

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Pick of the Patch

**Pumpkin Patches Offer
Plenty of Reasons to Get
Outside this Fall**

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**Ghost Town Under
Lake Oahe**

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86th Annual Meeting



Matt Sleep
CEO

You're all invited! Yes, you're all invited to the **86th annual meeting to be held on October 20, 2026**. The annual meeting will be held at the Belle Fourche Recreation Center at 1113 National Street in Belle Fourche. Registration, sweet treats, and refreshments start at 5:00 p.m. The annual meeting will begin at 6:00 P.M. We hope you can make it.

Members who attend will receive a \$30.00 bill credit and extension cord per membership. We will sprinkle in a few games of bingo during the annual meeting. We will also draw for some fun prizes throughout the annual meeting.

We will draw names for three scholarships; the scholarship applications can be found at butteelectric.com under scholarships in the community tab. Scholarship applications must be received at the Newell Office by October 14, 2026, and be deemed eligible to be included in the drawing. Must be present to win.

Last month, I wrote about the importance of calling 811 before digging. I'm writing again to reiterate the importance of calling 811 or going to www.sdonecall.com before digging. It is important to have the area located for underground utilities prior to digging. The reason I am mentioning this again is because we had a contractor bore through one of our underground powerlines. This caused over 300 of our members to

lose power. Unfortunately, this causes great frustration for you, our members. In turn, you, our members, call and wonder why the power is off and sometimes there is a little bit of anger towards our staff in this regard. Please understand that our crews are out working on fixing the outage. Often the outages are not caused by our equipment failing. Generally, there are four basic causes of most outages, which are: trees, lightning, people, and animals. In this case, it was caused by people. A good number of the people caused outages can be eliminated by calling 811 or going to www.sdonecall.com prior to digging. Please call or go online and report.

Halloween will be arriving shortly after the Butte Electric annual meeting. Here are a few safety tips from safeelectricity.org:

Decorate and trick or treat safely

Halloween is a time for candy, costumes and in some cases, outdoor lighting or inflatable decorations. While preparing for and enjoying the holiday, follow these safety precautions:

Outdoor lighting

- Inspect each electrical decoration. Check cords for cracking, fraying or bare wires, as they may cause a serious shock or start a fire. Also, inspect for damaged plugs.
- Replace any damaged decorations.
- Make sure any lights, animated displays or other outdoor electrical products are safety tested by a reputable laboratory such as UL (Underwriters Laboratory) and approved for outdoor use.



Butte Electric Cooperative 86th Annual Meeting You're all invited!

- Tuesday, October 20, 2026
- Belle Fourche Recreation Center
1113 National Street, Belle Fourche
- Registration, sweet treats, and refreshments: 5:00 p.m.
- Annual meeting begins: 6:00 p.m.

MEMBER PERKS

- \$30 bill credit and extension cord per membership
 - Bingo and fun prizes throughout the meeting
 - Three scholarship drawings
- We hope you can make it!**

Pre-Registration Form — Please Return by October 14

Member Name: _____
(as it appears on the mailing label)

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Number Attending: _____

Please return this form to:

Butte Electric Cooperative
PO Box 137
Newell, SD 57760

SCHOLARSHIP DRAWING

Applications are available at butteelectric.com under Scholarships in the Community tab. Applications must be received at the Newell office by October 14, 2026, and deemed eligible to be included in the drawing. Must be present to win.

Or pre-register online at butteelectric.com

- Do not overload extension cords or allow them to run through water on the ground.
- Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into ground fault circuit interrupter-protected outlets.
- When decorating outside, always make sure to look up and check that you and any equipment, such as ladders, are at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines. Always carry a ladder or other long object or tool in a horizontal position.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Consumer Product Safety Division and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer these tips:

Costume safety

- Wear costumes that are labeled flame resistant.
- Wear bright, reflective costumes or add strips of reflective tape for added visibility.
- Do not wear decorative (colored) contact lenses unless you have seen an eye care professional for a proper fitting and instructions on how to use them.
- Wear makeup and hats rather than costume masks that can obscure or obstruct your vision.
- Test the makeup you plan to use in advance for a possible allergy by putting a small amount on your arm.

Enjoy treats and decorate safely. Get more electrical safety tips at SafeElectricity.org.

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF BUTTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. 86th ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Membership Meeting of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. will be held October 20, 2026, at the Belle Fourche Area Community Center, Butte County, Belle Fourche, South Dakota beginning at 6:00 p.m. to act on the following matters:

1. Report on the number of members present in person to determine the existence of a quorum.
2. Reading of the notice of the meeting and proof of the due publication or the mailing thereof, or the waivers of notice of the meeting.
3. Reading of unapproved minutes of previous meetings of the Members and taking necessary action thereon.
4. Election of Directors and bylaw changes, if any.
5. Presentation and consideration of reports of Officers, Directors, and Committees.
6. Unfinished Business.
7. New Business.
8. Adjournment.

Dated at Belle Fourche, S.D,
this 20th of October 2026.

Thomas Brunner, Secretary

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BUTTE ELECTRIC

(ISSN 1531-1031)

Board of Directors

James Mortenson, Spearfish – President
Chandy Olson, St. Onge – Vice President
Travis Schenk, Spearfish – Treasurer
Thomas Brunner, Nisland – Secretary
Cris Miller, Spearfish – Asst. Secretary
Daniel Hefner, Whitewood
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Lee Ann - Staff Accountant
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Brett Fosheim - Chief Operations Officer
Bart McLellan - Member Services & Safety
Chuck - Operations Manager
Jacob - Work Order Clerk

Foreman:

Adam - Spearfish
Jeff - Newell
James - Sturgis

Lead Lineman:

Mike - Spearfish
Dave - Newell
Adam - Sturgis

Linemen:

John - Spearfish
Corey - Spearfish
Keaten - Spearfish
Taten - Newell
Jade - Newell
Kyle - Newell
Dalton - Sturgis
Ty - Sturgis
Nathan - Sturgis

Butte Electric Beacon Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

Subscription information: Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals postage paid at City, SD 57427.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Butte Electric Beacon, PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760; telephone (605) 456-2494; fax (605) 456-2496; email butte@butteelectric.com

This institution is an equal opportunity provider

SAFETY IS ALWAYS IN SEASON

Fall hunting is a core memory treasured by many in South Dakota. It's a family and friend tradition that should be kept safe. This is your caring reminder to stay safe and enjoy a great hunt this season.

Simple Safety Rules for All Hunters

- Watch for posted warning signs and stay clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Know where power lines and equipment are located on the land you hunt.
- Be careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be easy to see.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles; energized lines can shock or kill you.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment; they can block lines and create hazards for crews.

Pheasant hunting often takes place in open fields with hedgerows and grassy strips, while dove hunting centers on fast, aerial crossings across agricultural landscapes. In both scenarios, lines may be hidden by trees or tall grass, especially near field edges and canal banks. Staying alert in these transition zones reduces the risk of an accidental encounter with electrical infrastructure.

Practical Rules for Pheasant and Dove Hunts

- Plan ahead: Check maps or ask landowners where lines and equipment are located.
- Keep a safe distance: Stay away from overhead and buried lines near fields and edges.
- Hunt with a partner: A second person can help spot hazards.
- Speak up about hazards: If you see lines or equipment, treat it as a hazard and avoid the area.
- Follow rules: Respect any posted electrical safety warnings or access restrictions.
- Share safety: Tell fellow hunters and guests about these tips.

Why These Safety Tips Matter

Power lines conduct large amounts of electricity and contact with lines or equipment can cause serious injury or death. Maintaining distance, avoiding contact with poles or lines, and not placing gear on equipment are effective practices that protect you, your hunting partners, and the line workers who keep power on.

Your electric cooperative remains committed to safe hunting. We encourage members to stay informed about local electrical safety rules and to know line locations on the lands they hunt. If you encounter hazards, report them right away so they can be addressed. Sharing these safety practices help create a culture of safety that benefits everyone.



The poster features a green camouflage pattern at the top, followed by a yellow and black diagonal hazard stripe. Below this, a target icon is positioned to the left of the title "Electrical Safety Tips for Hunters". The text below the title encourages awareness of electrical equipment while hunting and lists six safety tips.

Electrical Safety Tips for Hunters

We encourage all members to be aware of electrical equipment while hunting. Keep these safety tips in mind as you enjoy the great outdoors.

- Keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Know where power lines and equipment are located where you hunt.
- Be vigilant in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Never place deer stands on utility poles.
- Never place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment.



The drawing shows a person on the ground flying a kite. A power line with a transformer is visible in the background. Handwritten text at the top of the drawing reads "Don't dig or fly kites by wires!".

"Don't dig or fly kites by wires!"

Seth Raak, age 7

Seth cautions readers to not dig or fly kites around power lines. That is great advice, Seth! Thank you! Seth's parents are Nathaniel and Katie Raak, members of Central 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.

Let's Eat CAKE

SWEDISH PANCAKES

Ingredients:

1.5 cups flour, sifted
3 tbsps. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
3 eggs
2 cups milk
2 tbsps. butter, melted

Method

Sift together flour, sugar and salt. Beat in 3 eggs until thick and piled softly. Beat in milk and butter until blended. Lightly grease griddle with butter. For each pancake, spoon about 1 tbsp. of batter on skillet. Cook over medium heat until lightly brown on each side.

Lois J. Larson
Clay-Union Electric

CREAM CHEESE CUPCAKES

Ingredients:

1 box chocolate cake mix, prepared
1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese
1/3 cup sugar
1 egg
Dash of salt
1 (6 oz.) package chocolate chips
1 can cream cheese frosting

Method

Mix cake mix according to package directions. Fill cupcake liners 1/2 full. mix the cream cheese with the sugar. Beat in egg and salt, then add chocolate chips. Drop a teaspoonful of cream cheese mixture into each cupcake. Bake as directed on package. Frost with cream cheese frosting when cool.

Elaine Rieck
Southeastern Electric

CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI CAKE

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 tsps. baking soda
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. espresso powder (optional)
1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup canola or vegetable oil
1 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup brown sugar, packed
4 large eggs, room temperature
1/3 cup sour cream or Greek yogurt, room temperature
2 tsps. vanilla
3 cups shredded zucchini (about 3 medium)
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Method

Preheat oven to 350 °F. Grease two 9x2 inch cake pans (make sure they're at least 2 inches high or one bundt pan). Whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, espresso powder (if using) and salt together in a large bowl. In another large bowl using a handheld or stand mixer, beat the oil, granulated sugar, brown sugar, eggs, sour cream, vanilla and zucchini together until combined. Pour dry ingredients into the wet ingredients and beat on medium speed until completely combined. Beat in chocolate chips. Batter will be thick. Pour batter evenly into cake pans. Bake for around 25-32 minutes for round pans; 45 minutes for bundt pans or 9x13 pan; 18-22 minutes for cupcakes (24-30 cupcakes). To test doneness, insert a toothpick into the center of cake. If it comes out clean, it is done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

RECIPE CORRECTION THE BEST APPLE CRISP

Ingredients:

6 cups sliced apples
1 1/2 cups white sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
6 tbsps. flour

Topping (makes enough for two pans)

2 cups flour
2 cups brown sugar
2 cups soft butter
1 tsp. baking powder
3 cups oatmeal

Method

Mix ingredients in a bowl and place in a 9x12 glass baking dish. Mix topping ingredients together until crumbly and sprinkle over apple mixture. Don't pack. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour or until apples are done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

TIPS TO SEAL DUCTWORK FOR SAVINGS



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

If you live in a home with a forced air furnace, the biggest energy waster may be out of sight. Improve your home's efficiency and comfort by repairing and sealing ductwork.

Around 20% to 30% of the air you pay to heat or cool is lost through leaks, holes or poorly installed ductwork in the average home, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This results in wasted energy and uncomfortable homes, regardless of the thermostat setting.

Properly sealing ducts can reduce wasted energy by delivering conditioned air where you want it inside the home. If you have a room that is cold in winter and hot in summer, the culprit might be a leaky or disconnected duct.

Duct sealing also helps with indoor air quality. Leaking return ducts can pull air from the spaces they run through, such as attics and crawl spaces. You don't want to breathe in dirt, dust and insulation. If you have gas appliances, such as a gas water heater, dryer or furnace, leaking return ducts can inadvertently cause backdraft, introducing combustion gases back into the home instead of outdoors where they belong.

You can seal ducts yourself or hire a professional. For a do-it-yourself approach, start with a visual inspection to determine your duct type. Most homes have flexible or metal ducts.

Metal ductwork comes in various shapes and sizes, including round and rectangular, and with various options for turns and connections. Ducts should be insulated when they run through unconditioned spaces, such as crawl spaces, attics and garages. If your metal ducts are insulated, you must remove the insulation to properly seal them, then reinsulate.

Flexible ducts typically have an inner and outer layer with insulation in between. The inner layer is made of bendable plastic reinforced with wire, like a stretched-out Slinky covered in plastic. The outer layer holds the insulation in place. The inner

liner in flexible ducts can become brittle over time, cracking easily and causing leaks. If your inner liner is in bad shape, replace the flexible duct.

Check for any obvious disconnections, gaps, extra bends or sagging ducts. Improve airflow by using short, straight, taut runs. Avoid sags and excess turns.

Metal ductwork should be fastened together at each joint using sheet metal screws. Make sure your ducts are properly supported to keep the joints from separating over time.

For flexible ducts, use Panduit straps. These are heavy-duty nylon zip ties that offer long-term durability and a tensioning tool specifically designed to tighten them.

When it comes to sealing ducts, use products designed for the job. Seal every joint and seam using duct-sealing mastic – a thick paste that can be applied with a paintbrush or gloved hand. When it dries, mastic creates a flexible, airtight seal, eliminating duct leakage. Use mesh tape to bridge larger gaps before applying mastic. Remove register covers inside the home to seal the joints and seams there. You also want a good seal where the duct meets drywall or flooring.

In easier-to-reach areas, you can opt to use UL-listed foil-backed tape designed for ductwork.

Do not use duct tape. Fluctuations in temperature cause the adhesive to fail.

Duct sealing is messy, so make sure to protect yourself and your home. Use drop cloths to protect flooring. Metal tape and the edges of metal ducts are sharp, so put on coated work or garden gloves underneath nitrile or latex disposable gloves. To protect your arms, wear a long-sleeve shirt tucked into your gloves or a long sock with the toes cut out.

After air sealing, have an HVAC professional test the airflow during your next annual maintenance visit.

If you don't feel comfortable getting your hands dirty, hire a professional. Most companies that install ductwork or heating and cooling systems can also seal ducts.

Sealing your ductwork gives you peace of mind that your home is not wasting energy or introducing unhealthy air into your living space.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST PHEASANT

Co-op Director Recalls Fixing Up Huron Landmark

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In east-central South Dakota, a roadside monument pays homage to one of the region's largest economic drivers: the ring-necked pheasant.

Towering 40 feet above U.S. Highway 14, the "World's Largest Pheasant" has watched over Huron since 1959, when it was built to welcome pheasant hunters to the James River Valley.

In the nearly 70 years since the pheasant was first perched at the Dakota Inn, it has become a South Dakota landmark, attracting visitors from across the country.



Schaun Schnathorst

"It's iconic," explained Schaun Schnathorst, assistant engineer for the City of Huron and director for Dakota Energy Cooperative. "It's in travel guides; it's definitely a destination spot. There's always people stopping to take photos of it."

Schnathorst witnessed the bird's popularity firsthand in 2011, when he and his brother, Bob Carlson, were commissioned to restore the gargantuan fiberglass pheasant to its 1950s glory.

"The thing is 28 feet tall, and it's on top of a 12-foot-tall building, so it's 40 feet tall at the very top of the pheasant's head," Schnathorst said. "For a guy hanging out [of the basket of a bucket truck] with a paint gun trying to paint stuff, it wasn't very fun. There were times I had to open the door of the basket and pretty much lay on the bottom and paint."

The pheasant's survival through nearly seven decades of South Dakota weather is a testament to its construction. Its body was built with steel mesh welded to supports, while massive steel rods inside its legs extend deep into the ground to keep it upright in the wind.

"It got hit by lightning at some point in time, and when I went to restore its head, it had a giant chunk of concrete blown out of it," Schnathorst recalled.

The weeks-long restoration presented several other challenges.

"Way back in the day ... people would go by during hunting season and shoot it with a shotgun when they were drunk in the middle of the night," Schnathorst continued. "There were three arrows sticking out of it."



An access door beneath the pheasant had also allowed area pigeons to shelter inside for years, turning the roadside sculpture into their own avian temple.

"The fecal matter was rotting out the bottom of the fiberglass," Schnathorst said, recalling the dismal condition inside the bird.

Luckily, the damage was repairable. Schnathorst installed a one-way door to evict the squatting pigeons and replaced several sections of fiberglass.

When it came time to paint, Schnathorst said the bird's back was the hardest area to reach from his lift, requiring constant repositioning and leaning out of the lift's basket.

"You just really couldn't get that close to it," he said. "But the scariest part is the head. When there's any kind of wind at all, it's moving and you're moving too, and it isn't always at the same pace!"

Schnathorst's work on larger-than-life animals extends beyond Huron's giant pheasant, having repainted Prostrullo Auto Mall's iconic bison statues at the dealerships in Huron and Madison.

"I had two car trailers, one statue on each trailer," he chuckled. "That was really cool living out in the country and having these two giant buffaloes in my yard. It was quite a conversation starter until we got them done!"

MORE PHEASANT FACTS

- The pheasant is 28 feet tall (on a 12-foot-tall roof) and measures 40 feet long from its beak to tail.
- The pheasant weighs more than 22 tons.
- Sculptor RF Jacobs of Gooding, Idaho, constructed the pheasant at a cost of about \$23,000.
- The pheasant was dedicated October 18, 1959, and christened by South Dakota Gov. Joe Foss.
- Other South Dakota communities including Gregory, Redfield, Brookings, and Chamberlain also host their own larger-than-life pheasants.



PICK OF THE PATCH

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sirea.coop

South Dakota Pumpkin Patches Offer Plenty of Reasons to Get Outside this Fall

Cooler air, changing leaves and the search for the perfect pumpkin all mark the arrival of the autumn season. Across South Dakota, fall weekends bring families to farms and orchards for corn mazes, apple picking and hayrides.

But putting together a few weeks of fall fun takes months of work behind the scenes.

Pumpkin patches and orchards are preparing to welcome visitors for another season of pumpkins, games and family traditions.

Country Apple Orchard – Harrisburg, S.D.

By the time visitors arrive at Country Apple Orchard near Harrisburg, owner Greg Jones and his crew have already brought in three semi loads of straw bales and about 6,000 bushels of corn.

It's all part of preparing for a fall season

that lasts just a couple of months but requires work throughout the year.

"The property is kind of a full-time, year-round job," Jones said.

The orchard has been around for more than 30 years, and Jones is six years into owning the operation. Since taking over, he has expanded the pumpkin patches and added many of the attractions that now make up the orchard's fall festival.

The season opens Sept. 4 and runs through October, beginning with apple picking in September before pumpkins take center stage in October. Weekend festivities include zip lines, apple cannons, hay bale mazes, corn mazes, corn pits and, new this year, fresh-cut flowers.

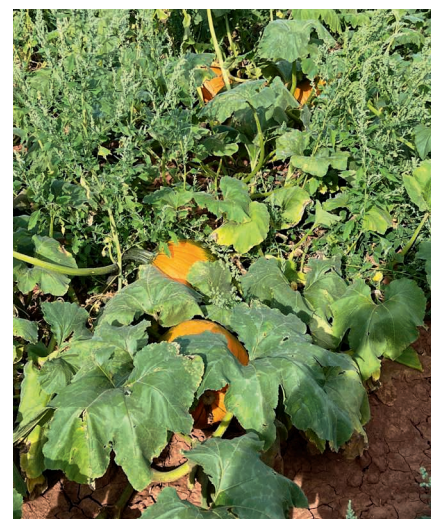
Country Apple Orchard is also a member of Southeastern Electric Cooperative, which helps power the operation through the busy fall season. Keeping everything running takes about

Lucas Hartshorn, owner of Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch, and his family opening the patch for last year's fall season.
Photo submitted by Lucas Hartshorn

60 seasonal employees. Once the crowds disappear, that workforce drops to Jones and one other worker.

The effort appears to keep families coming back.

"They love coming out and they come out multiple times," Jones said, adding that some families with season passes



Pumpkins grow in the field at Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch near Rapid City.
Photo submitted by Lucas Hartshorn

return nearly every weekend throughout the season.

Mazing Acres – Yankton, S.D.

What started as a small family project has grown into roughly 35 acres of fall festivities outside Yankton.

Scott and Molly Nedved opened Mazing Acres with their family in 2020. At the time, the idea was to create a small hobby farm that could teach their children the value of hard work while giving the community something new to enjoy.

“It’s grown more than we thought it would,” Molly laughed.

Today, Mazing Acres, a member of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, includes six acres of pumpkins, a five-acre corn maze, a flower patch and several attractions. Visitors can take a hayrack ride, watch pig races, play in the corn pit or try the apple cannons.

The corn maze, sponsored by First Dakota National Bank, changes design each year. For 2026, the design celebrates the nation’s 250th anniversary.

Although the festival lasts only several weekends, planning starts almost as soon as the previous season ends. The family reviews what worked, attends industry



A family poses for a photo in the giant pumpkin chair at Mazing Acres.

Photo submitted by Molly Nedved

conferences and selects the next year’s pumpkin varieties in late fall. By August, Scott said preparing the farm becomes “an all-day affair every day until we open.”

Visitors will notice a few changes this year. Saturday hours are being extended until 8 p.m., allowing families to experience the farm after dark, and a new tiny-town area will feature themed playhouses for younger children.

Mazing Acres opens Sept. 19 and runs through Halloween.

“We want to be something for every age,” Molly said. “Not just for the kids.”

Lil’ Harvester’s Pumpkin Patch – Rapid City, S.D.

At Lil’ Harvester’s Pumpkin Patch south of Rapid City, the Hartshorn family’s fall tradition started in 2013 with pumpkins planted by hand.

Since then, owner Lucas Hartshorn said the patch has grown to about 11 acres.

Hartshorn started the pumpkin patch with his parents, Lyle and Donna, after his father retired. The family wanted a way to keep farming while creating an event they could enjoy with their children.

“We were looking for something to do with the kids in the fall,” Hartshorn said.

At the time, pumpkin patches were harder to find around Rapid City. After

visiting one themselves, the family decided they could create a similar experience on their own farm.

Each year brought something new. Planting pumpkins by hand eventually gave way to a planter, while the patch grew to include a petting zoo, bounce houses, wagon rides, a sandbox and other activities.

Lil’ Harvester’s, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative, also opens during the week for school field trips, where students get a closer look at agriculture. Hartshorn said demonstrations may focus on pumpkins or the differences between sweet corn, field corn and popcorn, including how each is grown. For Hartshorn, that mix of farming, education and family time remains at the heart of the patch.

“They get to come out to the farm and learn something,” Hartshorn said.

Across South Dakota, there are several more pumpkin patches and fall festivities similar to those put on by Country Apple Orchard, Mazing Acres and Lil’ Harvester’s Pumpkin Patch. Whether it’s a small hobby farm or a dedicated agritourism operation, each one offers its own take on fall traditions that continue to draw families back year after year.



Visitors of all ages can find something to enjoy at Mazing Acres near Yankton, including the farm’s giant slides.

Photo submitted by Molly Nedved

THE PASSWORD MYTH: WHY LONGER IS STRONGER

Carter Manucy
NRECA

Many electric cooperative members manage important parts of their lives online. They pay electric bills, participate in efficiency programs, monitor energy use through member portals and receive outage alerts through co-op apps and websites. Protecting those accounts starts with a strong password.

With October recognized as National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, it's a good reminder that one of the easiest ways to protect yourself is by updating how you think about passwords.

Unfortunately, many of us learned the same password rules, which are now outdated.

Mix in a capital letter. Add a number. Throw in a symbol like a dollar sign. We were told that a password full of strange characters was a strong password. It turns out that advice was only half right, and the half that got left out matters more than you might think.

Here's the surprising truth: The length of your password protects you more than how complicated it is. A short password packed with symbols, like "P@ss1!", can be cracked by a computer in seconds. A longer password made of several unrelated words is far harder to break. The reason comes down to math. Computers crack passwords by guessing, and modern ones try billions of combinations every second. Every extra character multiplies the guesses a hacker must make, far more than swapping an "a" for an "@" ever could.

Think of it like a bike lock. A short combination is quick to spin through,

but a longer one simply has too many settings to try.

The nation's top security experts agree. The National Institute of Standards and Technology, which sets the standards many companies follow, now recommends longer passwords and has dropped the old rules that forced a mix of symbols and numbers. Why the change? Because those rules often backfire. When told to add symbols, people do predictable things, like ending with a "1" or an "!". Hackers know these tricks and check for them first. The rules made passwords harder for humans to remember but easier for criminals to guess.

So, what should you do instead? Whether you are logging into your electric co-op's member portal, online banking account, healthcare provider or favorite shopping site, the same advice applies. Think in phrases, not single words. A passphrase is just several words strung together, like "Sailboat lemon thunder pillow." The trick is to pick words that have nothing to do with each other. The stranger the mix, the better. Avoid song lyrics, common sayings or anything tied to you, since those are easier to guess. Aim for at least 15 characters when you can.

What about sites that still demand a number or a symbol? You don't have to give up your passphrase. Just work the extra character into a spot you will remember, like "Sailboat7 lemon thunder pillow." Try not to simply tack a "1" or "!" onto the very end, since that's the first thing criminals check.

A few more simple habits will keep you safe. Avoid personal details like your

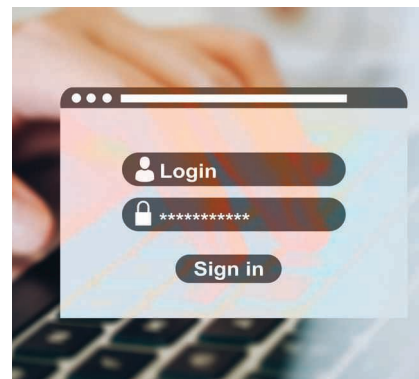
birthday, address or pet's name, since those are easy for others to find. Use a different password for every account, including your electric co-op's member portal.

Companies get hacked, and criminals try the stolen passwords on other sites, so one password should never unlock your whole life. If remembering them all feels like too much, a password manager can store them for you. And turn on multi-factor authentication whenever it is offered, which is the step where a website texts a code to your phone or an app, adding a second lock to your door.

You may also start seeing "passkeys." This newer option lets you sign in with your face, fingerprint, or a PIN instead of a password at all. Because there is no password to steal or guess, passkeys are very secure and worth using whenever a site offers one.

As more services move online, good password habits are becoming an important part of everyday cybersecurity. You don't need to be a technology expert to protect yourself. A longer password or passphrase is one of the simplest and most effective steps you can take. Pick a phrase you can remember, keep it unique for every account and you will be much harder for criminals to target.

Protecting online accounts helps safeguard access to services such as bill payment, outage notifications, energy management tools and other digital services offered by your electric co-op.



Artificial Intelligence Creates Real Problems for Scam Victims

Cathy Cash

NRECA

Artificial intelligence sometimes doesn't seem so artificial and that could be a real problem.

Artificial intelligence can create realistic text, voices, images and websites in seconds. Those capabilities make many everyday tools more useful, but they also make it easier for scammers to impersonate family members, banks and even your electric cooperative.

Through friendly chatbots and website agents, AI monitors your selections and online behaviors so it can efficiently make recommendations on entertainment or other online goods and services for you to consume.

But be vigilant. Scammers are using this amazing invention of computer-learning software for theft and extortion.

Scammers are applying AI to mimic familiar voices and change videos and emails to appear authentic in urgent online or phone requests for credit card and bank account numbers, electronic money transfers and personal information.

Maybe you know someone who believed their adult child or grandchild was calling them about getting in legal trouble and needing a large sum of money wired immediately. That scam has made the rounds.

Then there are investment or get-rich-quick scams, where criminals bully their victims via emails, websites or calls promising a big payout if they pay up now.

Website spoofing is also on the rise. Everything looks genuine on the surface but when consumers hit "submit" after punching in their credit card number and other personal info they are basically handing over valuable data to a cybercriminal.

"AI can help scammers produce polished, convincing messages and build fake websites that closely mimic a bank or even an electric co-op," said Carter Manucy, NRECA's senior director for cybersecurity.

Scammers can build sites and communications that resemble an electric co-op and contact members with high-pressure calls or emails demanding instant payment via gift cards, wire and even cryptocurrency or risk shutoff.

So, what should co-op members do in that situation?

Stop and make sure the contact is legitimate. Members should treat any unexpected demand for immediate payment by gift card, wire transfer or cryptocurrency as a scam and contact their co-op directly using the number on their bill.

"Call back using a number you already know, never one the caller provides. For a co-op message, use the number on your bill," said Manucy.

"Any message that pressures you to act immediately is the top red flag, no matter how real it sounds. Real family, banks and utilities let you take a breath."

But as AI makes scams much more difficult to spot, it also equips these rip-off artists with ways to boost their output and victimize thousands of people in just a few clicks. AI allows criminals to create, personalize and distribute convincing scams at a scale that once required far more time and people.

"Criminals can generate thousands of tailored attacks cheaply, so more scams reach members' phones and inboxes, more often," Manucy said.

As a result, the loot scammers are reaping is unprecedented. Americans reported nearly \$900 million in AI-assisted scam losses in one year according to the FBI. "Those figures capture only complaints that were reported and identified as AI-related, so they do not show the full scope of the problem," Manucy said.

Here are some tips to help protect yourself against today's scams made more sophisticated thanks to AI:

- Distrust urgency of a request for money or personal data.
- Verify parties making requests through a trusted channel, such as a phone number on your bill.
- Before you click, check the website address for veracity.
- Set a family code word not shared online and ask for the code word if you receive an emergency call. A cloned voice won't know it.
- Protect yourself when paying for goods and services online. Reject requirements for gift cards, wire transfers or cryptocurrency as these payments are difficult (and sometimes impossible) to recover.
- Report scams to the Federal Trade Commission at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud).

"AI has changed the tools scammers use, but not the trick behind them," said Manucy. "Every scam still depends on getting people to act fast, before they stop and think. Pause and verify remains the single best defense."



LOST BENEATH OAHE

The Rise, Fall and Disappearance of a South Dakota Ghost Town

Frank Turner

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Beneath the waves of Lake Oahe lies more than dead trees and walleye. Just below the surface near Akaska sit the remnants of LeBeau, an early 1900s railroad town once filled with immense promise and prosperity, whose story is worthy of its own Wild West feature film.

For years, Caroline Thorsen has collected the history of her great-grandfather, Antoine Le Beau, and the town that bore his name. Through Thorsen's collection and research by railroad historian Don Hofsommer in "A Promise Broken: LeBeau and the Railroad," we can dive beneath the waters of Lake Oahe and dredge up the story of LeBeau's dramatic rise and fall.

A French Fur Trader

The story of the ghost town of LeBeau begins with Antoine Le Beau Sr., a French fur trader whose journey in the mid-1800s took him from France to Quebec, Canada, then to St. Louis, Missouri and eventually up the Missouri River to what is now South Dakota.

"As I unfortunately did not know [Antoine], I hope he is remembered as being a brave gentleman who crossed the ocean from France to come to America and eventually become friends with the Native Americans, married in Native Tradition," said Thorsen, Le Beau's great-granddaughter.

The woman Antoine married was Mary Little Thunder, a member of the Two Kettle Band of Sioux. Antoine himself was later one of several Frenchmen adopted

into the Sioux Tribe at a Great Sioux Council, where he was given the name "Ogless," or "Red Shirt."

Le Beau worked with the American Fur Company before establishing a trading post along the Missouri River near present-day Akaska. The post became the foundation of a small town that would eventually bear his name and become a brief, yet bright, gateway to the West.

The Railroad

By the time the railroad arrived, Antoine Le Beau Sr. was gone, but the town was quickly gaining the reputation of a small metropolis. In 1907, the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway (M&StL) reached LeBeau, connecting the small Missouri River settlement to Watertown and markets farther east.

"As LeBeau prospered, so did the M&StL's westernmost extension; as LeBeau withered, so did its railroad," Hofsommer writes.

Cattle companies from Texas had taken notice of both LeBeau and the grasslands west of the Missouri. Once they learned cattle thrived west of the river, they began moving large herds into the region. Through its railroad, LeBeau offered those ranchers a new route to market.

The next trick was getting the cattle across the river. On the west side of the Missouri, large holding pens could accommodate as many as 3,500 animals. From there, cattle crossed the river aboard the Scotty Philip, a steam-powered ferry. Once across, they could be loaded directly onto eastbound rail cars.

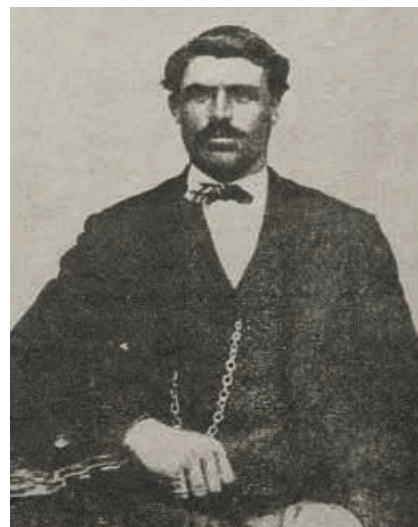
The mouth of Swan Creek on Lake Oahe where the ghost town of LeBeau resides under the waves. *Photo by Frank Turner*

In 1908, roughly 24,000 cattle passed through LeBeau on their way to and from the West River ranges, representing about \$1 million in livestock at the time. The feat helped cement the town's place as a major cattle-shipping point on the Missouri.

A Bustling Town

By the end of the season, LeBeau featured two banks, a newspaper, a drugstore, a general store and a local saloon. The growing town also boasted two lumberyards, a grain elevator and a livery, along with prominent businesses like the Idle Hour billiard and pool parlor, the Hotel LeBeau and Arcade Hotel. For entertainment, residents could even catch a show at Zimmer's Opera House.

As the town grew, M&StL officials planned to continue the rail line west of the



French fur trapper Antoine Le Beau Sr.
Photo submitted by Caroline Thorsen

Missouri by building a bridge across the Missouri, hinting at a long expansion all the way to the West Coast. The excitement only reinforced the idea that LeBeau was destined to become the gate to the west.

The buzz captured the attention of Murdo MacKenzie, general manager of the Matador Land and Cattle Company, and his wealthy son, Dode. Described as a likable and fine young man – while sober – Dode moved to LeBeau in his early 20s to oversee Matador's South Dakota operations.

A Questionable Killing

At the end of the 1909 shipping season, Dode MacKenzie began frequenting LeBeau's saloons. On Dec. 11, he was shot and killed by Bud Stephens, who was tending the bar that morning at Phil DuFran's saloon.

Local accounts of what happened that day – and of Dode MacKenzie's character – differ greatly. One local official described MacKenzie as a stand-up individual, while another local woman said he was known to shoot behind the heels of women in the town when "spirits took him."

Exactly what happened on Dec. 11 will never be known, but according to the version later presented by Stephens' defense at trial, MacKenzie became furious when Stephens failed to hear him order a drink. Rebuffed, MacKenzie crossed the street to purchase what he believed were



The paddle-wheeler Scotty Philip loads cattle at LeBeau, S.D., to be fattened on grasslands west of the Missouri River. For about three years, LeBeau was one of the Northwest's most important cattle-shipping towns.

Photo courtesy of the South Dakota Historical Society

.45-caliber shells, loaded his gun, walked back, pointed it at Stephens and pulled the trigger twice. As the story goes, MacKenzie had accidentally purchased .38-caliber shells, which failed to fire and instead plopped onto the floor. It was then that Stephens reached for his gun and began firing, killing the young MacKenzie.

A Dying Town

The trial resulted in Stephens' acquittal, drawing the ire of Dode MacKenzie's father and the Matador Cattle Company. The company effectively boycotted LeBeau, and no Matador cattle ever entered the town again.

Within months of the trial, a suspicious fire made matters worse. Although fires weren't uncommon in the Wild West, townsfolk discovered that the fire hose, telephone and telegraph lines had all been cut prior to the fire. No arsonist was ever caught.

The bad luck didn't stop there. A competing rail line to the north completed a bridge across the Missouri at Mobridge, undercutting LeBeau's stream of West River cattle. By 1924, M&StL abandoned the town, tearing out its segment of rail line. Within a year, the post office closed.

Beneath Lake Oahe

LeBeau had been a ghost town for decades when Lake Oahe came for what was left.

Construction of Oahe Dam near Pierre began in 1948 as part of a massive federal effort to control flooding and generate hydroelectric power along the Missouri River. In August 1958, the river was closed at the dam and the newly created reservoir began to fill.

As the water rose, it eventually covered the old LeBeau townsite near the mouth of Swan Creek. The empty foundations, cellar holes and remnants of the once-bustling railroad town disappeared beneath Lake Oahe. Unlike most ghost towns in South Dakota that faded away with time, LeBeau vanished beneath the Missouri.



A crowd gathers around a band near the railroad in LeBeau, S.D., with the depot and Missouri River visible in the distance. About a year after this photo was taken, the town installed 10-foot-wide concrete sidewalks along Main Street.

Photo courtesy of the South Dakota Historical Society.



A PRETTY SWEET IDEA

Doland Teen Finds Success as Ice Cream Entrepreneur

Jacob Boyko

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Noah Felderman has long enjoyed staying at his grandparents' cabin at Lake Poinsett, north of Arlington, S.D. But during the summer of 2020, the 12-year-old faced a dilemma many kids did during the COVID-19 era.

What is there to do today?

"I was there every weekend – almost every day – and people were talking about ice cream," Noah said. "I thought, 'Hey, I could try to make something out of this.'"

After drawing up a business plan with his grandparents and borrowing their orange side-by-side, Noah drove – or, rather, had an adult drive him – around to sell ice cream bars out of a small chest freezer.

"He was 12 years old and not able to drive, so this was a family event," Noah's dad, Chad, said with a chuckle.

Driving to different campgrounds and neighborhoods around the lake, Noah's business – Feldy's Ice Cream – became a hit with residents, cabin owners, and weekend campers.

The next summer, hoping to keep the momentum going, 13-year-old Noah found and purchased a retired school bus.

"We found a really good deal – this bus needed some work just to get going and be operational so that's how we snagged it," Noah explained. The Feldermans completely overhauled the bus to turn it into a fully-equipped ice

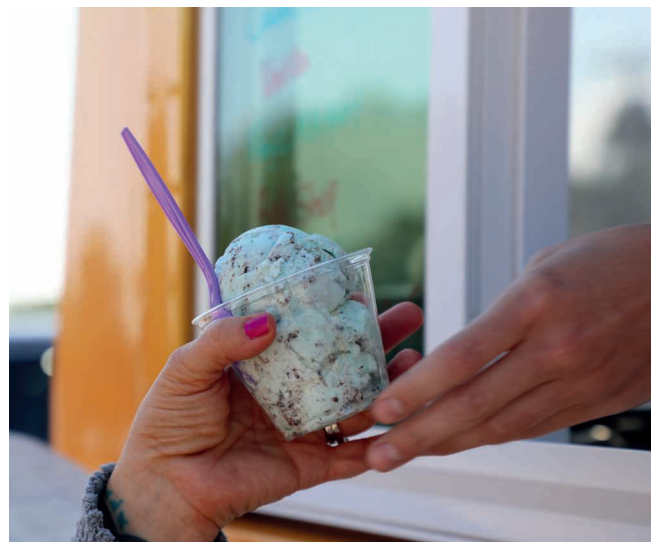
cream truck, even giving it a custom orange paint job to craft a recognizable brand and pay homage to his grandparents' orange side-by-side that started it all.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

cream truck, even giving it a custom orange paint job to craft a recognizable brand and pay homage to his grandparents' orange side-by-side that started it all.

That was the summer things really started to take off for Feldy's Ice Cream.

"I called the State of South Dakota asking about tax law, and they said they didn't have time for prank calls," Noah laughed.



Feldy's Ice Cream serves stocks many flavors – vanilla, caramel, raspberry chip, Oreo, and classic mint chocolate chip, to name a few.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

Covering more ground in the bus than he could with the side-by-side, the determined teenager became a familiar face and started building connections in the Lake Poinsett area.

"Someone said if I ever want to do an event, I could come cater the staff at the Madison hospital," Noah recalled. "So that's what I went out and did."

Word spread quickly. After Madison Regional Health, Noah visited Prairie Lakes Hospital in Watertown, then Huron Regional Medical Center.

He continued, "Once we were there, we served staff that were having their own private events, like weddings, so then they'd reach out to us and see if we'd want to cater their wedding. It just kind of kept growing."

As demand for ice cream grew, Noah purchased a small building at Lake Poinsett to open a permanent ice cream shop and also allow them the space to expand their offerings, serving Saturday morning waffle breakfasts and statewide favorites like Black Hills Bagels and Flyboy Donuts.

Six years since starting the business, Feldy's Ice Cream has become a seven-days-per-week summer commitment for Noah. Today, the 18-year-old operates an ice cream truck, ice cream trailer and the Lake Poinsett location.

For staffing, Noah turned to area high schools.

"We hit hard at the local schools – Castlewood, Estelline, Arlington, Hamlin, Watertown, Brookings," Noah recalled. "We'd go to the school, give them some free ice cream coupons, and encourage them to apply for a summer job."

Noah currently employs 17 part-time summer workers.

"I never imagined that (the business) would grow into what I'm doing now on a day-to-day basis," he reflected. "I've learned that you can have a plan, and the plan's not always going to go how you want. A machine will break down, and then you're sitting there fixing it and figuring out how you're going to get to this event on time. You learn to take things as they come."

After graduating this past spring, Noah enrolled at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown to pursue training in law enforcement. He hopes to pair that training with a pilot's license and pursue a career in aviation law enforcement.

But that doesn't mean he's finished with ice cream.

"I'll take it year by year," Noah said. "I don't have any plans to shut down or slow down operation. It's definitely something I'm going to continue doing."

Noah's dad, Chad Felderman, who also serves as CEO at Dakota Energy Cooperative, praised his son's work ethic and thanked the surrounding communities for supporting the business.

"You can't not be proud of Noah," Chad said. "With all of the connections he's made in different communities and businesses, when I introduce myself, I don't introduce myself as Chad – I introduce myself as Noah's dad or Feldy's Ice Cream's dad."



Spink County Sheriff's Deputy Wyatt Anderson visits Feldy's Ice Cream at a stop at the Spink County Courthouse in Redfield.

Photo by Jacob Boyko



Chad assists Noah as he prepares a large order of ice cream cups at Eastern Star retirement home in Redfield.

Photo by Jacob Boyko



Twelve-year-old Noah started his business at Lake Poinsett.

Photo submitted by Chad Felderman



OCT. 31
Yankton's Harvest Halloween
 Yankton, SD
www.harvesthalloween.com

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.

OCT. 3
Pumpkin Train/ SoDak Vendor Showcase
 Prairie Village
 Madison, SD

OCT. 3
Community Rummage Sale
 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Rapid Valley UMC
 5103 Long View Rd.
 Rapid City, SD

OCT. 3
Fall Harvest Farmers Market
 9 a.m.
 Centennial Park
 Hot Springs, SD

OCT. 3-4
The Black Market
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.,
 Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-332-6004

OCT. 4
Run Crazy Horse Full & Half Marathon

OCT. 5-11
Hill City Restaurant Week
 Hill City, SD

OCT. 10
Community Foundation Casino Night Fundraiser
 5:30 p.m.
 Eras Event Center
 Hill City, SD
 210-326-4414

OCT. 10
2026 Fall River Ag Appreciation Banquet
 4:30 p.m.
 Red Rock River Resort
 Hot Springs, SD

OCT. 11
BBQ Fundraiser for Delta Dental Bus
 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

OCT. 15-17
Spearfish Senior Center Fall Fundraising Rummage Sale
 Pies, Coffee, Caramel Rolls
 Quilt Raffle
 Thurs., Fri. 8 a.m.-3 p.m.
 Sat. 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
 1306 N. 10th St.
 Spearfish, SD

OCT. 20
Korczak Remembrance Day
 Crazy Horse Memorial

OCT. 23
Monster Mash
 5-8 p.m.
 Box Elder Events Center
 Box Elder, SD

OCT. 24
Hill City Children's Boo Bash & Pumpkin Festival
 9-11 a.m.
 Hill City, SD

OCT. 24
Tin City Saloon Masquerade Mystery Pairing Party
 Light Up Hill City Fundraiser
 Hill City, SD

OCT. 24
Owl-O-Ween
 Black Hills Raptor Center
 12 p.m.-5 p.m.
 15256 E. Hwy. 44
 Rapid City, SD
 605-519-2008

OCT. 31
Hill City Main Street Merchant Trick-or-Treat
 3-5 p.m.
 Hill City, SD

OCT. 31
Merchant Trick-or-Treat
 4-6 p.m.
 Hot Springs, SD

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.