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- Student of the Month
- Planting safety tips
- Youth Tour delegate



A day in the life of a lineworker

BY SAMANTHA VANGSNESS

Ask any lineworker why they do what they do, and you'll hear a mix of pride, purpose and a sense of responsibility that stretches far beyond the infrastructure itself. For a cooperative lineworker, dedication is woven into every part of the day. From the early morning safety checks to the late-night outage calls, each moment is driven by a commitment to serve the KEM Electric Cooperative members.

As we recognize Lineworker Appreciation Day April 13, we want to take you behind the scenes with the team who keeps our communities flowing with safe, reliable electric service.

Starting the day with safety

Every morning, the KEM Electric line crew is in the shop, gearing up for the day ahead. The shop is filled with a sense of purpose, as the crew reviews the work ahead with the foreman. Piece by piece, they gather the material they'll need for the day, ranging from insulators tools and load the trucks.

Before the engines start and the doors roll open, the crew circles for a "tailgate" safety briefing. This daily routine sets the tone for each day and ensures everyone understands the potential hazards of the upcoming projects. Additionally, the crew does a 360-degree check of the trucks to ensure everything is running properly and materials are safely secured.

For KEM Electric, safety isn't just a checklist. It's the culture that guides every decision. Whether lineworkers are replacing a pole, making repairs or performing system maintenance, they approach each task with careful planning and teamwork.

"Safety is important, because I have a family always waiting for me at home, along with my co-workers who have their family waiting for them at home," says Dillon Steinolfson, journeyman lineworker.

From there, the lineworkers grab the work plan, their lunches and head to the field for the day. Once on the road, the lineworkers use tablets to help them navigate directions to the jobsite, although most lineworkers know the service area like the back of their hands. Most KEM Electric lineworkers grew up in the area or have lived here for many years and are familiar with the landscape as well as the membership.

"I have come to know members better through outages and service upgrades and the outside programs that I donate my time to, such as Steele Fire and Rescue, Kidder County Sportsman's Association and Masons and Shriners," says Jake Zink, journeyman lineworker. "The best part of my job is helping others when they need it."

Collaboration at the jobsite

When they arrive at the jobsite, the lineworkers gather once more to run through the plan for the project. During these "tailgates," everyone has the chance to ask questions and offer suggestions before any work begins. The culture of trust and collaboration is something the crew members take seriously. They understand clear, honest communication is essential on every job, ensuring the work is done safely and everyone goes home at the end of the day.

"I value my fellow crew members' reliability and

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teamwork. Also, their commitment to safety and looking out for one another. In line work, trust and accountability are everything. Everyone takes the job seriously and works as a team to get it done safely and efficiently,” says Kevin Horner, Linton area foreman. “When working together on jobs, safety, communication and trust are important. Everyone needs to understand the plan and speak up if something doesn’t look right. We depend on each other to follow procedures and stay focused, so everyone goes home.”

Serving rural communities

As an electric cooperative, KEM Electric serves rural communities. It’s no surprise many of the jobs happen near a cornfield or your home or in the pasture. Out here, neighbors look out for neighbors, and that spirit is what makes KEM Electric members truly unique.

KEM Electric members help our line crew beyond guiding the cooperative through voting. They are also there for the crew during unplanned situations.

“KEM Electric’s membership is always understanding and always willing to help with access during storms. Countless times, I’ve had members offer to move snow to access problems or pulling trucks out when stuck,” says Marty Messer, Steele area foreman.

Often, KEM Electric line crews face instances out of their control. Factors such as weather, animals and even accidents impact our system and may need us to pivot in a moment’s notice. Outages don’t always wait for working hours, and KEM Electric lineworkers are ready to respond, even on weekends and holidays.

“We were working a frost storm over Christmas and it was around 6 or 7 in the morning. We had just energized a small tap that had a couple houses on it and when we drove past the first house, there were a couple young kids cheering and banging on the window. It made a guy feel pretty good,” says Tyler Schummer, journeyman lineworker.

KEM Electric members are always willing to help

and make our employees feel valued during outages, especially those that are more challenging.

“During an ice storm around Christmas, we were patrolling a line, looking for problem areas, when we pulled into a yard and the consumer brought us out a big plate of Christmas cookies,” says Austin Ohlhauser, journeyman lineworker.

Restoring power, together

When storm outages roll in, it is all hands on deck, from our member services to our operations department. When the power goes out, KEM Electric employees are analyzing and working toward restoration as efficiently and safely as possible.

Our member services team fields calls and ensures all outages being reported are put into our system, while our operations department is working with technology in the office to troubleshoot where the outage originated. KEM Electric employees work as a team to ensure an efficient process is in place to get electric services safely restored to homes and businesses.

“Storms and large-scale outages can be tricky. Conversations between crews and office personnel are typically held between cellphones and radios. All KEM Electric trucks are equipped with GPS, and office personnel can always see them on the map. This is critical during storms,” says Kirk Praus, journeyman lineworker. “Without proper communication, lines wouldn’t be energized as efficiently and lineworkers could be put in dangerous situations.”

Returning home

Lineworkers are no strangers to working long hours to ensure the job is done and members have a consistent, reliable flow of electricity. But after the job is complete, they look forward to going home to their families.

“Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with family and friends,” says Tyler Jacob, journeyman lineworker. Linework is a demanding, yet rewarding, career

that takes heart and a commitment to members, communities and their families. This commitment keeps lineworkers going to restore electric services to cooperative members during a windy, cold night.

A lineworker's job is essential, their service is steady and their heart is woven into every line they build.

"I became a lineman to represent a part of the production and maintenance of the power system in our rural community, to serve the community to

the best of my ability and be as helpful as I can be to members and neighbors," says Nick Nieuwsma, journeyman lineworker. "To me, being a lineman is a duty to keep the members' lights on. Being a cog in the system that keeps the community operating and functioning well is important to me, working to serve with the purpose of providing power in a safe, efficient manner." ⚡

MANAGER'S MESSAGE: Call before you dig



Jason Bentz
Co-General Manager/CEO

Spring is just around the corner, and there's never been a better time to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Perhaps you're making plans for a new shop or a yard makeover. Wherever your spring projects take you, remember to keep safety in mind for all projects, especially those requiring digging.

Most of us never think about the electric, gas, water and other infrastructure buried below the ground, but hitting one of these lines while digging is not the reminder you'll want. Trust us! KEM Electric Cooperative reminds all members who are planning a digging project to call 811 at least three business days before you start. Or you can submit a request online by visiting ndonecall.com.

Here's how the process works:

- **After you call 811 or submit your request online, all affected utility companies will be notified of your intent to dig.** It may take the utilities a few

days to get to your request, so please be patient.

- **The affected utility companies will send someone to mark the buried lines with paint or flags.**
- **Before you break ground, confirm all utility companies have responded to your request.** If you placed your request by phone, use the process explained by your 811 call center representative. If you submitted your request online, refer to your 811 center ticket to confirm everything.

Please keep in mind only public utility companies will be marked. As a homeowner, you are responsible for locating private utility lines.

By taking this important step before you break ground on your project, you can help protect not only yourself, but our community. Disrupting an underground utility line can interrupt service, cause injuries and cost money to repair, so remember to call 811 first and know what's below. ⚡



CALL BEFORE YOU DIG



 <p>NOTIFY</p> <p>Call 811 or make a request online by visiting: ndonecall.com</p> <p>Be sure to make the request three days before you start.</p>	 <p>WAIT</p> <p>Wait three business days for a response to your request.</p> <p>A utility company locator will be sent to mark any utility lines.</p>	 <p>CONFIRM</p> <p>Confirm that all affected utility companies have responded by comparing the markers to the list of utilities the 811 call center notified.</p>	 <p>RESPECT</p> <p>Respect the markers provided by the affected utility companies. They are your guide for the duration of your project.</p>	 <p>DIG</p> <p>Be sure there is 18-24 inches on all sides of the marker before you begin to dig. If you can't consider moving your projects.</p>
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MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS:

Strengthening employee safety and functionality



Dale Nagel

Chief of Staff/
Line Superintendent

Safety is a top priority at KEM Electric Cooperative, where each cooperative employee takes safety to heart and plays an important role. From daily “tailgates” or safety briefings before each job to monthly safety committee meetings and yearly safety audits, cooperative employees continue to embrace safety practices.

Each year, KEM Electric participates in a safety audit through N.D. Workforce Safety and Insurance (WSI). WSI offers a safety management program

that benefits the whole cooperative, from operations to member services personnel. The program aims to help reduce workplace injuries and improve ergonomics and safety technology. KEM Electric uses the ergonomic grants toward equipment to reduce employee fatigue and help eliminate injuries.

KEM Electric has taken part in WSI’s safety incentive program for 10 years, saving the cooperative over \$24,000. In addition, workplaces are eligible for up to a 25% discount on insurance by adhering to WSI’s safety management program. To be eligible for these discounts, KEM Electric reviews and meets annual goals set by KEM Electric’s Safety Committee. The Safety Committee, which includes employees from each department at the cooperative, meets every month.

KEM Electric also participates in the safety management program, Safety Committee program, drug-free workplace program and certified safety management systems. Yearly safety goals vary from performing a 360-degree check before moving trucks, being aware of surroundings when driving and using the proper tool for the task at hand.

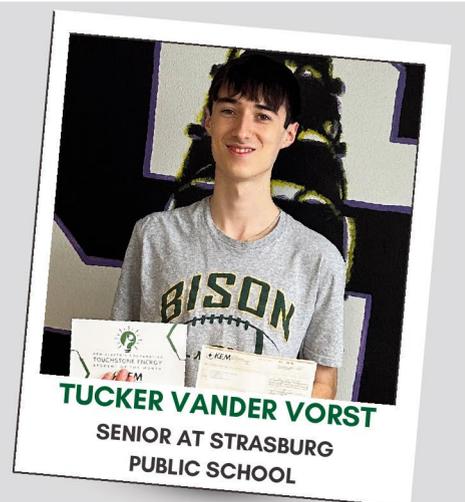
The WSI program helps our cooperative employees continue to keep safety top of mind to deliver safe, reliable electric services to our communities, while also saving costs for our membership. ⚡

Congratulations TUCKER VANDER VORST FROM STRASBURG PUBLIC SCHOOL!

FEBRUARY TOUCHSTONE ENERGY® STUDENT OF THE MONTH

“Tucker has shown great leadership skills not only while working with elementary students, but also on the football field and basketball court with his teammates,” says Tucker’s nominator.

In **April**, KEM Electric will be accepting nominations of homeschool students or dependents of KEM Electric members outside of the service area. The deadline for nominations is April 15. This sponsorship is open to any K-12 student. Visit kemelectric.com for more information.



MESSAGE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS: Undeliverable capital credits

KEM Electric Cooperative needs new addresses to mail members their capital credit allocation statements and/or capital credit check from last year. The following list of KEM Electric members and their current address on file (last known address) were mailed allocation statements and/or checks, which were returned from the post office because it was “not a deliverable address,” “unable to forward” or “attempted not known.” If you know of a current address, please call the KEM Electric office at 701-254-4666 or 800-472-2673. These are unclaimed capital credit allocations as of Feb. 20. ⚡

JOHN H. ACKERMAN
ASHLEY PARK BOARD
DARELL BAISCH
DALLAS BAKKEN
JOHN J. BAUMGARTNER
BENZ FARM LLP
SANDRA J. BOEHLER
DONOVAN BOSCHEE
JAMES T. BOWER
DAVID BRANDNER
DAVID BRENDEL
TRENT D. BROWNING
KENTON W. BUCHHOLZ
LARRY BUCHHOLZ
IVA BURCHETT
BURLINGTON NORTHERN
RAILWAY SANTA FE
CENEX OF LINTON
ROBERT CODDINGTON
COMMNET WIRELESS LLC
LES DAVIS
JOHN DENDINGER
MARY DERHEIM
VERL DORNBUSH
TIM DRONEN
HARRY EBELE JR.
DANA EHLI
LAWRENCE G. ELL
ELDA ERBELE
JEFF ERBELE
TIM ERBELE
BEN ERICKSON
DAVID FAWCETT
ROBERT L. FEIST
LORRAINE FERGUSON
MARLIN FETZER
JAN FRANSEN
EDWARD FUHRER

- DECEASED
CLINT GEORGE
TRAVIS GLAESMAN
MATTHEW GRENZ
RODNEY GRENZ
DAVE GRINSTEINER
TERRY LEE GROSS
TIM GROSS
VAL J. GROSS
ZACHARY GROSS
ARLENE GROSZHANS
MICHAEL GULLICKSON
AMANDA HANCOCK
TIM HARRIMAN
TOM HEINZ
RAYMOND L. HEYNE
MYRON L. HUBER
ALAN JACOB
TOM JAHNER
CLARICE L. JENSEN
SANDY Y. JOB
OSCAR KEMMET
BRUCE KETTERLING
GINA KETTERLING
TRUST KETTERLING
LARRY A. KOLBO
EDDIE KRAMER JR.
MICHAEL J. KUNZ
ESTATE OF EVELYN LANG
KAREN A. LANG
JASON LARSON
LARRY J. LAUNGER
HERBERT LOEBS
ROSE M. MAIER
MIKE MANN
VERNON J. MEIDINGER
LEONARD J. MEIER
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ROBERT P MILLER
SCOTT L. MILLER
RICK MITTLEIDER
ANTHONY MOCK
DANIEL L. MOCK
NAOMI MONSON
KENNETH MOSER
RICHARD A. MUELLER
KATHERINE NAGEL
WESLEY S. NICHOLSON
CLIFFORD NITSCHKE
DALE NYGAARD
KEVIN W. OLIVER
JUSTIN OLSON
CHARLES PALS
RICHARD PARMLEY
FELIX D. PIATZ
PIONEER HERITAGE
TERRY PRESZLER
LORRAINE RAU
HOWARD RETZLAFF
CAROL L. REUER
LARRY L. RITTER
PERRY RODENBURG
TODD RODENBURG
MICHAEL ROHRICH
HAL ROSENBLUTH
ROSEMARY RUBBELKE
PRISCILLA RUDOLF
GORDON RUDY
ARLO RYCKMAN
PERRY D. RYCKMAN
ROBERT RYCKMAN
EDWARD W. SAYLER
BRYAN SCHATZ
MELVIN J. SCHAUER
EDWARD SCHERR
JAMES SCHILLING
SANDY SCHLENKER
RUSS SCHMIDT
CLARENCE J. SCHULTES

JACK D. SCHWAB
AME SMITH
JEFF SMITH
GLORIA SOULE
LYNETTE STEWART
JAMES STREYLE
MARK STROH
MRS ESTATE OF MRS.
PETER STROH
SHAWN STROH
MYRON STROM
ALAN SVANES
DANA SVANES
TRASH INC.
DONNA VAN BEEK
JUDY VAN BEEK
RICK VAN BEEK
CHAD VANDER VORST
GERALD VANDER VORST
LOUIS VANDER VORST
JANE VANDER WAL
LORRAINE VANDER WAL
W&S RANCH
MONTE WAHL
ANDREW WALD
DUANE A. WALD
ELAINE A. WALD
LEROY WALTHER
DARCY J. WANGLER
MATT WARREN
WASTE
MANAGEMENT LINTON
MARY WEBER
MARTHA WEIGEL
TIM WERRE
WESTERN WIRELESS
CORPORATION
ALLEN WILL
WILLOWS MOTEL INC.
WISHEK WILDLIFE CLUB
BRADLEY ZIMMERMAN

View and search undeliverable capital credits by scanning the QR code or visiting our website.



SAFETY STARTS WITH ME: **Planting safety tips**



Tyler Jacob
Journeyman Lineworker

As spring approaches and fieldwork begins, our rural communities gear up for another busy planting season. Farm machinery has become larger over the years, increasing the risk for contact with electrical equipment. During this busy time of year, staying aware, working carefully and understanding potential risks can make all the difference in keeping everyone safe.

“Planting season moves fast,” says Tyler Jacob, journeyman lineworker. “Even when you know the area like the back of your hand, it’s crucial to slow down, stay alert and pay attention to what’s around you.”

To help ensure a safe planting season, here are a few tips to keep in mind while in the field and traveling on road:

- **Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines.** Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines. An 18-foot clearance is recommended under power lines.
- **Be aware of the clearance of equipment extensions and materials you are hauling before**

moving or transporting. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods, into power lines. Remember, nonmetallic materials, such as lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay, can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.

- **Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path.** Doing so could result in electric shock or death. If you need power lines to be raised or moved to help with moving large machinery this season, call our office at 800-472-2673 so we can safely assist you.

Remember, if your equipment comes into contact with an energized or downed power line, call 911 immediately. Stay inside until the power line is de-energized. If there is smoke or fire, exit by jumping clear of the cab without touching the equipment and hop away to safety. We also urge you to contact your electric cooperative for additional assistance.

We know accidents happen, so please do not hesitate to call us if you come into contact or damage KEM Electric infrastructure. The quicker we become aware of the issue, the sooner we can send a crew to assess and repair the damage. Our No. 1 priority is safety for members, employees and the communities we serve.

On behalf of all of us at KEM Electric, we wish you a safe and prosperous planting season. ⚡

APPLY FOR THE YOUTH CAREER TOUR

JUNE 24-25

**JUNIORS, SOPHOMORES AND FRESHMEN, YOU'RE INVITED TO
DIVE INTO THE HEART OF NORTH DAKOTA'S ENERGY SECTOR**

Limited spots available. Learn more by scanning the QR code or visiting: www.kemelectric.com.

Application deadline is May 1.



Bodvig announced as Youth Tour representative



Keylee Bodvig

Each June, students are immersed in a one-of-a-kind experience in Washington, D.C., through the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. KEM Electric Cooperative chose one local applicant to represent the cooperative on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. Applicants are asked to answer the essay question, "As member-owned

organizations, electric cooperatives are always seeking new ways to engage their members. What are some ways electric cooperatives can better communicate and connect, especially with students and young adults?"

KEM Electric announces Keylee Bodvig, the daughter of Korey and Tiffany, will be representing KEM Electric on the exciting weeklong trip. Keylee is a junior at Kidder County High School and is active in one-act play, choir, volleyball and track. Outside of school, she enjoys baking and babysitting as well as working at a day care.

"I enjoy traveling, so I thought I may as well try and apply," Keylee says.

She says she looks forward to the whole experience, but wants to see the Holocaust Museum to learn more about that time in history.

Keylee and other North Dakota electric cooperative representatives will visit Washington, D.C., in June. Follow Keylee's journey on KEM Electric's Facebook and Instagram.

Keylee's essay: New ways to engage

When I read the question, it got me thinking about different ways to get teens and young adults involved. I came up with a few ideas I think could really help. One thing I thought of right away was using social media and its trends to make it fun and a safe way to interact. A few others are inviting local schools to tour the KEM facility to check out the different jobs, and also doing a junior KEM board. These are some methods for teens to engage in the community through KEM.

The first idea is to engage with the teens through social media and its trends. Most teens have phones and use social media like TikTok or Instagram. Most teens use TikTok or Instagram every day. When a trend goes viral, lots of people see it, watch it and want to copy it. Tons of people see it in a short amount of time. If KEM were to engage with these social media trends, I think lots of teens would see the videos and

become interested in how KEM works! I feel like teens would notice KEM and want to learn more about it.

If KEM were to participate in these social media trends, it would be a really fun way to show that KEM is more than just a business, but a really fun place of work, and a great way for them to imagine having a future in the industry. Following or starting trends would make a difference in the electric business and among young adults and teens. I think it would be great for KEM and the teens.

The second way KEM can engage with young people is by inviting schools to tour the facility. KEM can invite classes or groups of young adults to tour and to show them the different ways KEM makes a difference in the community. They could watch lineworkers climb poles and fix power lines, watch them fix technical problems, watch customer service help customers and watch how managers keep the place running. As a teen, I feel like my peers learn best by seeing and doing. Watching KEM employees work and letting us use our hands to learn are great ways to get young people involved. Letting young people see these jobs in person could inspire them to pursue careers as a lineworker, a business degree, customer service or even becoming a manager.

The last way KEM can engage with teens and young adults is by having a junior board. The junior board would be able to sit in on some board meetings and learn how the KEM board works and operates. They could get to know some of the board members and understand why it's important to be part of these boards, and they get to learn how decisions are made. Having a junior board, they could also meet every so often to learn more about KEM and its everyday operations. They could also help come up with ideas to help the community and KEM. This board would also teach them how important KEM is in so many different communities. Teens being able to serve on the junior board would teach them leadership skills, teamwork and so many other great skills!

In conclusion, there are many different ways KEM can connect with young adults and teens. Social media trends help spread the word about KEM and all the good things they do. Inviting schools and young adults to tour the facility can show them what KEM is all about. My last idea is a junior board that can help the community, teach young adults and teens how to lead, show them how a great company runs and help so many different communities. These ways really help teens and show them what they don't know about KEM, how KEM works and what KEM really does for its customers and communities. ⚡

KEM ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: JAN. 27

The meeting of the board of directors of KEM Electric Cooperative was held on Jan. 27 in Steele. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair 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 Connie Hill. Tyler Richter from Brady Martz attended as a guest.

Consent agenda: The consent agenda was approved as presented.

Strategic items: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates on an internal cybersecurity policy, Basin Electric Power Cooperative district managers meeting, housekeeping items and other items. Several additional Basin Electric reports and board documents were available for review.

Department reports: Craigmile provided a financial report that included a review of the December financials, covering operating revenue and key ratios. Nagel provided a department report,

which included line crews projects, recent outages, inventory updates, technology upgrades and upcoming projects. Sanders provided a department report on the upcoming member satisfaction survey, youth program updates and director nomination information. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report for the board, which included technology updates. Grosz provided an update on projects, such as easements and permits.

Action items: The board discussed and resolved action items, such as the 2026 mutual aid agreement, board policies and other items.

Discussion/general information: Richter provided the board with an annual pre-audit discussion. The board also discussed the exposure control plan and bylaw amendments.

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 April 21 in Linton. ⚡



SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR 2026 ANNUAL MEETING JUNE 9 IN NAPOLEON

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

Hazelton, 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

Email address: info@kemelectric.com

FIND US ON:

