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# Tradition continues with onion calendar

BY SAMANTHA VANGSNES



The lives of **Donna** and **Delbert Eszlinger** have been closely tied to the weather as they ranch in McIntosh County.

For centuries, people have turned to nature's signs to help predict the weather, from the behavior of animals to foggy days and much more. As ranchers, Donna and Delbert Eszlinger, as well as their family, rely heavily on the weather for their livelihood. Donna has become well known in the area for using a particular vegetable to forecast the upcoming year's weather.

When he was a child, Delbert recalls visiting his neighbor with his father to see what the onion calendar had predicted. Now, the onion calendar has become a tradition for the Eszlingers.

"My husband's neighbor did it. She was an old

German grandma, and she lived by this," Donna says. "She would do it every year on New Year's Eve."

On New Year's Day, neighbors stopped by her house, wondering what the onion calendar had predicted for the year. Now, neighbors contact Donna.

"New Year's Day, the phone is ringing," Donna says.

Although there may seem to be some kind of trick with a specific variety of onion and particular salt, there isn't.

"I use a nice big round yellow onion," Donna says. "Yes, I buy the onion."

All that is required is a nice big round yellow onion and some table salt.

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On New Year's Eve before bedtime, an onion is cut in half, and the first six layers are separated, since those layers are usually the heartiest and most uniform. Next, the thin membrane is pulled off the layers, and the onion layers are arranged on a large cookie sheet. One half will be January through June, and the other half will be July through December. Once arranged, one teaspoon of salt is placed into each piece of onion.

The next morning, the onions will be either dry or moist. More moisture indicates more moisture in that month, and it will be a drier month where salt remains.

Donna makes her own judgment on the onion. There is no set way, although she enjoys comparing her onion results with others near and far.

### **Weather predictions over the years**

Donna started to intently keep track of the onion calendar and weather patterns in 2012. Before then, it was just something fun for the family to do.

Over the years, some predictions still stump her. She

recalls one year on New Year's Day when her calendar showed same halves of the onion were wet and the other were dry.

"How can the same onion and even layers have two different predictions?" she thought. "I haven't seen that instance since."

Another instance she recalls is 2023. She said her onion was not accurate.

"The onion showed moisture, and it was a dry year overall," Donna says.

Although the onion calendar hasn't stopped the Eszlingers from turning into the local weather channel, it has helped them be prepared for possible weather events, especially during crucial times of the year.

"As farmers and ranchers, we are always watching the weather," Donna says. "We don't take the weather lightly. Our life is based on the weather."

She says it is nice to know if the spring is going to be wet during calving or haying season or if it is going to be dry during planting. ⚡



### **2026 ONION CALENDAR PREDICTIONS**

**January:** All the salt in the onion was absorbed, which means it could be quite a wet month.

**February:** The onion was damp, but not all salt was dissolved. This means February could bring moisture as well.

**March and April:** These halves of the onion both had pools of moisture around the wet salt, signaling for moisture once again.

**May:** This half of the onion showed we could expect more moisture in May than March and April.

**June:** The salt was wet, but not dissolved, which means moisture.

**July and August:** The salt on these pieces was wet and dissolved. This means July and August could bring moisture as well.

**September:** Moisture may be in our sights for September, as all the salt was absorbed.

**October:** The onion was wet, meaning moisture could be in the cards.

**November and December:** These two pieces of the onion had the least amount of moisture. This means we could see less moisture toward the end of 2026.



## MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

## We want your feedback

**Jason Bentz**

Co-General Manager/CEO

At KEM Electric Cooperative, everything we do begins with you, our members. Your feedback helps shape the way we serve you and plan for the future. That's why we're inviting you to take part in our member satisfaction survey.

We encourage you to take a few minutes to complete the survey, which will be included in your February billing statement. If you prefer, you can also complete it online. Instructions for both options will be included. Whether you

choose to respond by mail or online, your voice will be heard, and you will not receive a follow-up phone call asking for survey participation.

Those who participate in the survey and provide their name will be entered in a drawing to win two Medora Musical tickets.

The short survey gives you the opportunity to tell us how we're doing and where we can improve. The

survey only takes a few minutes, but the impact is long-lasting. We use this data to guide improvements in areas that matter most to you. It also helps us make smart, member-focused decisions.

One example of how your feedback makes a difference is based on the 2024 member survey. We have implemented an e-newsletter, which was indicated as a preferred method of communication from our membership.

We also want to remind you the survey also includes four questions that help us measure our performance through the American Customer Satisfaction Index, which is used across the industry as a benchmark for member experiences.

The better we understand your needs, the better we can serve you, not just today, but in the years ahead. We truly value your time and your input. By sharing your thoughts, you're helping us shape the future of our service. ⚡



# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU, OUR MEMBERS!

**Your voice, your impact!** Participate in our member satisfaction survey and play a vital role in shaping the future of our services. Complete the survey by filling out the paper copy included with your February bill, visit our website, [kemelectric.com](http://kemelectric.com), or scan the QR code.

**Paper and online surveys will be accepted through March 1.**



# JOIN KEM ELECTRIC FOR THE CAREER TOUR

JUNE 24-25

**FROM COAL MINES TO WIND TURBINES, POWER PLANTS TO COOPERATIVES  
DIVE INTO THE HEART OF NORTH DAKOTA'S ENERGY SECTOR**



## ENERGY TOUR

This tour offers experiences and expert insights that will broaden your understanding of energy production and distribution. The tour will also introduce you to professionals who are shaping the future of energy in our state. Learn about different career paths and the pivotal role you could play in powering tomorrow's world.



## WHO CAN ATTEND?

- 2025-26 high school juniors, sophomores and freshmen who are interested in exploring careers in energy.
- Students who are curious about the diverse opportunities within North Dakota's energy sector.
- Open to KEM Electric members, and non-members!



## LEARN MORE

Limited spots available. Learn more by visiting [kemelectric.com/north-dakota-career-tour](https://kemelectric.com/north-dakota-career-tour). The application deadline is May 1.

**NORTH DAKOTA YOUTH  
POWER TOUR**



# MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS: Navigating rising infrastructure costs



**Dale Nagel**

Chief of Staff/  
Line Superintendent

The past five years have been a period of rising costs for everyone, including the electric utility industry. Increased costs are a result of soaring demand for electricity, supply chain challenges, material shortages and increased labor costs. The impact beyond increased infrastructure costs includes more unpredictable timelines.

KEM Electric Cooperative uses a multi-year work plan, which allows for ample time to order and secure materials for upcoming projects. Along with cooperatives across the country, KEM Electric has not been excluded from the supply chain and material challenges. For instance, the cost of transformers and regulators has doubled in the last five years, and lead time to secure them continues to change. At one point, lead times were more than a year. Uncertainty in the supply chain causes the operations team to step back and reevaluate projects to ensure time and

money are efficiently utilized.

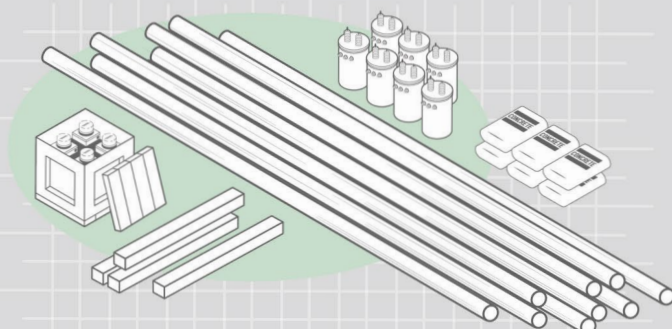
Impacts can be seen all the way down to equipment and materials used by crews every day. Bucket trucks and digger derrick trucks have seen price increases, and a lead time of one-and-a-half to three years is not unusual. The price tag on utility poles has increased 40% to 50% over the last five years. Underground cable and wire prices have fluctuated over the years, and lead times are expected to be six to seven months.

Due to the increase in price and lead times, we know it is important to plan and adapt to changes. Thankfully, we have an effective team of operations personnel and engineers who work efficiently to ensure co-op projects continue, so we can deliver reliable electric services to our members.

We understand prices for essentially everything are rising, which puts a strain on everyone. As KEM Electric navigates rising industry costs, we work closely with our CEO/Co-General Managers and board of directors to explore ways to manage costs for you, our members, while ensuring the reliability of your electric service. ⚡

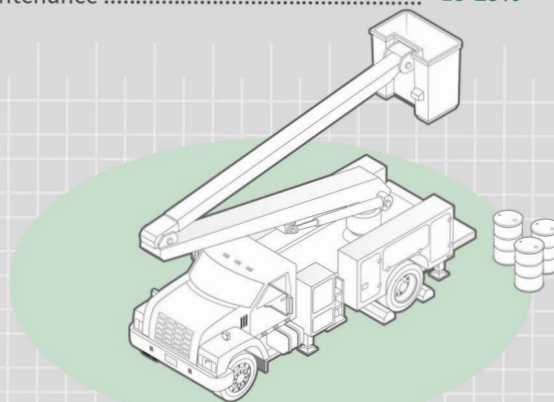
## Infrastructure Costs

Utility poles (wood, steel, composite) .....	<b>+25-40%</b>
Crossarms & braces (steel/wood) .....	<b>+20-35%</b>
Conductor wire (aluminum/copper) .....	<b>+30-50%</b>
Transformers .....	<b>+70-100%</b>
Grain-oriented electrical steel .....	<b>+80-100%</b>
Circuit breakers/reclosers .....	<b>+20-35%</b>



## Fleet Costs

Light trucks .....	<b>+25-40%</b>
Bucket trucks, digger derricks .....	<b>+20-50%</b>
Fuel costs (especially diesel) .....	<b>+20-30%</b>
Maintenance .....	<b>+15-25%</b>



## MESSAGE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS:

# Nomination petition now open



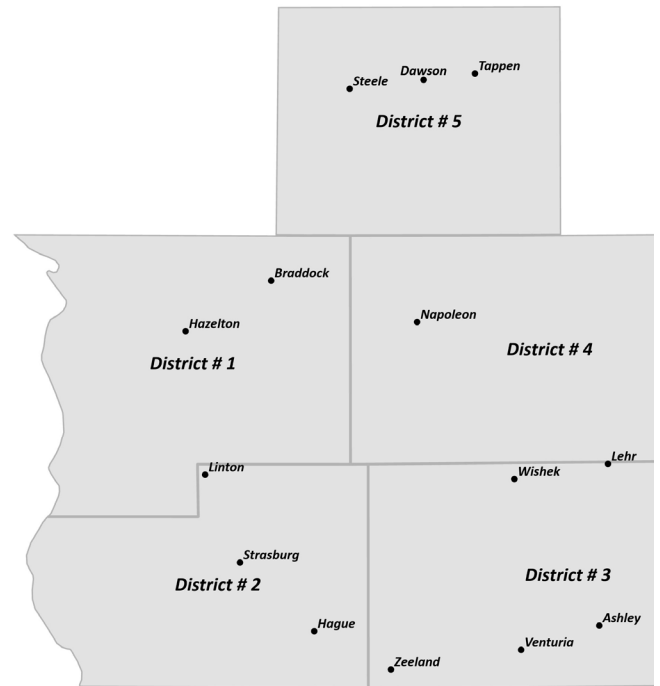
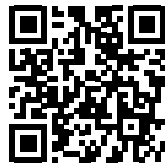
**Marcy Sanders**  
Manager  
of Member Relations

Are you passionate about your community and making a difference? We invite you to join the KEM Electric Cooperative board of directors. KEM Electric currently has a District 4, District 5 and District At-Large position up for election.

If you would like to place your name on the ballot, pick up a petition at the KEM Electric office or download a petition from the cooperative website at [kemelectric.com](http://kemelectric.com). Petitions are now available and must be

returned to the cooperative office no later than March 2. As a reminder, director nominations from the floor at the annual meeting will not be accepted. ⚡

**For more information  
regarding the  
nomination process  
visit our website,  
[kemelectric.com](http://kemelectric.com) or  
scan the QR code.**



KEM Electric district map

## 404. Member Petition-Form Information

(a) Each petition shall contain the following:

1. The name of the member nominee.
2. The director position for which the member nominee shall run.
3. The printed names, addresses, and telephone numbers, date of signature, and original signatures of each member signing the petition.
4. At least 10 signatures of the members of the respective district, or members at-large, as the case may be.

(b) In the case of joint members, the signature of one or more than one joint member shall constitute one joint signature.

(c) Firms, associations, corporations or body politics shall have the right to place one signature on

a petition, the same as other members, by the signature of a duly appointed representative.

(d) Petitions may not be circulated or signed more than 30 days before the date when petitions must be filed pursuant to this Bylaw. Any signature to a nominating petition obtained more than 30 days before that date may not be counted.

(e) All petitions must be filed at the principal offices of the Cooperative on or before the filing date as fixed by the board of directors.

(f) After verifying that a petition complies with this Bylaw, the secretary of the board of directors shall post a list of nominations for directors at the principal office of the Cooperative at least 10 days before the meeting of the members. ⚡



SAFETY STARTS WITH ME:

## Snow removal around electrical equipment



**Kevin Horner**

Linton Area Foreman

Winter is here. As wind, snow and ice conditions continue, members break out their shovels and snowblowers once again. While removing snow and ice, it is important to keep any electrical equipment KEM Electric Cooperative may have on or near your property in mind.

Equipment, such as meters, pad-mounted transformers, commonly known as the big green box, or even overhead lines, are typically located

near snow removal sites such as homes, shops and businesses.

"Keeping areas like your meter and pad-mounted transformers on your property clear of snow and ice helps us act quicker in the event of an outage," says Kevin Horner, Linton area foreman. "But it is important to do so safely."

Here are a few tips to keep in mind this winter as you remove snow:

- **Locate electrical equipment:** Before a heavy snowfall, mark the location of electrical equipment with flags to easily see it when removing snow.
- **Be gentle when clearing snow:** Always use a shovel to clear snow around electrical equipment. Never use a snowblower or plow directly against it.
- **Maintain clearance:** Ensure a safe distance is carefully cleared around pad-mounted transformers, which is typically at least 10 feet in front and 3 feet on the sides.
- **Be aware of overhead lines:** Be mindful of overhead power lines, especially when removing snow from roofs. Never attempt to remove ice from power lines.
- **Report damage:** If you notice any damage to electrical equipment due to snow removal, contact our office as soon as possible. Do not try and fix the damage yourself.

Keeping these tips in mind will help KEM Electric ensure safe and reliable electrical services continue to power your homes and businesses. Please remember, if you notice any damage to electrical equipment, contact our office as soon as possible at 800-472-2673. ⚡

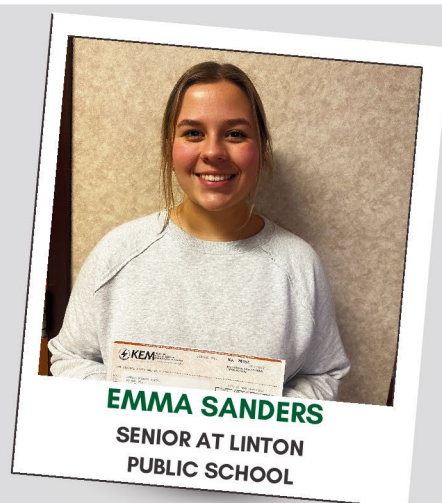
# Congratulations

## EMMA SANDERS FROM LINTON PUBLIC SCHOOL!

### DECEMBER TOUCHSTONE ENERGY® STUDENT OF THE MONTH

"Emma is an outstanding young lady who consistently demonstrates compassion and care for those around her," says Emma's nominator. "Emma has a genuine passion for supporting younger children and enjoys visiting with and assisting her elderly neighbors with tasks they need assistance with."

In **February**, KEM Electric will be accepting nominations of students from **Strasburg Public School**. The deadline for nominations is Feb. 15. This sponsorship is open to any K-12 student. Visit [kemelectric.com](http://kemelectric.com) for more information.



## KEM ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: **DEC. 18, 2025**

The meeting of the board of directors of KEM Electric Cooperative was held on Dec. 18, 2025, in Linton. The meeting was called to order at 12:41 p.m. by Chairman Victor Wald. A quorum was present. Also present were co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief of Staff/Line Superintendent Dale Nagel, Manager of Member Relations Marcy Sanders, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Legal Counsel Jennifer Grosz and Board Liaison Samantha Fischer.

**Consent agenda:** The consent agenda was approved as presented.

**Strategic items:** Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates on Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Western Area Power Administration and other items. Several additional Basin Electric reports and board documents were available for review.

**Department reports:** Craigmile provided the financial report, which included a budget review.

Nagel provided a department report, which included line crew projects and an outage report. Sanders provided a department report on member programs and community engagement. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report for the board. Grosz provided an update on the status on legal topics and projects.

**Action items:** The board discussed and resolved action items.

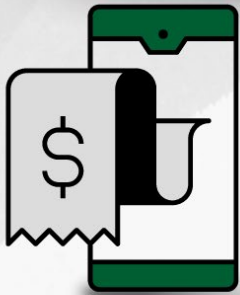
**Discussion/general information:** The board discussed the preliminary operating budget, bylaw amendments and other items.

**Executive session:** The board entered an executive session during the meeting.

The meeting concluded with adjournment. Secretary-Treasurer Carter Vander Wal certified the accuracy of the minutes.

**Next meeting date:** The next meeting is at 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 24 in Linton. ⚡

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### KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

#### DIRECTORS:

Victor Wald, Chairman, District 4..... Napoleon  
John R. Beck, Vice Chairman, District 1..... Linton  
Carter Vander Wal, Sec.-Treas., District 2..... Pollock  
Dean Dewald, Director, District 5..... Dawson  
Neil Meidinger, Director, District 3..... Zeeland  
Carmen Essig, Director-at-Large..... Lehr  
Todd Schnabel, Director-at-Large..... Lehr

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

#### MANAGEMENT:

Travis Kupper..... Co-General Manager/CEO  
Jason Bentz..... Co-General Manager/CEO

#### Report outages to the following toll-free number: **800-472-2673**

Hazleton, Linton and Strasburg exchanges' phone number: 701-254-4666

#### OFFICE HOURS:

Monday through Friday,  
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Website: [kemelectric.com](http://kemelectric.com)  
Email address: [info@kemelectric.com](mailto:info@kemelectric.com)

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