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Dean Volk, received the Cooperative Leadership Award at the NDAREC for being dedicated to cooperatives and communities.



Volk, right, work alongside his coworker while making repairs to a power pole.

Volk recognized for cooperative leadership

Each year, cooperative employees, directors and members from North Dakota are recognized for their commitment to cooperatives and communities at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) annual meeting banquet.

One of the awards presented is the Cooperative Leadership Award. Recipients of this award embody service, leadership and devotion to cooperatives and their communities.

Dean Volk, who recently retired as chief of staff and operations manager at Slope Electric

Cooperative, was honored with the 2026 Cooperative Leadership Award.

Most who have had the privilege to know Volk describe him as a humble and soft-spoken individual whose actions speak louder than his words. His commitment to Slope Electric, his colleagues and the members he served has been unwavering. Volk consistently embodied the definition of a servant leader, never viewing any task as too small and never hesitating to lend a hand where help was needed.

Throughout his career, Volk demonstrated a deep

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sense of responsibility to the communities served by Slope Electric. Volk is not one to boast or draw attention to himself, and much of what he contributed to the local communities often went unspoken, even to those who know him best. Whether assisting neighbors in rural areas or quietly supporting local events and civic efforts, he consistently modeled the values of selflessness and reliability.

Contributions to the industry

Volk devoted his entire career to delivering reliable, safe electricity to rural members, many of whom live at the “end of the line.”

At the beginning of his career as a lineworker, he faced the harshest conditions North Dakota had to offer. Snowstorms, ice, rain, wind and long nights never deterred him. His work ethic and dedication ensured families across the service area had the power they needed, often without ever knowing the effort behind it.

As operations manager, Volk continued his legacy of reliability and leadership. He not only managed crews and system operations, but also cultivated a work environment rooted in respect, diligence and teamwork. His experience in the field made him an invaluable leader who understood the challenges lineworkers face and who never asked anything of others he would not do himself.

Andrew Sonsalla, Slope Electric’s current operations manager, noted he has learned unwavering commitment to safety from Volk throughout his career.

“When Dean was the lead lineman that I worked under, he helped me understand no matter the severity of a situation or the sense of urgency, that the safety and wellbeing of his co-workers, the public and himself were the No. 1 priority, and during stressful situations, to slow down and take one thing at a time and don’t get in a hurry, and never take shortcuts. Always make sure that everyone on the crew understands the scope of the work, and everyone gets to go home at night to their loved ones,” Sonsalla said.

Volk’s commitment to safety, operational excellence and cooperative values stands as a testament to his impact on the electric utility industry.

On behalf of Slope Electric Cooperative, congratulations on this well-deserved award. ■



MANAGER'S MESSAGE: Growth on the electric grid



Travis Kupper

Co-General Manager/CEO

Electricity usage within the United States is reaching record levels and the demand is expected to continue to rise. Artificial intelligence (AI), crypto mining and data center technology play a role in increased demand. It's understandable our members would question whether the increase in technology and load will result in increased rates and higher electric bills.

For Slope Electric Cooperative, the answer is no.

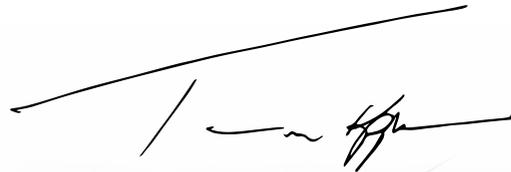
Slope Electric is a member of Basin Electric Power Cooperative. As our wholesale electric provider, Basin Electric developed a Large Load Program designed to insulate our existing members from the costs and risks associated with serving new large electric loads.

When a data center or other large load connects to our system, it is required to pay for the infrastructure needed to serve the load. Those costs are not shifted to our existing membership.

In fact, data centers specifically can often strengthen our system. Because they consume power around the clock, they consume unused capacity on the grid that would otherwise not be used. That steady demand provides reliable revenue, which strengthens the financial health of our cooperative. Beyond our cooperative, data centers can also help contribute to the economic growth and health of our local communities.

So, what are the primary drivers behind the rate increase we have seen over the years? They include growth in traditional load, commodity price variability, increased planning reserve margins (regulations) as well as continued investments in reliability.

The bottom line is data centers are not driving your electric bill higher. When properly planned, they help us maintain stable rates and position our system to meet the growing needs for the future. ■



MESSAGE FROM MEMBER SERVICES:

Capital credit retirement coming soon!



Brooke Waltner

Manager of Member Relations/Chief of Staff

As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, we operate differently than investor-owned utilities. Instead of generating profits for shareholders, we return any margins to you, our members, through capital credits. It is one benefit of being a member of Slope Electric Cooperative.

Each time you use electricity and pay your bill, you're helping to cover the cost of providing reliable electric service. After Slope Electric

covers all operating expenses, the board of directors can allocate the remaining margins to members based on their usage. This allocation is your share of the co-op's financial success.

This year, there's good news for members.

Traditionally, capital credit retirements were issued in November. However, our board of directors voted

to move the retirement schedule to March, allowing us to return your capital credits earlier in the year. This adjustment means you receive your cooperative benefit sooner, putting those dollars back into your hands when they may be most helpful.

Last June, you may have seen an allocation on your electric bill. Allocations are not immediate cash payments, but rather a record of your equity in the cooperative. These funds are reinvested into our system, supporting the maintenance, upgrades and expansion of the infrastructure that keeps your lights on.

When financial conditions are strong and the board of directors determines it's appropriate, a portion of those capital credits are retired, meaning they're paid to members in the form of checks or bill credits.

This process allows us to maintain a strong financial foundation, while returning value directly to you.

If you have any questions about how capital credits work, our team is here to help.

Thank you for your continued trust and partnership. We're proud to serve you. ■



JOIN SLOPE ELECTRIC FOR THE CAREER TOUR **JUNE 24-25**

**FROM COAL MINES TO POWER PLANTS AND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
DIVE INTO THE HEART OF NORTH DAKOTA'S ENERGY SECTOR**

Limited spots available. Learn more by visiting: www.slopeelectric.coop.
The application deadline is May 1.



*Slope Electric employees recognized for their safety efforts include, left to right, **Andrew Sonsalla, Cody Braaten, Mark Frank, Shay Olson, Brad Schmidt and Jason Bentz.***

MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS: Safety and dedication recognized

Each year, operations personnel from electric cooperatives across North Dakota gather in Mandan for a three-day safety-focused conference known as the Apprenticeship, Training and Safety Conference.

Safety is the top priority for electric cooperatives as well as for the members and communities they serve. Cooperative employees took part in valuable training sessions, such as vehicle extraction, leadership and other workshops. Additionally, cooperatives are recognized for their dedication to safety.

This year, Slope Electric Cooperative received a Safety Performance Award, which recognizes cooperatives for having zero OSHA recordable injuries during the past year. Slope Electric continues to analyze and improve safety plans for the wellbeing of employees and communities.

Additionally, lineworkers who have completed their apprentice lineworker training are recognized at the banquet. This year, 11 apprentice lineworkers earned their journeyman certificate, including Shay Olson. Olson has diligently worked to complete his apprenticeship program, while working alongside journeyman lineworkers at Slope Electric. The lineworker apprenticeship program requires apprentices to complete 8,000 hours of on-the-job

training and a set of books which includes 40 tests.

We are proud of our employees' dedication to safety at Slope Electric. ■



Shay Olson, center, receives his journeyman certificate at the AT&S Conference from Operations Manager Andrew Sonsalla, left, and co-General Manager Jason Bentz.

SAFETY STARTS WITH ME: Cybersecurity starts with all of us



Kennedy Binstock

Member Services
Representative

In today's world, most of us don't leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones and valuables from intruders with locks, alarms and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It's the practice of protecting other valuables, such as identity, banking and health records, and other sensitive information, from digital attacks and theft.

The energy sector continues to be a target of cyber attacks, and we will continue to face threats that target our employees, our supply chains and partners. It is critical we stay vigilant, because our infrastructure is both critical and relied upon by others.

We want our members – and the world – to know we take our role in managing cybersecurity threats to our members' data and our operations seriously.

"We participate in monthly training to stay vigilant on cybersecurity threats and tips to keep the cooperative safe and secure," says Kennedy Binstock, member services representative. "As a member of Slope Electric, there are steps you can take to help keep your information and ours safe as well."

Here are some simple things you can do to protect from cybersecurity threats.

- **Make sure all your computer software is updated with the latest version.** Keeping software, including your browser, up to date ensures crucial software updates take place.
 - **Create a strong password and keep it private.** It can take five days to crack a nine-character password, but more than two centuries to crack a password consisting of 12 characters or more!
 - **Treat all Wi-Fi networks as a potential security risk.** Never check financial or other sensitive accounts when using public Wi-Fi at a store, local coffee shop or when you're on the road.
 - **Be on the lookout for suspicious emails, phone calls and other messages.** Scammers will use various avenues to gain access to co-op and member information. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If something seems off, trust your instinct and convey your concerns to a manager or member of the security team.
 - **Think before you click!** Don't click links or attached files in emails or text messages from senders you don't know. Even if you do know the sender, hover over the link before you click, as they may have been hacked or someone could be spoofing them!
- While we can't stop a storm or predict every disruption, we do everything we can to keep the lights on and our members protected. Because if we all do our part, our interconnected world will be safer and more secure for everyone. ■

WE WANT TO TELL YOUR STORIES!

Every month, our magazine highlights the people, places, and happenings that make our cooperative communities special. We want your ideas for a chance to be featured in our pages!

Do you have an idea for a great story?

A dedicated volunteer, a unique business, a family farm with history, an inspiring neighbor, a community leader, or a local project making a difference?

We want to hear about them.

Submit your ideas here: comments@slopeelectric.coop
Your stories help strengthen the cooperative spirit.

Thank you for helping us shine a light on the people who power our community!



Thank you to all who joined us at our member appreciation events. We look forward to seeing you at our annual meeting June 4 in Amidon.





SLOPE ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS DEC. 18, 2025

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Slope Electric Cooperative was held on Dec. 18, 2025, at the cooperative's office in New England. President Angela Carlson called the meeting to order at 10:05 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/Member Relations Manager Brooke Waltner, Operations Manager Andrew Sonsalla and Board Liaison Connie Hill.

Consent agenda: The consent agenda was approved as proposed.

Strategic items: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-managers' report, which included updates on the strategic plan, an internal Cybersecurity Policy, Midwest Annual 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, which included an executive summary and other items. Sonsalla provided an operations report that included updates on recent weather-related outages, contractor work, a new crew

addition and other tasks. Waltner provided a member relations report on cooperative programs and communication efforts for upcoming programs and events. Waltner also provided a chief of staff report, which included staff training and project progress. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written information technology report. Grosz provided a legal counsel report on the status of projects.

Action items: The board appointed voting delegates for various upcoming meetings, approved the 2026 operating budget, approved recognition of O&M deferred revenue, approved issuance a bill credit and appointed Nominating Committee members.

Discussion/general information: The board discussed a recent West Dakota Holding meeting and potential amendments to Slope Electric bylaws.

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

The meeting concluded with adjournment. Secretary Charlotte Meier certified the accuracy of the minutes of the Nov. 20 board meeting.

Next meeting date: The next meeting is at 8 a.m. on March 26 in New England. ■



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Jason Bentz
CO-GM/CEO

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