

THIS ISSUE:

- Learn about power restoration
- Projects continue
- Protect against scams
- Medora discounts



John Fielding, who serves on the New England Community Store's board of directors, shows the new coolers installed at the store. Learn more inside.

New England Community Store receives donation for upgrades

In small towns across North Dakota, signs of economic health and stability are often found at the heart of the community – the local grocery store. Alongside gas stations, banks and schools, these essential services allow community members to flourish.

A cornerstone staple many people in New England cherish is the New England Community Store. The grocery houses fresh produce, local produce, pantry

essentials and other items, nourishing residents and providing essential goods to the surrounding area.

“One of the main things is for the elderly,” says Lyle Kovar, mayor of New England. “They can get their groceries locally and not have to drive out of town.”

As part of our commitment to supporting strong, sustainable communities within our service territory, Slope Electric Cooperative recently contributed \$10,000 to the New England Community Grocery

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Store to help strengthen its application for additional grant funding, improve the shopping experience and promote its long-term success.

Built for the community, by the community

The New England Community Store opened in 2007 after the town was without a grocer for two years.

“The people who weren’t able to get their own groceries would have to have someone pick up their groceries or find a ride to go and get them,” Kovar says.

“Without it, we were not complete. It took away the self-reliance of the community,” John Fielding says is a reoccurring statement he has heard from community members. Fielding is a New England Community Store board member who has a strong passion for the community.

Knowing the need for a grocery store, community members came together to reopen the store. Some gave what they could financially, others invested by purchasing shares and others rolled up their sleeves to help in any way they could.

The opening of the community store is built on cooperative values, built by people who worked together to secure an essential need in the town of New England. Volunteers remodeled the store into what it is today, guided by a board of directors. Over the past 20 years, the store has seen daily use by community residents and those passing through, which has attributed to wear.

With donated funds, including from Slope Electric, the New England Community Store was able to complete a few upgrades, which included installing new low-maintenance commercial vinyl plank flooring and a rubber wall base which complimented the recently installed high-efficiency coolers. These upgrades allow customers and employees to navigate and shop the store safely and have increased access to fresh items, such as produce and dairy products, for longer periods of time.

“Being able to increase the offerings and still be there for them,” Fielding says is an important part of the upgrades being made to the community store.

Many community members and businesses, including the New England Senior Center, rely on the store.

“The senior center buys all their groceries here for their Thursday meal,” Fielding says.

Looking ahead

With every business comes additional opportunities. John and his wife, Mitzi, who is the store manager,



A New England Senior Center coordinator checks out with ingredients for the Thursday meal.

have been doing research on how to ensure longevity for the store.

In 2025, the New England Community Store board of directors proposed a plan to meet the needs of the community into the future. The plan included four phases. The first phase included the high-efficiency cooler expansion, the second phase was updating the flooring, the third phase would allow more flexible hours addressing efficiencies with staffing and the fourth phase would provide unique fresh cooked items.

Some of the projects the board hopes to implement is a 24-hour member access to the store and self-serve and made to order warm food options. Expanding the options and hours of the grocery store will allow for more flexibility for community members who rely on the community store.



“Introducing more flexible hours of operation and expanding the fresh foods items are strengths we can offer,” Fielding says. “The ability to expand our sales volume as we will catch a lot of people after hours without increasing labor.”

The Fieldings have always valued supporting local community stores when traveling and they have a deep-rooted passion for community, which has branched into their involvement with the community store. In fact, that is one of the reasons the Fieldings planted roots in New England 15 years ago.

From then, the Fielding’s have worked with the community store to make it a welcome and sustainable part of the community. Mitzi has been the New England Community Store manager for just about four years and John has been on the board of directors for six years.

These projects the New England Community Store Board of Directors plan to implement would provide longevity and flexibility for management, which would allow a platform of stability for the store into the future. ■

Community grants available through Slope Electric

Slope Electric Cooperative shares grant funds available through the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC). Grant funds of \$2,000 were allotted to Slope Electric to be used to support community-owned entities, nonprofits and community-based projects.

Eligible projects include:

- Community-owned businesses (café, grocery store, motel, other)
- Community facilities (ambulance services, fire districts, recreation, hospital/clinic, community center, other)
- Workforce development or community-based projects (school/youth projects) that benefit rural areas and lead to community betterment.
- Community-based projects (school/youth

projects) that benefit rural areas and lead to community betterment.

RDFC does not provide funds for medical fundraisers or general operating costs. Matching funds include \$4 of other funds to every \$1 of RDFC funds.

Applications may be found at slopeelectric.coop or by calling Brooke at 701-579-4191.

Additionally, if you are a rural business seeking funding and programs, NDAREC has a program coordinator who can assist in navigating grant funds and programs.



Rural Development
Finance Corporation
GROWING COMMUNITIES



MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

What to know about power restoration



Jason Bentz

Co-General Manager/CEO

As the co-general manager/CEO of Slope Electric Cooperative, I'm accustomed to members' questions about power outages and why it can take time to restore power. Given our reliance on electricity, there's simply never a good time to be without it.

This month, I'd like to shed light on our restoration process to help our members understand what may be happening behind the scenes. Here are some things you

might not know about restoration:

- **We need you.** When your power goes out, it might be just at your home or a small section of a neighborhood. There is a chance we may not know about it and no one has reported it. We rely on you to let us know if your power is out.
- **We assess the situation first.** Every outage is different, and we don't know how dangerous it is or what equipment might need to be replaced. When responding to outages, we first need to see what happened, then decide what materials are needed and develop a plan to fix the problem(s) without compromising electric flow for the rest of our members. Restoration is normally prioritized by the largest number of members impacted in the shortest amount of time.

- **Our employees face many dangers.** Besides working around high-voltage electricity, our crews are on alert for weather elements, falling trees and fast-moving cars.
- **Flickering lights are good.** Some folks mistake flickering lights for outages, but these "blinks" are important, because they indicate our equipment worked and prevented a possible outage likely caused by wayward animals or stray tree limbs on the lines.
- **Sometimes it's a waiting game.** Our portion of the power grid is connected to other electric utilities, and we maintain positive relationships with power providers interconnected to our system. If our outage is due to an issue from their feed into our system, we must let them do their repairs and be mindful of what they're going through to fix it. We do our best to avoid power disruptions, but they are inevitable from time to time. If the lights go out, know your co-op team is working as quickly and safely as possible to restore power. If you experience an outage, please let us know by reporting it on SmartHub or by calling 701-579-4191. ■



GENERATOR INFORMATION FORM

To help Slope Electric Cooperative better serve our members, we're asking you to complete a short form letting us know whether you have a generator on your property. Scan the QR code to complete the form or call our office at 701-579-4191 to notify us.



MESSAGE FROM MEMBER SERVICES:

Get notified when an outage occurs



Brooke Waltner
 Manager of Member
 Relations/Chief of Staff

Use SmartHub to update email and/or SMS notification preferences regarding your outages, and more! To receive electronic notifications, please register for SmartHub through our website or through the SmartHub mobile application.

Step-by-step guide:

- Log in to your SmartHub account online or through the mobile app.
- Navigate to the “Settings” section of your account.
- Select the option, “Contact Methods.”
- Choose “Add Email” or “Add Phone” to add a phone number or email address.
- Enter your new contact details and follow the on-screen prompts to verify the information.
- Save your changes.
- Find the verification code sent to the phone number or email address.
- Enter the verification code and save.

You have now added a verified contact method!

- Next, navigate to “Manage Notifications.”
- Make your selections to receive billing, miscellaneous and service notifications. You can sign up to receive notifications on any phone number or email address you have verified.
 - Billing notifications relate to billing and payments.
 - Miscellaneous notifications relate to account security changes.
 - Service notifications relate to outage alerts.

- Save your changes

You are now enrolled in the notifications of your choice! You can adjust these notifications at any time.

Reporting an outage online

When a power outage occurs, our top priority is to restore service as quickly and safely as possible. To help us respond faster, it's important outages are reported promptly. While you can always call to report an outage, we're also making it easier for members to report online, either through SmartHub or by text message. ■



The original
**HIGHWAY 21
 TREASURE HUNT**
June 19-20 8 a.m.-5 p.m. MT

This way to treasures and fun!

SALE

- St. Anthony
- Flasher
- Carson
- Elgin
- New Leipzig
- Mott
- Regent
- New England

For more information, call 701-584-2172 or visit the Highway 21 Treasure Hunt Facebook page.

MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS: **Summer project plans**



Andrew Sonsalla

Operations Manager

Summer is a busy time for your cooperative, as projects across the service area progress. Each year, Slope Electric Cooperative's operations department works with a team of engineers at Innovative Energy Alliance Cooperative to diligently plan construction projects for the year.

Planning these projects allows Slope Electric to obtain easements, gather materials and allot the appropriate

amount of time to complete the projects. You may have seen crews in your area conducting pole testing, changing poles or installing new equipment on a power line near you. These are all part of the projects scheduled for the summer.

Enhancing reliability

Work plan projects continue to progress. One includes converting 15 miles of three-phase overhead power line to underground cable, which will take place east of New England along Bomber Club Road.

To further the cooperative's goal of replacing aged copper overhead conductors, crews will also be installing new underground tie-lines out of our Cedar Butte Substation and New England Substation. This will allow the cooperative to retire numerous miles of aged overhead powerline.

Due to numerous faults reported on aged underground cable on the Reeder Substation north of Bucyrus, 3 miles of underground cable will be replaced.

Installation of underground cable helps add reliability to the system by reducing exposure of power lines to weather conditions, animals and other factors that may cause electric service disruptions.

Upgrading technology

Slope Electric is working to install technology to enhance reliability for our members. This includes installing supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) technology, which acts as a remote data monitoring and control system. SCADA allows us to have real-time data at the cooperative's fingertips, which will assist in more efficient load switching, outage restoration and safety. SCADA technology will be installed later this year in the Langberg Substation and New England Substation.

Additionally, Slope Electric will be installing high-side circuit switchers in the Langberg Substation and Centipede Substation. These circuit switches will be installed on the higher voltage side of the Substation and will provide a more reliable protective device, which will allow for a more versatile range of protection settings compared to the current fuses.

Maintenance and service installations

Utility poles across the service area continue to get changed out. Through pole testing and line inspection, utility poles were flagged if they needed to be replaced.

Tree trimming will continue to keep foliage and debris from coming into contact with power lines and causing blinks or outages.

Crews will continue to install overhead power line and underground cable requests and retire line as member requests come in.

While our crews remain busy, we know our members are hard at work as well. We remind members to be aware of power lines and electrical equipment. Whether you are baling and stacking hay, planting, spraying fields or enjoying time in your yard, take a moment to look around and stay aware of your surroundings to help prevent accidents. Safety remains our top priority for you, our members. ■



SAFETY STARTS WITH ME:

Protect yourself against utility scams



Kennedy Binstock

Member Services
Representative

As your electric cooperative, Slope Electric Cooperative knows the importance of communicating with you. Slope Electric's priority is ensuring you receive timely information from us through various channels, such as social media, our e-newsletter, text messages and phone calls. But with the increase in scams targeting utility companies, everyone needs to be aware and take extra precautions when sharing information online and over

the phone. We are committed to the safety of the cooperative and member information, and encourage you to do the same.

Scammers are developing new tactics every day, and they are targeting everyone.

The "past due" scam is unfortunately a familiar occurrence that goes something like this: A customer gets a call from an 800-number that looks like a valid utility company phone number. Widely available spoofing software allows scammers to display what appears to be an official number on caller IDs. The scammer threatens to cut off power if the customer doesn't pay.

But here's the giveaway: The scammers will demand payment via a prepaid debit card or money order. In addition, they will ask for it within a specified timeframe, often in an hour or less.

Scammers might direct the customer to a specific store nearby that sells the prepaid cards and instruct the customer to put money on the card and provide the card number to the scammer.

But here's the reality about Slope Electric. We will never ask for immediate payment over the phone or in the form of prepaid or gift cards. We offer safe and secure ways for members to pay their energy bill online, over the phone or in person.

If something sounds or looks like a scam, it probably is. Refrain from clicking links in emails or text messages that look unusual or unexpected. If you receive a call from a number posing to be Slope Electric and it sounds suspicious, hang up and call us at 701-579-4191.

We value your trust and work hard to ensure your information stay safe with us, but everyone has a responsibility when it comes to staying vigilant about scams. ■



Discounts offered for Medora vacation

Slope Electric Cooperative is able to offer its members a discount by being a Touchstone Energy® member. Simply call 1-800-MEDORA-1 and give the discount code of "TOUCH2026" for a 15% discount on all of the following during any night of the season.

- Medora Musical
- Pitchfork steak fondue
- Bully Pulpit Golf Course
- Gospel Bruch tickets
- Old Town Hall Theater shows

LODGING AT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Elkhorn Quarters
- Badlands Motel
- Rough Riders Hotel
- Hotel 1883



The code is good for reservations over the phone, online or in person. A green fees discount will be applied at check-in for a tee time at the golf course.



SLOPE ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS MARCH 26

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Slope Electric Cooperative was held March 26 at the New England office. President Angela Carlson called the meeting to order at 8 a.m. A quorum was present. Slope Electric's General Counsel Jennifer Grosz was appointed recorder for the meeting. Also present were Slope Electric's co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Chief of Staff/Manager of Member Relations Brooke Waltner, Operations Manager Andrew Sonsalla and Board Liaison Connie Hill. Tyler Richter from Brady Martz attended a portion of the meeting.

Consent agenda: The consent agenda was approved as presented.

Strategic items: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates on a N.D. Public Service Commission meeting, National Information Solutions Cooperative call to order applications, a North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives manager meeting and other items. Several additional Basin Electric Power Cooperative reports and board documents were available for review.

Department reports: Craigmile provided a financial report and highlighted key items in the executive summary. Sonsalla provided an operations report that included updates on line crew projects, outage impacts due to weather, service inquiries and other operational items. Waltner provided a member relations report covering the member survey, website refresh, a recap of member meetings and other related items. Waltner also provided a chief of staff report that included updates on staff training, job postings and project progress. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written information technology report. Grosz provided a legal counsel report, providing project status updates, information on federal projects and policy discussions.

Action items: Richter reviewed the annual audit with the board. The board also discussed and resolved CoBank's proxy ballot, the strategic plan and bylaw amendments.

Next meeting date: The next meeting is at 8 a.m. on June 25 in New England. ■



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