Higher voltage + more capacity = more reliability

Capital Electric Cooperative and Central Power Electric Cooperative partnered to make system upgrades in the Bismarck area this fall. In this month's local pages, learn about the large-scale manpower and equipment needed to do the job — and how the Capital Electric membership will benefit with the improvements.

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Higher voltage + more capacity = more reliability

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CARMEN DEVNEY

The bucket and digger trucks don’t say Capital Electric Cooperative, but the work being done on your cooperative’s transmission system benefits all of our member-owners.

Central Power Electric Cooperative, the Minot-based wholesale electrical generation and transmission cooperative that purchased and assumed Capital Electric’s transmission and substation assets, has been making transmission upgrades based on Capital Electric’s membership growth and long-range power requirement plan. Central Power and its contract crews have been reconductoring parts of Central Power’s transmission loop around the Bismarck area. The new construction involves installing larger transmission conductor, larger transformers and other related equipment. This will increase the voltage from 41.6 kilovolts (KV) to 115 KV. Central Power’s transmission line in Capital Electric’s rural service area will remain 41.6 KV.

Phase one of the project involved upgrading the transmission loop from the North Bismarck Substation on Century Avenue to the Grandview Pines Substation located on the corner of Centennial Road and 43rd Avenue Northeast. Phase two involved upgrading the transmission loop from the Circle K Substation to the Ward Delivery Substation, both on 71st Avenue. Capital Electric line crews built temporary lines to re-route distribution services during this time frame.

The process for both projects was extensive, due to the labor and equipment involved. Rick Dressler, operations supervisor for Capital Electric, says in order to make the improvements, Capital Electric had to de-energize the power line (underbuild) below the transmission circuit. That involved re-routing power to Capital Electric members
so they didn’t have a disruption of electric service. It also involved de-energizing two substations for about two weeks each at different times, so the work could be done safely by lineworkers and contract crews.

Dressler says prior to selling the transmission line and substations to Central Power, Capital Electric has had substations out of service for a couple days — but never for a couple weeks at a time.

“We’ve had one sub out for two days, and we were sweating bullets,” he says with a laugh. “We had to be very creative in how to keep power flowing to members without overloading issues. That’s one reason we waited until October when the load is low [when members are using minimal heat or air conditioning] to do these upgrades with Central Power.”

The first day Central Power took the Grandview Pines Substation offline at the end of September, it was 92 degrees.

“We couldn’t believe it,” Dressler says.

The system handled the load just fine, and both phases of the project were completed at the end of October. GEC

Crews are shown installing new transmission switches along Centennial Road and 43rd Avenue.

Jesse Goehring, apprentice lineman, Wing

High demand

October and November are exceptionally busy months for the linemen who build and maintain Capital Electric Cooperative’s electric distribution system. Operations Supervisor Rick Dressler says line crews are busy trenching power to new members and new services before the ground freezes. They can continue to install services after the frost hits, but he advises that it costs more.
From top to bottom: Wing Public School first-grade students Britton Schlafmann, MaKenna Meier, Hudson Wolff and Megan Hertz are loving the new playground equipment. All of the children belong to Capital Electric Cooperative families.
Wing Public School upgrades playground equipment, seeks donations

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CARMEN DEVNEY

It’s been a colorful autumn at Wing Public School.

Bright, new playground equipment was installed in August, and the metal slides and merry-go-rounds that children have played on since the mid-1960s have been retired due to safety concerns. David Goetz, superintendent, spearheaded the project.

Summer Hoverson, elementary principal and activities director at Wing Public School, says the school’s staff, students and families, and community members worked together to install the new equipment in an effort to save money. In the cooperative spirit of people working together for the benefit of all, the huge effort turned into a huge celebration.

“People showed up even though they have very busy lives; especially in mid-August when harvest is going on. Being a farming community, it was very impressive to see how people came together to help,” Hoverson says.

To pay for the upgrades, school staff are writing grants, holding fundraisers and asking for donations. The school district also received some funding and is in need of more. Hoverson says she plans to apply for an Operation Round Up grant from Capital Electric Cooperative, as the co-op has a service center in Wing, and many of the students are children of co-op members.

Wing Public School currently has about 100 children enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12. Hoverson says the town is growing and thriving, thanks to academic activities, sports, extracurricular activities and community events.

Snow may be on the horizon, but Hoverson anticipates winter will be a colorful season, too.

“Our students are loving the new equipment, and it’s nice to know they are safe out there.”

Cooler weather is on the way and the heating season is upon us.

Is your electric meter breaker on?

Members, if your home or business has a sub-meter for an off-peak or all-electric heat rate, please make sure your heat meter breaker is turned on inside your electric panel. If the breaker is off, your electric heat credit will not be reflected on your bill. Thank you.

Off-peak rates run Oct. 1 through April 30

Off-peak electric heat utilizes the concept of a dual-energy heating system, which simply uses two sources of fuel rather than one. With off-peak electric heat, electricity is the primary heat source. Using a control system, Capital Electric can switch from one heating source to another automatically. This maximizes efficiency and allows your co-op to offer you lower heating rates!

For more information on off-peak electric heat and Capital Electric’s heating program and incentives, visit www.capitalelec.com and click on Energy Efficiency and Load Management Programs.

LEAVING FOR THE WINTER?

Please contact our billing department at 701-223-1513 to let us know you are going to be gone. Without notification, we may estimate your meter reading, which could result in being over billed for several months. Thank you!

www.capitalelec.com
Capital Electric holds geothermal workshop

Capital Electric Cooperative held a geothermal workshop Oct. 28 and 29 at co-op headquarters in Bismarck, in partnership with Enertech, the manufacturer of the ground-source heat pumps the co-op sells. More than 10 area contractors attended the workshop to listen and learn from a certified trainer, and do hands-on installation and troubleshooting on a training unit.

According to www.energy.gov, geothermal energy is heat derived below the earth’s surface that can be harnessed to generate clean, renewable energy. This resource supplies 400-percent efficient, renewable energy around the clock and emits little or no greenhouse gases — all while requiring a small environmental footprint to develop.

Josh Schaffner, member services assistant at Capital Electric, says around 60 member-households chose to have geothermal installed this year. He says interest in the ground-source heat pump remains high within the cooperative membership, although purchases are down because the cost of natural gas is low right now, and the state tax incentive has not been renewed. A federal tax credit of 30 percent is still available. To learn more, call the member services department at Capital Electric at 701-223-1513, or visit www.energystar.gov and click on the orange button labeled “Tax Credits” and then “Geothermal Heat Pumps.”

Schaffner says the nearest geothermal training is available in Minneapolis, Minnesota, or Mitchell, South Dakota. Contractors conveyed to Schaffner and staff that they appreciated the opportunity to learn locally from experts, while saving on travel expenses and time.

The contractors who attended the training earned continuing education credits. Schaffner says he would feel comfortable recommending contractors to members based on their attendance and interest while at the training.

To learn more about geothermal, visit the cooperative’s website at www.capitalelec.com and click on “Energy Efficiency,” “Energy Efficient Products” and “Geothermal Heat Pumps,” or call the member services department at Capital Electric.

LIHEAP provides energy assistance to eligible low-income households

If you need assistance paying your utility bill this winter, you might qualify for energy assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Federally funded and administered by the N.D. Department of Human Services and county social services, LIHEAP provides the following services for eligible individuals and families:

- heating assistance
- making your home energy efficient
- furnace and chimney cleaning
- emergency assistance
- furnace replacements
- minor repairs, and
- energy cost reduction devices

To date, more than 12,600 low-income households in North Dakota are participating in the state program. Shari Vetter, billing coordinator for Capital Electric Cooperative, says a number of co-op members utilize the program.

Applications are accepted from October through May of each heating season. For information related to application for benefits, program eligibility or an existing case, contact your local County Social Services office. There is no cost to apply, but consumers will have to pay a percentage of some services based on their income.

To read more about the LIHEAP program, view frequently asked questions and apply for energy assistance, visit www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/energyassist.html or www.nd.gov/dhs/ and click on “Services and Help,” “Services and Assistance” and the “Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.”

To ask questions about the LIHEAP program, call 701-328-2065 or email dhseap@nd.gov.
TOP 3 REASONS TO ENTER THE ESSAY-WRITING CONTEST

1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of Capital Electric Cooperative.
2. A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol.
3. A learning experience you’ll never forget.

ESSAY QUESTION:
“Pick one of the four Touchstone Energy® core values — innovation, integrity, accountability or commitment to community — and describe how you see this in action at Capital Electric Cooperative.”

CHECK OUT THE ESSAY-CONTEST GUIDELINES AT www.ndyouthtour.com and www.youthtour.coop
Board minute excerpts
Sept. 25, 2015

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., was held Friday, Sept. 25, 2015 at 9 a.m. at co-op headquarters in Bismarck.

Financial review: Prior to the board meeting, Directors Hilken and Patrie reviewed the August 2015 check register and expenditures. They reported all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve August expenditures in the amount of $3,392,251.84.

Business department report: The Manager reviewed the August financial and statistical report with the Board. The total kilowatt-hour (KWH) sales for August 2015 was over budget by 4.2 percent. Year-to-date, KWH sales are under budget by 6 percent and electric revenue is over budget by .06 percent.

Capital Electric’s load factor is below budget, resulting in a cost increase of $152,000. The financial margin for August is -$268,837 versus the budgeted margin of -$488,373, above budget by $219,536. The year-to-date margin is $208,578 versus $11,349 budgeted, over by $197,229.

Capital Electric began billing 113 new services in August, bringing our active services to 18,964 versus 18,135 at this time last year, or a net increase of 829 accounts over the last 12 months.

The Manager reviewed the comparison of actual-to-budgeted expenses for the month of August and for the year-to-date through August 2015. Accounts receivable balances as of Sept. 21, 2015, were reviewed.

Health care trust: We have received health care rates from both the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) and are in the process of reviewing them. The REC health care trust meets Sept. 28 to compare and review the plans.

Audit proposals: Proposals for our annual financial audit (including Operation Round Up agreed-upon procedures) were received from Eide Bailly, Brady Martz and Olsen Thielen. All three of the firms perform audits for the RECs.

It was moved, seconded and carried to accept the Eide Bailly proposal for audit years 2015 to 2017.

2016 budget: We are in the process of preparing the 2016 budget.

Cyber security assessment: We continue to work on our internal physical security assessment and are evaluating bids.

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:

- Clarence Heitzmann ................... $1,489.98
- Roger B. Peet ................................ $ 140.47
- Dennis Hill ................................... $1,119.85
- Ethel Mortvedt ............................. $ 703.60
- Alice Emineth .............................. $ 123.30
- Brian Burlingame ....................... $ 418.18
- Jim Lorenz ................................. $ 260.16

TOTAL .................................... $ 3,995.38

Engineering and operations report: The Manager reviewed the written report from the engineering and operations department. We completed 51 work orders this month, adding 74 new consumers to the system.

Fisher, 3rd Generation and Gieser Utility Contracting continue to trench in new services, and VIP continues to work on our overhead rural rebuild.

Crews have been working with Central Power Electric Cooperative as their contractor is in the process of reconductoring segments of their transmission line that we have three-phase under-build on.

Crews are also hanging OCRs in Central Power’s new Horizon II substation, plus wiring the control panels inside the new control building.

Preliminary 2016 capital expenditures and constructions budget were presented.

We would like Central Power’s contractor, Aveinia, to do some work for us on the three-phase under-build while they are working on the re-conductoring project for Central Power. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve Aveinia pricing.

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

Wing Service Center building: Work on the Wing Service Center heating system has been completed.

The existing Capital Power electric sign will be transferred from the old building to the south wall of the new building.

Geothermal heat pump loan for board approval: There are no loans for Board approval this month.

Communications and public relations department: The Manager reviewed the written report from the communications and public relations department.

Safety report: There was no lost-time accidents this month. Without objection, the safety report was approved.

CoBank: It was moved, seconded and carried to cast our ballot for Everett Dobrinski as director to the CoBank board.

It was moved, seconded and carried to approve the amendment to CoBank’s capitalization Bylaws Amendments for Co-Bank, ACB.

Central Power/Basin Electric: Hilken reported on Central Power matters and the board reviewed the Sept. 22 synopsis. Year-to-date total margins are $2.6 million. Central Power amended its wholesale power contracts with Basin Electric, extending its contract to Dec. 31, 2017.

North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC): There was no board meeting this month. Dennis Hill, executive vice president and general manager, has announced his retirement in the fall of 2016.

It was moved, seconded and carried to elect Hilken as delegate and Haugen-Hoffart as alternate representative to Basin Electric District 3 director election caucus.

NRECA director election: It was moved, seconded and carried to appoint Lukska as delegate and Eckroth as alternate to the NRECA Director Election on Oct. 1, 2015.

Arden Fuher, candidate for the Central Power director position, met with the board to discuss his re-election bid. Furer serves as vice president on the Dakota Valley Electric Cooperative board of directors.


Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the meeting, without objection, the regular meeting was adjourned.

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Office phone: 701-223-1513
Toll-free: 888-223-1513
Pay-By-Phone: 1-877-853-5928
DAY—NIGHT—WEEKEND TROUBLE CALL: 223-1513

Capital Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.