



**Capital
Electric**
COOPERATIVE

JANUARY 2023

Capital Electric Cooperative
wishes its members a happy and
healthy 2023!

*Happy
New Year*

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In November, Capital Electric Cooperative moved to its new headquarters building and service center, located at 7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck.

Capital Electric Cooperative looks toward the future

BY PAUL FITTERER

As a new year greets us once again, we are thankful for what we have accomplished and what is yet to come. As we dive into 2023, it's time to focus on the positive, while addressing the challenges we still need to face. Our resolutions typically provide a plan for us to improve our condition and give us hope for an even better year ahead.

Capital Electric Cooperative has relocated to its new headquarters building and service center, located at 7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck. Positioned along the two highways most traveled by the co-op's lineworkers, the new location provides improved security, better access and room for the cooperative to grow. Thanks to the work of the co-op's dedicated employees, the building is quickly becoming fully operational.

Capital Electric's employees have one priority in mind as we adjust to the co-op's new home: providing the best possible service to you, our co-op members. Below are a few of our goals in the year ahead.

To have all Bismarck employees working on one floor in 2023.

This may sound weird and unimportant, but one of Capital Electric's competitive advantages is its small size. Currently, we have 38 employees – 36 in Bismarck and two in Wing. At our previous location, employees were spread out on three different floors due to multiple additions over the last 50 years. I believe the more proximity we have with one another, whether planned or unplanned, leads to better

relationships, increased communication, and a better understanding of our members needs and how we can improve as a team.

To complete the transition to our new facility.

In the long run, serving our members begins by providing safe and easy access to major roadways for our crews. Over the past 50 years, Bismarck has experienced significant growth, which impacted our ability to operate efficiently out of our previous location, 4111 State Street. For several years, the co-op faced safety and road access concerns. Imagine Capital Electric's crews driving heavy digger trucks while pulling a full trailer load of poles, on and off 43rd Avenue, all while trying to avoid fast-moving vehicles. Those concerns were exacerbated once the city announced the rebuild of 43rd Avenue to be four lanes with an accompanying reduction in road access. This ultimately confirmed our decision to look for a new facility.

A major improvement, the new facility provides better access to both line crews and members, helping us better serve our members. Reasonably close to Bismarck, it provides direct access to major roadways, making it easier for crews to maneuver large trucks and trailers off the property. It also boasts a much larger material yard and a very flat topology. All member areas are at ground level, with no slope, providing better accessibility, especially for those with mobility issues. In addition, the parking lot is more



Billing Representative **Chelsey Souza** assists a member with a billing need.

than twice the size of the State Street property. We have also added another employee at the front desk to respond faster to members and contractors who come into the office.

To improve the member experience.

Like every organization, Capital Electric is constantly looking for ways to improve member experience while also reducing unnecessary costs. Both goals can be accomplished with new technology. Three important pieces of this endeavor include:

- Over the next three years, Capital Electric will change out the remaining meters that have not already been upgraded to our new Verizon metering system. This metering system provides fast, two-way, real-time communication with our control room, and once the transition is complete, will allow our control room and dispatchers to have a near real-time view of our entire system.
- Our engineering department recently configured a new operation analysis dashboard, which proactively determines where system issues may be expected. For instance, using predictive analysis, the cooperative can determine where transformers or conductors are expected to fail based on member loads, transformer size or other reasons. Already, Capital Electric has started actively upgrading these pressure points to avoid outages before they even occur.
- Directly improving the member experience are two exciting tools: a redesigned SmartHub website and a brand-new interactive voice response (IVR) phone system.
 - Our SmartHub web portal has a redesigned look and new features for members to do more and save time.
 - The IVR phone system will use human speech recognition to move you through the menu



Construction is underway on a 10,000-square-foot storage building, which will be completed in 2023.

directly. Say, "Pay my bill," and the system will jump right to payments. Once you set up your payment method the first time, the system will recognize you the next time you call, and future payments can be scheduled in under a minute.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Capital Electric. We look forward to serving you in the new year. May you be blessed with good health and happiness in 2023! ☺



Over the next three years, Capital Electric Cooperative will complete the final phase of its meter system upgrade, replacing old meters with wireless cellular meters. The new metering system provides fast, two-way, real-time communication with the co-op's control room. Once the transition is complete, it will allow the control room and dispatchers to have a near real-time view of the entire system.

Employees celebrate years of service

One thing you can count on at an electric cooperative is employees devoted to serving the member-owners.

In 2022, several Capital Electric Cooperative employees reached milestones in their co-op service. Leading the list with 25 years of dedicated cooperative service is Billing Supervisor Dana Solem. Not far behind with 20 years are Accountant

Erica Roth, System Supervisor Jeff Holzer and Lead Lineworker Seth Lothspeich. Manager of Communications and IT Wes Engbrecht and Lead Lineworker Matt Hagen celebrated 15 years with the co-op, and Energy Services Technician Jared Nygaard, Engineering Technician Sean Kiesz, Journey Lineworker Josh Bartsch and Journey Lineworker Ryan Koenig reached their five-year milestone.

Dana Solem, 25 years



Dana Solem

Joining Capital Electric when she was 22 years old, Billing Supervisor Dana Solem has seen her career come full circle.

"When I first started at the co-op, many of the more experienced guys were like father figures to me. They would warn me about traveling in the winter and give me other advice that I appreciated," she recalls. "Now, I'm

the one giving advice, taking care of the younger employees in my department."

Working directly with our members for 25 years, Dana has developed relationships that extend beyond the co-op's walls.

"I will run into someone I met at the office, and they will stop and talk to me. They ask about my family, if I have kids, and other things only friends would ask about. I enjoy those relationships very much!" she relates.

"Working at a cooperative, you develop friendships with your co-workers as well and they become part of your family. It's been a good place to work, and I am happy to have experienced it," she concludes.

Jeff Holzer, 20 years

System Supervisor Jeff Holzer says when you enjoy what you do, 20 years goes by really fast.

"We have a good group of employees. Everyone gets along. The members are great, too," Holzer says. "And I really enjoy playing with evolving electrical technologies and seeing the progression of our system."

Holzer began his career at Capital Electric in May 2002. A graduate of Bismarck State College's lineworker program, he started as summer help and was hired as a full-time apprentice lineworker in November 2002. In 2005, he earned his journey certificate. He spent the next 10 years working as a lineworker before moving into the control room in 2015. As system supervisor, Holzer monitors the co-op's systems, creates service orders and dispatches crews. He says his time in the field prepared him for the position.

"I'm comfortable telling people where to go and what to do, because I've seen most of the system in the field before I came into the control room," Holzer says. "I know exactly what it looks like in the field, because I've been there before."

Holzer says he plans to stay with the cooperative for quite some time.

"It's a good profession. I've enjoyed learning from older generations and passing that knowledge down as I became the teacher," Holzer says. "It's been a good place to work, and I believe it will be in the future, too."



Jeff Holzer

Seth Lothspeich, 20 years

Lead Lineworker Seth Lothspeich joined Capital Electric Cooperative 20 years ago. A 2002 graduate of Bismarck State College's lineworker program, he was hired as summer help in May 2002. Later that year, he joined the co-op as a full-time apprentice lineworker, earning his journey certificate in 2005.

Over the years, he's seen many changes.

"It's a changing world, and I think, for the most part, it's for the better. The equipment we use is safer. It's very worker-friendly, and a lot of it makes our job easier," Lothspeich says.

While technology has made the job easier, line work is not without its challenges. Responsible for maintaining and repairing Capital Electric's electrical lines and systems, lineworkers glove up in rain, snow or below freezing temperatures to keep the power on.

"Most lineworkers in their whole career will never experience what we did during the 2011 flood – using boats and building dikes and levees and dams,"

Lothspeich recalls. "We kept power on throughout the flood, and we got nothing but praise from our members."

Lothspeich says he's enjoyed serving the members all these years.

"Every day is different – one day you're trimming trees, and the next you're on a storm job. Looking back on some of the storm jobs, I mean, it's amazing what we accomplished. We put in a lot of hours, and it really did pay off," he says.



Seth Lothspeich

Capital Electric thanks the employees who reached milestones in 2022. We appreciate your hard work and dedication to the members – always putting them first and keeping the lights on! ⚡

15 years of service



Wes Engbrecht
Communications
and IT Manager



Matt Hagen
Lead Lineworker

5 years of service



Jared Nygaard
Energy Services Technician



Sean Kiesz
Engineering Technician



Josh Bartsch
Journey Lineworker



Ryan Koenig
Journey Lineworker

Congrats!

Capital Electric Cooperative welcomes James Keller

Capital Electric Cooperative recently welcomed a new geographic information system (GIS) specialist to its team. James Keller began his new role on Nov. 7, 2022.

As a GIS specialist, Keller is responsible for managing the co-op's GIS system, which maps out the co-op's service area and identifies the locations of important infrastructure, including transformers, substations and underground and overhead distribution line. This information is also used by the outage management system, or OMS, to predict the location, cause and extent of an outage.

A 2013 graduate of Bismarck State College's GIS program, Keller brings a strong set of skills to Capital Electric. Prior to joining the team, Keller worked for Bartlett & West for 10 years, starting as an intern and eventually succeeding to the position of senior GIS technician.

"In my last six months at Bartlett & West, I kind of became the go-to person. It threw me out of my

comfort zone, and I gained so much knowledge. I'm looking forward to putting that knowledge into the system I'm working with at Capital Electric," Keller says.

Keller lives in Bismarck with his wife, Annie, and their two daughters, Freya and Willa. He is a proud veteran, having served his country for 10 years as a member of the North Dakota Army National Guard's 957 Unit. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with family and playing softball. ☺



James Keller



Capital Electric Cooperative offers student scholarship

Capital Electric Cooperative is offering a \$1,000 student scholarship, in partnership with Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

To qualify for the scholarship, students must be enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate or graduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school. Their parent(s) or guardian(s) must be members of Capital Electric.

Our cooperative will assemble a panel of impartial judges to review all applications. The judges will select the winning application based on academic performance, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, a statement of education and career goals, work experience and an outside referral. The scholarship will be awarded without regard to other awards, loans or financial assistance the applicant may have obtained.

Application forms may be downloaded at www.capitalelec.com or picked up at co-op headquarters at 7401 Yukon Drive in Bismarck. **Applications need to be completed and returned to Capital Electric on or before Friday, Feb. 15.**

AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

ESSAY QUESTION:

If chosen as a Youth Tour delegate, you will be traveling to Washington, D.C., to experience and learn about America's rich history. What moment in American history do you wish you had been a part of and what would you have contributed?

TOP 3 REASONS

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

JUNE 18 TO 23, 2023



- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Capital Electric Cooperative.
- If you have any questions, please contact Wes Engbrecht, Capital Electric, at 701-223-1513 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 20, 2023. You can email entries to Wes Engbrecht at wese@capitalelec.com or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, PO Box 730, Bismarck, ND 58502-0730.



CHECK OUT THE ESSAY CONTEST GUIDELINES AT
ndyouthtour.com

Board minute excerpts NOV. 18, 2022

The Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative held its regular meeting on Friday, Nov. 18, 2022. All directors were present except Kayla Pulvermacher. Also present were: Manager Paul Fitterer, Business Manager Luke Steen, Operations Manager Rick Dressler, Engineering Services Manager Greg Owen, Energy Services Manager Josh Schaffner, Manager of Communications and IT Wes Engbrecht and Attorney Zachary Pelham of Pearce Durick, PLLC, who acted as recording secretary.

Financial Review: Prior to the board meeting, Directors Rex Hollenbeck and Sara Vollmer reviewed the October 2022 check register and expenditures. They advised that all checks and expenditures were in order. The financial review was approved as presented.

Management Reports (Business Department, Operations Department, Engineering Services, Energy Services and Communications/IT):

Business Department Report: Steen presented the October 2022 financial and statistical report to the board.

Total kilowatt-hour (kWh) sales for October were behind budget by 4.7%. The monthly electric revenue was behind budget by 5.2%.

Capital Electric's October load factor was better than budgeted by 1.65%.

The operating margin for October was \$66,793, ahead of the budgeted amount of -\$18,613. The total margin for October was \$55,486, which was behind the budgeted \$2,492,046 (the large variance was due, in large part, to the sale of cooperative real estate being moved to November).

Capital Electric began billing 23 new services in October, bringing active services to 21,906 versus 21,587 at this time last year, or a net increase of 319 accounts over the last 12 months.

The cash flow statement and monthly power cost for October were reviewed. Accounts receivable balances were also reviewed.

Estate Retirements: Following review of the financial condition of the cooperative and recommendation by management, payments of capital credits were approved for a total amount of \$2,895.16 to four members' estates.

Auditor Request for Proposal: Following discussion, the board selected Brady Martz to conduct the annual audit of the cooperative.

Operations Report: Dressler reviewed the written report from the operations

department. No outages were reported from the winter storm. Assistance was provided to Dakota Valley Electric Cooperative following an ice storm that impacted the co-op's service area. Crews also completed service upgrades.

Safety Report: There were no lost time accidents in November.

The cooperative's annual self-assessment was completed. The assessment identifies risks in the office/shop areas and identifies areas for continued improvements.

Without objection, the safety report was approved.

Engineering Services Report: Owen reviewed the written report from Engineering Services.

There were 28 work orders completed in October.

Owen reported on ongoing and upcoming projects, including the nearly completed MacLean Bottoms tie line and continued work to install service lines.

Property Update: Owen reported on the status of modifications to the new facility. The service center sale closed on Oct. 31, 2022. Efforts continue to market the administrative building.

Energy Services: Schaffner reviewed the Energy Services Report.

Twenty service orders were completed in October.

The extra cubicles at the new facility have all been sold, and lines for the geothermal loop have been installed for the new shop.

Schaffner attended a presentation to the Public Service Commission on electric vehicle (EV) charging regulations.

Communications and IT: Engbrecht reviewed topics of interest.

Meetings have been held with newly elected legislators to introduce them to Capital Electric staff. The installation and connection of IT equipment at the new facility has gone well. The co-op plans to hold a strategic planning meeting on Aug. 25, 2023.

2023 Budget: Fitterer and Steen presented on the 2023 budget. Following discussion, the board approved the budget as presented.

Policies: Steen presented on rate policies. Following discussion, the board approved the rate policy amendments presented.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative: Fitterer reported on Basin Electric matters, including the positive financial outlook

going into 2023.

Central Power Electric Cooperative: The October board meeting is scheduled for the following week.

Industry Update: Fitterer reviewed materials related to power markets and general cooperative news.

North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC): Board President Deon Vilhauer reported on NDAREC's annual meeting, which will be held in February. The board approved that Capital Electric's nine directors will be the voting delegates, with the general manager and department managers selected as alternates.

The board discussed electing a Capital Electric representative to the NDAREC board of directors. Following a call for nominations, Vilhauer was elected to serve as Capital Electric's representative, and Director Charles was elected to serve as the co-op's alternate representative.

Mid-West Electric Consumers Association Election: Fitterer reported on the open director positions.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. ☺

CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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Dave Charles, V. Pres.	Bismarck
David Straley, Sec.-Treas.	Bismarck
Kyle Tschosik, Asst. Sec.-Treas.	Bismarck
Rex Hollenbeck	McClusky
Dwight Wrangham.....	Bismarck
Kayla Pulvermacher.....	Bismarck
Lyndon Anderson	Bismarck
Sara Vollmer.....	Wing

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