



**CAPITAL ELECTRIC**  
COOPERATIVE

# CAPITAL ELECTRIC COMMENTS

JUNE 2016

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## Annual training for critical situations

Capital Electric Cooperative held pole-top rescue safety training May 4 at headquarters in Bismarck. In this issue, learn the process a lineman would go through to lower a stranded co-worker to the ground.

*Capital Electric Cooperative Lineman **Cory Bruner** performs a pole-top rescue. Watching from the ground are, from left: Lineman **Lance Diebold**, NDAREC Safety Instructor **Steve Homes** and Lead Lineman **John Frey**. In the bucket, Lineman **Steve Kuball** rehangs the 200-pound mannequin after it's been lowered to the ground.*



PHOTO BY CARMEN DENNEY



Prior to the safety training, NDAREC Safety Instructor **Steve Homes** (yellow jacket) prepares the mannequin with Capital Electric Crew Foreman **Les Vietz**. Lineman **Steve Kuball** (bucket) prepares to hang the mannequin on the pole.



**Charles Atkinson**, lead lineman in Wing, throws his rope over the cross-arm in order to secure it, before threading it around the body of the mannequin.

# Safety training saves lives

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CARMEN DEVNEY

In June 2008, the *Stabroek News* in Guyana reported an electric lineman became stranded on a pole when the support he was standing on gave way and wires began sparking. His thighs and lower right leg were burnt, and he was rendered unconscious. He hung limply in his safety belt, until one of his co-workers performed a pole-top rescue and lowered him to the ground.

The injured lineman was wearing the necessary personal protective gear, and thankfully he survived.

Accidents like this are not common, but they do happen. Linemen can also be stranded on a pole if they experience heat stroke, a heart attack or other condition that disables them and prevents them from climbing down. That's why the Occupational Safety and Health Administration requires linemen to receive pole-top safety training on an annual basis.

The 13 linemen who work for Capital Electric Cooperative receive this refresher course from safety instructors with the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC). During this year's training, held May 4 at Capital Electric headquarters in Bismarck, each lineman had to climb a pole, secure a rope around the waist of a 200-pound mannequin and lower the "body" to the ground.

NDAREC Safety Instructor Steve Homes discussed different techniques on how to secure the rope. In areas where Capital Electric has a three-phase distribution system, a lineman could use the pole's cross-arm to secure his rope. In other areas that have a single-phase line without a cross-arm on the pole, a lineman could use a screwdriver to secure the rope after the tool has been pounded into the pole.

Staying on top of safety and regularly reviewing what they already know can make the difference between life and death in a critical situation for linemen who sometimes work long hours in extreme weather conditions to restore electric service following an outage. Thanks to regular safety training sessions including pole-top rescue, Capital Electric's linemen are better equipped to react quickly and efficiently, and hopefully bring their co-worker and friend home safely to his family, should an accident ever occur. **CEC**



# What's he wearing and why?

When Apprentice Lineman **Jessie Goehring** climbs a pole and works on an overhead power line, he wears personal protective gear to prevent accidents and injuries. The following equipment helps keep him safe while on the job.

## 1 HARD HAT:

This insulated hat protects a lineman's head from blows and falling objects.

## 2 SAFETY GLASSES:

Protect a lineman's eyes from an arc or flying debris.

## 3 EQUIPMENT BELT:

Features clips, loops and D rings for linemen to carry tools commonly needed in the bucket, on the ground or in the air.

## 4 FIRE RESISTANT (FR) CLOTHING:

To protect linemen from a possible electric arc, they must wear FR jeans, shirt and jacket (in cold weather) at all times. A long-sleeve FR shirt must be worn during all seasons, even in the sweltering heat.

## 5 LEATHER GLOVES:

Provide protection from cuts, abrasions or punctures from tools.

## 6 CLIMBERS:

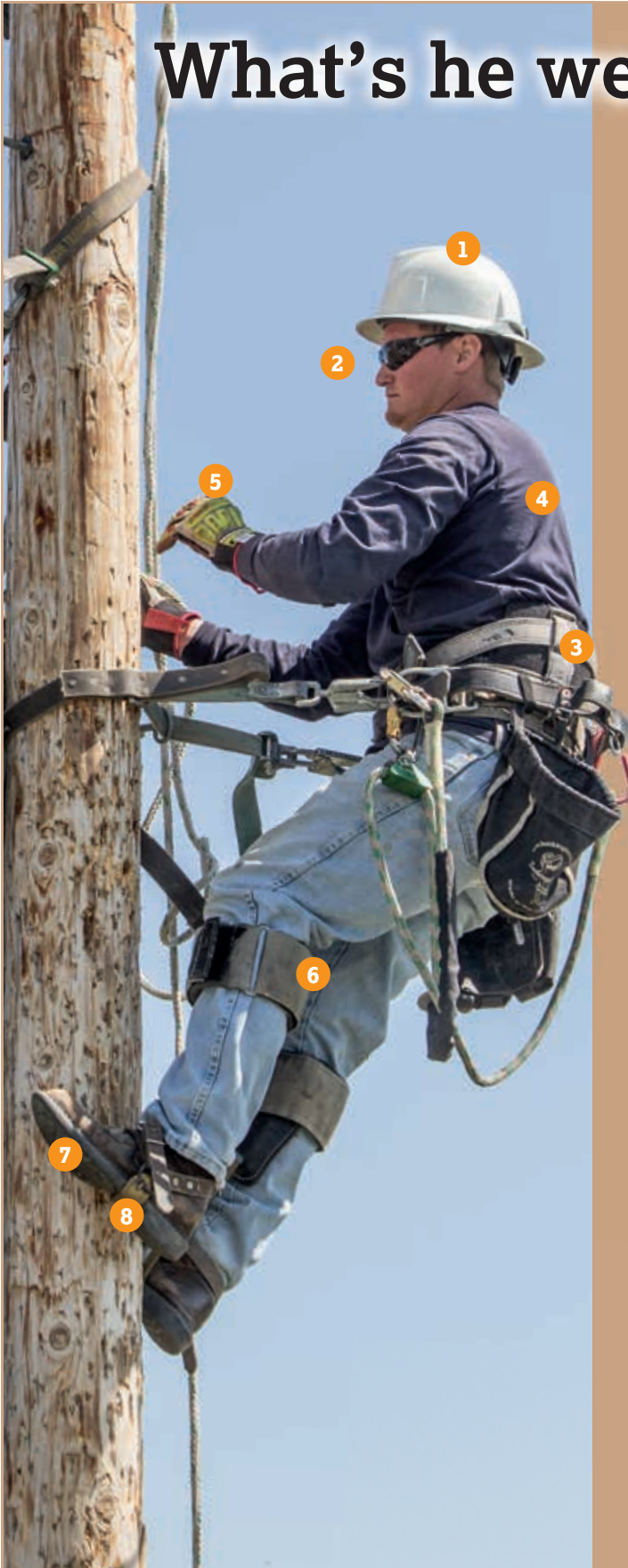
Strapped on just below the knee, these contoured leg shanks hold gaffs in place on linemen's boots. They are padded for comfort and support.

## 7 BOOTS:

These boots, specific for climbing wood structures, are 14 inches to protect linemen from gouging themselves in the leg.

## 8 GAFFS:

Sharp steel spikes are strapped to boots to climb poles safely and efficiently. Only the tips sink into the wood.



# Hesse earns cooperative scholarship

BY CARMEN DEVNEY



PHOTO BY ALEXIS HESSE

**Natasha Hesse**, Capital Electric Cooperative's scholarship recipient, will attend South Dakota State University in Brookings to pursue a degree in the medical field. After researching accredited nursing programs and college rankings, she toured SDSU and was completely blown away. "Their nursing program specifically is one of the best," she says. "I'm really excited."

Natasha Hesse has goals, and Capital Electric Cooperative members are helping her meet them.

A senior at Century High School in Bismarck, Natasha says she is very

aware of how student debt can build up fast.

"My goal for my college education is to try to pay for at least half of all my expenses," she says. She's well on her way for the first year.

The daughter of Capital Electric members Steve and Xiomara Hesse, Natasha applied for and received the \$1,000 student scholarship from Capital Electric and Basin Electric Power Cooperative. In the Touchstone Energy® Cooperative spirit of commitment to community, Capital Electric awards a scholarship annually to a child of one of its member-owners, with the goal of supporting area youth and developing future leaders.

Natasha vied for the scholarship along with 16 other highly qualified students. Reviewed through an independent process, the judges analyzed the applicants' academic performance, potential to succeed, leadership, participation in school and community activities, honors, a statement of education and career

goals, work experience, and an outside referral.

During her high school career, Natasha has been involved in at least 14 extracurricular activities, many of which have included leadership positions such as president and student adviser. She has served as captain for Science Olympiad for the past three years and helped the club place at the state competition. Involved in Patriot Ambassadors, show choir, jazz choir, "regular" choir, wind ensemble and much more, Natasha says her schedule is crammed yet organized.

Interested in anatomy and the medical field in general, Natasha plans to take a course at Bismarck State College this summer to become a certified nursing assistant. In the fall, she'll attend South Dakota State University in Brookings, with plans to eventually become a pediatrician or obstetrician.

"Ever since I was little, I've loved helping people," she says. "When my brother was born, I wanted to be really involved in taking care of him. I always had that strong desire to take care of people; especially younger kids."

Natasha knows the competition is fierce among students who apply for scholarships, and she thanks the Capital Electric membership for providing this opportunity to a student in the cooperative's service area.

"I'm really honored they picked me out of all the people who applied. I know some of my classmates are just as qualified as I am if not more, and I'm thrilled," she concludes.

Capital Electric congratulates Natasha Hesse for earning this year's student scholarship. We are proud to play a small role in how she will help countless people in the future. **CEC**

## Members, thanks for attending YOUR annual meeting!

The Capital Electric Cooperative directors, managers and employees thank you, our member-owners, for attending our 70th annual meeting of the membership held June 1. We appreciate the interest and support you continue to show in your electric cooperative!

This year our board of directors approved the retirement of 50 percent of unretired "co-op" capital credits from 1999 totaling more than \$481,000, which exclude capital credits allocated by our generation and transmission providers.



PHOTO BY CARMEN DEVNEY

Photo taken at the June 2015 meeting.

To learn more about Capital Electric's 70th annual meeting, read a complete summary at [www.capitalelec.com](http://www.capitalelec.com) or in the July local community pages of the *North Dakota Living* magazine. **CEC**



# ‘RAY OF LIGHT’ Madison Fritz earns Youth Tour trip

STORY AND PHOTO BY CARMEN DEVNEY



**W**hat we give to our community, we often get back. That’s the valuable lesson Madison Fritz learned through volunteering. She recently learned the member-owners of Capital Electric Cooperative are also committed to bettering their local communities — and she couldn’t be more proud to represent them and the co-op on this year’s Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

Madison researched her family’s electric cooperative prior to entering Capital Electric’s annual essay-writing contest. A junior at Century High School and recent transplant from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Madison learned that electric cooperatives provide more than electric heat products and services. Many participate in the Operation Round Up program, in which members choose to round up their utility bills to the nearest dollar. The spare change is pooled and donated twice a year to worthy people and groups in the cooperative’s service area. She also noted that Capital Electric supports rural development through the Rural Electric and Telecommunications Development Center.

“Whether you flick those electrical switches up or down, when it comes to ‘lighting up’ our communities through service, our cooperative and its members POWER ON!” she wrote.

This year’s essay contest required students to answer the following question: “Pick one of the four Touchstone Energy® Cooperative core values — innovation, integrity, accountability or commitment to community — and describe how you see this in action at Capital Electric Cooperative.” The daughter of co-op members Martin and Mary Fritz, Madison shared some of her experiences volunteering, and

noted her support of the Touchstone Energy Cooperative value commitment to community.

“I learned the value of community service early on by designing a teaching garden for my former grade school as a Girl Scout, and by hosting weekly bingo and holiday parties at a local nursing home. In 8th grade I won nearly \$800 in a Veterans of Foreign Wars essay program, and I donated it to a community homebuilding effort for a young veteran who lost both legs and suffered a traumatic brain injury in Afghanistan. I went on to organize two community fundraisers for the wounded vet that raised nearly \$9,000 for the home that he and his family now occupy,” she wrote. More recently, Madison got a group of friends together and they bagged garbage next to Interstate 94, to do their part on Bismarck Clean-Up Day. She also enjoys volunteering at the Central Dakota Humane Society and Missouri Slope Areawide United Way.

“A wise person once said that you need just one ray of light to chase a shadow away. In a world increasingly shadowed by poverty and violence, I’m proud to say that in my community, we have many people chasing away those shadows,” she wrote.

Madison’s essay earned her a free trip to Washington, D.C., courtesy of the Capital Electric membership. From June 11 to 17, she will tour the nation’s capital with 1,500 peers from across the state and nation who are representing their family’s electric cooperative on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

On the trip, Madison will see the grand architecture, meaningful monuments and fast-paced people. In addition to touring attractions including the U.S. Capitol, Arlington Cemetery, Mount Vernon, and the Smithsonian museum and research complex, she will learn about the cooperative business model, U.S. history and American government. The North Dakota students will also meet our state’s congressional delegation.

From working as the business manager of the *Century Star*, her school’s newspaper, to teaching figure skating classes to youth, Madison embodies the Touchstone Energy Cooperative value of commitment to community. With common sense and a caring heart, she is a mature young woman who will represent Capital Electric Cooperative well while on the tour.

We congratulate Madison for writing a thoughtful essay about how Capital Electric powers our economy and communities through its Touchstone Energy Cooperative value of commitment, and for earning the opportunity to go on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour trip. After she returns from Washington, D.C., we’ll visit with her again and learn the trip’s highlights. **CEC**



# Business department grows to continue providing the power of human connections

BY CARMEN DEVNEY

If you're missing some familiar faces at Capital Electric Cooperative, they are still there — they've just changed places. You've probably seen some new faces, too. When Paul Fitterer took over as general manager following the retirement of Lars Nygren, the cooperative hired Luke Steen to fill the position of business manager. Shari Vetter was promoted from billing coordinator to billing supervisor, Dana Solem was promoted from customer care specialist II to billing coordinator, and Jessi Hummel was hired as customer care specialist.

Capital Electric maintains some of the lowest controllable operating costs in the nation, thanks in part to the diligence and dedication of our employees who serve our member-owners. From the voices that greet you on the phone to the faces that smile as they visit with you at the counter, our employees are friendly and efficient at what they do.

The following employees recently changed job positions. The next time you call or stop at headquarters, please thank these folks. They work hard so Capital Electric can continue providing safe, reliable and affordable electric service to the members at the end of the line.



## Luke Steen

Luke Steen filled the vacant business manager position. He comes to the cooperative holding seven years of co-op business manager experience. When asked what attracted him to the opportunity at Capital, Luke responded, "Throughout my time in the co-op world, I have come to firmly believe that a cooperative has the opportunity to be an exceptional

thing; for a co-op to succeed in becoming exceptional it takes a special culture of member focus and self-forgetfulness." He perceived Capital Electric to be a place where that culture exists and has the opportunity to grow. While that might sound weighty and philosophical, as you take the time to get to know Luke, you'll discover he is a staunch supporter of being light-hearted and he tries to put a smile on the faces of those around him. "Each day seems to be better if we can find a reason to smile or laugh at some point," he says. Can someone really find a reason to smile or laugh when surrounded by financial statements and IRS filings? Luke seems to think so.

As a Minot native, Luke is also excited to have moved closer to home and family. He and his wife have three children and look forward to becoming settled into the Bismarck community. "The goal is to invest yourself to make each place better than when you found it. That's true of your community as well as your cooperative," Luke says.

Luke encourages members to stop by the cooperative office and introduce themselves, as he would be happy to put a face to the membership he will be striving to serve.



## Shari Vetter

Traffic continues to increase for the business office from members who need to pay a utility bill, ask a question about an electric heat product or service, or learn how they can improve their home's energy efficiency. As the number of phone calls and personal visits grew, the billing department needed to expand. With a background in management and 10 years of experience as billing

coordinator, Shari Vetter was promoted to billing supervisor.

Manager Fitterer describes Shari's strengths as being very organized and customer-oriented. "Her passion is serving customers — to the highest degree possible. Members can hear it in her voice, when she works with them on the phone or in person; they are her number-one priority. Regardless of what she is doing, she is always thinking about how to best serve them," he says.

Capital Electric is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative that embodies the national tagline, "The Power of Human Connections."

"We aren't automated; we're a body. We are a local office, and our members expect to hear us and see us," Shari says. "Even on blizzard days, we have people still come in. They like that there is always a friendly smile greeting them."

As a supervisor, Shari will oversee three employees while continuing to answer members' billing questions and work with them on payment plans. A new job brings new responsibilities and challenges, and Shari says the change has been exciting.

"My goal is to promote a positive team environment," she says. "We are all here for the same reason — to serve the member-owners."



### Dana Solem

For the past 19 years, Dana Solem has worked at the front counter as a customer care specialist II, taking members' bill payments and answering billing questions. Promoted to billing coordinator in February, Dana no longer sees her "regular customers" unless they ask to see her. And some still do!

"Many have gotten to know things about my family over the years, and I have gotten to know theirs. They are not just customers; they have become friends," she says.

As the billing coordinator, Dana audits bills, runs bill calculations and handles collections. Manager Fitterer says Dana's strength is her ability to use software and technology to support the cooperative's members.

"Dana has a natural analytical ability to figure things out. She can really dig in and do bill calculations like no one else. She is also good at explaining rather complex things to our members about meters and submeters," he says. "She does a great job."

Dana embraces technology and the way it continues to streamline the way we do business at Capital Electric. She shares she is excited about this new chapter at the cooperative.



### Jessi Hummel

A native of Garrison, Jessica Hummel started as a customer care specialist in March. She worked for RCC Western Store through its transition to Boot Barn®. When her parents needed a reliable employee to help with the family business, Lakeside Machinery, Jessi returned to Garrison to work at the machinery dealership.

Jessi replaces the position held by Dana Solem, and works with Customer Care Specialist Kacey Galster at the front desk to answer phones, take payments, and answer questions about services and billing.

While she is still learning her job duties and more about electric cooperatives, Jessi says she loves her job so far. **CE**

## 4-H students learn electrical safety

BY CARMEN DEVNEY

May is National Electrical Safety Month. To teach children about the importance of being safe around electric utility lines and poles, two Capital Electric Cooperative employees gave a presentation to 4-H youth on Tuesday, May 3 at the Joann Hetzel Memorial 4-H Building. Presenting next to his bucket truck, Lineman Seth Lothspeich encouraged students from Burleigh and Morton Counties to touch and wear some of his personal protective gear including a hard hat, rubber gloves and sleeves, and hot stick; all of which help keep him safe while he's working on and around energized power lines. Lothspeich talked about the work he does to build and maintain Capital Electric's overhead and underground distribution system, and how his job can be dangerous if he isn't constantly thinking about safety.

Wes Engbrecht, Capital Electric's

director of communications and public relations, explained how the cooperative provides electric service to many of the families in attendance, and that while kids don't pay the utility bills, they deal with electricity every day — by studying on iPads, heating food in the microwave and staying cool on a hot day.

After the safety lesson, two electricians taught the students how to make a 10-foot extension cord. All of the supplies for the cords were donated by Border States Electric.

Amelia Doll, 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent for



PHOTO BY WES ENGBRECHT

Capital Electric Cooperative Lineman **Seth Lothspeich** explains how he uses his hot stick to Burleigh and Morton County 4-H students during an electrical safety presentation.

NDSU Extension – Burleigh County, says Burleigh County 4-H offers project days each month to give youth the opportunity to learn new skills. Youth will be able to exhibit their cords at Achievement Days this summer. **CE**



## Board minute excerpts April 28, 2016

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., was held Thursday, April 28, 2016, at 9 a.m. at co-op headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota, pursuant to due notice to all directors.

All of the directors were present at that time.

**Financial Review:** Prior to the board meeting, Directors Vilhauer and Kramer reviewed the March 2016 check register and expenditures. Vilhauer reported all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve March expenditures in the amount of \$3,106,620.66.

A member appeared before the board to discuss a tree-trimming concern.

**Business Department report:** The Manager reviewed the March financial and statistical report with the Board. The total kilowatt-hour (KWH) sales for March 2016 was below budget by 10 percent. The actual monthly electric revenue is below budget by 8.62 percent.

The total margin for March is \$133,011 compared to the budgeted margin of \$130,778, above budget by \$2,233.

Capital Electric began billing 24 new services in March, bringing our active services to 19,281 versus 18,586 at this time last year, or a net increase of 695 accounts over the last 12 months.

The Manager reviewed the comparison of actual-to-budgeted expenses for the month of March. Accounts receivable balances as of April 27, 2016, were reviewed.

**AFLAC:** After discussion and without objection, it was approved that an initial presentation will be given to employees to consider offering AFLAC as supplemental insurance to Capital Electric employees, at their own cost.

**RUS work order inventories:** We have two work order inventories that are ready to submit to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for approval. Inventory 484 contains 66 work orders for a total of \$1,017,194.75. Inventory 485 contains 114 work orders for a total of \$2,814,113.16. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve the work orders.

**RUS RD Apply Intake System:** Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve the application.

**Estate retirements:** Following review of the financial condition of the cooperative and recommendation by

management, it was moved, seconded and carried to authorize payment of capital credits to the following deceased members' estates:

Gene Hilken	\$1,990.87
John H. Kocourek	\$ 565.06
Mary Burns	\$1,635.80
James Kuhn	\$1,154.92
Delane Meier	\$1,443.21
George Monroe	\$2,107.51
Ann C. Curtis	\$ 460.35
Cornelia Glavkee	\$ 28.64
Seth Elkins	\$ 312.82

**Quarterly write-offs:** After discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to write off \$2,913.72 for the first quarter.

**Audit report:** Eide Bailly presented the 2015 financial statement results. The cooperative received a "clean" audit opinion, or more precisely an "unmodified" opinion. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve the 2015 audit report.

**Engineering and Operations report:** The Manager reviewed the written report from the Engineering and Operations department. We completed 16 work orders this month, adding 74 new consumers to the system.

Fisher Contracting, Gieser Utility Contracting and Third Generation continue to trench in new services. VIP continues to work on overhead and rural rebuild.

As part of changing over the SCADA system to a new server, additional charges are required due to the type of server we are moving to. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve the payment as proposed.

Following review, the overhead contractor prices were approved upon motion, seconded and carried.

The outage history was reviewed for the month of April.

**Member Services department:** The Manager reviewed the member service written report.

**Tower site property appraisal:** We will continue discussions with Basin Electric Power Cooperative as to a possible lease or sale.

**Tree trimming concerns:** Mork will continue to work with our member on a satisfactory resolution.

**Surplus vehicles:** Following discussion it was moved, seconded and carried to sell the two older vehicles.

**Communications and Public Relations department:** Topics of interest were discussed with the Board.

**Safety report:** There were no lost-time accidents this month.

Dan O'Neill from Western Area Power Administration was at our shop on April 7, 2016, and put on a switching seminar for the linemen.

Jeff Tweten, safety instructor from the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC), was at our shop April 13, 2016 conducting a safety meeting on fire prevention, lockout/tagout procedures and grounding procedures.

Christy Roemmich, safety services director from NDAREC, Jeff Tweten, safety instructor from NDAREC, and Tim Dockter, area forman from KEM Electric Cooperative, were at our shop on April 20, 2016 conducting an in-house audit for Safety Accreditation.

Without objection, the safety report was approved.

**Central Power Electric Cooperative report:** Hilken reviewed Central Power matters including annual meeting updates. The next annual meeting date is March 29 and 30, 2017.

**Basin Electric report:** The April Basin Electric report from Troy Presser was reviewed.

**NDAREC report:** Liuska reported on Statewide matters.

The annual meeting is scheduled for June 1, 2016. **CEC**

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