

# Don't shoot at birds on power lines



**D**ove hunting season is in full swing, and whether you're headed out at sunrise or squeezing in a quick hunt after work, safety must always be your top priority. One important rule all hunters need to remember is to never shoot at birds perched on power lines.

Yes, we've all seen doves lining up along the wires. They make an easy target, but taking that shot can have serious consequences. Hitting or even grazing a utility line or pole can cause thousands of dollars in damage and knock out critical services like electricity, internet and phone connections for homes and businesses.

Beyond the inconvenience, damaged power lines are dangerous. Broken or downed lines can spark high-temperature arcs that ignite surrounding vegetation, leading to wildfires. In rural areas, where dove hunting is popular, that risk is even greater.

It may seem harmless in the moment, but shooting near power infrastructure puts you, your hunting partners and the entire community at risk.

Remember:

- Never shoot at or near power lines or utility poles.
- Always be aware of your surroundings before taking a shot.
- Report damaged lines to your local utility company immediately.

Stay safe, hunt smart and help keep the lights on for everyone. ■

## SEPTEMBER 2025

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Remembering Josh Cabler
- Weathering the storm
- Strengthening senior programs



## Weathering the storm together

A rare and powerful storm system swept across southern North Dakota the evening of Friday, June 20, bringing a devastating combination of extreme winds, large hail and multiple tornadoes. The impact was felt across six of the 11 counties Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) serves, with the most significant damage concentrated in Stutsman and Foster counties.

The storm struck late Friday night and by 10:30 p.m., NPEC line crews were already being dispatched to respond. What followed was a six-day restoration effort marked by extraordinary teamwork, grit and commitment.

Just over 1,000 accounts were without power at one time. On average, members affected by the storm experienced outages lasting about 22.5 hours, depending on whether the issue stemmed from transmission lines or the cooperative's distribution lines.

Unlike the blizzards and ice storms our crews often battle in winter, this storm brought heavy debris, including tree limbs and sheet metal tangled in power lines and poles. Before power could even begin to be restored, crews had to safely remove debris from damaged areas, which was a time-consuming and dangerous process.

The extent of the damage was significant, as 85 utility poles were damaged and estimated storm-related costs reached \$450,000.

Despite these challenges, our team pulled together. Over the course of the response:

- 20 lineworkers worked more than 14-hour days to restore service.
- Contractors aided line crews in restoration efforts.
- Patrol teams assessed the damage and helped localize outages.
- Dispatchers fielded a flood of outage reports and coordinated repair efforts.
- Office staff stayed connected with members, providing updates and support.

We recognize some members struggled to report outages due to phone lines being overwhelmed by the volume of calls. We thank you for your patience and understanding during that time.

Through it all, the resilience and kindness of our members kept us going. Whether it was prayers, thank you notes or homemade cookies, the support you showed to our crews and staff did not go unnoticed. We also extend our gratitude to those who helped clear debris, allowing our lineworkers to work more quickly and safely.

NPEC is incredibly proud of our team and grateful to our membership. Thank you for standing with us, for your strength in adversity and for your unwavering support as we worked to bring the lights back on.

Together, we can weather any storm stronger as a community. ■



# In memory of Josh Cabler



It is with profound sadness we share the passing of our dear friend and co-worker, Josh Cabler.

Josh was a valued member of the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) family for over 19 years. He began his journey as a temporary apprentice lineworker in May 2006, when he joined the New Rockford line crew. He was then hired full time by the cooperative that November and assigned to the Glenfield outpost, where he earned his journeyman certificate. In 2012 after the Glenfield and New Rockford warehouses closed, NPEC created the Carrington East crew based at the Carrington headquarters, where he eventually was promoted to foreman of the Carrington East crew in 2016. His leadership, dedication and deep care for others was evident in every role he held. In 2022, Josh was promoted to manager of operations, where his commitment to safety and service never wavered.

"My number 1 priority is the safety of the crews, our consumers and the general public," Josh once said.

He lived those words every day, dispatching crews, monitoring conditions and tirelessly ensuring everyone made it home safely. He put his heart and soul into this work, and his impact will be felt for years to come.

Beyond the job, Josh was a man of integrity, humility and incredible work ethic. He never hesitated to step in wherever help was needed and led by example in every way. His presence will be deeply missed. However, his dedication and spirit will live on through the connections he built across our team and community.

We extend our heartfelt sympathy and steadfast support to his family and friends during this incredibly difficult time and beyond.

Josh, you can rest easy knowing we'll keep the lights on.

With heavy hearts,  
Northern Plains Electric Cooperative ■

## Heroes

*A person of great strength or courage*

They get out of bed all hours of the night.  
They come as brothers, so you will have lights.  
With aches and pains and a battle scar or two,  
They do all of this for your family and you.

In rain, sleet or snow and even the heat,  
They work 'til you're happy, even though they are beat.  
When one is tired, the others pick up the slack,  
For they are always watching each other's back.

When the job is complete, they'll get a bite.  
Your family's now happy: you have lights.  
A storm brews up in another state.  
They're raring to go, just open the gate.

They pull into town and folks begin to cheer,  
But back home, they have left loved ones so dear.  
Some in buckets, some in hooks, they yell out, "Going tall."  
Lord be with them, one and all.

They keep this world moving day by day.  
For without them, all would be dismay.  
So the next time you see one and don't know what to say,  
Just thank him for his time for making your day.

Heroes come in all shapes and forms.  
But a lineman is not chosen; he is born.

*Excerpt by Robert "Skillet" Smith*





*The biggest attraction to the Maddock Rural Renaissance Festival is the corn maze spanning 9 acres. A new path is designed each year to keep guests on their toes.*

# Maddock gears up for annual festival

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

**T**he town of Maddock in Benson County is preparing to host one of its most cherished traditions – the Maddock Rural Renaissance Festival, a four-day celebration of community, creativity and small-town pride. This year's festival will take place Sept. 11-14 and promises to once again deliver fun for the whole family.

Unlike the name might suggest, Maddock's renaissance festival isn't about medieval costumes or sword fights.

"The name doesn't represent a typical English renaissance festival with costumes and reenactments. It's really about the rebirth of our city," co-director Paul Backstrom says.

The festival was born out of a push for economic revitalization in the early 2000s, when local leaders came together to breathe new life into the town. Their efforts led to the hiring of an economic development coordinator and ultimately their first festival in 2010. Since then, the celebration has grown into a yearly highlight, made

possible by about \$20,000 in sponsorships and a lot of work from the festival board and volunteers.

Backstrom smiles with pride when speaking of the event.

"I may be biased, but I think we have a pretty unique community, and it's worth being celebrated," he says.

## Festival highlights

The Maddock Rural Renaissance Festival is packed with family-friendly attractions, but a few signature events truly stand out.

- **The corn maze:** Spanning 9 acres, the maze is carved into farmland owned by Paul's brother, Phillip Backstrom. Paul's daughter, Kimberly Backstrom, designed this year's pattern, which is then implemented by her cousin, Josh Backstrom, using tractor GPS – making this event a true family affair.
- **Straw bale decorating contest:** A community favorite,





this event features local businesses and organizations decorating large straw bales placed throughout the town. The bales reflect themes ranging from business missions to imaginative creations. Past entries have included a burger and fries, rainbow fish, a gumball machine and even a helicopter. A committee selects the most creative entries for cash prizes. "It's the most talked about" event, Paul says. "People come to town to see the bales."

- **Music and entertainment:** The festival includes a musical performance at the historic Maddock Opera House, two street dances and a free stage featuring North Dakota musician Jessie Veeder. In conjunction, the Benson County Rodeo Association hosts its annual Bulls & Broncs event that includes mutton busting.

Though the entertainment is plentiful, the heart of the festival lies in its mission: celebrating Maddock's spirit.

"We hope just to break even or have a little saved up for next year. It's just about getting our small town together and celebrating," Paul says.

As Maddock prepares to welcome visitors and residents alike this September, the Rural Renaissance Festival stands as a powerful reminder of what a small town with a big heart can achieve.

For more details and updates, visit the festival's Facebook page at Maddock Rural Renaissance Festival. ■





# WATCH FOR HAZARDS ON THE FARM

**P**ower lines and other equipment are necessary to deliver electricity to hardworking farmers and ranchers, but those same power lines can also be deadly if not treated with respect.

As long hours, increased stress and tight schedules loom, sometimes power lines fade into the background. Even a split-second distraction can lead to contact with a power line and hazardous results.

## BE AWARE

- Be aware of overhead power lines and keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines on all sides.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of a grain truck. It can be difficult to estimate distance, and a power line may be closer than it looks.
- Always lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level before moving or transporting them. Encourage folding and unfolding to be done well into the field, not at the field's edge, which could have power lines running next to it.

## USE A SPOTTER

Avoid moving large equipment alone and be aware of overhead power lines when using machinery. Have someone watch as you move equipment to ensure you have at least 10 feet of clearance from power lines. And don't rely on autosteer around power lines and poles.

## REALIZE THINGS CHANGE

- If you have purchased new equipment, be aware of antennas or other attachments that may pose new hazards. A newer, bigger piece of equipment may no longer clear a line. Shifting soil may also affect whether or not machinery avoids power lines from year to year.

- Wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can cause you to lose control of equipment and make contact with power lines.
- Power lines also may sag over the years. If power lines on your property are sagging, contact your electric cooperative to repair the lines. Never try to move a power line on your own.

## EDUCATE THE CREW

- Look over work areas carefully for overhead power lines and utility poles. Make sure you, your family and employees know the location of overhead power lines, and use routes to avoid the lines when moving equipment. Do this every year, as equipment sizes and soil conditions may change.
- If someone operating a vehicle comes into contact with a power line, educate them to stay in the vehicle and contact 911. Utility workers will come to your location and make sure the line is de-energized and it's safe to exit your vehicle.

## LOOK AROUND

Overhead power lines are not the only electric hazard on the farm. Pole guy wires, used to stabilize utility poles, are grounded. However, when one of the guy wires is broken, it can become charged with electricity. If you break a guy wire, call the cooperative to fix it. Don't do it yourself.

## USE THE PROFESSIONALS

Use qualified electricians for work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems. Don't try to use quick fixes for wiring or electrical issues. It's best to call a licensed professional. ■



The James River Senior Center and Public Transit project is expected to be completed in 2026 to better support seniors in the community.

## Co-op donation helps strengthen senior programs

**N**orthern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) exemplifies its commitment to community by making yearly donations to local nonprofits and organizations. In June, the NPEC board of directors approved a \$25,000 donation to the James River Senior Center (JRSC) and Public Transit in Jamestown.

The donation, which will be distributed at \$5,000 a year for five years, will support the facility's move into a new location as well as two additions to the building, remodeling the inside and paving the parking lot.

The new location will improve safety and accessibility, making it easier for senior citizens to get the services they need, including senior meals and use of medical equipment. The updated design also includes more room for events and activities, ensuring seniors continue to stay active and involved in the community.

In 2024, JRSC and Public Transit provided 7,843 congregate meals and 24,229 home-delivered meals in Stutsman County. The transit traveled 121,859 miles and made 40,643 trips. ■



NPEC General Manager **Seth Syverson**, right, presents the first installment of a \$25,000 donation to **Maureen Wegenke**, director of JRSC and Public Transit.



## DO YOU HAVE ELECTRIC HEAT? Check that breaker!

Often, members turn off their breaker to their heat meter through the summer months and forget to turn it back on heading into fall. If the breaker is off to the meter, the meter will not register, therefore the member will not be credited for the lower rate of electric heat.

If you already have an off-peak meter and your breaker is switched to the "ON" position, you do not need to do anything.

### Don't have an electric heat meter?

Having a heat meter installed can help members save during cold winter months. An electric heat meter records your heat usage only. When electric demand and market prices are high, an off-peak device in the home automatically switches from an electric source to a backup source, such as propane or fuel oil. In exchange, participating members receive discounted off-peak rates, which are competitive with fuel oil and propane.

Our off-peak program is designed to reduce electric demand during peak times and save money.

If you are heating with electric heat and do not have a heat meter, please contact the NPEC office at 800-882-2500 to learn more. ■



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