



# NEWS *Lines*

PUBLISHED MONTHLY FOR THE MEMBER-OWNERS OF NORTH WEST RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

MAY 2021

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## MAY IS *Electrical Safety* MONTH

One of the biggest hazards for farmers is posed by power lines. To stay safe near overhead power lines, Safe Electricity urges farm operators and workers to:

- Use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines—at all times, in all directions.
- Inspect the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Always remember to lower extensions when moving loads.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- If a power line is sagging or low, call the local utility immediately.

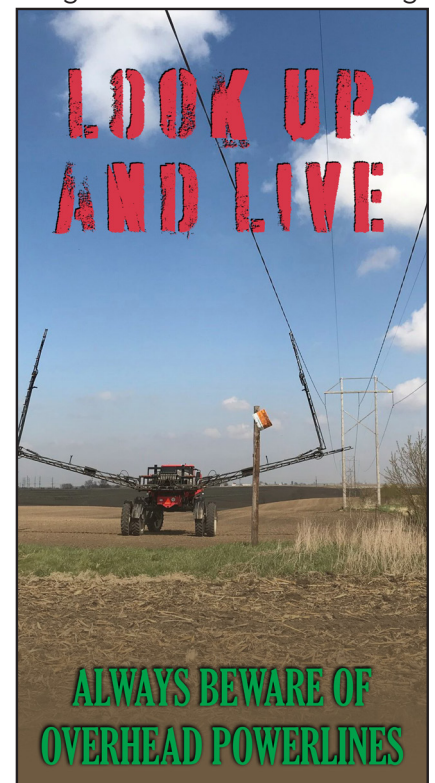
Always remember to periodically look up and be aware of your surroundings. Make sure before starting, to note the location of power lines. If you can't safely pass under a power line, choose a different path.

If contact is made with a power line, remember, it is almost always safest to stay on the equipment. Make sure to warn others to stay away, and call the local utility provider immediately. The only reason to exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, "bunny hop" away.

Additional safety tips from Safe Electricity include:

- Do not use metal poles when breaking up bridged grain inside and around bins.
- Always hire qualified electricians for any electrical issues.
- Do not use equipment with frayed cables.
- Make sure outdoor outlets are equipped with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).
- When operating a portable generator, make sure nothing is plugged into it when turning it on, and never operate a generator in a confined area. Generators can produce toxic and deadly gases like carbon monoxide.
- Always use caution when operating heavy machinery.

For more farm and electrical safety information, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).



# *Pole Maintenance* PROGRAM

You probably don't pay much attention to the utility poles found throughout North West REC's service territory, but did you know these tall structures are the backbone of our distribution network?

Strong, sturdy utility poles ensure a reliable electric system, which is why we routinely inspect the thousands of poles found on our lines. Throughout the year, our crews check poles for decay caused by exposure to the elements. They know which poles are oldest and conduct inspections through a rotational process. Typically, a standard wooden distribution pole is expected to last more than 50 years.



Occasionally, poles need to be replaced for other reasons besides decay and old age. Weather disasters, power line relocation, and car crashes are potential causes for immediate replacement. When possible, North West REC communicates when, and where, pole replacements will take place so that you stay informed of where crews will be working.

One of the key ongoing maintenance programs we do annually, in order to try to improve our service reliability, is pole testing and treating. Each year we test and treat approximately 3,000 poles.

Poles that are rejected due to excessive rotting conditions are replaced. The other poles are treated with a pole treatment which significantly extends the life of the pole. The very low 2% or lower rejection rate we typically have each year is a strong indication of the strength of the Cooperative's system.

This spring you will see contractors working in O'Brien & Plymouth counties. Please contact our office if you have any questions about the work they are doing.



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.  
CALL 811 / 1-800-292-8989



## NORTH WEST REC COMPLETES *R.E.S.A.P. Certification*

The Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program strives to promote the highest standards of safety, enabling electric co-ops to take ownership of their individual safety programs. RESAP emphasizes the idea that cooperative leaders and employees take ownership of their safety plan and its system and processes that create a safe working environment. This is only achieved by developing a strong, proactive safety culture where safety is embraced as a core value.

The RESAP on site assessment includes an unannounced inspection, which involves a crew inspection and underground and overhead inspections conducted by statewide association safety instructors.

The RESAP recertification was completed in 2020. Jason Thorson from the IAEC Safety and Loss Control Department recently presented the RESAP Certificate to the NWREC employee team.



Pictured from Left to Right: Doug White - Lead Lineman (Ida Grove), Derrick Haak - Assistant Operation Director, Jason Thorson - IAEC Job Training & Safety Instructor, Mike Berkenpas - Lead Lineman (Le Mars), Derald Philips - Safety/Loss Control Director, Tim Honkomp - Lead Lineman (Primghar), Lyle Korver - CEO/General Manager, Phil Elgersma - Lead Lineman (Orange City), Doug Alons - Operations Director.



# OPERATION *Round Up* REPORT

Disbursements made from North West REC's Operation Round Up Trust in the first quarter of 2021 totaled \$12,550. This brings the total disbursements made from Operation Round Up since its inception in June of 1999 to \$551,295. Many people have been helped thanks to our generous members.

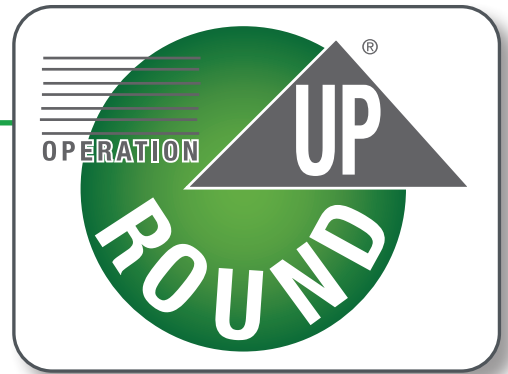
\$3,750..... Medical Emergencies – assist families with unusual expenses resulting from serious health problems and accident related injuries

\$6,800 ..... American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Siouxland, Center Against Abuse and Sexual Assault (CAASA), Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Family Crisis Center, Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa, Hospice of Siouxland, Hunger Free Kids of Sioux County, Mid America Council - Boy Scouts of America, Siouxland Habitat for Humanity, S.T.A.R.S., Then Feed Just One, Zestos Inc - program support

\$2,000..... County 4-H Foundations – program support

Operation Round Up funds are generated through a voluntary rounding up of cooperative members' electric bills to the next nearest dollar. The money is used to assist worthy causes and organizations right in your local county.

If you are currently not participating in Operation Round Up and would like to become a part of this worthwhile program, please call our office for information or sign up on our website. To receive an application for assistance, please call the office at 712-707-4935 or 800-766-2099.



Sioux County 4-H



O'Brien County 4-H



Plymouth County 4-H



Siouxland Habitat for Humanity



Ida County 4-H



Lyle D. Korver

# MANAGER'S *Report*

*"A record number of applications were received, and 84 students will receive \$33,750 for college scholarships in the 2021/22 school year."*

## ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE

There have been a lot of "firsts" during this pandemic period, and our combination virtual and in person Annual Meeting was another "first" for North West REC. The meeting was held on Tuesday, March 30, 2021, at the Terrace View Events Center in Sioux Center. We had a nice turnout of members who attended the meeting and we also had good participation on our Facebook livestream broadcast. Here are a few highlights of the meeting:

- Steve Abma was re-elected to the District 1 board position, Doug Becker to the District 3 board position, and Dale Ullrich to the District 4 board position.
- Scholarship winners were announced. A record number of applications were received, and 84 students will receive \$33,750 for college scholarships in the 2021/22 school year.
- During a Q & A panel discussion, Jeff Rehder, President; Tom Wagner, NIPCO/Basin Director; Manager Korver; and Matt Washburn, NIPCO Executive Vice President & General Manager, answered some frequently asked questions. Members had the opportunity to submit questions through the mail and we answered several of them. I will attempt to answer many of the other questions we did not have time for in upcoming newsletter articles.
- The meeting was recorded, and it has been added to our website for all members to view.
- Door prize winners were randomly selected from the on-line and in person registrations and from the returned ballot envelopes.



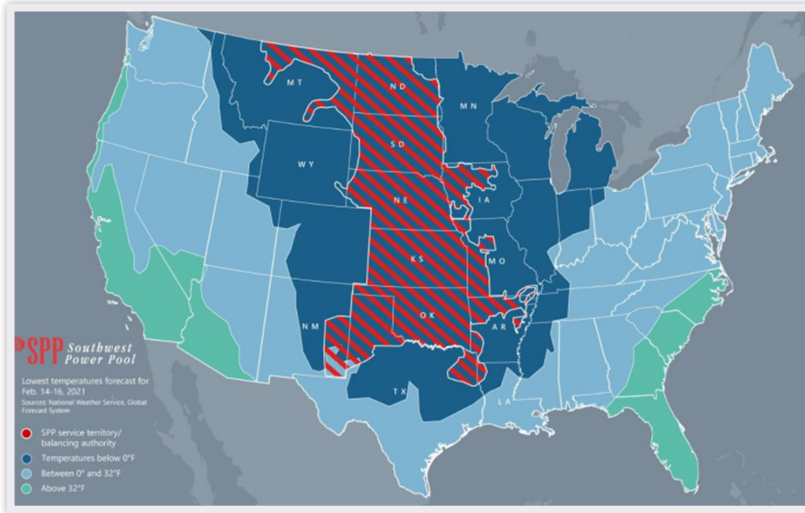
Thank you to all those members who participated in our Annual Meeting process. We are hopeful that we can have more of a normal Annual Meeting next year with a meal and entertainment or speaker.

## HOW CLOSE WERE WE TO EXPERIENCING ROLLING BLACKOUTS?

The most frequently asked question we received from members on the question cards was related to the February extreme weather and electric grid challenge situation. With the frigid temperatures, it's not surprising that our members were worried about the potential for rolling blackouts, similar to what happened in some nearby states and in Texas. This extreme grid situation reminded all of us that having a stable, reliable, and affordable power supply is critical to our everyday lives.

I am pleased to reassure our members that as a member-owner of North West REC (NWREC), you belong to a broad cooperative network which helps spread risks across many utilities. Our power supply network includes NIPCO, Basin Electric and WAPA and they are all members of the Southwest Power Pool (SPP). SPP is a regional





transmission organization that is tasked with the responsibilities of ensuring reliable supplies of power, adequate transmission infrastructure and competitive wholesale electricity prices on behalf of its members. The map below shows the SPP service area.

Basin and WAPA own generation and transmission resources, and NIPCO owns high-voltage transmission and substation infrastructure in SPP which allows our cooperative network to sell its power into the market and buy member power needs from the market when prices are low.

During the extreme weather events of February 14-18, simply put; the amount

of electricity usage in the SPP service footprint exceeded the amount of available generation. Under these conditions, simple economic theory prevails. Electric demand was higher than electric supply and electric market prices skyrocketed. The ability of Basin and WAPA to generate electricity limited our cooperative network's exposure to these unbelievably high market prices.

## SWITCH MAKES CENTS SYSTEM PROVES TO BE A REAL ASSET

It is important to also note that our Switch Makes Cents load management system proved to be a real asset during the February event. WAPA and Basin asked their member cooperatives to curtail load. In our case, rather than being forced to shut down substations and to have "rolling blackouts" for our members, we were able to shed the required amount of load by controlling electric heat, water heaters and special load control groups. We typically do not control electric heat load, but under the circumstances this was a great alternative to shutting off substations and impacting many of our members. We will provide more information about the important benefits we realize from our Switch Makes Cents program in future newsletters, but I wanted to share that this was the first time we had to use it for this type of event and what an important asset it is for NWREC and our members.



## ELECTRIC RATES WON'T BE IMPACTED

During the February extreme grid event, Basin and WAPA did experience some higher operating costs, as market prices increased. However, I am pleased to report that our wholesale power costs for 2021 will not be increasing. At the beginning of the year, we shared the good news that the Board of Directors had decided to keep our electric rates stable for 2021 and 2022. The bottom line is that this event will not be impacting that decision – NWREC's electric rates will remain stable for at least the next two years. I also like to remind our members that our last rate increase was in May of 2015, so we will reach a period of at least 7 years of rate stability through 2022.

In closing, I want to remind our members that you own, through your cooperative membership, your own generation. Our members have very little exposure on the market to serve its electric needs. That is the power of being connected to a cooperative power supply network. That is the power of membership in a rural electric cooperative.

# Prairie Winds PROGRAM UPDATE



Members of North West REC can support renewable energy through the Prairie Winds program. This program allows individual members to voluntarily contribute to the development of alternate energy production facilities.

Persons who choose to participate in Prairie Winds will pay 20 cents per 100 kilowatt-hour block per month.

Through this program, members will not be directly purchasing alternate energy, but the extra fee does go to support several wind turbines in the Dakotas, which feed wind-generated electricity into the transmission system that powers North West REC.

If you would like to support the renewable wind energy program, fill out the form below and return it to your cooperative office.

## WIND POWER AGREEMENT



Please specify the total number of 100 kilowatt-hour blocks you wish to purchase each month. Remember, each block is an additional \$.20 investment in not only the environment, but in the future of renewable energy.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Number of blocks at \$.20 per month \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*I understand my commitment is for one year and will continue on an annual basis until I notify you in writing to end my participation in the Prairie Winds program.*



## MOVE OVER OR SLOW DOWN

It's that simple, and it's the law in Iowa. By following these two rules of the road, you can help save lives and avoid receiving a traffic ticket – or even losing your driver's license. It's necessary to move over or slow down when approaching stationary emergency, maintenance, and utility vehicles with flashing lights activated.

## Revolving Loan Fund

North West REC created the Community/Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to improve the quality of life in rural areas by contributing to long term improvement in the local economy.

The RLF is a local funding source with a goal of providing low interest loans to assist local economic and community development projects. Our priorities include job creation and retention, diversification of the local economy, improving the skills of the rural workforce, and upgrading the public infrastructure to improve the health, safety, and/or medical care of rural residents. This fund is administered by the North West REC Board of Directors.

Eligible applicants include organizations involved in community or economic development projects such as: new or expanding private business, local governments and nonprofit community development organizations.

For more information on eligible and ineligible uses of funds, loan terms, interest rates and other loan requirements, contact the REC office at 712-707-4935 or 800-766-2099.

This institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

# STATEMENT OF *Nondiscrimination*


In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Program information may be made available in language other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, or staff office; the USDA TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TTY); or the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form, AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/ad-3027>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of the alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)



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**Plug into the Power of**  
**smart choices** 

Each month North West REC hides a code in our *Smart Choices* news stories. Find the code below in the Smart Choices article, complete the prize entry registration form and submit for a chance to win one of the two \$25 bill credits in May.

**524065MAY**

**Don't receive Smart Choices?**  
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[www.nwrec.coop/smart-choices-sign-up](http://www.nwrec.coop/smart-choices-sign-up)



## *RECare* - CONSUMER CONTRIBUTION FUND

Your Rural Electric Cooperative has always extended a helping hand to those in need. In response to actions by the Iowa General Assembly, your REC has established RECare, a program of members helping members. RECare will provide funds to be distributed by local community action agencies to help pay winter heating bills and to assist in weatherization of homes of low-income consumers. You may make a one time contribution or you may make a monthly pledge that will be automatically added into your monthly electric bill. You may also make your contribution part of a matching fund, if there is one established. Your contribution is tax deductible. Even a dollar a month pledge will help others!



*You care, we care, RECare.*

Please return form along with your monthly bill.

### CONSUMER AUTHORIZATION FORM

Yes, I want to be a part of members helping members and contribute to RECare.

- I will make a one-time contribution to RECare. My check is enclosed.
- I will contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month to RECare. I understand that this amount will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill.
- My gift is a matching fund gift. The matching fund is \_\_\_\_\_ (an active matching fund must be designated).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number \_\_\_\_\_

# THE POWER QUIZ

## NORTH WEST REC

1. Name one safety precaution farmers can take in the field: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name someone who received an Operation Round-Up Donation: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What counties are they going to be pole testing in this spring? \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Acct. # \_\_\_\_\_

Find the answers within the content of this newsletter, our website or Facebook posts and you could win a prize of \$10 off your electric bill. Send your answers to [powerquiz@nwrec.coop](mailto:powerquiz@nwrec.coop) or you can send your written answers to North West REC, PO Box 435, Orange City, IA 51041. You may mail your entry along with your electric bill payment, but remember the deadline is June 10. Each month, ten names will be randomly drawn from all correct entries for a \$10 bill credit. Members who answer the questions correctly and participate at least three times throughout the year will be eligible for 2 - \$250 bill credits, through a random drawing, at the end of the year.

### POWER QUIZ *Winners*

### FEBRUARY & MARCH 2021

*Winners*



Jerry Varenhorst - Le Mars  
 Hoogland Farms - Maurice  
 Mikayla Westhoff - Le Mars  
 Duane Bajema - Sioux Center  
 Richard Homan - Remsen  
 Jim Lange - Paullina  
 Bruce Rohwer - Paullina  
 Cindy Hansen - Alton  
 Kenneth Sauer - Paullina  
 Clayton Rensink - Hospers

Jacob Trometer - Merrill  
 Rick Van Roekel - Sheldon  
 Vicki Mullen - Sioux City  
 Roger Brinkert - Primghar  
 Harold Van Ginkel - Rock Valley  
 Doug Lacey - Sioux City  
 Jim McDonough - Schaller  
 Marlin Herbst - Merrill  
 Susan Schwartz - Le Mars  
 Sharon Junck - Hinton

*Winners*



## North West Rural Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 435 • 1505 Albany Place SE • Orange City, IA 51041-0435

#### OFFICE HOURS:

Monday through Friday  
 7:30 a.m. till 4:00 p.m.

Orange City office open  
 during noon hour

Le Mars office  
 closed 12:00 - 12:30 p.m.

Ida Grove office  
 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon, Mon-Fri

#### PHONE:

**ORANGE CITY** (712) 707-4935  
 (800) 766-2099

**IDA GROVE** (712) 364-3341

**LE MARS** (712) 546-4149

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