

NORTHERN PLAINS ANNOUNCES

Safety Poster Contest



Northern Plains Electric Cooperative is sponsoring a safety poster contest for children in kindergarten to sixth grade.

The purpose of the safety poster contest is to help make children aware of the dangers of electricity. At Northern Plains, safety always comes first, and we are dedicated to doing our part to teach children how to be safe around electricity.

Winners will be announced on our website and Facebook page and featured in the Northern Plains local pages of the *North Dakota Living* magazine. So, grab your art supplies and be creative!

- Deadline is March 20.

Entry categories

- Kindergarten-first grade
- second-third grade
- fourth-sixth grade

Prizes in each category

- First prize: \$20
- Second prize: \$15
- Third prize: \$10 ■

RULES

- Posters must be on white, 8.5x11-inch paper.
- Posters must depict the theme: "How to stay safe around electricity."
- Print the child's name, school grade, address and parents' names on the back of the poster.
- Child must be a dependent of a current Northern Plains member.
- Submit entries to a Northern Plains office (Cando or Carrington) or mail to:
Northern Plains Electric Cooperative
Attn: Brittnee Wilson
P.O. Box 608
Cando, ND 58324

FEBRUARY 2021

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2020 weather delivers savings for solar

2020 was the best year yet! For solar, that is. Come on, to look on the bright side of things (yes, pun intended), it was a good year for weather.

Data collected from Northern Plains Electric Cooperative's (NPEC) 16-panel, 6.56-kilowatt solar system at our Carrington office, showed a savings of \$1,020 from January through December. That puts 2020's recorded kilowatt-hours (kWh) of 9,273, at the top since the system launched in May 2015. On average, the system has produced 8,500 kWh per year, for an average savings of about \$935 per year.

Higher recorded kWh can be attributed to sunnier days and less equipment failure. So how did our equipment perform in 2020? No major repairs or damage took place, just basic maintenance, including cleaning dust, leaves and snow and the resetting of inverters when they trip.

"Even though we had a good year, the question still remains as to how economically feasible solar can be," said Scott Buchholtz, manager of information technology.

Our geographical location is our biggest downfall when it comes to solar. It's the limited access to the sun during a good portion of the year that can limit the solar panel's output. So, how long will it take for the co-op to see the return on its investment?

NPEC is looking at a 20-year return on its \$19,000 16-panel system. Without the \$10,000 in grants received, the payback period would extend to a 30-year return. Any repairs to the system would extend the payback period. The cost of solar panels, however, has declined by about one-third since 2015. There is some uncertainty right now of whether the federal government could further incentivize the use of solar generation, but if that occurs in the future, it may change the economics for solar.

Taking the first step

Before a NPEC member installs any solar or wind generation system, they are required to follow these steps first:

- 1) Contact NPEC for information regarding the cooperative's policies for interconnection before you make the decision to proceed with anything.
- 2) Complete our application for interconnection generation systems and return it to us with the fee. NPEC needs to review and approve the equipment that our members are contemplating to install BEFORE they purchase anything.

For more information, visit www.nplains.com, click on the "solar" tab on the homepage or call us at 800-882-2500. ■



Total Energy Generated [kWh]

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	\$ Saved
2020	321	678	868	947	1019	1048	1188	1012	818	601	445	329	9273	\$1,020.00
2019	303	190	879	814	958	942	1138	978	710	474	250	190	7825	\$861.00
2018	398	593	765	1113	1015	1051	1142	1004	757	584	266	257	8945	\$984.00
2017	276	538	723	759	905	1016	1208	1011	760	721	426	332	8675	\$954.00
2016	325	484	831	821	975	1104	991	1042	730	536	440	248	8527	\$938.00
2015	0	0	0	0	530	961	1065	1019	861	607	413	232	5689	\$626.00

Operation Round Up grants \$36,900 in 2020

At its December meeting, the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative Operation Round Up board of directors approved grants totaling \$9,300 to help support worthy causes.

Thanks to YOU, the Northern Plains member who generously elect to have his or her electric bill rounded up to the next dollar, 61 applications were approved in 2020 totaling \$36,900 given to charitable causes in

Northern Plains service area.

The board meets quarterly to disburse funds to help Northern Plains members with medical expenses and area nonprofit organizations. Since the program's beginning in October 1998, grants totaling \$824,362 have been awarded to 1,147 local charitable causes.

Grants approved in December include:

Pettibone Fire Protection District	Purchase turnout gear
Carrington City Library	Purchase play activity equipment
Kvernes Lutheran Church, Carrington	Purchase digital hymnals
Marketplace of Ideas/Kids	Education Days
Stitching Hearts Quilt of Valor Group, Wahpeton	Quilt supplies for veterans
Cando Fire Department	Purchase SCBA tanks
Ranelle Tandeki, Rolla	Medical expenses
Keith Rost, Cathay	Medical expenses
Marguerite Freund, Cando	Medical expenses
Benson, Eddy, Carrington Daily Bread, Griggs, Kidder, Pierce, Rolette, Stutsman, Cando Area Food Pantry, Wells, Ramsey County (The Hope Center)	Food banks

*If you would like additional information about this worthy program, please contact Northern Plains Electric Cooperative by calling 800-882-2500; or you may obtain guidelines or download applications at www.nplains.com. The board will meet again in March to review applications. **Application deadline is Feb. 20.** ■*

Copenhaver takes Klein's seat on Operation Round Up board

Congratulations to Joan Copenhaver, Carrington, for being elected to the Operation Round Up board. Joan replaces Curtiss Klein of Carrington, who reached his term limit on the board after having served for six years. Northern Plains thanks Curtiss for his dedication on the board and welcomes Joan.

The Operation Round Up board is comprised of five Northern Plains members who live across the service area. Joan joins Julie McDougall, Rolla; Cara Wagner, Pettibone; Robin Arnold, Esmond; and Angie Freund, Cando. ■



Klein



Copenhaver



Loan helps provide community gathering place

Courtenay is the home of a new community hall, thanks in part to a \$135,000 community capital loan provided by the Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC). The low-interest loan provided half of the funding for the construction of the Courtenay Community Hall, which provides a place for friends and neighbors to come together.

“This community capital loan is an example of RDFC’s commitment to help rural communities thrive,” says RDFC President David Sigloh. “One of the advantages of living in rural North Dakota is its sense of community. RDFC is proud to assist projects like the Courtenay Community Hall, which improve quality of life in the places where we live, work and play. Support from member cooperatives, such as Northern Plains Electric Cooperative and Dakota Central Telecommunications Cooperative, helps ensure funding is available for these projects.”

The new community hall replaces Courtenay’s previous community hall, which was in need of major repair. Completed in the spring of 2019, the new building is bright, modern and convenient. It has a full kitchen and is fully accessible for people with disabilities.

Since the new facility opened, it’s been a venue for weddings, family reunions, graduation receptions and community events. The building is also used for the community’s annual Fourth of July and Christmas events, which always draw a crowd. And, throughout the year, people gather at the community hall to try their luck at bingo.

“It’s a gathering space for fellowship for not just the Courtenay community, but for people from Kensal, Spiritwood and Wimbledon. They all come,” says Courtenay Mayor Angy Bartlett. “We used to drop in on

our neighbors, but we don’t anymore. This is a place for us to come together and visit with each other about our families and life. At the end of bingo, it just feels very good, because we were together and caring about each other. I don’t think we could survive if we didn’t have people to care about us. That’s the wonderful thing about Courtenay. It’s very small, but our neighbors look out for each other.”

Founded in 1994 by North Dakota’s electric and telecommunications cooperatives, RDFC is a nonprofit corporation that provides low-income financing for projects in rural communities. Since its formation, RDFC has provided more than \$6.5 million in funding, supporting small businesses, emergency services and a variety of community projects. These loans have helped create jobs and provide access to essential services. Additionally, the corporation has provided \$285,000 in grant funding to nonprofits and community-based projects. ■

More about Rural Development Finance Corporation

The Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC) is a nonprofit corporation that encourages economic diversification and community vitality through the generation of funding that supports sustainable asset building. Funding for RDFC programs comes from fee income generated by Dakotas America LLC, a certified development entity providing New Market Tax Credits in economically distressed census tracts across the United States. Support is provided by the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives.

For information, contact Northern Plains Electric at 800-882-2500 or visit www.ndarec.com and click the “Rural Development” tab, or contact Lori Capouch, rural development director for NDAREC, at lcapouch@ndarec.com.

GENERATOR SAFETY

USE BACKUP POWER SAFELY

When used properly, portable and standby generators are a great option to provide backup power during brownouts or blackouts.

Learn how to use generators safely with the following tips:

GENERATORS

Location



Always keep generators at least **20 feet away** from your home



Never operate a generator in an **enclosed space**



Make sure the generator has **3-4 feet** of clear space above and on all sides for proper ventilation



Keep generators **away** from doors, windows, and vents



Always **direct exhaust away** from your home

Use



Always use **grounded cords** and inspect cords for damage prior to use



Use the **proper cord** for the wattage being used



Always use **GFCI protection**



Make sure to start / stop generators when **no electrical loads** are connected



Keep generators dry, **do not operate when wet**, and refuel when cool

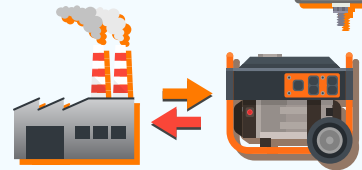


Do not overload generators



Do not plug a generator directly into your home, connect items being powered **directly to the generator**

TRANSFER SWITCHES



Transfer switches, whether manual or automatic, allow you to choose between **utility power** or **backup generator power**



Transfer switches are the only way to **safely power** your home's electrical system



Using a transfer switch **prevents backfeeding**. This occurs when your generator becomes a power source for the **surrounding area** and can damage your home, your neighbor's homes, and injure workers trying to restore power

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING PREVENTION



Improper use and installation of generators could **cause CO poisoning**



Make sure your home has **carbon monoxide alarms** outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home



CO can kill in as little as **5 minutes**

Symptoms of CO poisoning



Dizziness



Headaches



Nausea



Tiredness



If you experience CO poisoning symptoms, **get fresh air, do not reenter areas, and call 911.**

Northern Plains employees donate \$500 prize money to charity



Two of Northern Plains winning employees Tami Aljets and Justin Kollman, delivered a check to Foster County Public Health employees to use toward their Angel Tree Program in December. Back row (left to right): **Kristen Larson, Lisa House, Amber Kruse, Lisa Hilbert, Tami Aljets, Justin Kollman**. Front row (left to right): **Jennifer Whitman, Colleen Sweet**. Not pictured: Cassie Ness

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative employees have donated their prize money from the 2020 Co-op Bingo Fitness Challenge to local charities.

To encourage and reward employees for completing simple and easy health practices that enhance overall health, the ND REC Benefit Trust sponsored a month-long fitness challenge for electric cooperative employees across the state. Each day, participants checked the healthy practices they had completed, and at the end of the week, their “bingo card” was entered in a random drawing for a \$100 cash prize.

Four healthy, and apparently, very lucky, Northern Plains employees came away with \$500 in prize money for their charities, one employee winning twice. Kevin Larson, Becky Nyhagen, Tami Aljets and Justin Kollman donated their prize money to Sanford Health Foundation’s Great American Bike Race, Cando Fire Department, Foster County Public Health’s Angel Tree Program and Carrington Daily Bread’s Backpack Program. ■



Northern Plains members be aware

Members have reported receiving scammer phone calls claiming to be Northern Plains Electric Cooperative asking them to update their account information. DO NOT give your personal information over the phone.

- Thank the caller for the information. Then firmly tell them you will contact the utility company

directly using the number on your bill or on our website.

- Even if the caller insists you have a past due bill or your services will be shut off, never give banking information over the phone unless you place the call to a number you know is legitimate.

Contact us at 800-882-2500 or visit nplains.com.

2021 brings changes



Membership meetings

Every February, we usually update the membership on the schedule for Northern Plains Electric Cooperative's three district meetings. However, you won't find that this year. Due to the bylaw changes that passed by the membership at the annual meeting in August 2020, there will no longer be any district meetings. Director elections and membership updates will now take place during the annual meeting.

This year, the annual meeting will take place in the month of June instead of April. Be on the lookout for more updates on our upcoming annual meeting in the center pages of the *North Dakota Living* magazine and bill stuffers. ■



Washington Youth Tour canceled

Yearly, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative sponsors one lucky student to attend the National Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

Every June, as many as 1,500 high school students from across the country spend a week in the nation's capital visiting historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol.

The Youth Tour is an awesome way to learn about this great nation, develop leadership skills, gain a better understanding of electric cooperatives, and make friendships that will last beyond the week.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, North Dakota has joined over 15 states that have pulled their state from participating in 2021's tour. Northern Plains Electric is saddened to sideline the tour for the second year in a row. However, the safety of the students is our number one concern. ■



North Dakota Electric Cooperative

YOUTH TOUR

Co-op's taxes help our schools and emergency services

Eleven counties served by Northern Plains Electric Cooperative are the beneficiaries of taxes the cooperative pays yearly.

In 2019, Northern Plains Electric paid \$360,042.31 in taxes to the state of North Dakota. The tax money comes from the electric distribution tax, which taxes the electricity Northern Plains' members use. The electric distribution taxes are paid in lieu of property taxes on the cooperative's overhead and underground power lines.

Although Northern Plains sends just one check to the state, the tax revenue flows back to the counties based on the number of miles of power line and kilowatt hours sold in each county.

Counties that received tax money from the co-op in 2019 include:

• Benson	\$66,271.25
• Eddy	\$9,743.45
• Foster	\$60,291.88
• Griggs	\$2,912.70
• Kidder	\$9,471.31
• Pierce	\$21,408.50
• Ramsey	\$15,068.59
• Rolette	\$42,315.67
• Stutsman	\$66,932.29
• Towner	\$40,103.41
• Wells	\$25,523.25

In addition, Northern Plains pays property taxes on the headquarters and outpost buildings it owns in Rolla, Cando, Maddock, Rugby, Carrington, Robinson, Woodworth and Jamestown. ■



**NORTHERN
PLAINS** Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

An equal opportunity provider and employer.

CANDO OFFICE:

609 4th Ave.
Cando, ND 58324

CARRINGTON OFFICE:

1515 West Main
Carrington, ND 58421

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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