

Manager's message: Giving back to our community



Over the past year, you've probably heard or read about KEM Electric's concern for our community. This is one of the core

principles that sets cooperatives apart from other types of utilities and businesses. We've always taken this mission and responsibility to heart. It's who we are as a co-op.

Now, with the holidays behind us, it has made me pause and reflect on the role we play in our rural area. While our purpose is to provide safe and reliable energy to you, the members we serve, we have a greater mission—to be a catalyst for good.

You're probably aware of our Operation Round-Up program, where we take donations from generous members like you who have "rounded up" the amount due on their electric bill to donate to local charities. Or our Youth Tour program, where we take our community's brightest young people to Washington,

D.C. for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action.

You'll also see our employees serving on local boards, coaching youth sports, volunteering at charitable events. Because when you work at a co-op, you understand how important a strong community is—after all, without you, the co-op wouldn't exist.

We know that our core job is to keep the lights on; but our passion is our rural areas and we want to make it a better place for all.

If there's anything we can do to help you—whether providing energy-saving advice to help lower your monthly bill or discuss payment plan options during these difficult times—please reach out to us at KEM Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Concern for community is the heart and soul of who we are. And no matter what the future brings, you can count on your electric co-op to care about you. ⚡

Travis Kupper

Interested in becoming a director?

KEM Electric Cooperative's 2022 annual meeting will be held on June 15, 2023. This year, the director seats up for election are those of Victor (Chuck) J Wald, District #4; Dean Dewald, District #5; and Carmen Essig, District-at-Large.

KEM Electric Cooperative is governed by a seven-member board of directors that is elected by you – the members and owners of the electric cooperative.

The cooperative is divided into five districts, with one director representing each district and two at-large board seats.

If you would like to place your name on the ballot, pick up a petition at the KEM office or download a petition from the cooperative website at www.kemelectric.com. Petitions become available on January 31, 2023. Petitions must be returned to the cooperative office no later than May 2nd. As a reminder, KEM Electric no longer allows nominations from the floor after the membership voted to remove the option from the by-laws in 2021.

Interested in learning more about the details? Check out this month's issue of *North Dakota Living*. ⚡

OFFICERS

Chair.....Victor "Chuck" Wald
Vice Chair..... John Beck
Secretary-Treasurer.....Carter Vander Wal

DIRECTORS:

Dean Dewald • Dean Hummel
Carmen Essig • Neil Meidinger

CO-GENERAL MANAGERS/CEOS:

Travis Kupper
Jason Bentz

Safety starts with me: Tyler Schummer



“At KEM Electric, we do our best to maintain our system to ensure readiness for all types of severe weather and to reduce the number of outages, but mother nature can be unpredictable.” Said Tyler Schummer, KEM’s Journeyman Lineman.

That being said, outages are inevitable. Here at KEM, our line crew takes necessary safety precautions when restoring power for you, our members.

However, our line crew’s safety remains in your hands. When using portable generators in the event of a downed power line, this can prove to be dangerous and, in some cases, fatal to our linemen when used incorrectly.

A generator plugged into a home’s wiring or regular household outlet can cause back feeding along power lines and electrocute anyone that comes into contact with them - even if the line seems deenergized.

Not only does this cause danger for our linemen, but also for our members. In the event that a generator is used improperly, generator owners may also be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage, or carbon monoxide poisoning.

Here are some tips to ensure you are using a generator correctly:

- Never connect a generator directly to your home’s wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use.
- Always plug appliances directly into generators.
- Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords.
- Ensure your generator is properly grounded.
- Never overload a generator.
- Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.
- Keep the generator dry. Operate it on a dry surface under an open structure.
- Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby.
- Never refuel a generator while it is operating.
- Read and adhere to the manufacturer’s instructions for safe operation.

We encourage you to protect the well-being and safety of your family as well as those that assist in bringing power to you, our members. Contact KEM Electric for more information regarding generator hook ups. ⚡

Bentz announced as KEM Electric co-general manager/CEO

Line workers in the energy industry are taught from early in their careers that they will be faced with various challenges on a regular basis. These challenging conditions prepared Jason Bentz for his new role as Co-General Manager/CEO of KEM Electric Cooperative.

In late 2022, the KEM Electric board of directors announced that Bentz would be joining Travis Kupper in leading the cooperative beginning in 2023.

KEM Electric board of director president, Chuck Wald, noted, “Jason’s experience and leadership will be instrumental to our success as we continue to serve the needs of our membership.”

Serving the cooperatives

From a young age, Bentz recalls his interest in the electric service industry. His basic understanding of the profession came from a cousin who served as a cooperative lineman for many years. “I was always interested in being able to work with my hands while being outside, and since I wasn’t afraid of heights, I thought I would pursue a career as a lineman,” Bentz noted.

He pursued his goals, and after receiving the required training from Bismarck State College, Bentz headed out of state to do work for Theil Construction in Nebraska and Oklahoma. During his first transmission job, Bentz remembers feeling validated in my career choice. “When I was on my first transmission project in Nebraska, I was working on a 230KV and asked to go unclip wires in preparation for new wires to be pulled in. While on a 90-foot pole, which was situated on top of 300-foot plateau, I thought ‘Yes, I made the right choice’ as the view was spectacular,” he noted.

To read more about Bentz and his new position at KEM Electric, check out our local pages in this month’s issue of *North Dakota Living*. ⚡

Apply for Youth Tour

High School sophomores and juniors: write a winning essay and win the trip of a lifetime!
The deadline to apply for the 2023 Youth Tour is Jan. 20.

Learn more by visiting our website at KEMElectric.com/youth-tour.