

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

A large, scenic photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water. Two fishing boats are visible in the foreground, silhouetted against the bright light. The background shows a dark, silhouetted shoreline with trees and some structures.

In pursuit of Walleye

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Affordable Electricity Powers Quality of Life



Jeff Birkeland
CEO

Over the last five years, the cost of your electricity increased zero percent.

Most of us use electricity, either directly or indirectly, at almost all times. Because 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 10 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."

ELECTRICITY POWERS QUALITY OF LIFE

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 business, 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. Let's take a look at how the value

of electricity compares to other common expenses.

Over the last five years, the cost of rent increased 3.4 percent; medical care increased 2.8 percent; and education increased 2.2 percent. But the cost of your electricity increased zero percent. West Central Electric has not had an increase in our electrical rates since 2016. Those increases I just listed were national averages and were lower than what I thought, especially given the cost increases we are seeing today. But the point I wanted to make is that we have not had a rate increase since 2016 and things look stable at least through 2022.

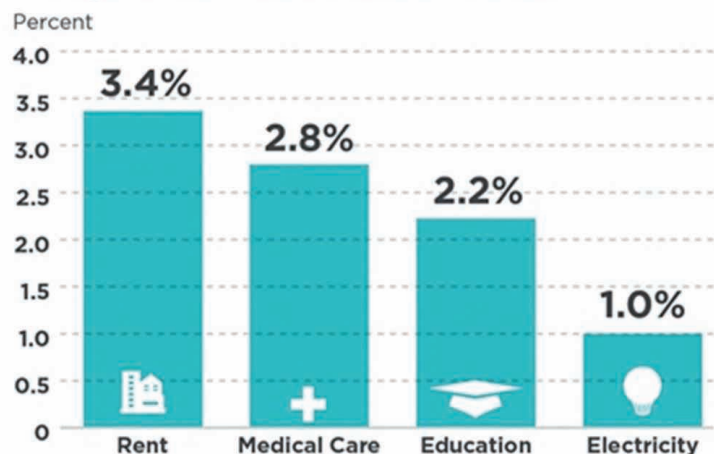
So, the next time you're enjoying your favorite podcast, TV series or movie, consider the value of electricity and how it enhances your quality of life.

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

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common expenses. Looking at price increases over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value!

Average Annual Price Increase 2015-2020



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Consumer Price Index

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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

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

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Design assistance by SDREA

MATERIAL LEAD TIMES



Kit Talich

As the county unwinds from the COVID-19 pandemic, I am sure you are noticing that some things are getting hard to find or that prices have skyrocketed.

On the price front, one of our vendors shared the following statistics with us. All differences are between the first half of 2020 versus the first quarter of 2021:

- Steel – up 74%
- Copper – up 29%
- Aluminum – up 20%
- HDPE (plastics) – up 28%
- Ocean Freight – up 248%
- Lumber – up 83%

While the cooperative has not seen substantial price changes on most materials yet, we do anticipate them. An exception to this is transformers and poles. On the last order, transformers were up an average of 10 percent. Poles were just shy of 10 percent more. Hopefully, those changes will not stick around and they come back down after things settle down!

The cooperative has started to run into longer wait times for some materials. Some examples; items that used to be 3-4 weeks lead time are now 8-10 weeks. One item in particular that we usually use has gone out to 53 weeks! How does anyone know how much of anything will they be making a year from now! Pad-mounted transformers are generally 8-10 week items but have now slipped to 20+ weeks. Of course, as lead times start to increase, orders start getting bigger, so it becomes a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy at some point.

As of this writing, the lead times seem to be trending in the wrong direction. Almost weekly, we hear about something else that is back-ordered or with a new long lead time. However, we have been able to find solutions to keep the crews working on the needed maintenance, new services, and upgrades. We hope to be able to keep finding these solutions so we can complete new services in a timely manner. However, at some point, we may have to tell folks, "It might be a while." If you have plans in the near future for a new service, please contact us early to get on the list!

WEST CENTRAL WELCOMES VOLMER

West Central is glad to announce the new employee, Jackson Volmer. Jackson started working for West Central on June 14. Originally from Draper, Jackson is the son of Dean and Terri Volmer and has one sister, Tana.

Upon graduation from Jones County High School in 2014, Jackson attended SDSU for two years before deciding that lineman school at MTI was what he wanted to pursue for a career path. After MTI, Jackson worked for two contractors, Tri-State and Brink Construction, on the Bigstone Transmission line that runs from Minnesota to North Dakota. In 2019, Jackson was hired by Cherry-Todd Electric Co-op in Mission.



Jackson is extremely excited to get back to his hometown. When not working, he enjoys helping Dean out on the ranch, fishing and golfing. "I wanted to get back to Murdo because I'm closer to friends and family and West Central is somewhere I've always wanted to work. The best part of my job is being able to get outside and work with good friends. I hope to work at West Central for as long as possible and become the best I can at my job."

West Central is excited to have Jackson as part of the crew!

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!

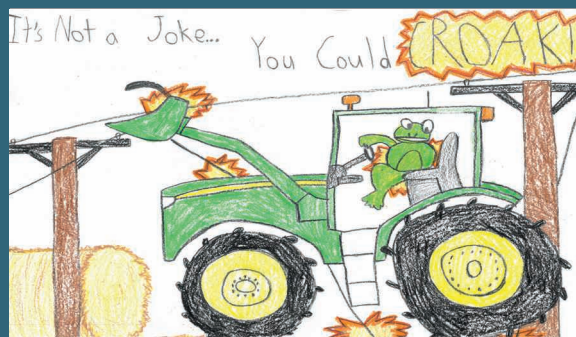
Here are the rules:

- 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.

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). 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

SD anglers pursue walleye for fun and charity

Billy Gibson

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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.

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



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.



Left to right: Dennis, Karla, Colton and Rikki

MAIER MEETS

A new family-owned business in Fort Pierre

Jessie Tucker

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It didn't take long for Maier Meats, the family-owned and operated butcher shop near Fort Pierre, S.D., to get to work. Upon completion of their new building and passing inspection on Feb. 18, 2021, Owners Dennis and Karla Maier and Colton and Rikki Maier butchered their first head of cattle the very next day. From there on out, they have kept busy getting high-quality meat to the plates of local families.

After spending over 15 years near

Bozeman, Mont., they were excited to get back to South Dakota.

"Everyone knows someone that you know around here, and there are always connections," Karla said. "It's a great place to be."

Over the years, they had helped numerous family members and friends butcher their own cattle and always seemed to get a call when someone needed help.

"After a while, we just thought we could do this full-time, and now

here we are," Karla said.

The shop typically handles five to eight head of cattle per week and is currently booked out until March of 2022, although they try to leave a little wiggle room for those last-minute calls. As the Maier's are producers themselves, they understand how tough it can be to get livestock into a butcher shop last minute, so they always try to be accommodating. Another interesting note is that Colton is also a state brand inspector, which helps streamline the process.

Additionally, they have had multiple local producers inquire about getting state certified. Their current plan is to have this

THE SHOP TYPICALLY HANDLES FIVE TO EIGHT HEAD OF CATTLE PER WEEK AND IS CURRENTLY BOOKED OUT UNTIL MARCH OF 2022.



Like father, like son – Dennis and Colton cut and package the beef.

certification by the end of 2021. This allows the producer to sell the meat after it is processed and packaged, which would help the producers and consumers in our local area.

Maier Meats also has a great selection of handmade products, including but not limited to dill pickle beef sticks, jalapeno cheddar summer sausage, berry brats, and many more!

The Maier family prides themselves on their specialty meats and putting quality meat in your freezer. We are glad to welcome them as new members of

West Central Electric.

West Central CEO Jeff Birkeland said, “This new facility will be a great asset to not only the local area producers but all of Central South Dakota.”

Stop by on your way through on Highway

14/34 at 26335 Bunkhouse Road, Fort Pierre, call them at 605-222-8804, and like their page at Maier Meats on Facebook for more information!



Quality beef aging in the freezer (left) inside the new butcher shop (above).

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."



TRUCKING ALONG

South Dakota trucking industry keeps rolling along despite challenges

Billy Gibson

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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>.

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



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.

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 20-22
Yankton Riverboat Days
City-wide, Yankton, SD, 605-665-1657

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 25-29
Corn Palace Festival
604 N Main Street, Mitchell, SD, 605-995-8430

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

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

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