEC's last rate increase was in July of 2017. We are happy to report that there will not be a rate increase for the remainder of 2021.

So, the next time you're enjoying your favorite podcast, TV series or movie, consider the value of electricity and how it enhances your quality of life.

We care about you, the members we serve, and understand that electricity is more than a commodity—it's a necessity. That's why Black Hills Electric Cooperative will continue working hard to power your life reliably and affordably.





**COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS**

**BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC**

(ISSN No. 1531-104X)

**Board President:** Dennis Quivey

**Board of Directors**

- Jim Preston - Vice President
- Don Andersen - Secretary
- Dave Lindblom - Asst. Secretary
- Gary Kluthe - Treasurer
- Thad Wasson
- Alan Bishop

**CEO & General Manager:** Walker Witt  
 w Witt@bhhec.coop

**Operations Manager:** Bill Brisk  
 billb@bhhec.coop

**Chief Financial Officer:** Sammi Langendorf  
 slang@bhhec.coop

**System Coordinator:** Jesse Sorenson  
 jsorenson@bhhec.coop

**Director of Communications & Member Services:** Michelle Fischer  
 michellef@bhhec.coop

BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Black Hills Electric Cooperative, 25191 Cooperative Way, P.O. Box 792, Custer, S.D. 57730-0792. Black Hills Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at [www.bhhec.coop](http://www.bhhec.coop).

**This cooperative is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.** If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form AD-3027, found on-line at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202 690-7442) or e-mail at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

**Subscription information:** Black Hills Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Black Hills Electric Cooperative, 25191 Cooperative Way, Custer, S.D. 57730-0792, and at additional mailing offices.

**Postmaster:** Please send address changes to Black Hills Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 792, Custer, S.D. 57730-0792. Address all other correspondence to: Cooperative Connections, P.O. Box 792, Custer, S.D. 57730-0792 Telephone: (605) 673-4461; Fax: (605) 673-3147; e-mail: [bhhec@bhhec.coop](mailto:bhhec@bhhec.coop); website: [www.bhhec.coop](http://www.bhhec.coop).

**Date:** July 22nd, 2021  
**Time:** We will serve dinner from 5-6 p.m.  
**Location:** Pringle Volunteer Fire Department  
 436 Railway St. - Pringle, SD

**THE ARGYLE VFD WILL BE JOINING US THIS YEAR!**

**Join us for dinner at the fair**

**Fall River County Fair**  
 Thursday, July 29, 5 p.m.  
 Fall River County Fairgrounds

**Custer County Fair**  
 Thursday, Aug. 12, 5 - 6:30 p.m.  
 Custer County Fairgrounds

Co-sponsored by BHEC

**Murphy**



# Prepare to protect your devices from power surges

A power surge, or transient voltage, is a sudden and unwanted increase in voltage that can damage, degrade or destroy sensitive electronic equipment in your home or business.

The National Electrical Manufacturers Association estimates that 60–80 percent of power surges are created within a building, such as when large appliances, like air conditioners, turn on and off. Far less common are surges that originate from an electric utility during power grid switching. The most powerful surges can be caused by lightning.

A spike in voltage can be harmful to electrical devices in your home if the increase is above a device's intended operating voltage. This excess voltage can cause an arc of electrical current resulting in heat that damages electrical components. Repeated small-scale surges may slowly damage your electronic equipment and shorten its life span.

**Surge Protection Options** - Consider protecting your devices and appliances with surge protection. Several levels of protection are available to consumers.

Point-of-use surge protectors protect only the items that are directly plugged into the device. They do not suppress or arrest a surge but divert the

surge to ground. Use point-of-use surge protectors that have an indicator light or audible alarm that alerts you when the surge protector needs replacement.

Service entrance surge protection devices are mounted in or on your main electrical panel or at the base of the electric meter and provide protection for your entire electrical system. These devices cover components that cannot be connected to a point-of-use device, such as outlets and light switches.

Power strips do NOT provide surge protection. Be sure you are relying on the appropriate device for protection.

And remember, power strips and surge suppressors don't provide more power to a location, only more access to the same limited capacity of the circuit into which it is connected. Be careful not to overload the circuit.

Unfortunately, no surge protection device on the market can handle a direct lightning strike. The best way to gird against surges caused by storms is to unplug devices.

## SUMMER MEMORIES

Send us your favorite summer photos!



As we approach the end of summer, *Cooperative Connections* would love to see your favorite memories of the season captured in pixels.

We're holding a photo contest called "Summer Memories." Send us your top shot and you could be eligible to win a \$50 gift card!

Here are the rules:

- One photo per entrant;
  - The deadline for entry is Aug. 27;
  - Finalist photos will appear in the October issue of *Cooperative Connections*;
  - Send your entry to editor@sdrea.coop.
- Good luck!

## Hope Haven fundraising event Sept. 11

Hope Haven will hold a fundraising event on Sept. 11 at Talsma's Trail Park in Avon. The organization offers services and support for children, adults and families, including physical, mental, intellectual, residential, vocational and spiritual needs. For more information, visit [www.hopehaven.org](http://www.hopehaven.org).

Hope Haven was misidentified in the July issue of *Cooperative Connections*.



## It's not a joke...you could croak!

### Creighton Werning, 4th Grade

Creighton is a fourth grade student at Parkston. He and his family live in Emery and are members of Southeastern Electric.

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



# PERFECT PASTA

## PAPPARDELLE

### Ingredients:

Salted water  
 3 tbsp olive oil  
 3 tbsp shallots, minced  
 2 cloves garlic, minced  
 1/4 tsp chili flakes  
 1 cup white wine  
 2 cups pappardelle noodles  
 3/4 cup vegetable stock  
 3 tbsp capers (optional)  
 2 vine-ripened tomatoes, sliced in wedges  
 1 handful baby kale  
 1 fresh lemon, juice only  
 2 tbsp butter (optional)  
 sea salt, to taste  
 fresh ground black pepper, to taste  
 1 handful fresh basil, torn

### METHOD

Bring large pot of salted water to boil. In fry pan on medium-high heat, add olive oil and onions; saute 2 minutes. Lower heat slightly and add garlic and chili flakes. Saute on medium heat 2-3 minutes. Add white wine and deglaze pan. Cook 3 minutes. Remove from heat, keep warm until ready to add freshly cooked pasta. In pot of boiling water, add pappardelle. Cook according to instructions then drain. Place fry pan back on medium heat. Add drained pasta; vegetable stock; capers, if desired; tomatoes; baby kale; and lemon juice. Add butter, if desired, toss well. Cook 2-3 minutes, tossing occasionally, and season with salt and pepper, to taste, and basil. Toss again, remove from heat and serve.

**Rouxbe.com**

## SUMMER GARDEN PASTA SALAD

1 # thin spaghetti, broken into 1" pieces  
 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved  
 2 zucchini, peeled & diced  
 2 cucumbers, diced  
 1 green pepper, diced  
 1 red pepper, diced  
 1 (16 oz.) can sliced black olives, drained

### Dressing:

1 (16 oz.) bottle Italian dressing  
 1/4 c parmesan cheese  
 1 T sesame seeds  
 1 tsp paprika  
 1/2 tsp celery seed  
 1/2 tsp garlic salt

### METHOD

Cook pasta and drain. Drizzle with small amount of olive oil to prevent sticking and stir to combine. Combine pasta with veggies and black olives. Whisk dressing ingredients together. Pour over salad ingredients and toss until coated. Cover and refrigerate 3 hours or overnight.  
**Jane Ham, Rapid City**

## PIZZA NOODLE HOT DISH

### Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef, browned and drained  
 1/2 c. chopped onion  
 1 jar pizza sauce  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 3 c. noodles, cooked and drained  
 1 jar spaghetti sauce  
 1 pkg. pepperoni slices  
 Mozzarella cheese for top

### METHOD

Mix ingredients together and put in a greased 9 x 13 pan. Bake at 350\* for 20 minutes. Sprinkle 8 oz. of mozzarella cheese on top and place back in oven to melt.

**JOAN ANTONEN, ARLINGTON**

## SPAGHETTI PIZZA

### Ingredients:

1/2 lb spaghetti  
 4 eggs  
 1 c. milk  
 Salt & pepper  
 7 oz. pepperoni  
 1/2 lb hamburger  
 1/2 lb pork sausage  
 1 onion  
 1 lg jar spaghetti sauce  
 2 c. mozzarella cheese

### METHOD

Cook spaghetti, drain, and put in the bottom of a 9x13 casserole dish. Mix eggs, milk, salt, and pepper to taste and pour over noodles. Spread pepperoni over the above. Brown hamburger, sausage, and onion and put over pepperoni. Pour spaghetti sauce over all. Sprinkle mozzarella on top. Bake at 350° for 45 min.

**Ruth Morman, Volin**

Please send your favorite dairy 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

## Dear Pat and Brad: I'd like to make my home more efficient, but I'm not sure where to start. When does it make sense to take on efficiency projects myself, and when should I hire a pro? - Chari



**Pat Keegan**  
Collaborative  
Efficiency



**Brad Thiessen**  
Collaborative  
Efficiency

Dear Chari: When it comes to home DIY projects, I recently asked myself, “Why hire someone to do a mediocre job when I can do a mediocre job myself?” That may sound odd, but I recently hired a contractor to remodel my kitchen. Needless to say, I was not happy with the quality of the work. Unfortunately, hiring a contractor based on positive online reviews and references doesn’t always guarantee quality work.

One reason to do it yourself instead of hiring a contractor is if you’re convinced you can do a better job. Naturally, this depends on the scope of the project and how knowledgeable you are. And there are additional reasons to tackle a home efficiency project yourself:

- You’re unable to find a contractor that is available and reasonably priced.
- You need the work completed in a tight time frame or during odd hours.
- You’re certain you can save a lot of money.
- The job is one you’d really enjoy doing yourself.

On the flipside, there are also several good reasons to hire a contractor:

- Specialized equipment is required. For example, the best wall insulators use a fill tube, which results in a higher R-value performance. Some contractors use an infrared camera to review wall framing and air leaks.
- Specialized materials are needed. Attics need proper ventilation, and contractors might have easier access to attic insulation baffles or roof vents.
- There’s a safety issue. I was once moving insulation in our attic and accidentally stepped onto the sheetrock ceiling and fell through to my waist. My legs were dangling in the air and the room below was littered with broken sheetrock and insulation. I wasn’t hurt but

could have been. As I repaired the damage, I regretted the decision not to hire a contractor.

- Expertise is required beyond the homeowner capability, like tuning a furnace or repairing holes in a sheetrock wall to match the wall around it.

- Tackling the project yourself will save little or no money. I discovered years ago that some contractors could install insulation cheaper than I could buy it.

As you consider whether to do the job yourself, be sure to research the tools and supplies you’ll need. Fortunately, there are amazing resources online.

**Don’t tackle energy efficiency projects yourself unless you’ve thoroughly researched it and have become very knowledgeable.**

When you search for information like “how to insulate an attic” or “how to air seal a home,” you’ll find fact sheets and video tutorials from contractors, home improvement shows, big box suppliers and manufacturers. YouTube videos often show experts making the installation of anything seem simple, but beware, some of these videos are aimed at other experts and not DIY homeowners.

To ensure you’re getting technically sound information, visit the ENERGY STAR® website ([www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)). Also, if you have a good energy auditor in your area, they can be another great source of information. An energy auditor can provide specifics about the materials you’ll need as well as information about local contractors and suppliers.

Our advice: Don’t tackle energy efficiency projects unless you’ve thoroughly researched it. Another benefit of doing the research upfront is that it will help you even if you decide to hire a contractor. You’ll be able to identify a knowledgeable contractor and hire one that knows you recognize a quality job. Good luck!





Shown above are participants from the 2019 Civil Air Patrol Joint Dakota Encampment. *Photos provided by CAP*

# EARNING THEIR WINGS

## Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program emphasizes overall youth leadership development

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Youngsters who sign up to join the Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Program often find themselves wondering why they're having to run laps, build a model rocket or learn how to handle a firearm.

Most would prefer to just skip to the good part: flying a jet fighter.

But it's all part of the curriculum to achieve the program's goal of developing teens who exhibit leadership and organizational skills, have a grasp of aerospace sciences and know the importance of pursuing a healthy lifestyle.

On July 10-18, nearly 200 CAP staff and students participated in the annual Joint Dakota Encampment at Camp Rapid. While the event is hosted each year by the joint North Dakota and South Dakota CAP Wings, the 2021 program included cadets from all eight CAP regions and 16 states as some states canceled their encampments this summer.

Capt. Richard Rezac, this year's encampment commander, was happy to welcome the students from other states.

"In terms of participation, this is the top activity for students and the

capstone of the youth program," Rezac said. "It's a prime opportunity to meet other students from other states, interact with one another, and enjoy engaging in those things they have in common. They often build life-long relationships while learning a wide range of skills and solidifying their moral character."

While the military-clad students attend some classroom sessions on Civil Air Patrol and U.S. Air Force topics, they also participate in outdoor drills and ceremonies, sports competitions, shooting instruction, physical fitness exercises and team-building courses at Camp Rapid West.

The list of week-long activities also includes visiting the South Dakota Air and Space Museum and touring Ellsworth Air Force Base. Active-duty units at the base are on hand to guide the group tours and to provide live demonstrations of skills, procedures and equipment.

Cadets are introduced to military firearms training at Camp Rapid's Weapons Simulator Range. Those enrolled in the Advanced Leadership Course track will go through a National Rifle Association (NRA) qualification course to earn their NRA badge.

A key component of the program is the more than 30 adult CAP Senior Members who serve as staff for the encampment. They supervise the cadets and manage activities and tend to record-keeping and administrative responsibilities

Visit <https://sdwg.cap.gov> for more information on the program.





# In hot pursuit of Walleye



Aydan Johnson landed this Walleye on his 12th birthday at Cow Creek north of Pierre. Photos by Billy Gibson

## SD anglers pursue walleye for fun and charity

Billy Gibson

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

Walleye fishing isn't always all about fishing for walleye.

That was the case at the annual SDREC Employee and Vendor Walleye Fishing Tournament held earlier this summer at the Cow Creek Recreation Area north of Pierre. For most of the more than 100 walleye whisperers who participated, the event was mostly about hanging out together, swapping fish tales - some of them true - and catching up with one another.

The tournament also raised \$500 for the state's rural electric cooperative Line Patrol charity.

For Evan Buckmiller, general manager at Kingsbury Electric Cooperative in DeSmet, the tournament presented a prime opportunity to spend time with family and interact with his cooperative colleagues. While his team failed to place, he enjoyed being out on the water with his wife and dad.

"It was a little hot, but we had beautiful weather and caught a lot of fish...just not as many as we wanted," said Buckmiller. "I'd never been a part of this event, so it was fun seeing all the boats taking off at the same time. It was also good to see people you don't normally get to see, or you haven't seen since you worked a storm together years ago. You get to connect with your friends and linemen you went to school with. That's the fun part about events like this."

Roger Crom, former manager of loss control services at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association in Pierre, served as a volunteer to help coordinate the event. Crom said while he likes to fish, he takes satisfaction with staying on dry land and meeting the competitors as they come in to weigh their catch and tell of their exploits on the lake.





The dawning of a new summer day brings the promise of fun and a full string of walleye by the afternoon.

“I just enjoy being a part of it every year,” Crom said. “It’s a lot of fun getting together with old friends and meeting new friends and getting to know the young linemen that are now part of the program. It’s not just one or two co-ops, it’s like a big family that comes out year after year. There’s a lot of camaraderie. Everybody works together and we also have a lot of fun together.”

For the record, the winning team of Roger Squires, Ryan Squires and Ron Koosman took top honors, despite temperatures soaring into the 90s and water levels that were unusually low. The crew representing H-D Electric and Dueco prevailed over a field of more than 30 teams with a total weight of 18.03 lbs. Their largest walleye weighed in at 3.05 lbs.

The East River Electric team of Tim Dockendorf, Doug Engbrecht



Crew members of the Captain Crawdaddy prepare to launch at Cow Creek.

and Robert Hanson landed the largest walleye at 4.04 lbs. (Search YouTube for Cooperative Connections Plus to see a video of the event.)

It’s no secret that the Missouri River system boasts some of the best walleye fishing in North America and is one of the top walleye habitats on the continent.

While there are many other walleye fishing tournaments held throughout the state in the spring and fall, one that stands out is the Tom and Matt Hill Memorial Tournament.

The fifth annual event, set for July 31 at the West Whitlock Recreation Area near Gettysburg, is held each year in honor of the Hill brothers who died in a boating accident on Brush Lake in December of 2016.

Born and reared in Volga, the siblings were avid hunters and fishermen. They were finishing up a day of duck hunting and were heading back to the landing to meet their father when their boat suddenly capsized.

The tournament is held to raise funds to support local youth outdoor programs in honor of the brothers. Proceeds have gone toward purchasing safety hunting vests for youngsters, hunting gear and safety training.

Sheila Gross, Energy Services Specialist at Sioux Valley Energy in

It’s no secret that the Missouri River system boasts some of the best walleye fishing in North America.

Colman, lost her brother and great-nephew in a fishing accident in January. As word spread, friends and family of the Hill Memorial Tournament and Fishing 4 Miracles jumped into action with an outpouring of support to the Berwald family. To express their gratitude, several of Gross’ family members plan to participate in the tournament to help contribute to the safe enjoyment of fishing and hunting.

“The Hill Brothers Committee is an amazing group of people and they do so much to support the community and those who have been impacted by tragedy. They have blessed my family in our time of loss and have brought great comfort,” she said.

A rules meeting will take place on Friday, July 30, at the Whitlock Bay Supper Club. An open house will be held from 1-5 p.m. with a meal from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

## NEW METERING SYSTEM



# New meters coming to you soon

## Two-Way Automatic Communication System (TWACS) Overview

**Jeff Barnes - IT Specialist**  
jbarnes@bhec.coop

### WHAT:

New meters are coming to your location. The biggest visual difference you will see is our logo and contact information will be on the faceplate of your meter. Similar to the image below.

### WHY:

There are a couple of reasons we are moving forward with this project.

1. Our current system has become end-of-life, and we cannot buy replacement parts when we run out or something breaks.
2. The new system will allow our members to have more information available to them. This additional information will give the member more control over their energy use and, ultimately, their power bill.

### HOW:

We have contracted a company to help us change out most of our meters. These companies' vehicles will have our logos and their own to make it easy for you to recognize if you see them in your area. We will be working with you if we cannot access a meter from the outside and schedule a time that works for you.

### YOUR BENEFITS:

When we are done with this project, you will have access to more data on how the power is used at your location via SmartHub®. The new system will also allow us to pinpoint outages quicker and more efficiently. We will still need to patrol the line and see what caused the outage before restoring, but we will have a better starting point when the crews get called out. This new system will also make our outage map on our website more accurate and updated.





# Home Charging Options for Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicle (EV) owners have multiple options for charging their vehicles at home. There are three common EV charging levels: Level One, Level Two, and DC Fast Charge.

## Level One Charging:

Level One is the most basic charging level. Your EV will typically include an adapter that plugs into a typical 120-volt outlet if you choose this option. This is the easiest and cheapest charging solution, but it will take much longer to charge your EV.

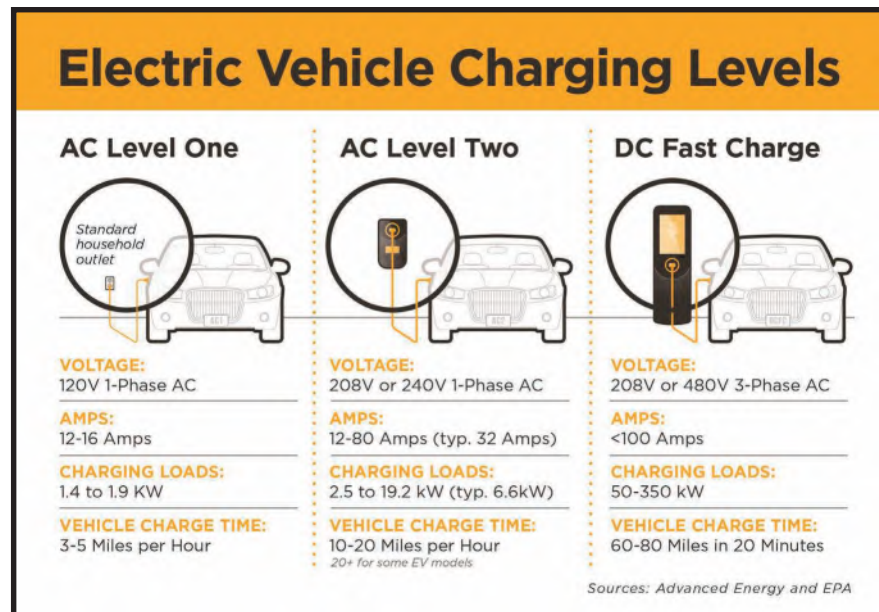
## Level Two Charging:

Level Two is about three to five times faster than Level One, but this charging level often requires separate purchases and installation. The EV is plugged into a 240-volt outlet, similar to what is used for larger appliances, like a clothes dryer. Most homes do not include a 240-volt outlet in garages, so the outlet must be installed by a licensed professional. You typically see Level Two charging stations at shopping malls, office buildings, and multi-family community spaces.

## DC Fast Charge:

DC Fast Charge stations are typically seen near high-traffic public areas, like gas stations, rather than in homes. This is the fastest charging level, with the ability to charge an EV at 80% in under 30 minutes. As EVs continue to become more popular, you can expect to see more DC Fast Charge stations throughout South Dakota.

If you're charging an EV at home, please contact Black Hills Electric Cooperative at 800-742-0085 or 605-673-4461 M-F 7:30 a.m - 5:00 p.m. EV charging creates additional energy demand. The time of day you charge your EV can have an impact on the grid and your monthly energy costs. By letting us know about your EV charging levels, we can help ensure your home is prepared for the additional energy consumption.



# RV TRIPPING

RV campers make new friends and enjoy new experiences on the open road. *Photo by South Dakota Travel*

## Vic and Barb Simmons adopt the RV lifestyle when visiting new places and creating lasting memories on the road

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Decisions, decisions...

When Vic Simmons starts to sense the allure of the open road, he has some decisions to make. He can crank up his Jeep Cherokee and join all the brand loyalists out there who rally around the phrase, "It's a Jeep thing: You wouldn't understand."

Or he could go grab his gloves and his riding gear, fire up his orange 2017 Harley-Davidson Street Glide and experience the wind rush and beauty of the natural landscape on two wheels. Or he can climb into the command-and-control center of his massive 40-foot Meridian "diesel pusher" motor coach.

But who wants to be burdened by making tough decisions when the highway is calling? Most of the time he makes it a little easier by attaching the bike or the Jeep and

heading out into the great wide open.

Simmons, who just turned 65, serves as general manager of Rushmore Electric in Rapid City. But he has plans of retiring early next year and that means lots of travel time in the future with his wife Barb and whoever else wants to join the adventure.

The passenger list usually includes a host of grandchildren as it has from the beginning of Simmons' foray into the world of recreational vehicles and RV life.

He and Barb invested in their first RV about 12 years ago by purchasing a pre-owned 32-foot Class C model Jamboree, the kind that's built on a truck chassis and resembles a van with a large camper shell and a sleeping chamber over the roof.

"When our three girls were little, Barb's parents used to take them

camping, and to this day they always talk about how much they enjoyed those trips," Simmons said. "So, when it came time for us to have grandkids, we wanted to have a way to create those same kinds of memories for our own grandchildren."

Inevitably, as the family grew the smaller that 32-foot camper became. Besides, the vehicle was a bit top-heavy and caused some white-knuckle driving in high winds, and according to Vic, "Barb's idea of roughing it is staying at a hotel without a swimming pool." So, after three summers an upgrade with more space and more amenities was in order, and Simmons graduated to a 37-foot motor coach.

After a few years, he sold that RV to Lacreek General Manager Josh Fanning, who used it for family vacations and to take his daughter to weightlifting and track competitions in far-flung places.

Soon afterwards, Vic and Barb acquired their "forever RV," a 40-foot Meridian they purchased





Vic Simmons of Rushmore Electric enjoys climbing behind the wheel and piloting his 40-foot recreational vehicle.

a few years ago when Vic began planning out his retirement.

Simmons, who prides himself on always buying pre-owned vehicles, purchased the RV sight-unseen... well almost.

"I found it at a dealership in Lincoln," he recalled. "It had 17,000 miles on it and looked like it was in good shape. My son-in-law was in Lincoln, so he went to the dealership and Facetimed me and walked through it and it looked nice. It was set up to pull the Jeep or the trailer for the motorcycle, so we got it. I don't usually do business like that, but..."

With Vic soon retiring and Barb already retired from her



Vic and Barb Simmons use their RV to visit new places and create lasting memories.

job as the pharmacy technician program director at Western Dakota Technical Institute, the two have lots of traveling plans in their future.

One hitch, however, is finding places to park. RV sales shot through the roof nationally last year as people sought to escape the confines of their homes under lock down conditions and explore the outdoors.

"You can hardly find any good camping spots," Simmons said. "Camping just became something that people felt safe doing, and it got them out of their homes. A neighbor of mine had a travel trailer for sale and it sold in just a few minutes after he posted it."

Simmons said his travel adventures have taken him from North Carolina on the eastern seaboard to Washington state on the Pacific, and also all the way down to El Paso.

His plan is to "go to places I haven't been," although when asked if there's one place he would like to re-visit he's quick with an answer.

"Door County in eastern Wisconsin. I just fell in love with the place," he said. "It's on the peninsula above Green Bay and is just gorgeous

## 'GREAT 8' UNIQUE RV CAMPGROUNDS IN SD

Here are the state's top eight unique campgrounds, according to the state Department of Tourism:

### Wessington Springs City Park Campground

Wessington Springs

### Castlewood City Park Municipal Campground

Castlewood

### Lake Carthage Campground

Carthage

### Custer's Gulch RV Park

Custer

### Cedar Pass Campground

Badlands National Park

### Rafter J Bar Ranch

Hill City

### Fish 'N Fry Campground & RV Park

Deadwood

### Rocky Point Recreation Area

Belle Fourche

with a beautiful campground and a friendly community and shops and restaurants on Sturgeon Bay. The sunrises and sunsets are awesome."

His plans for himself and Barb are the same he had for his grandchildren when he invested in his first RV: meet new people, explore new places and make lasting memories.

Oddly enough, many of those new people are encountered not at state parks, camp sites or in restaurants, but at the fuel pump.

"When you're driving a car and stop for gas, nobody will come up and talk to you," he said. "But if you're on a motorcycle or in an RV, it's amazing how many people want to come up and talk to you all the time about where you're going and where you've been. They also like to talk a lot about gas mileage."



## South Dakota trucking industry keeps rolling along despite challenges

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

While the two major political parties bicker back and forth about addressing the nation's crumbling infrastructure, substandard roads and other federal issues can be a real problem for people like Mick O'Connor.

Owner of Mick O'Connor and Son Trucking operating out of Mitchell, he oversees a fleet of 11 haulers and dump trucks along with his wife, Carla, and his son, Mike.

Mick launched the business in 1972 and has faced all manner of obstacles and challenges dating back to the Middle East oil embargo back in the 1970s that brought fuel shortages and high prices.

Over the years, there have been strict permitting regulations, soaring insurance premiums and economic downturns. Having cleared all of those hurdles in the past, he was braced to contend with any problems brought by last year's global pandemic. Fortunately for O'Connor and others in the trucking industry in South Dakota, there were a few figurative bumps in the road but business soon kept rolling right along.

"We kept people socially distanced like everybody else," O'Connor said. "Our business wasn't impacted as negatively as some industries, so we were lucky in that regard."

The industry hasn't been completely unscathed, however. Like other business owners navigating

through the post-pandemic environment, O'Connor is having to face challenges such as finding qualified employees and dealing with supply shortages and kinks in the supply chain.

Specifically, O'Connor is keeping his attention focused on the tire market. With big rigs that have up to 18 axles and can weigh up to 195,000 lbs., O'Connor and other trucking company owners purchase plenty of tires.

For Barry Selland, owner of the family-owned Selland Trucking company out of Woonsocket, the immediate need is for vehicle parts. Looking to expand his fleet of 30 flatbed and step-deck rigs, Selland is awaiting delivery on three new Kenworth trucks.

"We're waiting on certain parts to arrive before we can get them here," said Selland, whose company specializes in hauling structural steel





Approximate number of combined miles logged by

## 300 billion

truck drivers each year in the United States

More than 8 million workers are employed in the U.S. trucking industry.

and manufactured goods all across the country and into Canada. “A representative at Kenworth told me there are some headlight parts that have been on order since the first of the year. We had a water pump go out and there was only one pump in the six-state area.”

Selland admitted being surprised that the pandemic wasn’t more disruptive to his industry. At first, he said, he felt the situation was going to impact trucking as heavily as the economic recession did in 2008.

“Things quickly started to slow down and it felt like another recession was coming,” he said. “But

then, just as quickly as it slowed down, it picked back up again and just took off. And it’s been going great ever since. We’re getting good loads and doing a lot of business.”

Both O’Connor and Selland said a national dearth of qualified drivers and general labor shortages are problems not particular to the post-pandemic business world. One concern they share, however, is that the average age of available drivers is rising. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median age of a private fleet driver is 57 years old while drivers in training are at a median age of 35.

More than 3.5 million U.S. workers are employed as professional drivers with nearly 8 million employees in the industry, accounting for almost 6 percent of the workforce. Truckers log a combined 300 billion miles every year.

“There are always things to deal with,” Selland said. “But we’re optimistic about the future. People in this industry in South Dakota all work well together. We work with our state officials, law enforcement and others involved to make sure we continue to get products delivered where they need to be as safely and as efficiently as we can.”

## QUESTIONS ABOUT SOLAR ENERGY? THE PUC HAS ANSWERS

Seeking answers about state laws and regulatory policies regarding solar energy and electric vehicles?

The South Dakota Public Service Commission (PUC) has put together a list of frequently asked questions on these topics and more.

PUC officials have indicated that ratepayer inquiries on these topics have increased over the past several months, so they drafted a document entitled “South Dakota Electric Service Laws” to edify utility customers and cooperative members.

Under the heading “Solar Energy” some of the subjects include:

- Solar leasing
- Solar power for your home

- What are the benefits of solar energy?

- What challenges does solar energy face?

- What do I need to know when considering or installing a solar energy system?

- What will I get paid for my solar generation?

The document also provides information on electric vehicle charging, such as where existing EV charging stations are located throughout the state and a summary of rules governing the establishment of charging stations by independent business owners.

According to Trevor Jones, general manager of the South Dakota Rural

Electric Association in Pierre, the PUC’s document will help deliver useful information to electric cooperative members.

“The legislature and the PUC are working very hard to establish rules and regulations in an industry that’s continuing to evolve at a very rapid pace,” he said. “They’re focused on making sure the guidelines are fair and consistent and take into consideration the challenges faced by utility providers to deliver affordable, accessible power balanced against the needs and expectations of consumers.”

The document can be found at <https://puc.sd.gov/Publications/electricsolarfaq.aspx>.

## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**August 26-29**  
**58th Annual Steam**  
**Threshing Jamboree**  
*Photo by Travel South Dakota*



**JULY 23-25**  
**Arlington Days**  
Various Locations, Arlington,  
SD, 605-983-5251

**JULY 27-31**  
**Days of '76 Rodeo & Parades**  
Various Locations, Deadwood,  
SD, 605-578-1876

**JULY 29-AUGUST 1**  
**Bruce Honey Days**  
City-wide, Bruce, SD,  
605-627-5671

**JULY 29, AUGUST 5, 19**  
**The 1880 Train Old West**  
**Shootout**  
222 Railroad Avenue,  
Hill City, SD, 605-574-2222

**JULY 31**  
**Chislic Festival**  
Freeman's Prairie Arboretum,  
Freeman, SD, 605-496-9946

**AUGUST 5-7**  
**90th Anniversary Union**  
**County Fair**  
The Fairgrounds, Alcester, SD,  
605-356-2321

**AUGUST 5-14**  
**Sioux Empire Fair**  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds,  
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7178

**AUGUST 6-7**  
**Huron Senior Games**  
Various Locations, Huron, SD,  
605-491-0635 or 605-353-8533

**AUGUST 6-7**  
**Potato Days**  
Citywide, Clark, SD,  
605-360-7672

**AUGUST 6-8**  
**Annual Sioux River Folk**  
**Festival**  
Newton Hills State Park,  
Canton, SD, 605-261-7414

**AUGUST 6-15**  
**Sturgis Motorcycle Rally**  
Citywide, Sturgis, SD,  
605-720-0800

**AUGUST 11**  
**Willie Nelson & Family**  
824 32nd Avenue, Brookings,  
SD, 605-692-7539

**AUGUST 12-15**  
**Annual Custer County Fair**  
Custer County Fairgrounds,  
Hermosa, SD, 605-255-4145  
or 605-393-7055

**AUGUST 13-15**  
**Fort Pierre Trader Days &**  
**Backyard BBQ Competition**  
Various Locations, Fort Pierre,  
SD, 605-223-7603

**AUGUST 17-19**  
**Dakotafest**  
2300 E Spruce Street,  
Mitchell, SD, 877-611-8161

**AUGUST 20-29**  
**Central States Fair & Rodeo**  
800 San Francisco Street,  
Rapid City, SD, 605-355-3861

**AUGUST 21**  
**Dakota State Fair Speedway**  
**Stock Car Races**  
South Dakota State  
Fairgrounds, Huron, SD,  
605-352-4848

**AUGUST 26-29**  
**58th Annual Steam**  
**Threshing Jamboree**  
Prairie Village, Madison, SD,  
605-256-3644

**SEPTEMBER 10**  
**Mickelson Star Trail**  
Rochford Trailhead, Hill City,  
SD, pre-register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mickelson-star-trail-night-tickets-140121383831>

**SEPTEMBER 11-12**  
**Fall Harvest Festival**  
Delmont, SD, 605-928-3792

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.

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