

- The cooperative way
- Surge protection 101
- Students of the Month
- Annual meeting June 11



Manager of Member Relations **Marcy Sanders** visits with members at KEM Electric Cooperative's Kraut, Knoephla and Kilowatts Member Appreciation Day in Steele.

ELECTRIFYING THE FUTURE:

# KEM Electric powers into 2024 and beyond

KEM Electric Cooperative is continuously looking for ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the infrastructure and communications to best serve you, our members. The team at KEM Electric has been planning 2024 projects well in advance and crews will now be making updates and completing projects. This will ensure KEM Electric can deliver efficient and reliable power to members.

Along with infrastructure upgrades, the KEM Electric staff is working to meet members around the service area through local events and to inform members about information that may benefit them, such as scholarships and grant opportunities.

## Ensuring reliable power

The operations department has been working to update and maintain infrastructure to continue to ensure reliability for members, says Chief of Staff/Line Superintendent Dale Nagel.

Nagel notes projects for the year include general maintenance of infrastructure, which consists of pole testing and pole changeouts, as well as noting clearance issues. The crews will also work to convert overhead lines to underground.

"Ensuring safe, efficient and reliable power for our members is the highest priority for KEM Electric," Nagel says. "Continuing to maintain and upgrade lines

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Journeyman Lineworker **Austin Ohlhauser** helps ensure the cooperative delivers reliable power to members.

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in our service area helps us do just that.”

The cooperative plans to continue utilizing and installing technologies to improve the systems and workflow. This includes trip saver technology, which saves on maintenance and replacement, as well as leads to shorter or even fewer outages. A trip saver acts like a breaker in your home when an outage occurs.

### **Connecting with members**

Over the year, KEM Electric has been looking for ways to meet members where they are to answer questions and serve as a resource. As a new way to meet with members, KEM Electric hosted member appreciation events. These events included sausage, knoephla and kraut, along with the opportunity to visit with KEM Electric directors, CEOs and staff.

KEM Electric will be hosting its annual meeting on Tuesday, June 11, in Linton at Our Club, formally the Knights of Columbus Hall.

“We enjoyed being able to connect with members at these events and look forward to connecting throughout the year,” says Manager of Member Relations Marcy Sanders.

### **Serving the service area**

KEM Electric also continues to provide scholarships through area schools and Basin Electric Power Cooperative. At the annual meeting in June,

students will also have the chance to win luck-of-the-draw scholarships.

A new program KEM Electric unveiled for the 2023-24 school year is the KEM Electric Touchstone Energy® Student of the Month sponsorship. This sponsorship is available to any student at schools in KEM Electric’s service area. A student is randomly chosen and awarded funds to use how they choose within his or her school. In March, a student from Wishek Public School will be chosen.

KEM Electric also offers a handful of grant opportunities throughout the year. Some of these programs include Operation Round Up, which is a voluntary contribution through rounding up electric bills to the next dollar. Funds will be disbursed in the general service area of KEM Electric solely for educational, charitable, safety or scientific purposes by a designated Operation Round Up board. Members can apply for grant funds and find out more about Operation Round Up at [www.kemelectric.com](http://www.kemelectric.com). The next deadline for applications is March 31.

### **Serving you in 2024**

Looking forward to 2024, KEM Electric is working to redesign the electric bills and membership applications to be more accessible to members. The redesign will enhance your experience by providing clearer information and ultimately ensuring more efficient and user-friendly interaction for members. ⚡

MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

# The cooperative way



Travis Kupper

In the dynamic landscape of energy, our electric cooperative stands as a testament to the power of progress. I am thrilled to share insights into what makes us more than just an energy provider. We are a cooperative, shaped by the collective efforts and aspirations of each member.

Have you ever wondered about the origins of electric cooperatives?

The cooperative movement emerged in response to the need for rural electrification during the early to mid-20th century. Communities, often overlooked by traditional utilities, came together, pooled resources and formed cooperatives to bring electricity to their homes. This grassroots movement laid the foundation for our cooperative principles, emphasizing community, equality and shared prosperity.

### Cooperative 101: The core principles

• **Member ownership:** In our cooperative, you're not just a consumer. You're a member and a vital part of our success story. Your membership means ownership, and every member, regardless of the size of his or her contribution, has a say in the decisions that shape our cooperative's path.

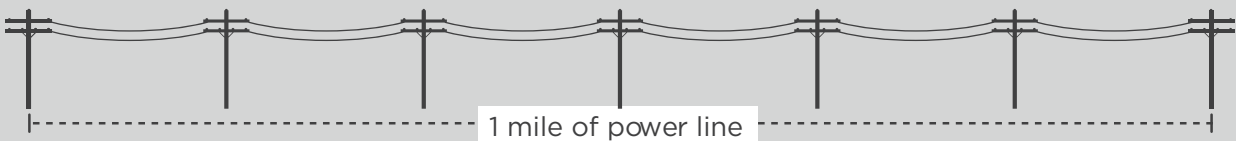
- **Democracy in action:** Our cooperative operates on democratic principles, ensuring your voice matters. Through the election of representatives, we guarantee your interests are at the forefront of our decision-making processes. You will be able to exercise your voice at the upcoming annual meeting on Tuesday, June 11.
- **Local control:** No two counties are alike, which we understand. That's why our cooperative believes in local control. Decisions are made by those who understand the unique needs and challenges of our local area, ensuring tailor-made solutions for you.
- **Local commitment:** We're not just about delivering electricity; we're committed to enhancing the overall well-being of our service area. Our initiatives extend beyond kilowatts, encompassing programs like scholarships, Operation Round Up and other grant opportunities.

As we stand on the shoulders of this cooperative history, remember you are not just a member; you are an essential participant in a movement that's been shaping the future for decades. ⚡



## GOING THE EXTRA MILE | Did you know electric co-ops power fewer consumers per mile of line compared to other utilities?

**KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**  
Serves less than 1 member per mile of line



**OTHER ELECTRIC UTILITIES**  
Serve 32 consumers per mile of line

## SAFETY STARTS WITH ME:

# Surge protection 101

Behind the walls of your home is a network of wires that ensures the seamless journey of electricity from the power line to your outlet. Sometimes, the unexpected occurs and an increase in voltage can happen. These are known as power surges.

“Power surges can be caused by lightning, electrical overload, faulty wiring, power outages or other reasons,” says Kirk Praus, a journeyman lineworker.

Regardless of the cause, power surges can majorly damage electronic devices and equipment in your home.

“Members can take precautions to prevent the impact surges can have on their electronics,” Praus says.

### Lightning

Lightning is one of the most common causes of power surges. Most of us have experienced this during a severe thunderstorm. When lightning strikes an electrical system, the excess current must be channeled somewhere. Unfortunately, it’s sometimes sent through a home. Your best bet is to unplug all unused devices and electronics during severe thunderstorms.

### Electronic overload

Electronic overload is another common cause of power surges. This happens when devices or appliances are plugged into an outlet that can’t handle the required amount of voltage or if multiple devices are plugged into one outlet through an extension cord. If you’re experiencing power surges due to electrical overload, it’s time to call a qualified electrician to evaluate your home’s circuits and electrical needs.

### Faulty wiring

Faulty wiring in a home can also cause power surges. Damaged or exposed wires can cause spikes in voltage, creating a potentially dangerous situation. If you notice signs of faulty wiring, like visible burns on outlets, buzzing sounds from outlets or frequently tripped circuit breakers, your home may be due for electrical wiring repairs and updates.

### Power outages

Surges can also occur after a power outage. Sometimes, when electricity is being restored and reconnected, it’s common to experience a quick surge in current. It’s best to unplug sensitive electronics during an outage. Then, wait to plug them back in after power is fully restored.

### How to prepare for surges

Although KEM Electric Cooperative does its best to provide members with steady, reliable energy, surges



can occur.

“Aside from unplugging devices when you suspect a power surge, there are two ways members can take additional precautions to protect electronics in their homes,” Praus says.

Devices like power strips can protect electronics during most surges.

“Not all power strips include surge protection, so it is important to read the packaging label carefully before you buy, and don’t overload the power strip with too many devices,” Praus says. You can also install specialized electrical outlets that offer additional surge protection.

“Another option is a whole-home surge protector, which can help protect your home from larger, more powerful surges,” Praus suggests. In most cases, whole-home suppressors are connected to your home’s service panel and include features like thermal fuses and notification capabilities that indicate when a device has been impacted by a surge.

### Safety Starts with ME (& YOU)!

Safety is the highest priority at KEM Electric not only for employees, but also for members in their homes.

“We hope these tips help familiarize members with what is in their home and make changes if needed to their power outlets,” Praus says. “While occasional power surges are inevitable, simply unplugging devices when you think a surge may occur and using additional levels of protection will ensure a safeguard to your electronics and devices. Remember to check if your home has surge-protecting devices, such as power strips or whole-home suppressors, to create a safety barrier when surges occur.” ⚡



KEM Electric Cooperative employees accept a safety award on behalf of the cooperative, which recorded zero injuries for a one-year period.

## POWERING SAFETY: KEM Electric recognized for safety achievement

KEM Electric Cooperative was recognized in January at the annual North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives Apprenticeship, Training and Safety Conference. KEM Electric received a Safety Performance Award, which is presented to cooperatives with zero recordable injuries for one year.

"This award exemplifies the hard work and unwavering dedication that not only contributes to the success of the cooperative but also plays a vital role in ensuring safety of both the service area and employees," co-General Manager/CEO Jason Bentz says. ⚡



*Congratulations on your Retirement!*

**Thank you, Jeff Werner, for your dedication to the cooperative and members for the past 25 years!**

**We wish you nothing but the best in retirement.**

## STUDENT OF THE MONTH:

# Dawson Erbele, Napoleon Public Schools

Dawson Erbele was named the January Touchstone Energy® Student of the Month from Napoleon Public School. An eighth-grader, Erbele was recognized for being a hardworking, kind and compassionate student.

“She is truly mature beyond her years, reliable, dependable and compassionate, and is a friend to all who know her,” says Erbele’s nominator.

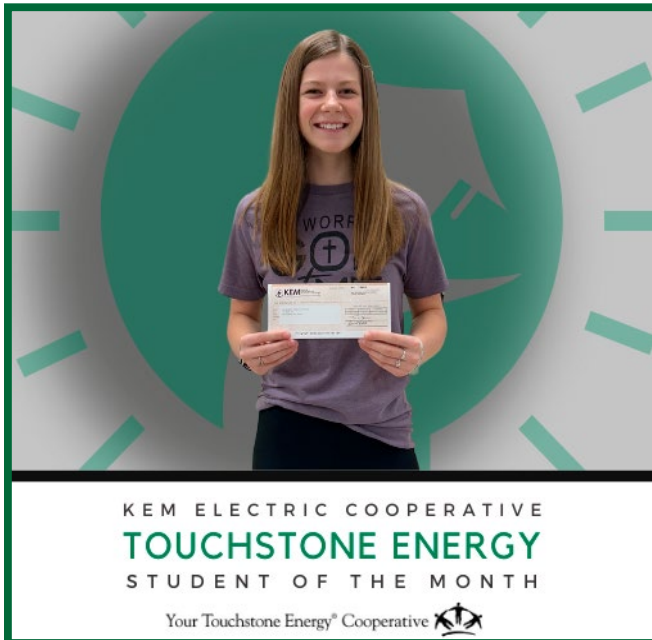
Erbele plans to utilize the funds to reward the Napoleon students and staff with ice cream.

We would also like to recognize the other outstanding students who were nominated:

- Joren Jangula
- Teagan Erbele
- Sabrina Haas
- Tarryn Erbele
- Dylan Erbele
- Alexa Haas

Throughout the school year, KEM Electric Cooperative is choosing one student at random who has been nominated from the schools in KEM Electric’s service area to receive a \$100 sponsorship in partnership with Touchstone Energy Cooperative. The donation can be utilized to the student’s choosing for school activities.

In March, KEM Electric will be accepting nominations of students from Wishek Public School. The deadline for nominations is March 25. This sponsorship is open to any K-12 student. ⚡



Scan the QR code to nominate a student or for more information, or visit [www.kemelectric.com/touchstone-energy-student-month](http://www.kemelectric.com/touchstone-energy-student-month).



## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Participate in our member satisfaction survey and play a vital role in shaping the future of our services. Scan the QR code with your phone for more information and to complete the survey.

As a gesture of appreciation for your valuable input, participants who choose to provide their contact information will also be entered into a giveaway for a chance to win Medora Musical Tickets and a KEM gift basket.

# SAVE THE DATE

## 2024 Annual Meeting

### Tuesday, June 11 in Linton



INTERESTED IN SERVING?

## Join the KEM Electric board and power the future

Are you a dedicated leader with a deep connection to our rural community? We invite you to join the KEM Electric Cooperative board of directors.

KEM Electric currently has an at-large vacant seat, along with District 1 and District 2 positions up for election.

### Why join our board?

Running for a board of director position for an electric cooperative can be a meaningful and impactful decision. Here are just a few reasons to join:

- **Make a difference:** Contribute to decisions that impact our energy future.
- **Community engagement:** Collaborate with like-minded individuals dedicated to community growth.
- **Professional growth:** Enhance your leadership skills and network.

### Who we're looking for

We're seeking individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives who share our commitment to serving the members of KEM Electric. Ideal candidates should have:

- Leadership and strategic thinking skills
- A commitment to our communities/service area
- Strong communication and collaboration abilities

If you're ready to make a meaningful impact, we encourage you to visit [www.kemelectric.com](http://www.kemelectric.com) to learn more. Nomination petitions are open and must be turned in by the end of day on March 13.

For inquiries or more information, please contact Marcy Sanders at 701-254-4666 or email [msanders@kemelectric.com](mailto:msanders@kemelectric.com). ⚡

#### 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 member.

(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 60 days before the date when petitions must be filed pursuant to this bylaw. Any signatures to a nominating

petition obtained more than 60 days before that date may not be counted.

(e) All petitions must be filed at the principal offices of the cooperative not less than 90 days prior to the date of the meeting of the members, 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 60 days before the meeting of the members.

If you would like to place your name on the ballot, pick up a petition at the KEM Electric Cooperative office or download a petition from the cooperative website at [www.kemelectric.com](http://www.kemelectric.com). Petitions must be returned to the cooperative office no later than March 13. As a reminder, nominations from the floor will not be accepted.

# KEM Electric board meeting highlights

## Dec. 19, 2023

The December meeting of the board of directors of KEM Electric Cooperative was held on Dec. 19, 2023, at the KEM Electric office building in Linton. President Victor Wald called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. A quorum was present. Also present were KEM Electric's co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Legal Counsel Tom Bair, Chief of Staff/Line Superintendent Dale Nagel, Member Relations Manager Marcy Sanders and Executive Assistant Connie Hill.

**Consent agenda:** There was a proposed addition to the consent agenda. The consent agenda was approved as amended.

**Strategic/action:** Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates from various meetings attended. A Basin Electric Power Cooperative CEO report was also provided for

the board to review.

**Action items:** The board discussed end-of-the-year items, such as notices, load forecasts and audits.

**Department reports:** Nagel provided a department report, which included outage reports and safety statistics for December. Sanders presented a department report, an annual meeting update and a report on the January local pages. Dunbar provided a report, which included IT training. Bair reviewed a legal report with the board.

**Executive session:** The board entered into an executive session.

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

**Next meeting date:** The next meeting date is set for Jan. 17 at BEK Communications in Steele. ⚡

### Statement of nondiscrimination

KEM Electric Cooperative Inc. is a recipient of federal assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In accordance with federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices and employees and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible agency or USDA's TARGET

Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD3027, found online at [www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint](http://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form.

To request a copy of the complaint form, call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: 1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410; 2) fax: 202-690-7442; or 3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). KEM Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider.

## KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

### DIRECTORS:

Victor Wald, Chairman .....Napoleon  
 John Beck, Vice Chairman .....Linton  
 Carter Vander Wal, Sec.-Treas. .... Pollock  
 Dean Dewald, Director..... Dawson  
 Carmen Essig, Director .....Lehr  
 Neil Meidinger, Director ..... Zealand  
 Director- At-Large .....Vacant

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

### MANAGEMENT:

Travis Kupper ..... Co-GM/CEO  
 Jason Bentz ..... Co-GM/CEO

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

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

FIND US ON:



### 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)