

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

## Keeping the Lights On

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Motor Vehicles and  
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# Grain Bin Safety



**Jeff Birkeland**  
CEO

As rewarding as it may be, farming is an extremely difficult job – and it ranks among the top 10 most dangerous professions in the United States. At West Central, safety is top priority for all – our employees and our members.

Our farmers work hard to get the job done, and sometimes it's easy

to forget all the necessary steps to take when practicing safe operations. Grain bins are siloed spaces built for storing grain and fermented feed known as silage. These bins play an integral role in the efficiency and profitability of farm and ranch operations, and safety regulations should always be considered when working around these structures.

Whether you're purchasing new grain bins or remodeling areas that contain existing ones, proximity to overhead power lines must be a considered factor.

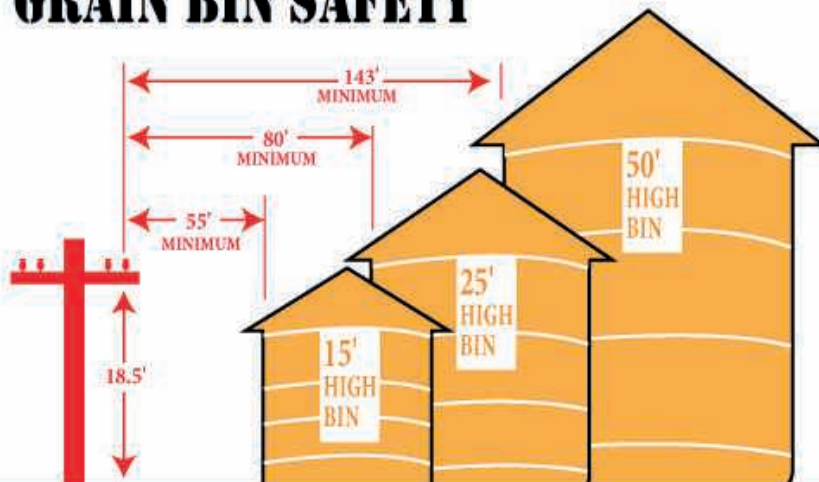
- **Safe clearance.** The National Electrical Safety Code requires an 18-foot minimum vertical clearance from the highest point of the filling port of the grain bin to nearby high-voltage wires and a 55-foot minimum distance from the power line to the grain bin wall. See the chart for further guidelines. Changes to landscaping and drainage work can affect clearance heights of power lines, so remember to check these measurements regularly.
- **Filling grain bins.** High-voltage power lines are not insulated, so it's important to remember to maintain an adequate high-wire

clearance when using a portable auger, conveyor or elevator to fill your grain bin.

- **Moving equipment near grain bins.** When moving equipment, such as a hopper or a scaffold, be aware of nearby power lines. Remember to maintain a 15-foot clearance to ensure safety.

Accidents can happen in a split-second, which is why West Central reminds you to always use caution when working near power lines. If you are considering a plan for a new grain bin or reconstruction of an existing bin's site, please contact West Central Electric at 605-669-8100 and let us assist you in maintaining a safe environment for you and your family.

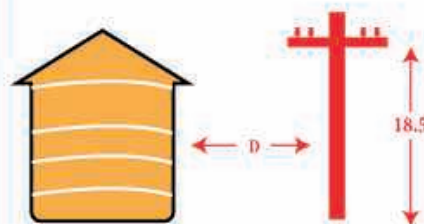
## GRAIN BIN SAFETY



**DANGER: HIGH VOLTAGE!**  
**FOLLOW FARM SAFETY RULES AROUND POWER LINES**

Height of grain storage structure	D=Minimum distance from line to bin wall*
15 ft.	55 ft.
20 ft.	68 ft.
25 ft.	80 ft.
30 ft.	93 ft.
35 ft.	104 ft.
40 ft.	118 ft.
50 ft.	143 ft.
60 ft.	168 ft.
70 ft.	193 ft.
80 ft.	218 ft.

\*Based on a typical power line having a vertical clearance of 18.5 feet above the ground and a supply line phase to ground voltage of more than 0V to 22KV; National Electrical Safety Code Rule 232.





**COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS**

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(USPS No. 018-988)

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**Our Mission is to Provide  
Safe, Reliable Service  
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Design assistance by SDREA

# Whatever it Takes: Powering Life, from a Lineworker's Perspective

*Linemen are ranked as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the country. The linemen at West Central Electric work rain or shine, in often challenging conditions to ensure you have reliable electricity. We're celebrating Lineman Appreciation Day on April 8, 2024. Nathan Drury, one of our many dedicated linemen, wrote the following column.*



**Nathan Drury**  
Lineman Foreman

My name is Nathan Drury, and I'm one of 16 linemen at West Central Electric who work every day in all weather conditions to make sure our communities have the power to live their lives. I love my job. It's hard work, but it's very rewarding. I hope this will give you a better look into what we face and more importantly, why we do it.

## The Danger

A lot of people know linework is dangerous because we work near high-voltage electricity. Move just the wrong way or lose focus for a split second, and it could be deadly. You have to be aware of your surroundings and the safety of the person next to you. We often work on energized power lines, and you can't always tell they are energized by just looking at them. You're working with an element of danger that requires concentration, and there is no margin for error. The environment compounds the pressure, because when you need power most is usually when the weather is worst. We often work in storms with rain, wind, extreme heat and cold, in the dark, or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it's dangerous, but that's what we're trained to do.

Many may not realize it, but we undergo years of training before we can officially be called a lineman. We typically start as a groundsman, helping crews with tools and keeping job sites safe, and then we transition to apprentice status, which typically spans four years. After an apprenticeship, with more than 8,000 hours of training under our belts, we transition to journeyman status – that's

when we're considered officially trained in our field.

But the education is ongoing. Lineman continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

## The Physical Demand

The daily expectations of a lineman are physically demanding, but you won't hear any of us complain about that. I know what I signed up for – loading heavy materials, climbing poles and in and out of buckets. Most of us are just glad to be outside.

## The Sacrifices

There are some sacrifices to being a lineman. You don't know what type of situation you're going to face or when you're going to face it, and it usually comes with an element of high stress. We get calls at all hours and in the middle of the night. I've missed holidays, birthdays, camping trips, and have changed many plans over the years, but my family is very supportive, and it pays off in the end. We ensure nothing is in the way of helping our friends and neighbors get back to normal life.

## It's Worth It

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. Our co-op is my second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood. In this work, you must depend on the person beside you in life-or-death circumstances. It's a culture of trust, teamwork, and service. It's all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on for everybody else.

I have a lot of pride in my work. Even when it's cold and wet, I know I'm working to keep people warm. Hearing someone yell "Thank you" from the window after the lights come back on or seeing people flipping the light switches on their porches after an outage is restored is a lot of satisfaction. No matter how tired or long I've been working, that feeling always makes it worth it.

West Central Electric and its employees are members of these communities. So, you can trust that we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible, so you can get back to normal life.

# Break Dirt Without Breaking the Law

As the warmer spring temperatures cause the ground to thaw, contractors and homeowners alike are likely to begin on projects that require some sort of digging.

By law, anyone who is digging in South Dakota needs to call 811 and have a locate ticket in their hand before moving any ground. If you're not the one that's digging and you've hired a landscaper to do the work instead, that landscaper should have a ticket in their name.

When someone calls 811, the call goes through a center in Dallas, Texas. That call center then notifies utilities in the area, according to South Dakota 811 Executive Director Codi Gregg.

An excavator or digger has to allow 48 hours for the utilities in the area they plan to dig into to come on site and mark the location of those underground utilities. On average, there are five to eight utilities notified per call.

If there's a potential loss of life or property, the allowed response time is shortened to a maximum of two hours during normal business hours.

"When the ticket goes in, the excavator is given a list of the utilities that are involved or are working or that are in that area where they're working," Gregg explained.

Those companies that own the utilities will make marks that identify the location. Those flags are also color coded according to the type of utility. As more and more overhead electrical lines are converted to underground lines, it's imperative that anyone who plans on doing a project that requires digging call 8-1-1 to avoid a dangerous and deadly situation.

"It's a free phone call for the excavator to make. There's no real reason for them not to make the phone call other than not being aware of it," Gregg said.

Kristie Fiegen, South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairwoman, echoed Gregg's comments, stating that making the call to 811 is the "most important and easiest call anyone can make before starting a digging project."

"This simple and imperative effort will help to prevent damages to vital underground utilities and safeguard critical services that our residents and economy depend on," Fiegen said. "During the 2024 construction season, I urge everyone to call 811 before you dig and protect all South Dakotans by abiding by our state laws and making safety our highest priority."

- Last year, there were 176,984 notices to the 811 Center of work occurring.
- South Dakota's 811 laws were established in 1993.
- In 2017, South Dakota 811 added damage reporting to our laws, stating if there was a damage, disturbance, or a dislocation of a utility – 811 was to be contacted to report the damage. It was also added that 911 was to be contacted first if there was a leak.
- Free accounts are offered upon request, allowing account holders to enter locate tickets themselves without calling an agent.
- A total of 1,944 utilities were reportedly damaged in 2023. Of that total, 375 excavators did not have a previous ticket.
- According to Common Ground Alliance's Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report, the annual rate of damages to buried infrastructure costs the U.S. a staggering \$30 billion every year and 60% of nationwide damages to underground utilities are caused specifically by professional contractors not contacting 811 prior to digging.



## Don't Fly Drones Near Power Lines Lyndon Kaski, Age 8

Lyndon Kaski warns readers to stay away from power lines when flying drones. Great advice! Lyndon's parents are Jonathan and Amanda Kaski, members of Kingsbury Electric Cooperative.

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.



# SALSA SAVORY

## FRESH SALSA

### Ingredients:

4-6 med. to large tomatoes, seeded and chopped  
1 med. onion, chopped  
4 fresh jalapenos, seeded and finely chopped\*  
1 clove garlic, crushed  
1 tbsp. dried parsley or fresh cilantro to taste  
1 tsp. salt

### Method

\*To prevent jalapenos from burning your fingers, lightly rub fingers with shortening, especially around fingernails.  
Serve with tortilla chips.

Linda Hubbard  
Rapid City, S.D.

## LUANN'S FRESH SALSA

### Ingredients:

4 med. tomatoes, peeled and chopped  
1/4 cup finely chopped onion  
1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper  
1-2 tbsps. jalapeno or other hot pepper, seeded and finely chopped  
1 tsp. salt  
pepper to taste  
1 tbsp. lime juice or red wine vinegar  
1-2 tps. catsup  
dash garlic powder  
dash cayenne pepper  
1-2 tps. sugar  
cilantro ( optional)

### Method

Mix all ingredients. Serve with any tortilla or corn chips for dipping. Will keep approximately 1 week in the refrigerator.

Nancy Stenson  
Fort Pierre, S.D.

## TAMARIND PASILLA MANGO PINEAPPLE SALSA

### Ingredients:

1 1/4 cups diced fresh pineapple  
1 large mango, pitted and diced (about 1 1/4 cup)  
1 small red onion, diced  
1 small red bell pepper, diced  
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro  
1 med. jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped  
2 cloves fresh garlic, minced  
3 tbsps. fresh lime juice  
1 tbsp. honey  
4 1/2 teaspoons Tamarind Naturally Flavored & Pasilla Chile Seasoning

### Method

Mix all ingredients in medium bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving. Stir before serving. Serve with tortilla chips or use to top tacos or nachos.

McCormick

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Celebrate Earth Day

## Why Taking Steps to Conserve Matters



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

Earth Day is April 22, a time when we celebrate this beautiful planet we are lucky to call home. During this day of appreciation, I encourage you to take action at home by making changes to conserve energy. If we all contribute, even small adjustments and changes to how much energy we use can have positive impacts.

Electricity is essential to our daily lives. It gives us opportunities to learn, keeps us safe and comfortable and provides entertainment. The downside is that every source of energy generation has consequences. Fossil fuels emit carbon. Hydropower dams limit the passage of migrating fish. Even solar panels can't be made without mining minerals. Using less electricity is a way to mitigate the impact of producing the electricity that powers our lives.

Before diving into ways to use less energy, it's important to know the difference between conservation and energy efficiency. Energy efficiency refers to equipment that uses less energy to do the same job. For example, ENERGY STAR®-certified refrigerators keep your food just as fresh as standard models but use about 9% less energy to do it, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Conservation is using less energy by changing behavior and practices. For example, adjusting your thermostat to be closer to the temperature outside or turning off the lights or a ceiling fan when you leave the room conserves energy.

Conservation has the best return on investment. It's often free and can save a little or a lot – depending on what you are changing and how drastic of a change you make.

Let's start with what's typically the biggest energy user in the average household: heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment. Save energy while you sleep by programming your thermostat to be a few degrees closer to the outside temperature at night. In colder climates, add an extra blanket or comforter to your bed to keep you warm.

Typically, the second biggest energy user is the water heater. Replacing an electric storage water heater with a heat pump/hybrid water heater is a great example of an energy efficient project. Adjusting the temperature setting to the recommended 120 degrees and using less hot water in your home conserves energy. Wash clothes in cold water. When washing dishes, don't let the hot water run longer than necessary.

Earth Day also lends itself to thinking of ways we can connect with each other and limit our screen time. Look for electricity-free opportunities with your family or community. I like to unplug and get outside with friends and family. Going for a hike, a walk or even just spending time in your yard or local park is a great way to reconnect with others and nature. Before you head out, adjust that thermostat and turn off everything possible. Unplug chargers from outlets and turn off all electronics and lights.

I am grateful for this planet we call home. It offers so much to sustain us. Any small changes we can make to benefit the planet can add up if we all pitch in.



# State Technical Colleges Offering Dual Credits

**Shannon Marvel**

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

More and more motivated high school students in South Dakota are getting a leg up on their careers through dual credit programs offered by the state's technical colleges.

In fact, three high school students are set to walk away with their degrees from Lake Area Technical College this spring.

Lake Area Technical College President Tiffany Sanderson said more high school juniors and seniors are participating in the state's dual credit program to get a jump start on their career paths while saving a considerable amount in tuition costs.

"Students have ten different public colleges and universities in the state to choose from. At Lake Area Tech, the savings are huge. A student normally pays \$166 per credit but will only pay \$48 per credit through the dual credit program," Sanderson said. "That's a 70% savings on college coursework."

"It's popular for students to take both technical courses and general education courses. Often that first class helps them understand what they're interested in pursuing."

At Mitchell Technical College, more and more students are not only enrolling in the dual credit program but taking more

than one course during each semester. That's according to Carol Grode-Hanks, vice president of academics at MTC, and Hilary Vining, director of enrollment at MTC.

Vining said about 80% of those in the dual credit program just take one class.

"Students that take one class save \$570, while full-time students save \$3,500," Grode-Hanks said.

Vining said students enrolled in dual credit courses full-time typically only have their elective high school classes remaining.

"However, by taking dual enrollment courses, they have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning and actively participate in practical activities," Vining said. "There are some kids that are ready to get out in the workforce and get as much as they can get done at a cheaper rate. It's becoming a lot more popular. Parents are getting more educated about the opportunity as well."

At Western Dakota Technical College, for the 2023-2024 school year, there are 310 dual enrollment students in the fall semester and 327 students in the spring semester.

Diana Newman, director of admissions at WDTA, said the school works with many students one-on-one to advise them toward a track to get ahead in addition to a graduation plan.

"Western Dakota Technical College aims to help make dual enrollment accessible. Through the use of grants, we have been able to support more students to have access to books, tools, equipment, uniforms, and other needed items to succeed in dual enrollment classes," Newman said.

Southeast Technical College President Robert Griggs said he's also seeing an increased interest in the dual credit program.

"Dual credit courses provide high school students the opportunity to explore different career fields and areas of interest, all while earning credits that count towards a high school diploma and a college degree," Griggs said. "Southeast Technical College works with area school districts to package dual credit learning options that facilitate the transition into college and entry into high-demand career fields."

Dual credit programs that fill up fast at Southeast Technical College include welding, medical and cardiovascular sonography, HVAC, electrician, nursing, and vet tech.

For more information on enrolling in the dual credit program, students and parents should reach out to their high school counselor's office or check out the options at <https://ourdakotadreams.com/high-school/dual-credit/>.



Students enrolled in Western Dakota Technical College's Dual Credit Program.  
Photo courtesy of Western Dakota Technical College.





# KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON

Elliot and Janaye Rayman at their second annual Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser.

## One Lineman's After-hours Outreach

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

Across the state, linemen are charged with keeping South Dakota's power going. It's a big responsibility: troubleshooting electrical systems, operating heavy equipment, and maintaining power lines. These workers are frequently asked to navigate high voltage and confront dangerous challenges in all kinds of extreme weather. In the face of these challenges, it takes a truly community-minded individual to ensure the community's lights stay on. Many of these crucial workers demonstrate their commitment to their community daily, both during and outside of work hours.

Butte Electric Journeyman Lineman Elliot Rayman, who has been with the cooperative for seven years, serves as just one example of an electric cooperative employee who has pulled extra hours for his local community of Spearfish, S.D. In addition to his role as a lineman, Elliot wears many hats in his community beyond just the hard hat of a co-op employee. He is a veteran of the National Guard, having served a deployment overseas. Elliot and his wife, Janaye, are also deeply involved in their community as the owners of Barefoot Fitness, a gym in the Spearfish community. Janaye, a cancer survivor, operates the gym and is an integral part of their community efforts.

Janaye and Elliot purchased Barefoot Fitness in 2018, fulfilling Janaye's long-standing dream of owning a gym. Shortly after their purchase, the couple learned that Janaye's cancer, previously in remission, had metastasized into Stage 4 breast cancer.

"In 2020, I had reoccurrence everywhere – brain, lungs, liver, bones," said Janaye. "Since then, I have been on a mission every day to heal and recover. It's also been my goal to help others every single day, day in and day out, and that's



what keeps me going. That's my job and it's what I love to do, so I'm not stopping."

"My wife is an inspiration to many people," added Elliot. "She is the strongest person I know."

Undeterred, Elliot and Janaye decided to press on and use their gym as a platform to engage with their local community. Despite Janaye's ongoing battle with breast cancer, the two started a new Barefoot Fitness tradition – an annual Memorial Day fundraiser to benefit South Dakota's gold star families, the families of fallen soldiers.

"After a few years of owning the gym, we decided we needed to give back to the community, because the community had really been there for us through everything," said Elliot. "We knew we had the ability and the platform to give back to the community through Barefoot Fitness, so we settled on a Memorial Day fundraiser that would benefit gold star families in our state."

This May, Elliot and Janaye will host their fourth Barefoot Fitness Memorial Day fundraiser. Like previous years, the event will feature local catering from Spearfish businesses, such as Spearfish Brewing Company and Timmons Market. The event will also include an optional community workout for all ages.

"We kick off our day with the National Guard leading the pledge of allegiance and national anthem," said Janaye. "We do a prayer, and then we do our Memorial Day workout. It's a team workout that people are encouraged to complete with their family or friends."

According to Janaye and Elliot, the team workout is about more than just breaking a sweat. Instead, it's about remembering those who gave their lives for this country.

"You always hear about people doing things for veterans, but you never hear about the story on the other side of

that – the families," Janaye said. "A lot of times the family is forgotten so we really want to honor the families that also made a sacrifice."

At the end of the day, Elliot and Janaye said none of their efforts would be possible without the support they have received from the Spearfish community, the veteran community,

and the electric cooperative community.

"Butte Electric and the co-op world have helped us out so much," said Elliot. "The culture of the co-op community is huge: there is brotherhood – it's the way people help each other out. You just can't ask for a better group of people, and that's the same way with the veteran world."



Janaye and Elliot lead a community workout session, challenging participants to complete 300 weighted ball throws.



# 2024 Projects



**Scott Kittelson**

Manager of Operations

Even though we are into late winter, we are already looking forward to another busy construction season in 2024. As I said last year, I am happy to say we are not presently doing any storm cleanup and are continuing with regular wintertime maintenance and construction activity. I hope we have a mild but wet spring as I write this.

With the milder winter, the crews have been working on OCR change-outs, line patrol, meter readings, tree trimming, line maintenance, pole change-outs, electric heat connects, service upgrades, pole testing, infrared testing, and a few new overhead services.

Our big project for this year will be to rebuild 10.5 miles of 69 kV transmission line between Midland and north of 1880 Town along Highway 63.

This year, we will convert another nine miles (detailed below) of the original overhead line built in the early 1950s to underground. Most of these lines were constructed with 30' class 7 poles, long spans, and with #4 ACSR conductor.

1. Continue with 7.5 miles of three-phase overhead to underground with V-phase 18 miles northwest of Philip along Hilland Road, (2 miles left to trench).
2. Replace 1.75 miles of single-phase overhead to underground 2.5 miles west of Philip.
3. Replace 3 miles of single-phase overhead line with underground 10 miles NE of Presho.
4. Replace 1.5 miles of three-phase overhead line with underground 1.5 miles north of Reliance.

5. Replace .75 miles of single-phase overhead to underground just north of Kennebec.

A carry-over project from last year, in the Reliance area, we will be making system improvements to include sectionalizing changes and conversions of three-phase to single-phase. This will reduce line exposure to that area, reducing momentary blinks and outage times.

The crews will be busy with the retirements from the past construction season of our overhead line to underground conversions. These overhead line retirements consist of 10 miles of single-phase, west of Ft. Pierre; 1 mile of three-phase, north of Philip; 2.5 miles of single-phase, southeast of





## 2024 Projects, Continued

Philip; 5 miles of single-phase, west of Milesville; 3 miles of single-phase, west of Billsburg; 5 miles of single-phase, west of Murdo; 3 miles of single-phase, south of Kennebec; and 7.5 miles of three-phase, northwest of Philip.

Since 2013, we have been doing our “In-House” pole testing. Previously, we used Osmose Utility Services Inc. out of Georgia for our annual pole testing. We have over 100 pole replacements scheduled this spring and summer, as reported from our inspection process regarding our aging plant and weather-related pole damage. These poles are classified as non-priority poles and can be changed out later. We schedule priority poles (danger poles) immediately for replacement.

This year, we have a SDDOT road project for Highway 248 between Draper and Vivian. Before they can start the road work, we will have to move the line out temporarily for five culvert and bridge replacements; we will move them back after completion.

We have two substations to finish upgrades with:

- Cheyenne Substation (Kirley Area)
- Murdo Rural Substation

As with last year, one of our biggest challenges for this year will be the availability and lead times for materials, as most of you are also having. Listed below are just a few of the material items:

- Wood Poles
- Transformers (Overhead & Underground)
- Wire (Overhead & Underground)
- Metering Equipment (Sockets, Current Transformers, Pole Top Kits, & etc.)
- Fiberglass Products
- Underground Terminations and Modules

We have been ordering materials well in advance for these items with an extended lead time. Due to these challenges, we have been stocking more materials than previously.

With our busy work schedule planned and material available for this summer, please try to contact WCE well in advance for any new service requests or work you may want WCE to do. Please remember to call SD One-Call 48 hours before digging, 1-800-781-7474, or dial 811.



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



SDHP Trooper Megan Koch stands by her patrol vehicle. Koch works within the state's Motor Carrier Division. *Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel*

# COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

**Shannon Marvel**

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When commercial motor vehicles come into the state of South Dakota, it's the job of the South Dakota Highway Patrol's Motor Carrier Division to ensure the drivers of those vehicles have the necessary paperwork, permits and documents.

The task is one of public safety.

Making sure the carriers are adhering to safe driving practices is just another way to ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be while driving on the state's roadways.

South Dakota Highway Patrol

Trooper Megan Koch is one of the officers who works within the motor carrier division.

"Our main focus is making sure the motor carriers or trucks are safe on the roadways and keeping everybody else safe. It helps them perform their job of carrying their property or passengers across the state lines and within the state. We help make sure that they can do that job," Koch explained.

Mainly, Koch works specifically with commercial motor vehicles that carry over a certain weight or property of monetary value within the state or interstate.

"When we do an inspection on a driver, we're checking a bunch of different things. Weight sometimes is one of them, but not always. It just depends on the situation," Koch said.

"They have to have certain paperwork with them and they are required to follow certain rules. It depends on what they're doing."

The dependent variables include whether a carrier is traveling with goods within the state or going out of the state and how far away they are from the hub, or where they leave every day or go home to every day.

Koch also checks their paperwork to ensure the drivers are within compliance of state law.

"They have to follow certain hours that they can work so that they don't get tired while driving. It's a big thing that we follow for safety," Koch said.

"We also check things like



equipment violations, headlights, taillights, tires, you know, stuff that makes them safe on the roadway and keeps them safe. We'll also check for things such as bad driving behavior, if they're not staying within their own lane, using blinkers, not properly stopping at stop sign – stuff like that. So, if we see something like that, we can initiate an inspection."

Koch, a Plankinton native whose father was a truck driver, said the division is typically checking brake lines and lights.

In South Dakota, there are four main ports of entry. The ports are located along Interstate 29 in Jefferson and Sisseton, and along Interstate 90 in Sioux Falls and Tilford.

Each carrier is issued a "safety score," which is assessed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

"That's based on whether or not they have the proper paperwork, if they're driving within their hours, if they have the proper equipment and whether or not they've received any driving or alcohol violations," Koch said.

If a driver has a high enough safety score, they aren't required by law to stop at a port for inspection.

Overall, it all comes down to keeping the roadways safe for everyone, regardless of what type of vehicle they are driving.

"These rules and laws are in place for a reason. They have to be extra alert and awake while they're driving and that all of their equipment works properly. If you're driving a very heavy, large vehicle, you need excellent brakes. You have to be able to stop in time. That is the main reason we're checking all these things. It helps everybody on the road."

The division also works

with rural electric cooperatives when oversized loads travel along the state's highway system, according to Lieutenant Austin Schmitz, District Four Assistant Commander with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Sometimes oversized loads require that overhead power lines be moved out of the way to let the carrier pass through.

"As a district we do work with a lot of the cooperatives such as East River Electric. We all get together when planning for oversized loads coming through our area," Schmitz said.

"They usually run the route first and let us know what lines they need to move."

That was the case when a massive generator was moved across the state. The generator was so heavy and huge that the truck carrying it could only travel 30 miles per hour. That truck was also equipped with over a hundred tires, Schmitz said.

"That generator came through Watertown a couple of years ago and we've got some more coming in two or

three years," Schmitz said, referring to the multi-million pound machines.

"The planning for those started last year. That equipment will be coming in through the Great Lakes on a ship. They'll pick them up there and then they'll move through our state then Wyoming, Montana, however they can go," Schmitz said.

The truck carrying the heavy equipment is too big to go across most bridges and overpasses, so finding a route that allows the machinery to snake across the country is tricky.

While moving huge pieces of machinery can be one of the more interesting parts of the job, it's the flexibility of the job that Koch enjoys most.

"I get to pick and choose where I want to go for the day. I get to do something a little bit different every day. Because, I mean, nothing is ever the same," Koch said.

"It's kind of nice to be able to do that and make the day what you want of it."



A SDHP officer has the latest technology at his or her fingertips to ensure trucks on South Dakota roads are operating safely. Photo Credit: South Dakota Highway Patrol



# Fun and Unique Places to Stay in South Dakota

**Scott Waltman**

South Dakota is known as the land of infinite variety, and for good reason.

From the Black Hills to the Badlands to the rolling East River prairies and from scorching heat to bitter cold, South Dakota covers a wide swath of geography, weather and activities.

That carries over to places to stay across the state.

There are plenty of fun and unique Airbnb and Vrbo options in South Dakota with something to please everybody who doesn't need the hustle, bustle and traffic of a major metropolitan area. Not surprisingly, some of the best options are near water. Others are remote for folks who want to unplug for a few days, while some are near farms and ranches and offer the opportunity to help with modest chores, if visitors so choose.

Here is a look at some of the more distinctive and interesting staycation options in South Dakota.

### Lookout Loft Treehouse near Valley Springs

How about planning a stay in a treehouse? That's possible with the Lookout Loft Treehouse near Valley Springs. Two decks, a fire pit, a hot tub and 360-degree views more than make up for any lack of space for a guest or two looking for a getaway that sets itself apart from most others. This rental is available through Airbnb.

#### Amenities

- Wrap-around deck
- Pillow-top mattress
- Hot tub

- Propane fire pit
- Kitchenette
- Air conditioning and heat

### Mansfield Micro-Cabin

In the heart of the pheasant belt, this small Escape Vista trailer is ideal for hunters seeking for South Dakota's state bird or those who just want to escape. No city lights, no traffic, no interruptions. Just peaceful prairie surroundings with easy access to top-notch hunting. This rental is available through Airbnb.

#### Amenities

- Queen bed
- Full bath
- Patio
- Kitchen
- Backyard

### Log cabin in Vanocker Canyon

There's a lot to like about this custom-built log cabin that's surrounded by the Black Hills National Forest on three sides. With 1,300 square feet, it's roomy and sleeps as many as eight guests. There's a deck, patio and hot tub, and the cabin is settled on 40 acres between Nemo and Sturgis. There's easy access to ATV trails and nearby golf courses. Take in the local history knowing Gen. George Custer camped in the canyon during the summer of 1847. This rental is available through Vrbo.

#### Amenities

- Gourmet kitchen
- 60-inch high-definition TV
- Deck and patio
- Log pool table
- Luxury bath
- Propane grill



Cabin over water on the prairie near Philip

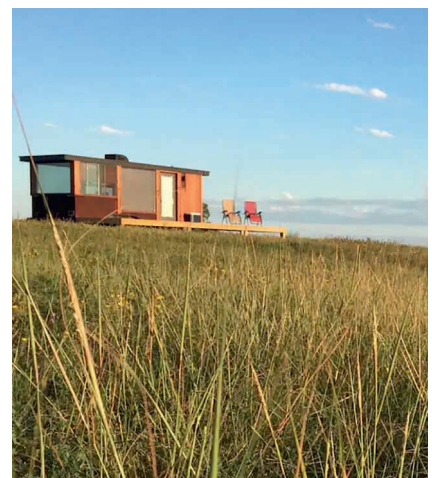
- Fireplace and fire pit
- Washer and dryer

### Dennis Ranch near Red Owl

Settle in and enjoy a working cattle ranch that's a century old at the Dennis Ranch. Take a personal tour led by your hosts. Go for a hike, search for arrowheads and dinosaur bones or just enjoy nature and bird-watching. For an extra fee, guests can watch or help with day-to-day ranch work. Those who can ride horses can hop on and ride alongside working cowboys and ranchers. Visitors will stay in a house with the hosts, who will happily share the history of the land and ranch.

#### Amenities

- Two bedrooms
- Dedicated workspace
- Wi-Fi
- Washer and dryer
- Fire pit
- Shared patio



Mansfield Micro-Cabin



The Still House near Rapid City

## The Still House near Rapid City

How's a tent with an attached deck sound for a unique option? That's what The Still House offers. Visitors won't exactly be roughing it with sleeping bags on the ground. The 16-foot-by-13-foot wall tent is more like luxury camping near the Black Hills. A heated shower is attached and there's a private, odor-free, environmentally friendly "outhouse" just a few steps away. This rental is available through Airbnb.

### Amenities

- Wood-burning fireplace
- Private deck
- Barbecue grill and outdoor kitchen
- Fire pit
- Outdoor shower
- Outdoor furniture and dining area
- Hammock

## 37-foot recreational vehicle near Hot Springs

If you don't have your own RV, but you're willing to stay in one, here's something to consider. This large RV offers a few extras, including a beautiful patio overlook and a hot tub. The Evans Plunge mineral springs are just a 15-minute drive away. This rental is available via Vrbo.

### Amenities

- Seven beds, including three bunk beds
- One full bath
- Private property with an overlook view of Hot Brook Canyon

- Propane fire pit
- Hot tub available upon request
- Mountain view

## Cabin over water on the prairie near Philip

Relax and enjoy in this locally constructed prairie home that sits along the bank of a small dam. Don't expect the bells and whistles offered by a top-end motel room. This is a place for people who enjoy nature and the outdoors. Hop in a kayak and row away a portion of the day while getting a little exercise. This rental is available via Airbnb.

### Amenities

- Four queen beds
- 43-inch TV
- Private patio
- Kayak
- Grill
- Fire pit

## The Lodge at Broken Arrow Farms near Pierre

If you have a big gathering and need lots of room, The Lodge is worth considering. It's huge. The nine bedrooms can accommodate as many as 28 guests, and there are eight and a half bathrooms. Need a place for a family reunion,

team-building event or an upscale base for fishing or hunting? You've found it. Just northeast of Pierre, the waters of the Missouri River are nearby and easy to access. This rental is available via Vrbo.

### Amenities

- Pool table
- Bluetooth sound system
- Patio
- Four king beds, 10 queen beds
- Fire pit
- Barbecue

## Deep Snow near Terry Peak Ski Area

This is a stop for folks who love snow skiing, but it makes for a great summer stay, too, with plenty of hiking options. Terry Peak Ski Area is not even 1,000 feet away, so don't forget to pack your gear. There are no shortage of other options, either, with the history and casinos of Deadwood nearby and the entire Black Hills area as a possible playground. This rental is available through Airbnb.

### Amenities

- Fully equipped kitchen
- Hot tub
- Wi-Fi
- Patio
- Grill



Log cabin in Vanocker Canyon





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.

**MARCH 30**  
**BHEC Community Easter Egg Hunt**  
 10 a.m.  
 Hermosa Baseball Fields  
 Hermosa, SD

**MARCH 31**  
**Easter Sunday Sunrise Celebration**  
 7 a.m.  
 Mount Rushmore National Monument  
 Keystone, SD

**APRIL 2**  
**Clay-Union Electric Ribbon Cutting & Open House**  
 3 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.  
 31321 SD Hwy. 19  
 Vermillion, SD

**APRIL 5**  
**A Night at the Races fundraiser for Safe Place of Eastern SD**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Highland Conference Center  
 Mitchell, SD

**APRIL 5-7**  
**71st Annual Hayes Play: Under a Cowboy Moon**  
 7 p.m.  
 Hayes Community Hall  
 Hayes, SD

**APRIL 12-14**  
**The Farmer's Daughter 19th Anniversary Celebration**  
 Hill City, SD

**APRIL 13**  
**Front Porch 605 Shop Hop**  
 9 a.m.  
 Groton, SD

**APRIL 14**  
**Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast**  
 8 a.m.  
 Hill City Center  
 Hill City, SD

**APRIL 20**  
**Healthy Kids Day**  
 10 a.m.  
 Liberty Center YMCA  
 Box Elder, SD

**APRIL 20**  
**Groton Firemen's Spring Social**  
 7 p.m.  
 Groton Fire Station  
 Groton, SD

**APRIL 21**  
**Fiddle & Popular Song**  
 2 p.m.  
 Gayville Hall  
 Gayville, SD

**APRIL 26**  
**Mitchell Technical College Alumni Cornhole Tournament**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 World's Only Corn Palace  
 Mitchell, SD

**APRIL 27**  
**Spaghetti Feed & Silent Auction for Black Hills Raptor Center**  
 4:30 p.m.  
 Canyon Lake United Methodist Church  
 Rapid City, SD

**MAY 4**  
**Jones County Pheasants Forever Banquet**  
 Murdo, SD

**JUNE 7-9**  
**Gumbo Ridge Wagon Trail**  
 Murdo, SD

**JUNE 20**  
**Kadoka Ranch Rodeo**  
 Kadoka, SD

**JUNE 21-23**  
**Scavenger's Journey**  
 Wall to Wagner

**JUNE 21-22**  
**Kadoka Reunion Weekend and PRCA Rodeo**  
 Kadoka, SD

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